

Freedom in the World 2018

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Freedom in the World 2018

The Annual Survey of Political Rights & Civil Liberties

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Freedom in the World 2018: **Democracy in Crisis**

by Michael J. Abramowitz

Political rights and civil liberties around the world deteriorated to their lowest point in more than a decade in 2017, extending a period characterized by emboldened autocrats, beleaguered democracies, and the United States' withdrawal from its leadership role in the global struggle for human freedom.

Democracy is in crisis. The values it embodies—particularly the right to choose leaders in free and fair elections, freedom of the press, and the rule of law—are under assault and in retreat globally.

A quarter-century ago, at the end of the Cold War, it appeared that totalitarianism had at last been vanquished and liberal democracy had won the great ideological battle of the 20th century.

Today, it is democracy that finds itself battered and weakened. For the 12th consecutive year, according to *Freedom in the World*, countries that suffered democratic setbacks outnumbered those that registered gains. States that a decade ago seemed like promising success stories—Turkey and Hungary, for example—are sliding into authoritarian rule. The military in Myanmar, which began a limited democratic opening in 2010, executed a shocking campaign of ethnic cleansing in 2017 and rebuffed international criticism of its actions. Meanwhile, the world's most powerful democracies are mired in seemingly intractable problems at home, including social and economic disparities, partisan fragmentation, terrorist attacks, and an influx of refugees that has strained alliances and increased fears of the “other.”

The challenges within democratic states have fueled the rise of populist leaders who appeal to anti-immigrant sentiment and give short shrift to fundamental civil and political liberties. Right-wing populists gained votes and parliamentary seats in France, the Netherlands, Germany, and Austria during 2017. While they were kept out of government in all but Austria, their success at the polls helped to weaken established parties on both the right and left. Centrist newcomer Emmanuel Macron handily won the French presidency, but in Germany and the Netherlands, mainstream parties struggled to create stable governing coalitions.

Perhaps worst of all, and most worrisome for the future, young people, who have little memory of the long struggles against fascism and communism, may be losing faith and interest in the democratic project. The very idea of democracy and its promotion has been tarnished among many, contributing to a dangerous apathy.

The retreat of democracies is troubling enough. Yet at the same time, the world's leading autocracies, China and Russia, have seized the opportunity not only to step up internal repression but also to export their malign influence to other countries, which are increasingly copying their behavior and adopting their disdain for democracy. A confident Chinese president Xi Jinping recently proclaimed that China is “blazing a new trail” for developing

countries to follow. It is a path that includes politicized courts, intolerance for dissent, and predetermined elections.

The spread of antidemocratic practices around the world is not merely a setback for fundamental freedoms. It poses economic and security risks. When more countries are free, all countries—including the United States—are safer and more prosperous. When more countries are autocratic and repressive, treaties and alliances crumble, nations and entire regions become unstable, and violent extremists have greater room to operate.

Democratic governments allow people to help set the rules to which all must adhere, and have a say in the direction of their lives and work. This fosters a broader respect for peace, fair play, and compromise. Autocrats impose arbitrary rules on their citizens while ignoring all constraints themselves, spurring a vicious circle of abuse and radicalization.

THE UNITED STATES ACCELERATES ITS WITHDRAWAL FROM THE DEMOCRACY STRUGGLE

A long list of troubling developments around the world contributed to the global decline in 2017, but perhaps most striking was the accelerating withdrawal of the United States from its historical commitment to promoting and supporting democracy. The potent challenge from authoritarian regimes made the United States' abdication of its traditional role all the more important.

Despite the U.S. government's mistakes—and there have been many—the American people and their leaders have generally understood that standing up for the rights of others is both a moral imperative and beneficial to themselves. But two long wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and a global recession soured the public on extensive international engagement, and the perceived link between democracy promotion on the one hand and military interventions and financial costs on the other has had a lasting impact.

The Obama administration continued to defend democratic ideals in its foreign policy statements, but its actions often fell short, reflecting a reduced estimation of the United States' ability to influence world events and of the American public's willingness to back such efforts.

In 2017, however, the Trump administration made explicit—in both words and actions—its intention to cast off principles that have guided U.S. policy and formed the basis for American leadership over the past seven decades.

President Trump's "America First" slogan, originally coined by isolationists seeking to block U.S. involvement in the war against fascism, targeted traditional notions of collective global security and mutually beneficial trade. The administration's hostility and skepticism toward binding international agreements on the environment, arms control, and other topics confirmed that a reorientation was taking shape.

Even when he chose to acknowledge America's treaty alliances with fellow democracies, the president spoke of cultural or civilizational ties rather than shared recognition of universal rights; his trips abroad rarely featured any mention of the word "democracy." Indeed, the American leader expressed feelings of admiration and even personal friendship for some of the world's most loathsome strongmen and dictators.

This marks a sharp break from other U.S. presidents in the postwar period, who cooperated with certain authoritarian regimes for strategic reasons but never wavered from a commitment to democracy as the best form of government and the animating force behind American foreign policy. It also reflects an inability—or unwillingness—by the United States to lead democracies in effectively confronting the growing threat from Russia and China, and from the other states that have come to emulate their authoritarian approach.

DEMOCRATIC NORMS ERODE WITHIN THE UNITED STATES

The past year brought further, faster erosion of America's own democratic standards than at any other time in memory, damaging its international credibility as a champion of good governance and human rights.

The United States has experienced a series of setbacks in the conduct of elections and criminal justice over the past decade—under leadership from both major political parties—but in 2017 its core institutions were attacked by an administration that rejects established norms of ethical conduct across many fields of activity. President Trump himself has mingled the concerns of his business empire with his role as president, appointed family members to his senior staff, filled other high positions with lobbyists and representatives of special interests, and refused to abide by disclosure and transparency practices observed by his predecessors.

The president has also lambasted and threatened the media—including sharp jabs at individual journalists—for challenging his routinely false statements, spoken disdainfully of judges who blocked his decisions, and attacked the professional staff of law enforcement and intelligence agencies. He signals contempt for Muslims and Latin American immigrants and singles out some African Americans for vitriolic criticism. He pardoned a sheriff convicted of ignoring federal court orders to halt racially discriminatory policies and issued an executive order restricting travel to the United States from a group of Muslim-majority countries after making a campaign promise to ban all foreign Muslims from the United States. And at a time when millions around the world have been forced to flee war, terrorism, and ethnic cleansing, President Trump moved to implement major reductions in the number of legal immigrants and refugees that the United States would accept.

The president's behavior stems in part from a frustration with the country's democratic checks and balances, including the independent courts, a coequal legislative branch, the free press, and an active civil society. These institutions remained fairly resilient in 2017, but the administration's statements and actions could ultimately leave them weakened, with serious consequences for the health of U.S. democracy and America's role in the world.

CHINA AND RUSSIA EXPAND THEIR ANTIDEMOCRATIC INFLUENCE

While the United States and other democratic powers grappled with domestic problems and argued about foreign policy priorities, the world's leading autocracies—Russia and China—continued to make headway. Moscow and Beijing are single-minded in their identification of democracy as a threat to their oppressive regimes, and they work relentlessly, with increasing sophistication, to undermine its institutions and cripple its principal advocates.

The eventual outcome of these trends, if unchecked, is obvious. The replacement of global democratic norms with authoritarian practices will mean more elections in which the incumbent's victory is a foregone conclusion. It will mean a media landscape dominated by propaganda mouthpieces that marginalize the opposition while presenting the leader as omniscient, strong, and devoted to national aggrandizement. It will mean state control over the internet and social media through both censorship and active manipulation that promotes the regime's message while confusing users with lies and fakery. And it will mean more corruption, injustice, and impunity for state abuses.

Already, Vladimir Putin's Russia has carried out disinformation campaigns before elections in countries including the United States, France, and Germany, cultivated ties to xenophobic political parties across Europe, threatened or invaded its closest neighbors, and served as an alternative source of military aid for Middle Eastern dictatorships. Its chief goal

is to disrupt democratic states and fracture the institutions—such as the European Union—that bind them together.

Beijing has even greater ambitions—and the resources to achieve them. It has built up a propaganda and censorship apparatus with global reach, used economic and other ties to influence democracies like Australia and New Zealand, compelled various countries to repatriate Chinese citizens seeking refuge abroad, and provided diplomatic and material support to repressive governments from Southeast Asia to Africa. Moscow often plays the role of spoiler, bolstering its position by undercutting its adversaries, but the scope and depth of Beijing's activities show that the Chinese regime aspires to truly global leadership.

CORRUPT AND REPRESSIVE STATES THREATEN GLOBAL STABILITY

The past year provided ample evidence that undemocratic rule itself can be catastrophic for regional and global stability, with or without active interference from major powers like Russia and China.

In Myanmar, the politically dominant military conducted a brutal campaign of ethnic cleansing against the Muslim Rohingya minority, enabled by diplomatic cover from China and an impotent response from the rest of the international community. Some 600,000 people have been pushed out, while thousands of others are thought to have been killed. The refugees have strained the resources of an already fragile Bangladesh, and Islamist militants have sought to adopt the Rohingya cause as a new rallying point for violent struggle.

Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan broadened and intensified the crackdown on his perceived opponents that began after a failed 2016 coup attempt. In addition to its dire consequences for detained Turkish citizens, shuttered media outlets, and seized businesses, the chaotic purge has become intertwined with an offensive against the Kurdish minority, which in turn has fueled Turkey's diplomatic and military interventions in neighboring Syria and Iraq.

Elsewhere in the Middle East, authoritarian rulers in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Egypt asserted their interests in reckless ways that perpetuated long-running conflicts in Libya and Yemen and initiated a sudden attempt to blockade Qatar, a hub of international trade and transportation. Their similarly repressive archrival, Iran, played its own part in the region's conflicts, overseeing militia networks that stretched from Lebanon to Afghanistan. Promises of reform from a powerful new crown prince in Saudi Arabia added an unexpected variable in a region that has long resisted greater openness, though his nascent social and economic changes were accompanied by hundreds of arbitrary arrests and aggressive moves against potential rivals, and he showed no inclination to open the political system.

The humanitarian crisis produced in Venezuela by President Nicolás Maduro's determination to stay in power continued to drive residents to seek refuge in neighboring countries. But other Latin American states also proved problematic: Brazil's sprawling corruption investigations implicated leaders across the region. Mexico's embattled administration resisted reforms that would help address rampant graft, organized crime, and a crumbling justice system.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo and Burundi, incumbent rulers' ongoing use of violence to flout term limits helped to generate internal displacement and refugees. A deeply flawed electoral process in Kenya contributed to political violence there, while South Sudan's leaders chose to press on with a bloody civil war rather than make peace and face a long-overdue reckoning with voters.

North Korea presented one of the most glaring threats to world peace, aggressively building up its nuclear arsenal in an attempt to fortify an exceptionally oppressive and criminal regime.

FREEDOM IN ONE COUNTRY DEPENDS ON FREEDOM FOR ALL

Democracies generally remain the world's wealthiest societies, the most open to new ideas and opportunities, the least corrupt, and the most protective of individual liberties. When people around the globe are asked about their preferred political conditions, they embrace democracy's ideals: honest elections, free speech, accountable government, and effective legal constraints on the police, military, and other institutions of authority.

In the 21st century, however, it is increasingly difficult to create and sustain these conditions in one country while ignoring them in another. The autocratic regimes in Russia and China clearly recognize that to maintain power at home, they must squelch open debate, pursue dissidents, and compromise rules-based institutions beyond their borders. The citizens and leaders of democracies must now recognize that the reverse is also true: To maintain their own freedoms, they must defend the rights of their counterparts in all countries. The reality of globalization is that our fates are interlinked.

In August 1968, when Soviet tanks entered Czechoslovakia to put down the Prague Spring, a small group of dissidents gathered in Red Square in Moscow and unfurled a banner that read, "For your freedom and ours." Almost 50 years later, it is this spirit of transnational democratic solidarity and defiance in the face of autocracy that we must summon and revive.

REGIONAL TRENDS

Americas: Gains and declines show value of electoral turnover

Despite the decline in democracy worldwide in 2017—and Venezuela's continued descent into dictatorship and humanitarian crisis—the Americas region displayed some signs of resilience.

Under new president Lenín Moreno, Ecuador turned away from the personalized and often repressive rule of his predecessor, Rafael Correa. Moreno has eased pressure on the media, promoted greater engagement with civil society, proposed the restoration of term limits, and supported anticorruption efforts, including a case against his own vice president. Moreno had been Correa's chosen successor, but his unexpectedly reformist stance once again demonstrated the potential for regular elections and transfers of power to disrupt authoritarian entrenchment.

Meanwhile, under a new administration that took office in late 2015, Argentines benefited from a freer press as part of the country's recovery from the authoritarian tendencies of former president Cristina Fernández de Kirchner. In Colombia, more citizens could enjoy basic due process rights as the government implemented reforms to limit pretrial detention and continued to expand its territorial control under a 2016 peace agreement with left-wing rebels.

Nevertheless, declines outpaced gains in the region as a whole in 2017. In Honduras, after an early presidential vote count favored the opposition candidate, a belatedly updated total handed victory to the incumbent, prompting protests, curfews, and calls for a new election. In Bolivia, the constitutional court—which had been elected through a highly politicized process—struck down term limits that would have prevented incumbent leader Evo Morales from seeking reelection. Voters had rejected the lifting of term limits in a 2016 referendum, and international observers called the court's reasoning a distortion of human rights law.

Nicaragua carried out deeply flawed municipal elections that favored the party of President Daniel Ortega, and the government enacted judicial reforms that further centralized state authority and shifted power from juries to judges. Separately, Mexico was shaken by new revelations of extensive state surveillance aimed at journalists and civil society activists who threatened to expose government corruption and other wrongdoing.

Asia-Pacific: Antidemocratic forces on the march

Repressive regimes in Asia continued to consolidate their power in 2017, while marginalized communities faced dire new threats.

Cambodian prime minister Hun Sen oversaw a decisive crackdown on the country's beleaguered opposition and press corps as his Cambodian People's Party prepared for national elections in 2018. The politicized Supreme Court dissolved the opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party, and party leader Kem Sokha was charged with treason. In a series of blows to free expression, the authorities shuttered the independent *Cambodia Daily*, pushed several radio stations off the air, and announced that sharing criticism of the government on social media was a crime.

The Communist Party leadership in Beijing exercised ever-greater influence in Hong Kong as it attempted to stamp out growing public support for local self-determination. Four prodemocracy lawmakers were expelled from the legislature on the grounds that their oaths of office were "insincere," making it easier for progovernment forces to pass major legislation and rules changes. In addition, the government obtained harsher sentences against three prominent protest leaders, and the Chinese legislature annexed a law criminalizing disrespect of the national anthem—which is often booed by Hong Kong soccer fans—to the territory's Basic Law, effectively compelling the local legislature to draft a matching measure.

In Myanmar, the military's brutal campaign of rape, mutilation, and slaughter aimed at the Rohingya minority forced over 600,000 Rohingya to flee the country. The crisis, and the civilian leadership's failure to stop it, underscored severe flaws in the country's hybrid political system, which grants the military enormous autonomy and political power.

The Maldives suffered from acute pressure on freedom of speech and dissent in 2017. The murder of prominent liberal blogger Yameen Rasheed had a chilling effect, encouraging people to self-censor rather than speak out against religious extremism. Moreover, the military was used to block opposition efforts to remove the speaker of parliament, and a number of lawmakers were ousted for defecting from the ruling party.

In a bright spot for the region, Timor-Leste, one of the poorest nations in Southeast Asia, conducted fair elections that led to a smooth transfer of power. The process helped to consolidate democratic development in the country and allowed new parties and younger politicians to gain seats in the parliament.

Eurasia: Some doors open as others close

Observers have long speculated about the problems and opportunities posed by presidential succession in Central Asia, where a number of entrenched rulers have held office for decades. In Uzbekistan, speculation turned into cautious optimism in 2017, as the country's new administration—formed following the 2016 death of longtime president Islam Karimov—took steps toward reform. Among other moves, the government ended forced labor in the annual cotton harvest for some segments of the population, and announced plans to lift the draconian exit-visa regime and make the national currency fully convertible. The new administration has also granted more breathing room to civil society; some local groups reported a decrease in state harassment, and a Human Rights Watch delegation was allowed to enter Uzbekistan for the first time since 2010.

In other parts of the region, however, governments sought to stave off change. In Armenia and Kyrgyzstan, heavily flawed voting highlighted the continuing erosion of democratic norms surrounding elections. The dominant parties in both countries relied on harassment of the opposition, voter intimidation, and misuse of administrative resources to maintain a grip on power. In Armenia's case, the blatant electoral misconduct stands at odds with the country's pursuit of a closer relationship with the European Union, with which it signed a Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement in November.

Perhaps the most alarming threats to democracy in the region involved authoritarian forces reaching across borders to punish their critics. Exiled Azerbaijani journalist Afgan Mukhtarli was kidnapped in Tbilisi by men who allegedly spoke Georgian, then transported across the border to Azerbaijan, raising concerns that Georgian authorities were complicit in the abduction. In Ukraine, a prominent Chechen couple who were fierce opponents of Vladimir Putin and supported Ukraine in the Donbas conflict fell victim to an assassination attempt that killed one and injured the other. Numerous plots against politicians were also reported during the year, with Ukrainian authorities mostly pointing the finger at Russian security services.

Europe: Right-wing populists win seats and reject democratic values

Reverberations from the 2015–16 refugee crisis continued to fuel the rise of xenophobic, far-right parties, which gained ground in elections in France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Austria.

Marine Le Pen, leader of France's far-right National Front, defeated mainstream presidential candidates with her pledges to suspend immigration and hold a referendum on France's EU membership, though she lost in the second round to centrist newcomer Emmanuel Macron. The Euroskeptic, anti-immigrant Alternative for Germany became the first far-right party to enter Germany's legislature since 1945, following a campaign in which its leaders demanded the deportation of "large numbers of refugees" and characterized Islam as incompatible with German identity. In Austria, the similarly Islamophobic Freedom Party finished third in parliamentary elections and entered a governing coalition headed by the conservative People's Party. In the Netherlands, the notoriously xenophobic Party for Freedom chipped away enough support from mainstream parties to finish second, becoming the parliament's primary opposition group.

In Hungary and Poland, populist leaders continued to consolidate power by uprooting democratic institutions and intimidating critics in civil society. Smears of the opposition appeared in public media in both countries, and both passed laws designed to curb the activities of nongovernmental organizations. Poland's ruling party also pressed ahead with an effort to assert political control over the judiciary, adopting laws that will affect the Supreme Court, the local courts, and a council responsible for judicial appointments.

Events in the Western Balkans demonstrated a need for continued engagement in the region by major democracies. In Macedonia, mediation by Washington and Brussels helped resolve a years-long political crisis, paving the way for a new, democratically elected government. But in Serbia, EU leaders' tolerance of Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić's authoritarian tendencies allowed him to further sideline the opposition and undermine what remains of the independent media after winning the country's presidency in April.

Middle East and North Africa: Authoritarian rule and instability reinforce one another

In a region ravaged by war and dictatorship, Tunisia has stood out for its successful transition to democratic rule after hosting the first Arab Spring uprising in 2011. In 2017, however, earlier signs of backsliding became far clearer: municipal elections were once

again postponed, leaving unelected councils in place seven years after the revolution, and figures associated with the old regime increased their influence over the vulnerable political system, for example by securing passage of a new amnesty law despite strong public opposition. The extension of a two-year-old state of emergency also signaled the erosion of democratic order in Tunisia.

Tunisia's security situation has been undermined by lawlessness in neighboring Libya, where disputes between rival authorities in the east and west have led to political paralysis. Reports of modern-day slave markets were added to other abuses against refugees and migrants stranded in militia-run detention camps. Their captivity in Libya stems in part from an EU-led crackdown on human trafficking across the Mediterranean.

Libya's problems also pose a threat to Egypt. The authoritarian government of President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi has allegedly supported the anti-Islamist campaign of the de facto government in eastern Libya in order to buttress its own floundering efforts to combat extremist violence, which has extended from the Sinai to touch all corners of Egypt. Rather than reforming its abusive security services and enlisting support from all segments of Egyptian society, however, the regime continued its repression of dissent in 2017 and adopted a restrictive new law designed to choke off international funding for nongovernmental organizations and provide legal cover for their arbitrary closure.

Elsewhere in the region, Iraqi forces declared victory over the Islamic State (IS) militant group in December, and improved security has helped to create space for competition among newly registered parties and candidates ahead of the 2018 elections. IS also lost territory in Syria, but the repressive Assad regime gained ground, and civilians in areas captured from IS by U.S.-backed fighters faced widespread devastation and concealed explosives.

Yemen's civil war churned on despite a late-year rift in the rebel alliance, leaving some three-quarters of the population in need of humanitarian aid. Small groups of war-weary protesters in Sanaa repeatedly turned out to demand the release of political prisoners and an international response aimed at ending the violence. The Saudi-led coalition supporting Yemen's ousted government continued its indiscriminate bombing campaign, while in Saudi Arabia itself, Mohammed bin Salman worked to consolidate power after replacing the previous crown prince in June. Among other rapid and opaque decisions during the year, he arbitrarily detained hundreds of princes, officials, and businessmen under the pretense of an anticorruption campaign.

Sub-Saharan Africa: New leaders from old parties may fail to bring reform

New leaders replaced longtime incumbents in Angola and Zimbabwe in 2017, but their background in the ruling elite raised doubts about their promises of change.

The dramatic exit of President Robert Mugabe in late 2017 left the future of democracy in Zimbabwe uncertain. While his departure after nearly four decades in office was widely welcomed, he resigned under pressure from the military, and his successor, former vice president and ruling party stalwart Emmerson Mnangagwa, was a key member of Mugabe's repressive regime.

In Angola, newly elected president João Lourenço began to dismantle the family-based power structure set up by his predecessor, José Eduardo dos Santos, who served as president for 38 years and was still head of the ruling party. In one of his first moves as head of state, Lourenço, a ruling party member who had served as dos Santos's defense minister, fired the former leader's daughter as chairwoman of the national oil company. It remained unclear, however, whether Lourenço would tackle corruption comprehensively or simply consolidate his own control over the levers of power and public wealth.

Leaders in several other countries clung to power, often at the expense of their citizens' basic rights. Kenya's Supreme Court initially won broad praise for annulling the results of what it deemed to be a flawed presidential election. However, the period before the court-mandated rerun was marred by a lack of substantive reforms, incidents of political violence, and a boycott by the main opposition candidate, Raila Odinga. These factors undermined the credibility of President Uhuru Kenyatta's victory, in which he claimed 98 percent of the vote amid low turnout.

In neighboring Tanzania, the government of President John Magufuli—who took office in 2015 as a member of the only ruling party the country has ever known—stepped up repression of dissent, detaining opposition politicians, shuttering media outlets, and arresting citizens for posting critical views on social media. And in Uganda, 73-year-old president Yoweri Museveni, in power since 1986, sought to remove the presidential age limit of 75, which would permit him to run again in 2021. Museveni had just won reelection the previous year in a process that featured police violence, internet shutdowns, and treason charges against his main challenger.

Even in South Africa, a relatively strong democratic performer, the corrosive effect of perpetual incumbency on leaders and parties was apparent. A major corruption scandal continued to plague President Jacob Zuma, with additional revelations about the wealthy Gupta family's vast influence over his government. The story played a role in the ruling African National Congress's December leadership election, in which Zuma's ex-wife and ally, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, was defeated by Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa.

Introduction

The *Freedom in the World 2018* survey contains reports on 195 countries and 14 territories. Each country report begins with a section containing the following information: **population**, **capital**, **political rights rating** (numerical rating), **civil liberties rating** (numerical rating), **freedom rating** (the average of the political rights and civil liberties ratings), **freedom status** (Free, Partly Free, or Not Free), and “**electoral democracy**” designation. Each territory report begins with a section containing the same information, except for the capital and the electoral democracy designation. The population figures are drawn primarily from the *2016 World Population Data Sheet* of the Population Reference Bureau.

The **political rights** and **civil liberties** ratings range from 1 to 7, with 1 representing the most free and 7 the least free. The **status** designation of Free, Partly Free, or Not Free, which is determined by the average of the political rights and civil liberties ratings, indicates the general state of freedom in a country or territory. Any improvements or declines in the ratings since the previous survey are noted next to the relevant number in each report. Positive or negative trends that were not sufficient to trigger a ratings change may be highlighted by upward or downward **trend arrows**, which are located next to the name of the country or territory. A brief explanation of ratings changes or trend arrows is provided for each country or territory as required. For a full description of the methods used to determine the survey’s ratings, please see the chapter on the survey’s methodology.

Following the section described above, each country and territory report is composed of three parts: an **overview**, bullets on **key developments**, and an analysis of **political rights and civil liberties**. The overview provides a succinct, general description that explains the country or territory’s place on the 0–7 rating scale; bullets on key developments summarize key events that took place in 2017; and the section on political rights and civil liberties analyzes the degree of respect for the rights and liberties that Freedom House uses to evaluate freedom in the world. This section is composed of seven parts that correspond to the seven main subcategories in the methodology and justify a country or territory’s score for each indicator. The scores for each indicator, subcategory, and category, along with any changes from the previous year, are noted next to the relevant subheading. Some reports have an **executive summary** that analyzes the year’s major developments and why they are significant for the country or territory’s state of freedom.

Country Reports

Afghanistan

Population: 33,400,000

Capital: Kabul

Political Rights Rating: 5 ↑

Civil Liberties Rating: 6

Freedom Rating: 5.5

Freedom Status: Not Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Ratings Change: Afghanistan's political rights rating improved from 6 to 5 due to increased opposition political activity ahead of scheduled elections, as well as modest gains in government transparency.

Overview: Afghanistan's constitution provides for a unitary state, headed by a directly elected president, with significant checks from the parliament and a wide range of rights guaranteed to citizens. However, an insurgency waged by Islamist militants has undermined the writ of the state in much of the rural hinterland. Political rights and civil liberties are curtailed in practice by violence, corruption, and flawed electoral processes.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- The Taliban rebel movement failed to capture any major cities but ramped up suicide attacks against military and civilian targets. Meanwhile, U.S. and Afghan government forces intensified their air strikes and commando raids, and fighters loyal to the Islamic State (IS) militant group attacked Shiite targets. The conflict continued to cause mass internal displacement.
- In June, the Independent Election Commission (IEC) announced that long-overdue parliamentary and district council elections would be held in July 2018, but progress on electoral preparations was slow, and insecurity remained a major threat to successful balloting.
- The year was an especially violent one for the media, with the media rights organization Nai recording the deaths of 21 journalists and media workers among dozens of other attacks, including terrorist assaults on broadcasters in Jalalabad in May and Kabul in November.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 12 / 40 (+2)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 2 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4

Afghanistan's president is directly elected for up to two five-year terms and has the power to appoint ministers, subject to parliamentary approval. In the 2014 presidential election, the two first-round winners—Abdullah Abdullah, a former foreign minister, who received 45 percent of the vote, and Ashraf Ghani, a former finance minister, who took 32 percent—faced off in a final round held that June, with a high reported turnout. After the IEC published preliminary results showing Ghani leading by more than 10 percentage points, the Abdullah camp alleged voter fraud, claimed victory, and threatened to overthrow the government. The United States brokered an agreement calling for an internationally supervised audit and the formation of a National Unity Government (NUG). Ghani became president,

and Abdullah became chief executive, a new post resembling that of a prime minister, which was not supported by the constitution. The final vote tallies for the two candidates were not officially announced, and the NUG's stated goals of overhauling the electoral system and convening a loya jirga on constitutional reforms have yet to be accomplished.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

In the directly elected lower house of the National Assembly, the 249-seat Wolesi Jirga (House of the People), members stand for five-year terms. In the 102-seat Meshrano Jirga (House of Elders), the upper house, the provincial councils elect two-thirds of the members for three- or four-year terms, and the president appoints the remaining third for five-year terms. The constitution envisages the election of district councils, which would also send members to the Meshrano Jirga, though these have not been established. Ten Wolesi Jirga seats are reserved for the nomadic Kuchi community, including at least three women, and 65 of the chamber's general seats are reserved for women.

The most recent parliamentary elections, held in 2010, were characterized by widespread fraud. The parliament's term expired in 2015, but elections were postponed amid security concerns and a lack of progress on electoral reforms, and the president extended the legislature's mandate with an apparently unconstitutional decree. In June 2017, the IEC announced that both parliamentary and district council elections would be held in July 2018, but at year's end it remained unclear whether that date could be met.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 1 / 4

Elections are administered by the IEC, and disputes are adjudicated by an Election Complaints Commission. After delays, a new electoral law was adopted in 2016, but among other shortcomings, it did not address the issue of redrawing constituency boundaries.

During 2017, flawed attempts by the IEC to introduce new antifraud technology contributed to further delays in the preparations for the overdue parliamentary and district council elections. The president fired the IEC's chairman in November amid growing warnings that the July 2018 election date would have to be pushed back.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 7 / 16 (+1)

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 2 / 4

Most candidates for elected office run as independents and participate in fluid alliances linked to local and regional patronage networks. Political parties have been free to seek registration since 2005, though they are typically centered on particular ethnic groups or personalities rather than coherent policy platforms.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 2 / 4 (+1)

Multiple opposition leaders and parties have sought power through elections, but the recurrent problem of fraud means they cannot be certain that their popular support will translate into victory at the polls.

Several new opposition political groupings formed or intensified their activities during 2017. For example, senior political figures with links to northern Afghanistan who had grown disaffected toward the NUG announced the Coalition for the Salvation of Afghanistan

in June, and former officials from the presidency of Hamid Karzai launched the People's Axis of Afghanistan in July. Although some activities were tolerated, opposition figures accused the government of covertly undermining them and promoting rivals. In December, the government prevented northern leaders including Atta Mohammed Noor from traveling to Kandahar for an opposition gathering, and the president later attempted to dismiss Noor as governor of Balkh Province; as of the end of the year, he had refused to leave office.

Hizb-i-Islami, a political party led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar that had split into factions years earlier over whether to pursue armed insurgency or political participation, struggled to restore unity in 2017. Hekmatyar had reached a peace deal with the government in 2016 and returned to the country in May, but some factions refused to lay down arms, while others that had long engaged in politics resisted his reassertion of leadership.

Score Change: The score improved from 1 to 2 due to increased opposition political activity ahead of much-delayed parliamentary elections scheduled for 2018.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 1 / 4

The Taliban rebel movement, which has consistently opposed the holding of elections, is active in most of the country and fully controls many areas, especially outside major population centers. Normal political activity is also hampered by the presence of IS and various militias with links to the government, local power-brokers, or foreign states. Government officials and politicians at all levels are regularly targeted for assassination.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 2 / 4

The constitution recognizes multiple ethnic and linguistic minorities and provides more guarantees of equal status to minorities than historically have been available in Afghanistan. Since 2001, the traditionally marginalized Shiite Muslim minority, which includes most ethnic Hazaras, has enjoyed increased levels of political representation and participation in national institutions. Nevertheless, participation is curtailed for all segments of the population by lack of security, flawed elections, and the dominance of powerful patronage networks. Members of minority groups have limited practical opportunities to organize independently, outside the networks of established leaders.

Women's political participation has been constrained by threats, harassment, and social restrictions on traveling alone and appearing in public. Women accounted for about 16 percent of the candidates in the 2010 parliamentary elections, and roughly 41 percent of registered voters were women; 69 women were elected to the Wolesi Jirga. While no women candidates ran in the 2014 presidential election, 273 women ran for provincial council seats that year, securing 97 of them.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 3 / 12 (+1)

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 1 / 4

The ability of the president and his cabinet, acting in concert with the legislature, to set and implement state policies is limited by a number of factors. The government remains heavily dependent on military and economic support from the United States and its allies, and it is unable to enforce its laws and decisions in parts of the country controlled by the Taliban and other insurgents. There were also rifts among leading officials in 2017. First

Vice President Abdul Rashid Dostum flew to Turkey in May after being implicated in the abduction and torture of a political rival, was reportedly prevented from returning in July, and remained abroad at year's end. Atta Mohammed Noor's refusal to accept his dismissal by the president as governor of Balkh Province also raised questions about the central government's control over regional leaders.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

There have been periodic arrests, prosecutions, and dismissals of civilian and military officials accused of corruption, and an Anti-Corruption Justice Centre was established in 2016, bringing together specialized police, prosecutors, and courts to focus on high-level malfeasance. Nevertheless, corruption remains an endemic problem, law enforcement agencies and the judiciary are themselves compromised by graft and political pressure, and the most powerful officials and politicians effectively enjoy impunity.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 1 / 4 (+1)

The government has made some progress on fiscal probity and oversight of state spending. For example, the National Procurement Commission, established in 2014 and chaired by the president, has taken the lead in reforming procurement procedures and attempting to maintain transparency throughout the government. It has centralized supervision of state contracts and claims to have saved hundreds of millions of dollars in more than 2,000 approved contracts to date, though its lack of independence from the president has raised concerns about impartiality.

Achieving transparency in official appointments has proven more challenging. Afghan commentators report that many senior positions can only be obtained through corrupt payments to figures in the relevant ministry and presidential office. Ethnic background and personal or political ties also play an influential role in appointments.

Score Change: The score improved from 0 to 1 due to modest improvements in fiscal transparency and procurement oversight in recent years.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 14 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 6 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4

Afghanistan is home to a vibrant media sector, with multiple outlets in print, radio, and television that collectively carry a wide range of views and are generally uncensored. Media providers include independent and commercial firms, as well as a state broadcaster and outlets tied to specific political interests. However, intimidation and violence against journalists are increasing, with 167 incidents documented and 21 journalists and media workers killed during 2017, according to the media advocacy organization Nai. Journalists faced the threat of attack from IS and harassment by both the Taliban and government-related figures attempting to influence how they are covered in the news.

A rapid expansion in the availability of mobile phones, the internet, and social media has granted many Afghans greater access to diverse views and information. The NUG has publicly supported media freedom and cooperated with initiatives to counter security threats to the media. In November 2017, after a public outcry, the government quickly reversed an apparent attempt to block the social media applications WhatsApp and Telegram.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 1 / 4

While religious freedom has improved since 2001, it is still hampered by violence and discrimination aimed at religious minorities and reformist Muslims. The constitution established Islam as the official religion and guaranteed freedom of worship to other religions. Blasphemy and apostasy by Muslims are considered capital crimes, and non-Muslim proselytizing is strongly discouraged. Conservative social attitudes, intolerance, and the inability or unwillingness of law enforcement officials to defend individual freedoms mean that those perceived as violating religious and social norms are highly vulnerable to abuse. During 2016 and 2017, the UN documented 51 attacks against places of worship and religious leaders. IS militants carried out a campaign of deadly attacks on Shiite mosques and cultural centers in 2017.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 1 / 4

Academic freedom is largely tolerated in government-controlled areas. In addition to public schooling, there has been a growth in private education, with new universities enjoying full autonomy from the government, though there are serious shortages of qualified instructors and up-to-date teaching materials. Government security forces and the Taliban have both taken over schools to use as military posts. The expansion of Taliban control in rural areas has left an increasing number of public schools outside of government control. The Taliban operate an education commission in parallel to the official Ministry of Education. Although their practices vary between areas, some schools under Taliban control reportedly allow teachers to continue teaching, but ban certain subjects and replace them with Islamic studies.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 2 / 4

Although private discussion in government-held areas is largely free and unrestrained, discussion of a political nature is more dangerous for Afghans living in contested or Taliban-controlled areas. Government security agencies have increased their ability to monitor the internet, including social media platforms. However, this monitoring has not yet had a perceptible impact on social media use.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 4 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 2 / 4

The constitution guarantees the right to peaceful assembly, subject to some restrictions, but it is upheld erratically from region to region. In early June 2017, a large demonstration was held in response to a high-casualty terrorist bombing in Kabul at the end of May, with protesters denouncing the government's failure to ensure security. Government forces responded in some cases with live ammunition, killing several people. The government then prepared a draft law on assembly that would give the authorities new powers to restrict demonstrations. The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission and civil society groups objected to a number of provisions as unconstitutional constraints on freedom of assembly; the draft was not adopted by year's end.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 1 / 4

The constitution guarantees the right to form associations, and both the legal framework and the national authorities are relatively supportive of civil society groups. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) play an important role in the country, particularly in urban areas,

where thousands of cultural, welfare, and sports associations operate with little interference from authorities. However, NGOs are sometimes hampered by official corruption and bureaucratic reporting requirements, and the threat of violence by armed groups is a major obstacle to their activities. In 2017, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was forced to suspend its operations in parts of northern Afghanistan after a series of attacks on staff and health facilities.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 1 / 4

Despite broad constitutional protections for workers, labor rights are not well defined in law, and no effective enforcement or dispute-resolution mechanisms are currently in place. Unions are largely absent from the informal and agricultural sectors, which account for most Afghan workers.

F. RULE OF LAW: 2 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4

The judicial system operates haphazardly, and justice in many places is administered on the basis of a mixture of legal codes by inadequately trained judges. Corruption in the judiciary is extensive, with judges and lawyers often subject to threats and bribes from local leaders or armed groups. Informal justice systems, employing variants of both customary law and Sharia (Islamic law), are widely used to arbitrate disputes, especially in rural areas. The Taliban have installed their own judiciary in areas they control, but many Taliban commanders impose arbitrary punishments without reference to this system.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 0 / 4

Prosecutions and trials suffer from a number of weaknesses, including lack of proper representation, excessive reliance on uncorroborated witness testimony, lack of reliable forensic evidence, arbitrary decision-making, and failure to publish court decisions. The police force is heavily militarized and primarily focused on its role as a first line of defense against insurgents in administrative centers. There are high levels of corruption and complicity in organized crime among police, particularly near key smuggling routes.

There is an entrenched culture of impunity for the country's political and military power brokers. In December 2016, the former governor of Jowzjan Province, Ahmad Ishchi, accused First Vice President Dostum of ordering his arbitrary detention and sexual assault. During the subsequent investigation, Dostum was reportedly placed under house arrest but later left the country and remained abroad at the end of 2017; seven of his guards were sentenced in absentia to eight years in prison in November. Atta Mohammed Noor, the governor of Balkh Province, was similarly accused of detaining and assaulting a member of the Balkh provincial council in August, but he remained free at year's end. Noor and Dostum were allies who had both clashed with President Ghani, raising suspicions that the government was using the cases to help marginalize them politically even if it lacked the will or power to uphold the law.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 0 / 4

The torture of detainees by Afghan police, military, and intelligence services reportedly remains common. Government-aligned strongmen and powerful figures within the security forces operate illegal detention centers.

The civil conflict continued to take a heavy toll on civilian life and safety in 2017, as the Taliban and IS carried out high-profile suicide attacks, U.S. and allied forces increased their

air strikes, and U.S.-backed Afghan government forces stepped up commando raids. The United Nations documented 3,438 civilian deaths and more than 7,000 injured during the year, roughly matching the levels reported each year since 2014, when many international troops were withdrawn from the country.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

Despite some legal protections, religious and ethnic minorities remain subject to harassment and discrimination, including in employment and education. Ethnic-based patronage practices affect different groups' access to jobs depending on the local context. The population of non-Muslim minorities such as Hindus and Sikhs has shrunk to a tiny fraction of its former size due to emigration in recent decades. Women face severe disadvantages in the justice system, access to employment, and other matters, with harmful societal norms often overriding legal guarantees.

There is no legal protection for LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people, who face societal disapproval and abuse by police. Same-sex sexual activity is considered illegal under the penal code and Sharia.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 2 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 0 / 4

The constitution grants Afghans freedom of movement, residence, and travel abroad. These freedoms are severely circumscribed in practice by the ongoing civil conflict, which continued to cause mass displacement and render travel unsafe in much of the country in 2017. Opportunities for Afghans to seek refuge abroad have been curtailed in recent years, as the European Union has attempted to reinforce its external border and Iran and Pakistan have compelled hundreds of thousands of refugees to return home.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or non-state actors? 1 / 4

Citizens are formally free to own property, buy and sell land, and establish businesses. However, economic freedoms are constrained by patronage, corruption, and the dominant economic role of a narrow, politically connected elite. Over the past decade the most profitable activities available to Afghans have been government and defense contracting, narcotics trafficking, and property and minerals development. Investors in all of these sectors have depended on connections to those in power, and land theft backed by the threat of force is a serious problem. A combination of harassment, extortion, and arbitrary taxation make for a highly unfavorable business climate for any investor hoping to operate within the law.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 0 / 4

Domestic violence against women remains pervasive. The Attorney General's Office recorded nearly 1,500 cases of violence against women, mostly involving beatings, in an eight-month period in 2017, arguing that more cases were being reported. However, women's rights activists maintain that only a small proportion of actual incidents are reported because of social acceptance of the practice, and perpetrators are rarely brought to justice.

Women's choices regarding marriage and divorce remain restricted by custom and discriminatory laws. The forced marriage of young girls to older men or widows to their husbands' male relations is a problem, and many girls continue to be married before the

legal age of 16. The courts and the detention system have been used to enforce social control of women, for example by jailing those who defy their families' wishes regarding marriage.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

The constitution bans forced labor and gives all citizens the right to work. However, debt bondage remains a problem, as does child labor. Most human trafficking victims in Afghanistan are children trafficked internally to work in various industries, become domestic servants, settle debts, or be subjected to sexual exploitation. Children are also vulnerable to recruitment by armed militant groups, and to a lesser extent by government security forces.

Albania

Population: 2,900,000

Capital: Tirana

Political Rights Rating: 3

Civil Liberties Rating: 3

Freedom Rating: 3.0

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Albania has a record of competitive elections, though political parties are highly polarized and often focused on leading personalities. Civil liberties such as religious freedom and freedom of assembly are respected. Corruption and organized crime remain serious problems despite recent government efforts to address them, and the intermingling of powerful business, political, and media interests inhibits the development of truly independent news outlets.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In February, the opposition Democratic Party (PD) began boycotting the parliament, alleging that elections set to take place in June would be fraudulent.
- International mediation efforts ended the political deadlock, and elections were held in June, just one week later than scheduled. The incumbent Socialist Party (PS) won the elections, which monitors assessed as generally well-conducted.
- In October, prosecutors requested that the parliament permit the arrest of a PS lawmaker on drug trafficking charges, but the PS-controlled parliament voted down a measure to revoke his immunity.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 28 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 8 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

The president is the head of state and is chosen by the parliament for a maximum of two five-year terms; the office does not hold executive power, though the president heads the military and plays an important role in selecting senior judges. The prime minister is the head of government, and is designated by the majority party or coalition. Because both the president and prime minister are selected by lawmakers, their legitimacy is generally dependent on the conduct of parliamentary elections.

In April 2017, Ilir Meta, the head of the Socialist Movement for Integration (LSI), was selected as president. PS leader Edi Rama retained his position as prime minister of Albania following the 2017 parliamentary elections.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

Albania is a parliamentary republic. The unicameral, 140-member Kuvendi (Assembly) is elected through proportional representation in 12 regional districts of varying size. All members serve four-year terms.

Events preceding the elections of June 2017 reflected ongoing distrust between the PD—the main opposition grouping—and the ruling PS. In December 2016, the president called parliamentary election for June. In response, the PD began boycotting the parliament in February, claiming that the PS would commit massive electoral fraud. A standoff ensued, with tensions escalating in May, when the PD held a large opposition protest in Tirana. However, international mediators from the US and EU facilitated an agreement between the two parties later in May, under which the PD was guaranteed several positions in the government, including one deputy prime minister, six ministers, the chairperson of the Central Election Commission (CEC), and directors of several public agencies.

Elections were held in June, a week later than initially scheduled. The PS won 74 of the 140 seats, enough to govern without the support of other parties. Voter turnout was 46.8 percent.¹ Election monitors from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) generally praised the polls' conduct, but noted that the mediated agreement that facilitated elections resulted in the "selective and inconsistent application" of electoral laws. The mission also noted allegations of vote-buying and voter intimidation.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 2 / 4

The OSCE, in its report on the 2017 polls, expressed concern that the CEC had not always operated with transparency, and at times had failed to sanction parties that committed electoral violations, such as failing to adhere to gender quotas in certain districts. The OSCE additionally noted that the CEC faced a number of logistical challenges in administering elections due to the provisions of the political agreement that facilitated the polls, and that the agreement had subverted parts of the electoral framework. For example, as part of the deal a new CEC chairperson was installed weeks before the elections, outside of the standard legal procedure.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 13 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 3 / 4

Albanian citizens generally have the right to organize in political parties. The two main political parties, the PS and the PD, are sharply polarized and given to personality-driven rivalry.

Candidates for legislative elections who do not belong to a party currently seated in the parliament must collect a set number of signatures in order to run. The OSCE noted that in 2017, the CEC refused requests by the opposition for additional scrutiny of signatures supporting candidates for certain parties, which reduced transparency and could potentially contribute to an unequal playing field among political parties.

¹ <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/albania/346761>

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

Albania's multiparty system provides ample opportunity for opposition parties to participate in the political process, and elections have resulted in the rotation of power among parties.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 3 / 4

People are generally free to make their own political choices, but powerful economic actors have some ability to shape the political sphere through their media holdings and influence on electoral campaigns.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

Election officials provided voter education materials in minority languages for the 2017 polls. Members of the Roma minority and other marginalized groups remain vulnerable to political exploitation and vote-buying schemes, such as ones involving the distribution of fuel vouchers or cash. Women are underrepresented both in politics and election administration roles.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 7 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 3 / 4

In 2017, elections, and thus the timely formation of a new government, were threatened by an impasse between the PD and PS that persisted until international mediators facilitated a political agreement. Once installed, Albanian governments are generally able to formulate and implement policy.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

Corruption is pervasive, and the EU has repeatedly called for rigorous implementation of antigraft measures. Convictions of high-ranking officials and judges for corruption and abuse of power are rare. The Special Prosecutor Service was established as part of 2016 reforms and is tasked with prosecuting high-level corruption; it is functional but has yet to achieve full operational capacity. In October, the office issued a request to the parliament to arrest former interior minister Saimir Tahiri, a PS lawmaker, on drug trafficking charges. Ruling party lawmakers declined to revoke his parliamentary immunity on the grounds that the prosecutors needed to present incriminating evidence against him to the parliament.²

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

A robust law on access to information is not well implemented; in 2017, the Albanian nongovernmental organization (NGO) Mjaft that evaluated the transparency of Albanian institutions, and found that only 42 percent of the requests for information were answered, and that local governments were the least transparent.³

² <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/albania-moves-to-fortify-mps-immunity-01-18-2018>

³ <http://mjaft.org/map/raporti-i-transparences-ne-institucionet-publike/> See review in English <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/albanian-institutions-difficulties-in-doing-transparency-07-11-2016>

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 40 / 60**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 13 / 16****D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4**

While the constitution guarantees freedom of expression, the intermingling of powerful business, political, and media interests inhibits the development of independent news outlets; most are seen as biased toward either the PS or the PD. Reporters have little job security and remain subject to lawsuits, intimidation, and occasional physical attacks by those facing media scrutiny.

The OSCE media monitoring of the 2017 election campaign noted that most campaign coverage shown on television was footage prepared and submitted by the political parties themselves. The main public broadcaster, Radio Televizioni Shqiptar (RTSH), and several private outlets provided more balanced reporting.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

The constitution provides for freedom of religion, which is generally upheld in practice.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 3 / 4

The government typically does not limit academic freedom, though teachers in several districts have faced pressure ahead of elections to participate in political rallies.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

There are no significant restrictions on free and open private discussion, including for online blogs and social media.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 9 / 12**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4**

Freedom of assembly is generally respected. Demonstrations by opposition parties and civic groups are common, and they have generally been peaceful. Notably, a large opposition protest took place peacefully in May 2017, amid tensions related to the standoff between the PD and PS.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 3 / 4

NGOs function without restriction, but have limited funding and policy influence.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

The constitution guarantees workers the rights to organize and bargain collectively, and most have the right to strike. However, effective collective bargaining remains limited, and union members have little protection against discrimination by employers.

F. RULE OF LAW: 9 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 2 / 4**

The constitution provides for an independent judiciary, but the underfunded courts are subject to political pressure and influence, and public trust in judicial institutions is low. In 2016, parliament approved a variety of reforms designed to boost the independence and

capacity of the judiciary. Implementation of the reforms, considered essential to the country's bid to join the EU, has been slow.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 2 / 4

Constitutional guarantees of due process are upheld inconsistently. Trial procedures can be affected by corruption within the judiciary, and are sometimes closed to the public. Legal counsel is not always provided to those that cannot afford their own. Traditional tribal law is practiced in parts of northern Albania, and sometimes involves revenge killings.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 2 / 4

Reports of police abuse of detainees continues. Prison inmates suffer from poor living conditions and a lack of adequate medical treatment.

Drug-related crime remains a problem, as Albania is a transit country for heroin smugglers and a key site for European cannabis production. Albanian police destroyed a number of cannabis plantations in 2016 and 2017, a shift from a previous practices in which officials had generally turned a blind eye to the problem, in part because cannabis production lowered unemployment in distressed rural areas.⁴

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

Roma face significant discrimination in education, health care, employment, and housing. A 2010 law bars discrimination based on race and several other categories, including sexual orientation and gender identity, and a 2013 reform of the criminal code introduced protections against hate crimes and hate speech based on sexual orientation and gender identity. However, bias against LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people remains strong in practice.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 9 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4

Albanians generally enjoy freedom of movement and choice of residence or employment, though criminal activity and practices related to traditional honor codes limit these rights in some areas. Access to higher education is affected by corruption.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

Numerous property-restitution cases related to confiscations during the communist era remain unresolved. Illegal construction is a major problem, as is bribery linked to government approval of development projects.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

The government generally does not place explicit restrictions on social freedoms. Authorities in the past have indicated a willingness to recognize same-sex marriages, but no policy developments have followed. In 2017, LGBT activists initiated procedures to ask the European Court of Human Rights to rule on the legality of same-sex partnerships in Albania.

⁴ <https://www.ft.com/content/28f3e902-679d-11e7-8526-7b38dcaef614>

Domestic violence is widespread, and while the parliament has adopted some measures to combat the problem in recent years, few cases are prosecuted. Police are poorly equipped to handle cases of domestic violence or spousal rape, which is often not understood to be a crime.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Women are underrepresented in the workforce, and LGBT people face employment discrimination.

Albania continues to struggle with human trafficking. However, authorities are becoming more proactive in addressing the issue, according to the U.S. State Department's 2017 *Trafficking in Persons Report*, which noted an increase in prosecutions and the use of a special fund that draws from the seized assets of traffickers to provide assistance to victims.

Algeria

Population: 40,800,000

Capital: Algiers

Political Rights Rating: 6

Civil Liberties Rating: 5

Freedom Rating: 5.5

Freedom Status: Not Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: Political affairs in Algeria are dominated by a closed elite based in the military and the ruling party, the National Liberation Front (FLN). While there are multiple opposition parties in the parliament, elections are distorted by fraud, and electoral processes are not transparent. Other concerns include the suppression of street protests, restrictive laws to curb the media, and rampant corruption.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In May, the ruling FLN and the military-backed National Democratic Rally (RND) won over half the seats in legislative elections. The polls saw just 35.6 percent turnout, the lowest turnout rate since the introduction of multiparty elections.
- In May, the registration of SNATEGS, a union comprised of employees of the state-owned gas and electricity company, was cancelled by the authorities, following a series of labor strikes staged by the organization.
- In September, the head of Algeria's Ahmadi Muslim community was sentenced to six months in prison for offending the Prophet and Islam.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 10 / 40 (-1)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 3 / 12 (-1)

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4

The president is directly elected to a five-year term. Constitutional revisions approved in 2016 reintroduced a two-term limit for the presidency, though President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who has been in power since 1999 and is currently serving his fourth term, is nevertheless eligible to seek reelection in 2019. The 2014 presidential vote was marred by

ballot stuffing, multiple voting, inflated electoral rolls, and the misuse of state resources to benefit the incumbent. Moreover, the authorities were unable to give election observers access to the national electoral roll.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4 (-1)

The 462 members of the People's National Assembly, the lower house, are directly elected to five-year terms. In the May 2017 elections, the ruling FLN and RND won a combined 261 seats. Several other parties won a smaller share of seats. An unpublished European Union (EU) assessment of the polls, acquired by the Algerian newspaper *Liberté*, noted serious deficiencies in the electoral process, including a general lack of access to voter lists and opaque vote-counting processes. Opposition parties and other observers alleged widespread electoral fraud, and media outlets carried videos taken by voters that appeared to depict ballot-box stuffing and other irregularities. Vote buying was also reported. Turnout was just under 36 percent.

The president appoints one-third of the members of the upper legislative house, the Council of the Nation, which has 144 members serving six-year terms. The other two-thirds are indirectly elected by local and provincial assemblies.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 because the 2017 legislative elections were marred by allegations of fraud, and their administration was generally opaque.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 1 / 4

Electoral management bodies are subject to government influence. In 2016, the government created the High Independent Commission for Election Oversight (HIISE) to run and observe elections and respond to complaints. However, the body's head and all of its members are appointed by Bouteflika, and it has not yet assumed its responsibilities for administering elections; polls are instead run mainly by the Interior Ministry. In 2017, the opposition and other observers questioned the independence of the HIISE, and criticized the generally opaque administration of the year's elections.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 4 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 1 / 4

The Interior Ministry must approve political parties before they can operate legally. Parties cannot form along explicit ethnic lines. The Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), which swept the 1990 and 1991 elections, remains banned.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 1 / 4

Opposition parties play a marginal role in the national legislature. Election boycotts by opposition parties are not uncommon. Indecision by opposition parties on whether to boycott the 2017 polls contributed to depressed turnout that harmed the competitiveness of parties that chose to participate.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 1 / 4

In recent years, there have been allegations of corruption and financial sway over the selection of political candidates, as well as of vote buying. In March 2017, gendarmes found the son of FLN secretary general Djamel Ould Abbes with several candidate lists and around 200,000 euros (\$210,000). He was detained but released shortly afterward, apparently without being charged.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 1 / 4

Amazigh-dominated parties like the Rally for Culture and Democracy (RCD) and the Socialist Forces Front (FFS) are allowed to operate, although they sometimes boycott elections. Amazigh-dominated parties control a handful of municipalities, mainly concentrated in Kabylie Region.

Women hold 26 percent of seats in the lower house. While women's participation in politics is increasing, many women reportedly feel reluctant to run for office, and have difficulty making their voices heard in the legislature and in intraparty debates. In 2017, some parties obscured the faces of women candidates on their campaign posters.

LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people are politically marginalized, and have little ability to fight for relevant antidiscrimination laws or the repeal of laws criminalizing same-sex sexual relations.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 3 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 1 / 4

The executive is extremely powerful, and parliament plays only a marginal role in policymaking. The aging Bouteflika has increasingly withdrawn from political life, and several actors hold strong influence over executive decisions, including the president's brother, Saïd Bouteflika; oligarchs; and the army.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

Anticorruption laws, a lack of government transparency, low levels of judicial independence, and bloated bureaucracies contribute to widespread corruption. While lower-level officials have been held accountable for corrupt behavior, few corruption investigations are filed against senior officials.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 1 / 4

There is no legislation that guarantees citizens' access to official information. There is considerable opacity surrounding official decision-making procedures, the publication of official acts is rarely timely, and public officials rarely declare their assets.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 25 / 60 (+1)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 7 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4

Although some newspapers are privately owned and journalists remain aggressive in their coverage of government affairs, most newspapers rely on government agencies for printing and advertising, encouraging self-censorship. In October and November 2017, access to the online newspaper *Tout sur l'Algerie* was blocked by two state-owned networks, allegedly

following a request by the communications minister. People can access unlicensed private television channels located in Algeria but legally based outside the country, but these can be subject to government crackdowns, including office raids and confiscation of equipment.

Authorities use legal mechanisms to harass the media and censor controversial reporting. In January 2017, a blogger was arrested for interviewing an Israeli diplomat. A cybercrime law gives authorities the right to block websites “contrary to the public order or decency.”

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 1 / 4

Algeria’s population is overwhelmingly Sunni Muslim. Religious communities may only gather to worship at state-approved locations. Proselytizing by non-Muslims is illegal. Religious minorities sometimes face repression. Authorities have cracked down on Ahmadi Muslims, claiming they pose a security threat and at times calling them heretics; nearly 300 such believers were arrested between June 2016 and June 2017, with some receiving prisons sentences or large fines. In September 2017, the head of Algeria’s Ahmadi community was sentenced to six months in prison on charges of offending the Prophet and Islam.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 2 / 4

Authorities generally do not interfere directly with the operations of universities, though due to restrictive laws and practices, debate is somewhat circumscribed.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4

Private discussion can take place relatively freely outside of certain sensitive topics. The government monitors internet activity in the name of national security, and does not disclose information about the program’s targets or range, which is thought to be extensive.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 5 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 2 / 4

The government regularly uses force to disrupt public gatherings and protests. A ban on demonstrations in Algiers remained in place at the end of 2017. Demonstrations against increased taxes turned into riots in the Bejaïa Province in January, and security forces responded by deploying tear gas.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 1 / 4

The law on associations in effectively restricts the formation, funding, and operations of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Permits and receipts of application submission are required to establish and operate NGOs. Both new and old organizations experience bureaucratic labyrinths while waiting not just for permits but also for application receipts. NGOs must notify the government of staffing change and submit detailed reports on their funding, and gain government approval before accepting foreign funding or risk fines or imprisonment.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

Workers can establish independent trade unions, but the main labor federation, the General Union of Algerian Workers, has been criticized for being too close to the government

and failing to advocate for workers' interests. Algerian authorities have increasingly clamped down on efforts to form independent unions. In May 2017, the registration of SNATEGS, a union for workers of the state-owned gas and electricity company, was canceled by the authorities, following a series of strike actions. Over 800 workers of the company were charged over their involvement in strikes.

F. RULE OF LAW: 6 / 16 (+1)

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4

The judiciary is susceptible to government pressure. The constitution empowers the president to appoint all judges and prosecutors. Judges are selected by the High Judicial Council, which is led by the president. Those with resources or connections can also influence judicial decisions.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

The lack of independence of the judiciary and of prosecutors often erodes the rights of defendants, particularly in political trials. Lengthy delays in bringing cases to trial are common. Prosecutors' requests to extend pretrial detention periods are typically granted. Security forces frequently conduct warrantless searches.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 2 / 4 (+1)

Allegations of torture have decreased since the end of the 1990s civil war, but human rights activists still accuse the security forces of abusing detainees. In July 2017, the family of prominent lawyer Mohcine Amara accused security forces of beating and torturing him.

Terrorist groups operate in Algeria, and in August, a suicide bomber targeted a police station in the city of Tiaret, killing two officers. However, the rate of such attacks has decreased over recent years.

Prison conditions in Algeria generally do not meet international standards due to overcrowding and poor nutrition and hygiene.

Score Change: The score improved from 1 to 2 due to a gradual improvement in the security environment.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

Officials have made modest efforts to recognize the Berber community's cultural demands. Tamazight, the Berber language, is now a national language.

Throughout 2017, thousands of sub-Saharan African migrants, refugees and asylum seekers among them, were arbitrarily arrested and deported from the country without being given the opportunity to challenge procedures against them. Government officials have broadly characterized migrants from sub-Saharan Africa as criminals, effectively encouraging discrimination against them.

LGBT people face severe discrimination and risk violence for expressing their sexual orientation, and many LGBT activists have fled the country. Same-sex sexual relations are punishable with two months to two years in prison, though no prosecutions were reported in 2017.

Though the constitution guarantees gender equality, women continue to face discrimination at both the legal and societal levels. Many women make lower wages than men in similar positions, and there are few women in company leadership positions.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 7 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 2 / 4

While most citizens are free to travel domestically and abroad, the authorities closely monitor and limit access to visas for non-Algerians. Men of military draft age are not allowed to leave the country without official consent. The land border between Algeria and Morocco has been closed for years, separating families that live in the border areas and forcing many to resort to illegal smuggling networks for routine travel. Police reportedly limit the movement of sub-Saharan African migrants attempting to reach the Mediterranean coast. Married women younger than 18 must obtain the permission of their husbands to travel abroad.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

The government plays a dominant role in the economy, leaving little room for private competitors. Numerous regulations make Algeria one of the most difficult environments in the world in which to establish and operate a business.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Women do not enjoy equal rights in marriage, divorce, or inheritance. Gender-based violence is common, and womens' rights groups report that between 100 and 200 women are killed in domestic violence incidents each year. No law prevents spousal rape. Sexual harassment is punishable with fines and jail time, but is nevertheless common in workplaces and on the street.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

Weak rule of law, government involvement in the economy, and bureaucratic obstacles represent barriers to social mobility.

A 2009 law criminalized all forms of trafficking in persons, and Algeria reported its first ever conviction under the law in 2015. In recent years, the government has made an effort to enforce the ban through prosecutions and has provided protections for the victims, though not systematically. Undocumented sub-Saharan migrants are particularly susceptible to exploitation by traffickers.

Andorra

Population: 80,000

Capital: Andorra la Vella

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 1

Freedom Rating: 1.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Andorra has a parliamentary system of government and regularly holds free and fair elections, though more than 50 percent of the population consists of noncitizens who

do not have the right to vote. Political rights and civil liberties are generally respected and safeguarded. However, domestic violence is a problem, and the country is not fully compliant with international standards on accessibility for disabled people. The small Muslim and Jewish communities lack dedicated cemeteries, and the country has no recognized mosque.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In June, the government approved a draft law that would protect the rights of people with disabilities and provide assistance to victims of racism or discrimination.
- In July, the government passed a law to criminalize tax evasion, which will enter into effect in 2018.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 39 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

Andorra has a parliamentary system, with a prime minister elected by and accountable to the parliament. The prime minister is usually the head of the largest party in the parliament, and their legitimacy rests largely on the conduct of parliamentary elections, which have historically been competitive and credible. Antoni Martí, head of the Democrats for Andorra (DA), was reelected as prime minister following that party's victory in the 2015 legislative elections.

Two unelected "co-princes," the French president and the bishop of La Seu d'Urgell, Spain, serve jointly as ceremonial heads of state.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

Popular elections are held every four years for the 28-member Consell General. The most recent elections occurred in March 2015. The DA won 15 seats, followed by the Liberal Party of Andorra (PLA) with 8, an independent coalition with 3, and the Social Democracy and Progress party (SDP) with 2. International observers deemed the polls competitive, credible, and generally well administered.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

The Electoral Law, which was last changed in 2014 to introduce regulations on campaign finance, provides a sound framework for free and fair elections. The Electoral Board supervises elections impartially.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 15 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4

Political parties may form and operate freely, and there are a number of active parties in Andorra.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

There are no restrictions preventing the opposition from increasing its support through elections. Multiple opposition parties are currently represented in the Consell General.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

There are no powerful groups without democratic legitimacy that influence or limit the people's political choices.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

More than 50 percent of the population consists of noncitizens who do not have the right to vote. Under Andorra's restrictive naturalization criteria, one must marry a resident Andorran or live in the country for more than 20 years to qualify for citizenship. Prospective citizens are also required to learn Catalan, the national language.

Women are active in politics, and hold 36 percent of seats in the legislature.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 12 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4

The elected government and parliament exercise their powers without undue restraints from nonelected or nonstate actors, and freely determine the policies of the government.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 4 / 4

Government corruption is not viewed as a pressing issue in Andorra. Significant progress was made to address concerns raised in a 2011 report by the Council of Europe's Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) about Andorra's laws concerning bribery and campaign finance. In a 2017 progress report, GRECO notes that eighteen of the twenty recommendations have now been satisfactorily implemented.

Andorra continued to make efforts to address longstanding concerns about abuse of its banking system in 2017. In July, the government approved a law to outlaw tax evasion, making this practice punishable by prison sentences of between three months and three years. The new law will enter into force in January 2018, together with a law renouncing banking secrecy, which was passed in December 2016.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 4 / 4

No law exists to provide public access to government information. However, the government weekly publishes its main actions in a bulletin, which is accessible online or by e-mail.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 57 / 60 (+1)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 15 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4

There a number of daily and weekly newspapers, and one Andorran television station, operated by the public broadcaster Ràdio i Televisió d'Andorra. Business, political, and religious interests heavily influence media coverage. Reporting on the activities of Andorra's banks is particularly difficult.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Freedom of religion is generally respected, but the Catholic Church enjoys a privileged position that allows it to draw on some state support, and to bypass some bureaucratic processes that other faiths must adhere to.

Despite years of negotiations between the Muslim community and the government, there is no proper mosque for the country's roughly 1,300 Muslims. The government has organized meetings with Jewish and Muslim communities to talk about the possible construction of a special cemetery where these groups may engage in burials according to their customs and beliefs, but progress toward establishing one has stalled.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

There are no restrictions on academic freedom, and the educational system is free from indoctrination.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

Freedom of speech is respected across the country, and there are no restrictions on internet access or online communications.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 11 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4

Andorran law provides for freedom of assembly, and the government respects this right in practice.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Various nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are active in the country, and can function without restrictions. The groups were able to publish their findings on human rights cases, and experienced cooperation from the government.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

While the government recognizes that both workers and employers have the right to defend their interests, the right to strike is not legally guaranteed. There are also no laws in place to penalize antiunion discrimination or regulate collective bargaining, although a 2009 law guarantees unions the right to operate.

F. RULE OF LAW: 15 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 4 / 4

The judiciary is impartial and independent, and the government generally respects the independence of the judiciary.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 4 / 4

Defendants enjoy the presumption of innocence and the right to a fair trial, and due process is generally upheld in the criminal justice system. The constitution prohibits arbitrary arrest and imprisonment, but police can detain suspects for up to 48 hours without charge.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 4 / 4

Andorra is free from war and insurgencies, and law enforcement agents are not known to use excessive force against civilians.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

Same-sex marriage is legal in Andorra, and discrimination against women is illegal. In June 2017, the government approved a draft law that would protect the rights of people with disabilities and provide assistance to victims of racism or discrimination. However, the country is not fully compliant with international standards on accessibility for disabled people and ensuring their entry into the workforce. The law does not require equal pay for equal work, and the Department of Statistics has estimated that women earned 24 percent less than men for comparable work.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 16 / 16 (+1)

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4

There are no restrictions on the freedom of movement, and people are generally free to choose their place of employment, residence, and education.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 4 / 4 (+1)

Citizens enjoy the right to own property. Legislation passed in 2012 fully opened up the economy to foreign investors as well, allowing noncitizens to own up to 100 percent of any commercial entity.

Score Change: The score improved from 3 to 4 due to efforts to eliminate restrictions on individuals' rights to own a business or property.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 4 / 4

Domestic violence and sexual exploitation are prohibited by law and are punishable with prison sentences. The government pursues domestic violence cases and provides resources for victims. Nevertheless, domestic violence remains a problem, and sometimes involves violence against children.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 4 / 4

Andorran laws provide protections for most workers, including migrant workers. However, temporary workers are in a precarious position, as they must leave the country when their employment contract expires, leaving them vulnerable to potential abuse by employers. The Labour Inspections Office successfully addresses cases of violations of workers' rights.

There have been no confirmed reports of human trafficking occurring in Andorra in the past year.

Angola

Population: 25,800,000

Capital: Luanda

Political Rights Rating: 6

Civil Liberties Rating: 6

Freedom Rating: 6.0

Freedom Status: Not Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: Angola has been ruled by the same party since independence, and authorities have repressed political dissent and maintained restrictions on freedom of speech and assembly. Corruption, political imprisonment, and abuses by security forces all remain common.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- The ruling Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) won parliamentary elections held in August. João Lourenço then became Angola's president, succeeding José Eduardo dos Santos, who had been in power for 38 years.
- Opposition parties jointly challenged the elections' results, which they deemed fraudulent, but the Constitutional Court dismissed their claim. The court additionally ruled that opposition figures had submitted fraudulent documents as part of the claim, and referred the issue to prosecutors. Opposition figures elected to the National Assembly ultimately took their seats—a move that prompted criticism from their supporters.
- After taking office, Lourenço fired several senior officials associated with dos Santos, including Isabel dos Santos, the daughter of the former president, who had headed the state oil company.
- In March, the National Assembly abandoned amendments that would have criminalized abortion, following vocal opposition by women's groups.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 10 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 3 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

The 2010 constitution abolished direct presidential elections. Instead, the head of the national list of the political party receiving the most votes in general elections becomes president, in the absence of any confirmation process by the elected legislature. The constitution permits the president to serve a maximum of two five-year terms, and to directly appoint the vice president, cabinet, and provincial governors.

In December 2016, the MPLA announced that Defense Minister João Lourenço, who was also the MPLA vice president, would be its presidential candidate in 2017. The decision was made by the MPLA's political bureau, without meaningful public consultation. The MPLA retained power in the 2017 legislative elections, and Lourenço succeeded José Eduardo dos Santos, who had been in power for 38 years. Dos Santos remained the head of the MPLA.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4

Angola's 220-seat, unicameral National Assembly, whose members serve five-year terms, has little power, and most legislation originates in the executive branch.

In the 2017 legislative polls, the MPLA won 61 percent of the vote, while the opposition National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) took 27 percent, and the Broad Convergence for the Salvation of Angola—Electoral Coalition (CASA–CE) won 9 percent. An African Union (AU) monitoring mission praised the elections' conduct, noting that they were peaceful and that there was a broad consensus that polling preparations and processes were better organized than in past polls. However, the prevalence of biased progovernment media, deficiencies in voter registration processes, and the MPLA's use of public resources in its campaign hampered the opposition. There were also reports of post-election violence in some locations.

Alleging grave irregularities at the National Election Commission (NEC), including the manipulation of the vote count, opposition leaders called the polls fraudulent, and jointly disputed the results. The Constitutional Court dismissed their claim, citing a lack of evidence, and further concluded that officials from UNITA and another opposition party, the Social Renewal Party, had forged documents related to the complaint; the case was referred to prosecutors, and convictions on the charges could result in sentences of as many as eight years in prison. Opposition figures elected to the National Assembly ultimately took their seats—a move that prompted intense criticism from their political base.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 1 / 4

The law states that the makeup of the CNE should reflect the disposition of power in the National Assembly, which attributes an advantage to the MPLA. In 2017, the political opposition cited serious misconduct and a lack of transparency on behalf of the CNE in its challenge of the year's election results.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 6 / 12

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 2 / 4

The creation of new political parties is fraught with bureaucratic obstacles and attempts of cooptation, factors that severely hinder public confidence in new parties. The newly created National Patriotic Alliance (APN) is largely seen as an offshoot of the MPLA and mimicked UNITA's flag.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 1 / 4

There is little space for the opposition to increase its share of parliamentary representation, much less gain power through elections, although they are gaining the support of the larger public, particularly in Luanda.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 1 / 4

MPLA-aligned economic oligarchies nurture a system of dependency and patronage that can subvert candidates' and voters' ability to freely express their political choices.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 2 / 4

Discussion of issues affecting lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people are taboo, and such issues remain absent in public debate. While societal pressures can discourage women from active political participation, women's rights advocates nevertheless have an increasingly vocal presence in political life. In March 2017, the association Ondjango Feministas organized a march in Luanda to protest an amendment that would criminalize abortion. The National Assembly later dropped consideration of the measure, with pushback by women considered a factor in the decision.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 1 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 1 / 4**

The country has been ruled by the MPLA since independence, and president is expected to keep constant consultations with the party's political bureau. However, the forum is not presided over by the recently elected President Lourenço, but by the leader of the MPLA, former President dos Santos.

Executive powers are broad and varied. Under dos Santos, legislation was frequently passed through presidential decree. Before leaving office, President dos Santos signed several decrees ensuring the continuation of key officials in the economy and military sectors.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 0 / 4

The structural distribution of power in the country erected throughout several decades of MPLA rule have entrenched corruption and patronage in nearly all segments of public and private life.

President Lourenço stressed his willingness to fight corruption during the electoral campaign. Months after taking power, he fired Isabel dos Santos, the daughter of the former president, from her position as head of the state oil company, Sonangol, whose revenues funded the patronage system that kept her father in power for more than 35 years. At year's end she was being investigated for misappropriating funds from the company. Lourenço also fired the central bank governor, a dos Santos appointee, in what was seen as both part of an anticorruption drive and an attempt to consolidate power.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 0 / 4

Government operations are generally opaque.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 16 / 60 (+2)**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 7 / 12 (+2)****D1. Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4**

The Angolan state owns most media in the country. Many outlets outside state control are privately owned by senior officials of the MPLA, and act as mouthpieces of the regime.

In March and June 2017, the Portuguese news channel SIC Notícias was taken out of the list of channels offered with Zap and DStv subscriptions, ahead of national elections; the channel had run stories about financial scandals involving the dos Santos family. (Zap is owned by Isabel dos Santos.) Critical journalists continued to face spurious legal charges during the year. In June, prominent journalist Rafael Marques de Morais was charged with "outrage to a body of sovereignty and injury against public authority," a crime carrying up to six years in prison, in connection with a 2016 story implicating the attorney general in a corruption scheme.

Lourenço in November replaced the heads of several major state-owned media outlets, and urged that the outlets serve the public interest. Long-term effects of the shakeup remain to be seen.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 2 / 4 (+1)

The constitution guarantees religious freedom, but the government requires religious groups to meet rigorous criteria in order to receive official recognition, which is required for the legal construction of houses of worship. Notably, many Pentecostal churches—which are having a profound social impact in Angola—remain unregistered. There are no registered Muslim groups, and Muslim communities have been more vocal in their demands for recognition and the right to worship freely.

However, many unregistered groups are able to operate and worship in practice. Violent crackdowns against small, unregistered sects that took place in recent years have not been repeated.

Score Change: The score improved from 1 to 2 because the government has pulled back from a past crackdown on small unregistered sects.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 2 / 4

Since most academic positions are attained through political connections, indoctrination is prevalent in virtually all areas of academic life. Academics have to maintain a façade of agreement with the MPLA’s preferred narratives and refrain from open critique of the party, or risk losing their positions. Academics who engage in criticism of the regime are often monitored by security services.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 2 / 4 (+1)

In recent years, there has been somewhat less fear of retribution for expressing criticism of the government or controversial views in private conversations; such concerns had spiked amid 2015–16 affair in which participants of a democracy-minded book club were convicted on charges of state security crimes; they were released conditionally in 2016. However, self-censorship remains, fueled by concerns that a perceived intent to organize against the government could result in reprisals.

While internet access is increasing in Angola, the government actively monitors internet activity. Known surveillance of civil society groups, journalists, and academics can leave people reluctant to speak out.

Score Change: The score improved from 1 to 2 due to a greater willingness by individuals to express their views in private discussions.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 3 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 1 / 4

Constitutional guarantees of freedom of assembly are poorly upheld. Grassroots anti-government gatherings are typically dispersed with violence, and participants and organizers risk arrest and prosecution. Activities organized by opposition parties are better tolerated. A nationwide protest organized by UNITA in June 2017 to demand transparent elections went forward without notable incidents. However, in April, seven people were sentenced to serve

45 days in prison and pay fines for taking part in a demonstration in Cacucaco, in which they made similar demands for fair elections and good governance.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 1 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) working on human rights and governance are closely monitored. The MPLA makes vocal attempts to discredit their work, and sometimes threatens such groups with lawsuits and outright closure, prompting many to curtail their activities.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 1 / 4

Certain kinds of employees who provide services considered essential—including prison guards, fire fighters, but also workers in the oil sector—may not legally strike. Unions not associated with the MPLA face interference and harassment. In 2017, the head of the New Alliance of Taxi Drivers of Angola (ANATA), which is widely perceived as antigovernment, received death threats.

F. RULE OF LAW: 3 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4

The president appoints Supreme Court judges to life terms without legislative input. Corruption and political pressure from the MPLA contribute to the judiciary's general inefficacy. In a controversial decision, the Constitutional Court dismissed a challenge of the 2017 election results filed jointly by the opposition, and further concluded that claimants had forged documents they submitted to the court. The issue was referred to prosecutors, and a case against them was open at year's end.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

Constitutional guarantees of due process are poorly upheld. Many defendants are unable to afford legal counsel, and the state largely fails to provide qualified legal aid to those who need it. The use of physical force by the Angolan police is common, including the use of firearms.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 0 / 4

Security forces enjoy impunity for violent acts committed against detainees, activists, and others. There is no effective protection against unjustified imprisonment, lengthy pre-trial detention, extortion, or torture. Angolan jails are reported to be overcrowded, unhygienic, lacking basic necessities, and plagued by sexual abuse.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

Security forces allegedly harass and abuse African immigrant communities, against a backdrop of the government's failure to adequately protect refugees and asylum seekers.

National law criminalizes "acts against nature," though there have been no recent cases of this provision being applied to same-sex sexual activity. LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people sometimes suffer harassment, and few formal LGBT organizations exist.

Women face discrimination in the workplace that makes it difficult for them to rise to senior positions. There have been reports of abuse of women and children accused of practicing witchcraft.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 3 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 1 / 4

Several organizations have been working to remove land mines that were placed during Angola's decades-long civil war. Land mines inhibit agriculture, construction, and freedom of movement, particularly in rural areas.

The process for securing entry and exit visas remains difficult and mired in corruption. Individuals who are critical of the government have faced problems when attempting to leave or enter the country. Patronage is frequently required in order to attain employment and residence.

Access to quality education is limited to Angola's elite and the expatriate community. Literacy rates remain low, due to the shortage of qualified teachers and the lack of school facilities, especially in rural districts. Many young people prefer to abandon school in order to work.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 1 / 4

Predatory Angolan elites tend to either disrupt or assimilate emerging new businesses. Authorities at times have expropriated land and demolished homes without providing any compensation. Customary law practices can leave women with unequal inheritance rights.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 1 / 4

Domestic violence is rampant in Angola. Teenage pregnancy is common. Protections for children are generally absent. Same-sex marriage is illegal.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 0 / 4

The Angolan economy is characterized by an informal system of economic exploitation that relies on the lack of opportunity for the poor and people otherwise less privileged. Rural regions have lesser infrastructure and service availability, and thus people in rural areas are disadvantaged in terms of employment and education.

Child labor is a major problem, and foreign workers are vulnerable to sex trafficking and forced labor in the construction and mining industries. The authorities have failed to effectively investigate human trafficking or prosecute offenders.

Antigua and Barbuda

Population: 90,000

Capital: St. John's

Political Rights Rating: 2

Civil Liberties Rating: 2

Freedom Rating: 2.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Antigua and Barbuda is a democracy that holds regular elections. Corruption in government is a concern, and women and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender)

people are underrepresented in politics and suffer some discrimination. In 2017, Hurricane Irma devastated Barbuda; the entire island was evacuated, and many residents lost their livelihoods and have yet to return home.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In March, the US State Department criticized Antigua’s Citizenship by Investment Program (CIP) for its lax provisions, and for lacking safeguards that could prevent its misuse by politicians. The government tightened the program’s policies the same month.
- In May, George Wehner, a member of the opposition United Progressive Party (UPP), was charged with threatening to kill Prime Minister Gaston Browne and 13 other members of the ruling Antigua and Barbuda Labour Party (ABLP). The charges were connected with a video that circulated widely online which appeared to show Wehner issuing the threats, accompanied by the sound of gunfire.
- In September, Hurricane Irma badly damaged Barbuda. The government issued a mandatory evacuation order, and many people had yet to return there at year’s end.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 33 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The 1981 constitution establishes a parliamentary system, with a governor-general representing the British monarch as ceremonial head of state. Antigua and Barbuda’s prime minister is the head of government, and is typically the leader of the majority party or coalition that emerges from the legislative elections. The leader of the ABLP, Gaston Browne, became prime minister after his party won a majority in parliament in 2014 elections.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The bicameral Parliament is composed of an appointed 17-seat Senate, and the House of Representatives, whose 17 directly elected members serve five-year terms. In the 2014 elections, the opposition ALP captured 14 out of 17 seats in the House of Representatives, while the UPP took 3 seats. Observers deemed them generally competitive and credible.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

Electoral laws are generally fair, and are implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 13 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 3 / 4

Political parties can organize freely. While there are a number of small political parties in the country, elections have been won by either the ABLP or the UPP since 1994. Inadequate campaign finance regulations effectively allow candidates and parties to accept donations without disclosing donors’ identities.

While political threats are uncommon, in May 2017, George Wehner, a member of the opposition UPP, was charged with threatening to kill Prime Minister Gaston Browne and

13 other members of the ABLP. The charges were connected with a video that circulated widely online, which appeared to show Wehner issuing the threats, accompanied by the sound of gunfire.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

There are realistic opportunities for opposition parties to increase their support or gain power through elections. Power has rotated frequently between the ABLP and UPP.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 3 / 4

Recent elections, including those in 2014, have been viewed as free and fair. However, concerns were raised by the Electoral Observation Mission of the Organization of American States (OAS) about the lack of transparency of party and campaign financing, and thus the potential influence of unknown domestic and foreign interests over candidates.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

Women are underrepresented in politics. Only two women were elected to the House of Representatives in 2014. In February 2017, the UPP's sole female member in the House, Joanne Massiah, was ejected from the party on the grounds of acting against its interests and disrespecting its leaders, in response to her criticism of other party members.

The LGBT community is marginalized, and this impacts its ability to engage fully in political processes.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 8 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 3 / 4

The elected prime minister, cabinet, and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government. However, in 2013 and 2016, normal legislative operations were disrupted when government-appointed senators were dismissed after voting with the opposition. There are some concerns about the influence of businesses on policymaking.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

Despite claims of their involvement, no Antiguan officials have been brought to trial in connection with a massive investment scandal involving Stanford International Bank of Antigua that erupted in 2009.

Antigua's Citizenship by Investment Program (CIP), in which individuals can be granted citizenship in exchange for a sizable business investment or contribution, came under scrutiny in 2017 after being criticized on the US investigative news program *60 Minutes* as attracting fugitives and tax evaders, among others. The US Department of State in March called the program "the most lax" of its kind, and raised questions about the program's autonomy from politicians who might seek to misuse it. In March, the government tightened CIP policies.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 3 / 4

Antigua and Barbuda has seen gradual improvement in accountability structures since 2004, when the government enacted a Freedom of Information Act. The Public Accounts

Committee can also expose governmental improprieties and wrongdoings, but historically it has not functioned effectively, and there have been lengthy delays in submission of the Auditor General's report.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 50 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 15 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4

Press freedom is generally respected in Antigua and Barbuda. In 2015, the ABLP government passed the Defamation Act, which abolished criminal defamation. However, under the Seditious and Undesirable Publications Act, seditious libel is a criminal offense punishable with a maximum of two years in prison and a maximum fine of \$5,000. Media outlets are concentrated among a small number of firms affiliated with either the current government or its predecessor.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

The constitution provides for freedom of worship as well as the right to practice and change religion, and these freedoms are generally respected. A law that outlaws blasphemous language is not enforced.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is generally respected.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

Individuals are generally free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 9 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 3 / 4

Freedom of association and assembly are guaranteed under the constitution, and the government generally respects these rights in practice. However, demonstrators are occasionally subject to police harassment.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights—and governance-related work? 3 / 4

The country's few nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are active, though inadequately funded and often influenced by the government. NGOs include Women against Rape, the Free and Fair Elections League, and the Professional Organization of Women in Antigua.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

Labor unions can organize freely and bargain collectively. Workers providing essential services must give notice two weeks before intent to strike, and the International Labor Organization (ILO) has described the list of essential services as excessively broad. Strikes are fairly rare.

F. RULE OF LAW: 13 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 3 / 4

The constitution provides for an independent judiciary, which is generally respected by the government. Antigua and Barbuda is a member of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States court system. Past ABLP governments manipulated the judicial system, but in recent years the courts have increasingly asserted independence.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 3 / 4

Constitutional guarantees of due process are generally upheld. However, prisoners on remand often remain in jail for an average of three to four years before their cases are heard.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 4 / 4

Residents of Antigua and Barbuda do not face any significant security threats. Nevertheless, there is a small Antigua and Barbuda Defense Force. Prisons are severely overcrowded, and conditions within them are poor.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

The 2005 Equal Opportunity Act bars discrimination on the basis of race, gender, class, political affinity, or place of origin. There are no specific laws prohibiting discrimination against people with disabilities, or LGBT individuals. Same-sex sexual activity remains criminalized under a 1995 law; however, it is not strictly enforced. Societal norms discourage participation of women in some employment sectors, and few women hold leadership positions.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 13 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4

Individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education. Many residents of Barbuda remained displaced at the end of 2017 due to damage inflicted by Hurricane Irma.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or non-state actors? 3 / 4

While the government has historically encouraged both national and foreign investors to operate businesses in the country, taxation procedures are cumbersome.

In late 2017, many Barbudans forced to evacuate the island due to Hurricane Irma opposed preliminary moves by lawmakers in Antigua to eliminate the communal land ownership system that had governed the island for almost two centuries. Opponents claimed authorities were taking advantage of the devastation to develop rural Barbuda for mass tourism.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

The Domestic Violence Act of 2015 strengthened the measures that can be taken against the perpetrators of domestic violence, and laid out a process for victims to obtain an order of protection. However, domestic violence remains a serious problem. Same-sex marriage and civil partnerships are not recognized.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

Antigua and Barbuda serves as both a destination and transit country for the trafficking of men, women, and children for the purposes of forced labor and sexual exploitation. Government efforts to address the problem are inadequate, and there have been no recent reports of prosecutions or convictions of traffickers.

Barbuda was evacuated after Hurricane Irma devastated the island in September 2017. Many of Barbuda's 1,800 residents had yet to return home at year's end due to widespread devastation, which has seriously affected their livelihoods.

Argentina

Population: 43,600,000

Capital: Buenos Aires

Political Rights Rating: 2

Civil Liberties Rating: 2

Freedom Rating: 2.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Argentina is a vibrant representative democracy, with competitive elections and lively public debate. Corruption and drug-related violence are among the country's most serious challenges.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Former president Cristina Fernández de Kirchner faced several corruption investigations in connection with actions allegedly undertaken during her time in office. In December, a judge ordered her arrest on treason charges in connection with allegations that she covered up Iran's possible role in a deadly 1994 bombing, and rescinded the immunity she held as a newly elected senator.
- Protests against a weak economy and the disappearance of an indigenous rights activist in August were met with disproportionate police force.
- A long-awaited access to information law came into effect in September.
- In November, Congress passed a new law stipulating that future party lists must have full gender parity, with men and women alternating.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 33 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 11 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The constitution provides for a president to be elected for a four-year term, with the option of reelection for one additional term. Presidential candidates must win 45 percent of the vote to avoid a runoff. Mauricio Macri was elected president in 2015 in a poll deemed competitive and credible by international observers.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The National Congress consists of a 257-member the Chamber of Deputies, whose representatives are directly elected for four-year terms with half of the seats up for election every two years; and the 72-member Senate, whose representatives are directly elected for six-year terms, with one third of the seats up for election every two years. Legislators are elected through a proportional representation system with a closed party list.

Legislative elections, including the most recent held in October 2017, are generally free and fair. Notably, former president Cristina Fernández de Kirchner won a senate seat in the Buenos Aires province in the 2017 elections. However, overall the elections reflected support for Macri and his center-right Cambiemos coalition, which won in 13 out of the 23 provinces, including the capital, and after the polls was the largest coalition bloc in Congress.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4

Argentina has a clear, detailed, and fair legislative framework for conducting elections. There is universal suffrage, and voting is compulsory. However, the system suffers from some shortcomings, including inconsistent enforcement of electoral laws and campaign finance regulations. Some observers have criticized the country's primary system, saying that despite primary polling, in practice candidates are chosen internally by party leaders.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 14 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4

Argentina has competitive political parties that form and operate without encountering undue obstacles.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 3 / 4

Argentina's multiparty political system affords opposition candidates the realistic opportunity to compete for political power. While Macri defeated the Peronist candidate in the 2015 presidential election, the Peronist party (in its various ideological forms) has dominated the political scene since 1946. Non-Peronist presidents, once elected, have struggled to win reelection in the post-dictatorship period. However, the strong performance of Cambiemos—the coalition comprised of Macri's center-right Republican Proposal (PRO), the Radical Civic Union (UCR), and the Civic Coalition (CC)—in the 2017 legislative polls was widely interpreted as a signal of robust support for Macri and his reformist agenda.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

Argentines' political choices are generally free from domination by groups that are not democratically accountable.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

Ethnic and religious minorities have full political rights in Argentina. However, in practice, the government frequently ignores legal obligations to consult with indigenous communities about legislation and government actions that affect them.

Since 1991, the country has had a law requiring that at least 30 percent of a party's legislative candidates be women, and around 40 percent of seats in both houses of Congress are currently held by women. In November 2017, Congress passed a new law stipulating that future party lists must have full gender parity, with men and women alternating.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 8 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 3 / 4

Argentina's elected officials are duly installed in office without interference. However, the political system is characterized by a powerful executive, with the president having power to implement some policies by decree, thereby bypassing the legislative branch. Provincial governors are also powerful, and tend to influence senators representing their provinces.

In 2017, the Macri government continued its efforts to restore macroeconomic credibility to the country through a difficult adjustment program that has led to an erosion of real wages.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

Corruption scandals are common, and several members of the political class—including former presidents—have been charged with or found guilty of malfeasance in recent years. However, weak anticorruption bodies and the politicization of the judicial system hamper institutional safeguards against corruption. Many politicians hold immunity in connection with their posts, and are thus shielded from legal consequences for corrupt behavior.

Former president Cristina Fernández de Kirchner faces several allegations of corruption relating to her time in office. These include charges filed in April 2017 of money laundering and leading an illegal organization, in connection with her and her family's real estate dealings. A separate fraud case filed against Kirchner in 2016, involving allegations of the irregular sale of dollars by the central bank ahead of the 2015 election, remains open. She dismisses the charges as politically-driven, and holds immunity in her current role as a sitting senator. In December, a judge ordered her arrest and requested that the Senate lift her immunity, which would require the approval of two-thirds of the chamber. The order came in connection with charges of treason relating to her alleged role in covering up Iran's possible involvement in the 1994 bombing of a Jewish community center in Buenos Aires, in which 85 people were killed.

Several government officials linked with the Kirchner administrations faced accusations of corruption relating to the Latin America-wide Odebrecht investigation, in which Odebrecht, a Brazilian construction firm, admitted to paying bribes to win public works contracts. Additionally, in April 2017, the newspaper *La Nación* revealed that Macri had accepted \$500,000 from Odebrecht for his 2015 election campaign, but the company defended the payment as legal.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 3 / 4

In September 2017, a long-awaited access to information law came into force. The law establishes a Public Information Agency, an autonomous body operating under the executive branch, through which citizens may request information from state agencies. The law contains some exceptions for information deemed restricted. Citizens must receive a response to their request within 15 business days, and will have the right to appeal a denial within 40 days.

Adherence to and enforcement of public asset disclosure regulations is inconsistent. Macri declared millions of dollars' worth of assets only after some of his holdings were revealed in the 2016 Panama Papers leak, in which a trove of documents leaked from a Panama-based law firm were unveiled by media organizations.

Macri's government has revamped the country's statistics agency, which under the Kirchner administration had been censured by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for misrepresenting data. The government now publishes timely data that offers an accurate picture of the economy. Government officials hold press conferences, and make other efforts to communicate policy objectives to voters.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 50 / 60 (+1)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 15 / 16 (+1)

D1. Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4 (+1)

Argentine law guarantees freedom of expression, and Congress decriminalized libel and slander in 2009. Macri's government holds regular press conferences, and has a much more open relationship with the press than the previous administrations of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner and her late husband, Néstor Kirchner, who held the presidency before her.

Macri has also reduced the state's role in advertising compared to the previous Kirchner administrations, which funded a number of friendly print and broadcasting outlets and denied advertising contracts to critical media. However, the reduction in spending, combined with the country's difficult economic situation, affected media businesses' financial sustainability, and resulted in the closure of a number of largely left-leaning outlets, in effect narrowing the scope of opposition voices. While media ownership is now concentrated among large conglomerates—which tend to side with the government—Argentineans nevertheless enjoy a robust and lively media environment, and there is no official censorship. The government does not restrict access to the internet, which is widely used in Argentina.

Score Change: The score improved from 2 to 3 because President Mauricio Macri's government has a much more open relationship with the press than the previous administrations of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner and her late husband, Néstor Kirchner, who held the presidency before her.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Argentina's constitution guarantees freedom of religion. While the population is largely Roman Catholic, public education is secular, and religious minorities express their faiths freely. The government has formally acknowledged more than 5,300 non-Catholic organizations, granting them tax-exempt status and other benefits.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is largely observed in practice.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

Private discussion is vibrant and unrestricted.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 11 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4

Freedoms of assembly and association are generally respected, and citizens organize protests to make their voices heard. However, in 2017, there were numerous reports of abuses of protesters by police at demonstrations in the capital; such incidents were reported at a demonstration marking International Women's Day in March; a protest organized by striking teachers in April, and an anti-austerity protest in December, during which dozens of participants were also detained on dubious grounds. In September, a number of people were injured, and more than two dozen others were violently detailed, amid clashes in the capital between police and demonstrators protesting the disappearance weeks earlier of indigenous rights activist Santiago Maldonado.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Civic organizations, especially those focused on human rights and abuses committed under the 1976–83 dictatorship, are robust and play a major role in society, although some fall victim to Argentina's pervasive corruption.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

Organized labor remains dominated by Peronist unions, and union influence has decreased in recent years. Labor groups continued to call nationwide strikes in 2017, largely in protest of the austerity measures, job losses, and real wage cuts that have resulted from the Macri government's economic adjustment plan.

F. RULE OF LAW: 10 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 2 / 4

Inefficiencies and delays plague the judicial system, which can be subject to political manipulation, particularly at lower levels. The Supreme Court, however, has maintained relative independence, and has pushed back against executive overreach during both the Kirchner and Macri administrations.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 3 / 4

Due process rights are written into the constitution and are generally upheld. However, police can face pressure from political actors, and some police collusion with drug traffickers.

Court cases dating from the mid-2000s have allowed the prosecution of crimes against humanity committed during the 1976–83 dictatorship. Dozens of military and police officers have been convicted of torture, murder, and forced disappearance, and sentenced to life in prison, helping to combat a culture of impunity.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 2 / 4

Drug-related violence remained a serious issue in 2017 as international criminal organizations used the country as both an operational base and a transit route; the country's northern and central regions are particularly affected.

Police misconduct—including torture and brutality against suspects in custody—is endemic. Prisons are overcrowded, and conditions remain substandard throughout the country. Arbitrary arrests and abuse by police are rarely punished in the courts, and police collusion with drug traffickers is common.

In August 2017, indigenous rights activist Santiago Maldonado disappeared after being arrested by border guards, who took him into custody following his participation in a

demonstration in support of land claims by the indigenous Mapuche people. His body was recovered in October, with an autopsy determining that he had drowned. Further circumstances of his death remained unclear at year's end.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

Argentina's indigenous peoples, who comprise approximately 2.4 percent of the population, are largely neglected by the government and suffer disproportionately from extreme poverty and illness. Only 11 of Argentina's 23 provinces have constitutions recognizing the rights of indigenous peoples.

Women enjoy legal equality, but continue to face economic discrimination and gender-based wage gaps.

Argentina's LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) population enjoys full legal rights, including the right to serve in the military. However, LGBT people face some degree of societal discrimination, and occasionally, serious violence.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 14 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4

The government respects citizens' constitutional right to free travel both inside and outside of Argentina. The Macri government's 2015 move to lift Kirchner-era currency controls increased ordinary people's access to foreign currency, making travel abroad more accessible.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 3 / 4

Citizens generally enjoy the right to own property and establish private businesses. However, approximately 70 percent of the country's rural indigenous communities lack titles to their lands, and forced evictions, while technically illegal, still occur. Indigenous communities increasingly struggled to defend their land rights in 2017 against oil and gas prospectors, as well as to reclaim traditional lands.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 4 / 4

Argentineans enjoy broad freedom regarding marriage and divorce. Same-sex marriage has been legal nationwide since 2010. A 2012 gender identity law allows people to legally change their gender.

Violence against women remains a serious problem, and according to the Supreme Court, 254 women died as a result of gender-based violence in 2016. Activists continue to hold highly visible protests and events aimed at drawing attention to the problem.

Access to abortion is legal only in cases where the mother's life or health are in danger, or if the pregnancy is the result of rape; women in more remote parts of the country report difficulty in accessing an abortion even when these conditions are met.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

Some sectors of the charcoal and brick-producing industries profit from the forced labor of men, women, and children from Argentina as well as from neighboring countries; forced labor is also present in the agriculture sector and among domestic workers and street vendors. Men, women, and children are subject to sex trafficking. The government has

taken steps to better fund programs to assist victims of human trafficking and draw public awareness to the problem, according to the U.S. State Department's 2017 *Trafficking in Persons Report*.

Armenia

Population: 3,000,000

Capital: Yerevan

Political Rights Rating: 5

Civil Liberties Rating: 4

Freedom Rating: 4.5

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Note: The numerical ratings and status listed above do not reflect conditions in Nagorno-Karabakh, which is examined in a separate report.

Overview: Voters in Armenia have little say in policymaking, and formal political opposition is weak. High levels of corruption as well as political influence over the media remain concerns.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- The incumbent Republican Party of Armenia (HHK) won April's legislative elections. The party's strong performance will allow it to nominate a prime minister in 2018, when Armenia will transition to a parliamentary system under recent constitutional changes.
- The elections were marred by credible allegations of vote-buying, voter intimidation, and abuse of administrative resources by the ruling party.
- A trial began for members of the armed opposition group Sasna Tsrer, who in 2016, seized a police building in Yerevan and killed three police officers, while holding others hostage.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 15 / 40 (-1)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 4 / 12 (-1)

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4

International election monitors documented severe limitations on opposition candidates in the 2013 presidential election, in which President Serzh Sargsyan of the HHK won a second term.

In late 2015, voters approved constitutional changes that, among other things, will transform the country from a semipresidential to a parliamentary republic. Therefore, no further presidential elections will be held; when Sargsyan completes his second term in 2018, executive power will be transferred to a prime minister, who is appointed by the National Assembly. There are no legal requirements that would prevent Sargsyan—whose HHK maintained a majority in the National Assembly in the 2017 polls—from assuming that position.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4 (-1)

National Assembly elections took place in April 2017. Given the context of Armenia's transition to a parliamentary system, the election was to decide not only the composition of the parliament, but also which party would hold executive power in 2018. The ruling HHK won 49 percent of the vote, and hence the ability to appoint the prime minister in April 2018, when Sargsyan's presidential term will end. Election monitors from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) said the elections were "tainted" by credible allegations of vote-buying, voter intimidation, and abuse of administrative resources by the ruling party. The OSCE had reported more favorably on the 2012 parliamentary elections, calling them "competitive" and "vibrant" while also noting some administrative problems.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 because the year's parliamentary elections were marred by credible allegations of vote-buying, voter intimidation, and abuse of administrative resources by the ruling party.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 2 / 4

The head of the Central Election Commission (CEC) and its members, who are nominally independent and serve six-year terms, are recommended and then confirmed by the National Assembly, which is controlled by the HHK. The CEC is generally considered to be subservient to the HHK, and has been reluctant to investigate allegations of wrongdoing made against the party. This has resulted in a low level of public trust in the election process in general, and the CEC in particular.

The OSCE, in its report on the 2017 legislative elections, said the CEC generally operated with transparency, but noted a reluctance to investigate complaints and said the body had failed to adequately scrutinize campaign finance reports.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 7 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 2 / 4**

People have the right to organize political parties in Armenia, but the ruling party's dominance and control of administrative resources prevent a level playing field among parties. There were reports in 2017 that some opposition supporters were pressured into skipping campaign rallies for opposition parties.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 2 / 4

Generally, elections are not seen as a realistic opportunity for opposition parties to win governing power. In the April 2017 elections, only one opposition political force, Yelq, was able to enter parliament; the party won 8 percent of the vote, amounting to 9 seats. The HHK took 49 percent of votes and 58 seats; the remaining votes were distributed between HHK's minor coalition partner, Dashnaktsutyun, and the Tsarukyan bloc.

The presence in parliament of the Tsarukyan bloc—led by oligarch Gagik Tsarukyan, who in 2017 appeared to have negotiated an uneasy coexistence with Sargsyan—helps the government to channel some of the protest vote, delegitimize the opposition, and create an illusion of a pluralistic political landscape.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 1 / 4

The dominance of Sargsyan's HHK and lack of a strong opposition to it effectively limits people's political choices. Election monitors cited credible reports of vote-buying in the 2017 legislative election. The Armenian Apostolic Church is politically influential.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 2 / 4

A quota system introduced as part of the 2015 constitutional reforms mandates the inclusion in parliament of four lawmakers representing ethnic minorities. However, the four new representatives are required to be elected on a party list. In 2017, three were elected on the HHK party list and one was elected on the Tsarukyan bloc's list, raising questions as to the new representatives' independence and ability to advocate on behalf of the respective minority groups they belong to.

No openly lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons have ever run for office in elections or been appointed to a public office in Armenia.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 4 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 1 / 4

The HHK and Sargsyan dominate political decision-making. The influence of the HHK's minor coalition partner, Dashnaktsutyun, remains limited.

Russia has significant influence in Armenia, and at times moves by the Russian government have prompted significant changes of policy. So-called "oligarchs," or influential businessmen who have close relationships with the government, can exert influence over political decision making.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

Armenia does not have effective safeguards against government corruption. The parliament includes some of the country's wealthiest business leaders, who continue entrepreneurial activities despite conflicts of interest. Relationships between politicians and other oligarchs also influence policy and contribute to selective application of the law.

In 2017, a measure criminalizing "illegal enrichment," which also contained provisions designed to reduce conflicts of interest and to protect whistleblowers, was approved—though its practical effects remains to be seen.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

While members of government regularly issue statements and communicate with journalists (often preferring pro-government media outlets), the level of openness and transparency of the government remains limited.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 30 / 60 (+1)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 9 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4

Independent and investigative journalists operate in Armenia, but their work is generally found online. Most print and broadcast outlets are affiliated with political or commercial interests. Journalists practice self-censorship to avoid harassment by government or business figures.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 2 / 4

Article 18 of the Constitution recognizes the Armenian Apostolic Church as a “national church” responsible for the preservation of Armenian national identity. Religious minorities have reported discrimination in the past, and some have faced difficulty obtaining permits to build houses of worship.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 2 / 4

Although the Armenian constitution protects academic freedom, government officials hold several board positions at state universities, leaving administrative and accreditation processes open to political influence. There is some self-censorship among academics on politically sensitive subjects. The Union of Informed Citizens (UIC), a domestic NGO, made credible allegations that heads of educational institutions pressured teachers and other individuals including students’ parents to vote for the ruling party in the 2017 elections.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4

Private discussion is relatively free and vibrant. However, while the law prohibits wiretapping or other electronic surveillance without judicial approval, but there have been reports of judges issuing warrants in cases lacking sufficient justification.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 6 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 2 / 4

The right to free assembly is legally guaranteed, but inconsistently upheld in practice. In 2016, police employed violence against peaceful protesters in Yerevan, injuring hundreds of people. While a number of the protesters were prosecuted in connection with their activism, no police involved in the crackdown have faced criminal charges. Demonstrations during the 2017 campaign period, however, took place without issue.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 2 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) lack local funding and largely rely on foreign donors. However, there are a few outspoken rights organizations and watchdog groups, mostly in Yerevan and in northern Armenia.

In 2017, the CEC denied two local NGOs permission to monitor the year’s elections. There have been reports of harassment against Veles, an NGO that assists victims of predatory lenders.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

The law protects the rights of workers to form and join independent unions, strike, and engage in collective bargaining. However, unions have little stature, and many are inactive.

F. RULE OF LAW: 6 / 16 (+1)

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4

Judges face systemic political pressure, and judicial institutions are undermined by corruption. Judges reportedly feel pressure to work with prosecutors to convict defendants, and acquittal rates are extremely low.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

Authorities apply the law selectively, and due process is not guaranteed in civil or criminal cases. Lengthy pretrial detention remains a problem, and judges are generally reluctant to challenge arbitrary arrests.

Lawyers defending members of the armed opposition group Sasna Tsrer—which had seized a police building in Yerevan’s Erebuni District in 2016, and killed three police officers while holding others hostage—reported that their work has been obstructed and that they were subject to excessive searches upon arriving at the courts to defend their clients. In June, five of the defendants were removed from the courtroom by police. The defendants later appeared with scratches and bruises, wounds they claimed were inflicted by the police.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 2 / 4 (+1)

Reports of police abuse of detainees and poor conditions in prisons persist.

Areas near Nagorno-Karabakh, an Armenian-majority territory that gained de facto independence from Azerbaijan following the breakup of the Soviet Union, remained tense in 2017. However, a 2016 outbreak of fighting along the border was not repeated in 2017, and there were otherwise no high-profile attacks or violent skirmishes in Armenia during the year.

Score Change: The score improved from 1 to 2 due to lower levels of violence and militarization as compared to 2016, when the security situation deteriorated due to a violent takeover of a Yerevan police station by a militant group, and heightened hostilities along the Nagorno-Karabakh border.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

Rights watchdogs have criticized the government for discriminating against asylum seekers who are not of ethnic Armenian origin. LGBT people continue to face violence and mistreatment at the hands of police and civilians.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 9 / 16**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4**

The law protects freedom of movement and the rights of individuals to choose their place of education, residence, and employment. In practice, access to higher education is somewhat hampered by a culture of bribery.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

Economic diversification and simpler regulations have increased the ease of doing business in recent years, but a lack of transparency and persistent cronyism continue to create unfair advantages for those with ties to public officials. Armenian law adequately protects property rights, though officials do not always uphold them.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Although same-sex sexual activity was decriminalized in 2003, the constitution defines marriage as a union between a man and a woman. Domestic violence is common and not adequately prosecuted.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Armenia is a source and, to a lesser extent, destination country for men, women, and children subjected to sex and labor trafficking. The government has made efforts to address the problem, including by initiating a national plan of action, identifying more victims, and setting up a compensation fund for trafficking victims. At the same time, there is no formal protection program for victims or witnesses, and funding to NGO-run shelters for trafficking victims has recently decreased.

Australia

Population: 24,100,000

Capital: Canberra

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 1

Freedom Rating: 1.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Australia has a strong record of advancing and protecting political rights and civil liberties. Challenges to these freedoms include the threat of foreign political influence, harsh policies toward asylum seekers, and ongoing difficulties ensuring the equal rights of indigenous Australians.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In December, Parliament legalized same-sex marriage following a nationwide, nonbinding postal survey in which more than 60 percent of participants favored legalization.
- Mounting concerns about foreign influence in politics prompted lawmakers to propose potentially restrictive laws in December. One proposal would ban foreign donations to political parties and activist groups; nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) claimed the measure would harm their ability to operate freely. A proposal to toughen espionage laws was met with pushback by press freedom advocates, who said the measure could restrict journalists' operations.
- In April, a new data retention law came into effect. The law, which authorities said was aimed at combatting terrorism and crime, requires telecommunications companies to store users' metadata for two years. Privacy advocates have expressed concern about the potential for data leaks, or the law's misuse.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 40 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The Australian government is a parliamentary democracy under a constitutional monarchy. The leader of the popularly elected majority party or coalition is designated as prime minister, and serves as head of government. Malcolm Turnbull, head of the Liberal Party, has been prime minister since 2015, when he successfully challenged Tony Abbott for leadership of the party. A governor general, appointed on the recommendation of the prime

minister, represents the British monarch as head of state. The powers of the monarchy are extremely limited.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The bicameral legislative branch consists of a 150-member House of Representatives and 76-member Senate. The Liberal Party/National Party coalition won a slim majority in the House of Representatives in 2016 elections, which were free and fair. Several by-elections were held in 2017 due to the resignations of parliament members who had dual citizenship. The Liberal/National coalition temporarily lost its majority, but had gained it back through more by-elections by year's end.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

Australian electoral laws and procedures are generally fair and impartial. The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC)—an independent federal agency—coordinates all federal elections and referendums, draws seat boundaries, and keeps the electoral rolls. Voting is compulsory, and a registered voter's failure to vote may result in a small fine, which if unpaid can increase, and ultimately lead to a criminal conviction.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 16 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4

Australians may organize political parties without restrictions. Registration and recognition as a political party requires a party constitution and either one member in Parliament, or at least 500 members on the electoral roll.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

Power rotates between parties frequently in Australian politics, traditionally alternating between the Labor Party and the Liberal Party/National Party coalition. The Australian Greens and smaller left-leaning parties tend to ally with Labor, while rural-oriented and more conservative parties often ally with Liberals.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

Political participation in Australia is free from undue influence of the military, religious organizations, or other powerful groups. The British monarch remains the Australian head of state, but the monarchy's power is strictly limited by the Australian constitution and legal precedent.

In 2017, there was growing concern about foreign influence on politics. More than a dozen members of parliament (MPs) resigned, were deemed ineligible for office, or were under investigation for being dual citizens—a status federal elected officials are banned from holding. Some observers downplayed concerns about officials with dual citizenship though, particularly in light of Australia's large foreign-born population.

Concerns about Chinese interference in politics also emerged during the year. In December, a senator was forced to resign in connection with his financial ties with

companies linked to the Chinese government. Media reports also raised the possibility of Chinese attempts to directly influence election campaigns by funding particular candidates or parties, both in past elections and in the year's by-elections. In December, the government proposed a ban on foreign donations to political parties due to concerns about foreign influence.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 4 / 4

Political rights and electoral opportunities are granted to all Australians. However, the interests of some groups, including women and indigenous Australians, are inadequately represented, and women MPs have reported being the targets of sexist remarks while working. Some voting restrictions—including requirements that voters hold a fixed address, and a ban on voting by prisoners serving long sentences—disproportionately affect indigenous Australians.

In the 2016 legislative elections, the first indigenous woman was elected to the House of Representatives.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 12 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4

The freely elected government is generally able to develop and implement policy.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 4 / 4

Laws against official corruption are generally well enforced. However, Tasmania, the Northern Territory, and the Australian Capital Territory lack jurisdictional anticorruption bodies.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 4 / 4

Government operations are characterized by a high degree of transparency, and political affairs are openly discussed in Parliament and in the media. Parliamentary records and commissioned reports are readily available. The Freedom of Information Act allows people to access a wide range of government documents.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 58 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 16 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 4 / 4

The constitution does not explicitly protect press freedom. However, journalists scrutinize lawmakers and the government and cover controversial topics, generally without encountering serious obstacles or risking harassment or violence.

However, in December 2017, lawmakers proposed amendments that would toughen espionage laws, making it illegal not only to communicate certain sensitive information, but to receive and possess that information, even if a person were unaware that the information was in their possession. Press freedom advocates expressed concern about the proposed amendments, saying they could interfere with journalists' work.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

The constitution explicitly prohibits laws that would either impose or restrict religious expression, and individuals are generally able to express religious beliefs or nonbelief. Some religious practices, such as drug use, are limited by general laws.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is generally respected. However, in October 2017, federal officials warned of Chinese attempts to monitor Chinese students in Australia, and to question academics whose views differed with those of the Chinese government.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

Generally, people in Australia may freely discuss personal views on sensitive topics. However, in April 2017, a new data retention law came into effect, sparking concerns about the government's ability to track mobile and online communications. Under the law, which authorities said was aimed at combatting terrorism and crime, telecommunications companies must store users' metadata for two years. Some experts have warned of the potential for data breaches, and have argued that the law undermines civil liberties.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 12 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4

Freedom of assembly is not explicitly codified in law, but the government generally respects the right to peaceful assembly in practice. There are some limited restrictions meant to ensure public safety.

There has been some concern in recent years about measures designed to discourage protests at certain kinds of workplaces. In 2016, the New South Wales state government passed laws apparently meant to curb a protest movement targeting mining operations. In October 2017, the High Court ruled that laws in Tasmania prohibiting demonstrations in areas designated as workplaces were not constitutional.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

NGOs are generally free to form, function, and receive funding. However, in December 2017, due to concern about foreign influence, the government proposed a ban on foreign donations to political parties and activist groups. The legislation would also require Australians to declare whether they are working for a foreign power. Several domestic and international NGOs said the legislation, if approved, would severely impact their ability to function.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

Workers can freely organize and bargain collectively, and trade unions actively engage in political debates and campaigns. However, strikes are only allowed when negotiating new union agreements, and may only pertain to issues under negotiation. In December 2017, a High Court ruling prohibited organizations that had previously violated orders from the Fair Work Commission from holding strikes during negotiations. The court described the right to strike as a "privilege."

F. RULE OF LAW: 15 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 4 / 4

The Australian judiciary is generally independent.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 4 / 4

The right to due process is generally respected. Defendants and detainees are presumed innocent until proven guilty and can only be held for 24 hours without being charged for a crime, with exceptions for terrorism cases.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 4 / 4

Australia provides protection from the illegitimate use of force, and Australians have means to seek redress for harm. Prison conditions mostly meet international standards. However, conditions at numerous juvenile detention centers are substandard, and children have been held at adult prisons. In 2017, juvenile detention centers in the Northern Territory were judged by a royal commission to be “not fit for accommodating, let alone rehabilitating” minors.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

Indigenous Australians continue to lag behind other groups in key social and economic indicators, suffer higher rates of incarceration, and report routine mistreatment by police and prison officials. Indigenous children are placed in detention at a rate 25 times higher than that of nonindigenous children. Additionally, people with disabilities make up over half the prison population, and face harassment and violence in prisons.

Men and women have the same legal rights, and discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity is prohibited. In practice, women and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) population experience employment discrimination, and occasional harassment.

Australia’s immigration and asylum policies continued to draw domestic and international condemnation in 2017. Rights groups and other observers continued to blast the country’s policy of transporting many refugees and asylum seekers to offshore facilities that are characterized by poor living conditions, inadequate safety for women and children, delays in processing applications, and a lack of sufficient healthcare and education services. A section of the 2015 Border Force Act threatens a prison sentence of up to two years for service providers who disclose unauthorized information about the facilities. In August 2017, the government proposed an amendment to lessen the danger of criminal charges for service workers who disclose such information.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 15 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4

The government respects the freedom of movement, and neither state nor nonstate actors interfere with the choice of residence, employment, or institution of higher education.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 4 / 4

With an open and free market economy, businesses and individuals enjoy a high level of economic freedom and strong protections for property rights.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 4 / 4

The government generally does not restrict social freedoms. In December 2017, Parliament legalized same-sex marriage following a nationwide, nonbinding postal survey in which more than 60 percent of participants favored legalization.

Violence against women remains a national concern, particularly for indigenous women. Abortion law is decided by state and territory governments, and abortion is illegal in some regions.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

Australians generally enjoy robust economic opportunities and freedom from exploitation. However, indigenous people continue to face economic hardships. Census data from 2016 revealed that the indigenous employment rates in remote areas have declined since 2006, impeding their upward social mobility.

In 2017, the government was in its third year of a five-year action plan to combat human trafficking and slavery. The program has resulted in the investigation of over 100 trafficking cases, and the identification of more than over 30 victims from mid-2016 to mid-2017.

Austria

Population: 8,000,000

Capital: Vienna

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 1

Freedom Rating: 1.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Austria has a democratic system of government that guarantees political rights and civil liberties. It has frequently been governed by a grand coalition of the center-left Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ), and the center-right Austrian People's Party (ÖVP). However, in recent years, the political system has faced pressure from the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ), a right-wing, populist party that openly entertains nationalist and xenophobic sentiments. The FPÖ entered the Austrian government in coalition with the ÖVP in 2017.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Austria held early elections in October, following the collapse of the governing coalition between the SPÖ and ÖVP in May. The ÖVP won a plurality of seats in the elections, and formed a coalition government with the right-wing, populist FPÖ.
- In January, Austria introduced a ban on full-face coverings, including burqas and niqabs, which came into effect in October.
- Major parties were unable to agree on certain provisions of a proposed freedom of information law, and the policy of official secrecy remained in the constitution at the end of the year.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 37 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

Executive elections in Austria are generally free and fair. The president is elected for a six-year term and has predominantly ceremonial duties. The president does, however, appoint the chancellor, who also needs the support of the legislature to govern. Austria's current president is the former head of the Green Party, Alexander Van der Bellen, who was elected president after a close and controversial poll that featured a repeat of the run-off between Van der Bellen and FPÖ candidate Norbert Hofer. The run-off was repeated after the Constitutional Court established that there had been problems with the handling of postal ballots.

Following the 2017 elections to the National Council (Nationalrat), the lower house of parliament, ÖVP head Sebastian Kurz became chancellor with support of the right-wing, populist FPÖ.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

Legislative elections in Austria are generally free and fair. The National Council has 183 members chosen through proportional representation at the district, state, and federal levels. Members serve five-year terms. The 62 members of the upper house, the Federal Council (Bundesrat), are chosen by state legislatures for five- or six-year terms.

Snap elections to the National Council took place in October 2017, one year early, following the collapse of the coalition between the SPÖ and the ÖVP in May. Animosity between the two former coalition partners was reflected in an antagonistic, heavily-fought election campaign. Migration and asylum issues were particularly prominent. ÖVP leader Kurz became a proponent of some of the restrictive policies supported by the right-wing, populist FPÖ, reflecting a rightward shift in Austrian politics.

The ÖVP took 62 mandates—the most of any party but not enough for a governing majority. The SPÖ received 52 mandates, and the FPÖ took 51; the remaining votes were split between smaller parties. Voter turnout was around 80 percent.

The ÖVP formed a coalition government with the FPÖ in December. The formation of the coalition made Austria the only western European country to have a far-right party included in the government. President Van der Bellen approved the coalition and Kurz became chancellor that same month.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

Austria's electoral laws and framework are fair and generally implemented impartially by the relevant bodies.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 15 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4

Austria has competitive political parties that form and operate without encountering undue obstacles. Recent years have seen the rise and fall of various competing parties and coalitions through democratic processes. The Green Party lost its seats in the National Council after failing to meet the 4 percent voting threshold in the 2017 elections, while the recently formed Pilz List entered the chamber for the first time.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

Opposition parties have a realistic opportunity to gain representation. Austria has frequently been governed by grand coalitions, a trend that has fostered some public disillusionment with the political process. The SPÖ had formed a grand coalition with the ÖVP in 2013 after winning a plurality of seats in that year's elections. However, following the 2017 polls, the SPÖ was pushed into opposition after the best-performing ÖVP entered a coalition with the FPÖ.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

Austrians are generally free to make their own political choices without pressure from the military, business leaders, or other groups that are not democratically accountable.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

The participation of Slovene, Hungarian, and Roma minorities in local government remains limited. There is little minority representation in legislature. The number of people who have been naturalized (thus gaining certain political rights) has fallen dramatically since the establishment of a more restrictive national integration policy in 2009.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 10 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4

The freely elected president and legislative representatives work with the chancellor, vice chancellor, and cabinet ministers to determine the policies of the government.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4

Austria has some problems with public-sector corruption, and the political class is perceived by many as corrupt. In what was considered one of the most significant corruption cases in recent years, the trial of former finance minister Karl-Heinz Grasser opened in December 2017; he is charged with bribery and embezzlement in connection with the sale of state housing in 2004. Separately, the Council of Europe's Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) criticized Austria in February for weak party finance legislation, and for failing to adequately regulate lobbying and prevent corruption amongst parliamentarians.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 3 / 4

Austria's government has frequently been criticized for lacking transparency. Official secrecy remains enshrined in the constitution. For over four years, a draft freedom of information law has been stuck in parliamentary procedures, and it again stalled in June 2017 when parties could not reach an agreement over certain aspects of its provisions. Austria's overall legal framework on access to information—containing vague criteria for compliance and lacking a strong appeals mechanism—is among the weakest in the world.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 57 / 60 (-1)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 15 / 16 (-1)

D1. Are there free and independent media? 4 / 4

The federal constitution and the Media Law of 1981 provide the basis for free media in Austria, and the government generally respects these provisions in practice. However, libel and slander laws protect politicians and government officials, many of whom—particularly

members of the FPÖ—have filed defamation suits in recent years. Media ownership remains highly concentrated, particularly in the provinces. The government exerts some influence on the state broadcaster, the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF). In December 2017, Heinz-Christian Strache, the head of the FPÖ and vice-chancellor, claimed that the ORF needed an “optimization” of its objectivity, prompting concern among media freedom advocates.

Before the October 2017 elections, then chancellor Christian Kern was heavily criticized for his decision to not place any campaign ads in or give interviews to the tabloid-style newspaper *Österreich*, which had mocked him ahead of the election, a step seen by some as an attack on press freedom. While there is no official censorship, Austrian law prohibits any form of neo-Nazism or anti-Semitism, as well as the public denial, approval, or justification of Nazi crimes, including the Holocaust. There are no restrictions on internet access.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4 (-1)

Religious freedom is constitutionally guaranteed. Austrian law divides religious organizations into three legal categories: officially recognized religious societies, religious confessional communities, and associations. Many religious minority groups allege that the law impedes their legitimate claims for recognition, and demotes them to second- or third-class status.

Foreign funding for Muslim houses of worship and imams is prohibited by a 2015 law; Orthodox Christian and Jewish groups with similarly strong links to communities abroad face no such restrictions. The FPÖ has been accused of anti-Semitic rhetoric in recent years, and more recently has been criticized for stoking anti-Muslim sentiment through controversial advertising campaigns. Some Muslims in Austria have told journalists that they feel the need to keep a low profile following the formation of the new ÖVP-FPÖ government.

In January 2017, Austria passed a ban on full-face coverings, which was generally interpreted as targeting women who wear burqas and niqabs—even though very few women in Austria wear those garments. The law, which came into effect in October, was met with derision by opponents who pointed out that it also criminalized clown makeup, animal masks, and, under certain circumstances, scarves.

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 due to increasingly unequal treatment of religious groups under the law, as reflected in a ban on foreign funding for Muslim houses of worship, and a 2017 law banning the face veil.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is generally upheld, and the educational system is free from extensive political indoctrination.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

Private discussion in Austria is generally free and unrestricted. However, there have been some difficulties related to the balance between ensuring freedom of speech, and enforcing legal prohibitions on hate speech.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 12 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4

Freedom of assembly is protected in the constitution and in practice. However, the opposition SPÖ criticized the heavy police presence and tactics at antigovernment protests in December 2017.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operate without restrictions. In March 2017, then foreign minister Sebastian Kurz strongly attacked international and other NGOs that aid migrants attempting to cross the Mediterranean, accusing them of supporting human trafficking.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

Trade unions are free to organize and to strike, and they are considered an essential partner in national policymaking. Around 25 percent of Austrian employees are unionized, according to 2014 figures.

F. RULE OF LAW: 15 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 4 / 4

The judiciary is independent, and the Constitutional Court examines the compatibility of legislation with the constitution without political influence or interference.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 4 / 4

Due process generally prevails in civil and criminal matter.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 4 / 4

People in Austria are generally free from the illegitimate use of physical force, war, and insurgencies. However, terrorist threats are a concern. In January 2017, the Austrian police arrested an 18-year-old citizen who allegedly had planned a terror attack in Vienna.

Conditions in prisons generally meet high European standards.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

Some marginalized groups face difficulty exercising their human rights before the law. Strong rhetoric has been directed against refugees and migrants in recent years. Some asylum seekers can be deported while appeals are pending. The new Austrian government announced plans to tighten asylum policies in December 2017; the proposed reforms would include benefit cuts for refugees throughout Austria, and would require that refugees and migrants turn over their cash and phones when applying for asylum. Earlier, in August 2017, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had condemned “xenophobic debates” taking place in the lead-up to the October elections.

LGBT (lesbian, gay, transgender, and bisexual) people face some societal discrimination. Hate crime legislation prohibits incitement based on sexual orientation. However, no law prohibits service providers from denying services on that basis.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 15 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4

Austrian citizens enjoy freedom of movement and choice of residence. Roma and other ethnic minorities face discrimination in the labor and housing markets. The labor ministry has sought to promote integration of younger immigrants by providing German-language instruction and job training.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 4 / 4

Austrians may freely exercise the right to own property and establish businesses.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 4 / 4

In December 2017, Austria's Constitutional Court ruled that same-sex marriage will be legal starting in 2019, overturning the 2009 law that permitted civil partnerships for same-sex couples; the court ruled that the civil partnership law was not consistent with the constitutional prohibition against discrimination. Since 2016, there are no longer restrictions on same-sex couples adopting children.

The 2009 Second Protection against Violence Act increased penalties for perpetrators of domestic violence, and authorized further punitive measures against chronic offenders.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

A 1979 law guarantees women's freedom from discrimination in various areas, including the workplace. However, the income gap between men and women remains significant. According to the U.S. State Department 2017 Trafficking in Persons Report, Austria remains "a destination and transit country for men, women, and children subjected to sex trafficking and forced labor," but the government is making efforts to fight human trafficking; convictions and prosecutions for trafficking-related offenses have increased, and the government makes efforts at identifying victims among refugee and migrant populations.

Azerbaijan

Population: 9,800,000

Capital: Baku

Political Rights Rating: 7

Civil Liberties Rating: 6

Freedom Rating: 6.5

Freedom Status: Not Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Note: The numerical ratings and status listed above do not reflect conditions in Nagorno-Karabakh, which is examined in a separate report.

Overview: In Azerbaijan's authoritarian government, power remains heavily concentrated in the hands of Ilham Aliyev, who has served as president since 2003. Corruption is rampant, and following years of persecution, formal political opposition is weak. The regime has overseen an extensive crackdown on civil liberties in recent years, leaving little room for independent expression or activism.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- President Aliyev appointed his wife, Mehriban Aliyeva, as vice president in February. The post had been created via constitutional changes that were pushed through in 2016 without meaningful parliamentary debate or public consultation.
- In May, a Baku court upheld a ban on five independent media websites, on grounds that they threatened national security.
- In September, Azerbaijani police arrested dozens as part of a crackdown on LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people.
- An investigation by international media outlets exposed a \$2.9 billion money-laundering scheme and slush fund used to lobby for Azerbaijani interests in Europe, and to benefit the Azerbaijani elite. Recipients of money from the so-called Azerbaijani Laundromat reportedly included former members of the Council of Europe.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 3 / 40 (-1)**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 1 / 12****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4**

Since the early 1990s, elections have not been considered credible or competitive by international observers. In the 2013 election, President Ilham Aliyev—who succeeded his father, Heydar, in 2003—won a third term in a predictable landslide victory amid significant evidence of electoral fraud.

In February 2017, President Aliyev appointed his wife, Mehriban Aliyeva, as vice president. The post had been created via constitutional changes that were pushed through in 2016 without meaningful parliamentary debate or public consultation.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

Elections to the 125 seats in Azerbaijan's unicameral Milli Mejlis, or National Assembly, were held in 2015 amid a government campaign against criticism and dissent. The main opposition parties boycotted the vote. According to official results, Aliyev's ruling Yeni Azerbaijan Party (YAP) won 71 seats, with 41 going to independent candidates who tend to support the ruling party, and the remaining 12 split among small progovernment parties. Two international election monitoring mission from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) declined to send monitors, saying restrictions placed by the government on the number of observers permitted would make effective and credible observation impossible.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 1 / 4

The electoral laws and framework do not ensure free and fair elections. The nomination process for members of electoral commissions places the bodies under the influence of the ruling party, and commission members have been known to unlawfully interfere with the election process and obstruct the activities of observers. Complaints of electoral violations do not receive adequate or impartial treatment.

In 2016, voters approved a package of constitutional changes that were pushed through without meaningful debate or consultation; among other changes, the legislation further concentrated power within the president's office.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 2 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 1 / 4

The political environment in Azerbaijan is neither pluralistic nor competitive, and mechanisms for public participation are limited by the dominance of the president's YAP party. A number of laws passed over the past decade limit candidates' ability to organize and hold rallies. The political opposition has virtually no access to coverage on television, which remains the most popular news source in Azerbaijan.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 0 / 4

Opposition politicians and party officials are subject to arbitrary arrest on dubious charges, as well as physical violence and other forms of intimidation. Ilgar Mammadov, leader of the Republican Alternative movement, remained behind bars at the end of 2017 on politically motivated charges, in breach of a 2014 European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) decision. In December 2017, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe initiated infringement proceedings against Azerbaijan over the government's refusal to release Mammadov. In May, Gozel Bayramli, the deputy chairperson of the opposition Popular Front Party, was detained on charges of carrying \$12,000 in undeclared funds into the country; she claimed that police had planted the money, and that she was arrested for political reasons. Her predecessor, Fuad Gahramanli, was arrested in 2015 on charges including appealing for the violent overthrow of the government, in connection with his criticism of authorities on social media. In January 2017, he was sentenced to 10 years in prison. A local coalition of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) estimated that there were 158 political prisoners in the country as of August 2017.

The main opposition parties chose to boycott the 2015 parliamentary elections rather than take part in a flawed vote.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 1 / 4

The authoritarian one-party system in Azerbaijan largely excludes the public from any genuine and autonomous political participation. President Aliyev appointed his wife, Mehriban Aliyeva, as vice president in February 2017.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 0 / 4

The dominance of the ruling party limits political parties' freedom to represent a diversity of interests and views. There are no meaningful mechanisms to promote representation of minorities.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 0 / 12 (-1)

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 0 / 4

The head of government and national legislative representatives are not elected in a free or fair manner. Aliyev and the YAP determine and implement the policies of the government with little opposition.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 0 / 4 (-1)

Corruption is pervasive. In the absence of a free press and independent judiciary, officials are rarely held accountable for corrupt behavior.

In September 2017, a network of international media outlets exposed a \$2.9 billion slush fund, held within United Kingdom–registered shell companies and linked to the Azerbaijani ruling elite, including the Aliyev family. Leaked banking records from 2012–14 revealed payments to, among others, former members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), London-based lobbyists, and senior officials in the Azerbaijani government. Britain’s *Guardian* newspaper, one of the outlets that exposed the scheme, credited lobbying operations associated with the fund with a move by PACE to vote down a 2013 report critical of Azerbaijan’s rights record.

Score Change: The score declined from 1 to 0 due to the revelation of a massive money laundering scheme linked to the family of President Ilham Aliyev and other elites, and a lack of mechanisms to investigate it.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 0 / 4

Government operations are opaque. Although public officials are nominally required to submit financial disclosure reports, procedures and compliance remain unclear, and the reports are not publicly accessible. There are legal guarantees for citizens’ access to information, but also broad exceptions to the right, and authorities at all levels systematically refuse to respond to information requests.

In March 2017, Azerbaijan withdrew from the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), an international platform that promotes good governance and transparency in resource-rich countries, having been suspended due to ongoing noncompliance with EITI human rights standards. In June, the Open Government Partnership (OGP), an international initiative under which governments commit to increasing transparency and accountability to their citizens, extended Azerbaijan’s inactive status for another year due to concerns about threats to civil society.

CIVIL LIBERTES: 9 / 60 (-1)**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 2 / 16****D1. Are there free and independent media? 0 / 4**

Constitutional guarantees for press freedom are routinely and systematically violated, as the government works to maintain a tight grip on the information landscape. Defamation remains a criminal offense. Journalists—and their relatives—faced harassment, threats, violence, and intimidation by authorities. Many have been detained or imprisoned on fabricated charges, while others face travel bans. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), there were 10 journalists imprisoned in Azerbaijan as of December 2017.

State censorship of online media intensified during 2017. Legal amendments passed in March extended government control over online media, allowing blocking of websites without a court order if deemed to contain content posing a danger to the state or society. Five independent news sites, including the local service of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) were subsequently blocked, and, a Baku Court upheld authorities’ decision to do so in May.

The few critical outlets that can still disseminate information in the country face constant pressure and risk. In August 2017, a criminal case was opened against Turan, the last independent news agency operating inside the country, on charges of tax evasion; its director was arrested shortly afterward on related charges, and detained for several weeks before

claims against him were dropped. In September, the government-controlled Azad Azerbaijan TV and Radio Company (ATV) replaced its top management after a host criticized the Baku mayor on a morning television program.

Attacks and intimidation of journalists and their families continued in 2017. In April, blogger Mehman Galandarov, who was known for his criticism of the government, was found dead in his prison cell, allegedly by suicide; he had been arrested in February on trumped-up charges of drug trafficking. There was no independent autopsy or public investigation of his death, and local activists who attempted to speak to his family said it appeared they had been pressured into remaining silent. In February, 12 family members of Ordukhon Teymurkhan, a Netherlands-based dissident blogger, were detained and questioned by police. Two received month-long sentences for disobeying police. The brother-in-law of Turkel Alisoy, another Azerbaijani journalist based in the Netherlands, was arrested in November on charges of drug trafficking local activists said were fabricated. And in May, investigative journalist Afgan Mukhtarli was abducted from Tbilisi, Georgia, and transported to Azerbaijan, where he was charged with smuggling.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 0 / 4

The government restricts the practice of minority and “nontraditional” religions and denominations, largely through burdensome registration requirements and interference with the importation and distribution of printed religious materials. A number of mosques have been closed in recent years, ostensibly for registration or safety violations. In 2017, several booksellers received fines of about \$1,200 for selling unsanctioned religious literature. Jehovah’s Witnesses face continued harassment, with several meetings broken up during 2017 and some members detained. In January, 17 members of the Muslim Unity Movement (MUM), a conservative Shiite group, received prison sentences of up to 20 years for charges including conspiracy to overthrow the government. In September, 14 of them were pardoned.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 1 / 4

The authorities have long linked academic freedom to political activity. Some educators have reported being dismissed for links to opposition groups, and students have faced expulsion and other punishments for similar reasons.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 1 / 4

Law enforcement bodies are suspected of monitoring private telephone and online communications—particularly of activists, political figures, and foreign nationals—without judicial oversight. The escalation of government persecution of critics and their families has undermined the assumption of privacy and eroded the openness of private discussion. In recent years, activists have reported being targeted by spear-phishing campaigns designed to install malware on their computers or steal personal information.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 1 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 0 / 4

National law imposes tight restrictions on freedom of assembly, and under 2016 amendments, the right to free assembly is contingent on not violating “public order and morals.” Unsanctioned gatherings can draw a harsh police response and fines for participants. After

the Laundromat scandal emerged in September 2017, the main opposition organized two anticorruption protests in Baku. Although both rallies were sanctioned, at least three opposition members were detained prior to the first.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 0 / 4

Repressive laws on NGOs have been used to pressure both local and foreign organizations, many of which suspended operations when their bank accounts were frozen or their offices raided.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 1 / 4

Although the law permits the formation of trade unions and the right to strike, the majority of unions remain closely affiliated with the government, and most major industries are dominated by state-owned enterprises.

F. RULE OF LAW: 1 / 16 (-1)

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 0 / 4

The judiciary is corrupt, inefficient, and subservient to the executive. Although nominally independent, the Bar Association acts on the orders of the Ministry of Justice, and is complicit in the harassment of human rights lawyers.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

Constitutional guarantees of due process are not upheld. Arbitrary arrest and detention are common, and detainees are often held for long periods before trial. Opposition figures, journalists, and activists arrested or sentenced in recent years have reported restricted access to legal counsel, fabrication and withholding of evidence, and physical abuse.

A bill passed in October 2017 restricts court representation by lawyers who are not members of the bar, giving the politicized Bar Association full control over the legal profession and seriously limiting access to representation.

In April, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruled that the state had failed to conduct an adequate investigation into the 2005 murder of journalist Elmar Huseynov.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 0 / 4

Reports of the use of torture to extract confessions continue. Prison conditions are substandard; medical care is generally inadequate, and overcrowding is common. The ECHR ruled in May 2017 that the state had failed to protect a prisoner's right to life and to conduct an effective investigation into his death in 2006.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 0 / 4 (-1)

Members of ethnic minority groups have complained of discrimination in areas including education, employment, and housing. In September 2017, police imprisoned or fined dozens of people—police said 83 but local activists put the number as high as 200—in a coordinated crackdown on LGBT people. Some were reportedly beaten by police. All were released in early October; and some reportedly fled the country.

Score Change: The score declined from 1 to 0 due to a coordinated crackdown on LGBT people in September, under which dozens of individuals were imprisoned or fined.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 5 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 1 / 4

The government restricts freedom of movement, particularly foreign travel, for opposition politicians, journalists, and civil society activists. Courts denied appeals by such individuals against their travel bans in 2017.

People with disabilities and psychiatric patients are routinely institutionalized; there is no clear procedure to review their confinement.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 1 / 4

Property rights and free choice of residence are affected by government-backed development projects that often entail forced evictions, unlawful expropriations, and demolitions with little or no notice.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Traditional societal norms and poor economic conditions restrict women's professional roles. Domestic violence committed against women, men, and children is a problem.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

Domestic violence remains a problem, and Azerbaijan is a source, transit point, and destination for forced labor and sex trafficking. Roma children are particularly susceptible to forced labor, including by being forced to work in restaurants or as roadside vendors, or to engage in forced begging. The government has taken some efforts to combat trafficking, including by prosecuting traffickers and providing services to victims.

Bahamas

Population: 400,000

Capital: Nassau

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 1

Freedom Rating: 1.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: The Bahamas are a stable democracy where political rights and civil liberties are generally respected. However, the islands have a relatively high homicide rate, and migrants do not always receive due process under the law.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- The opposition Free National Movement (FNM) party won general elections held in May, and FNM leader Hubert Minnis became the new prime minister.
- A wave of harsh immigration raids took place after Minnis announced a December 31 deadline for irregular migrants to obtain regular status.

- Rights groups reported that a number of migrants were detained without being granted access to legal counsel, and that many of their cases were not heard by a judge within the legally required 48 hours.
- A long-awaited Freedom of Information Act was approved, but it lacked some key provisions, including whistleblower protections.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 38 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS 12 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The Bahamas are governed under a parliamentary system, and the governor general is appointed by the British monarch as head of state. The prime minister is head of government, and is appointed by the governor general; the office is usually held by the leader of the largest party in parliament or head of a parliamentary coalition. Hubert Minnis became prime minister following the victory of the FNM in May 2017 legislative elections.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

Members of the lower house of the bicameral Parliament, the 39-member House of Assembly, are directly elected to five-year terms. The 16 members of the Senate are appointed for five-year terms by the governor general based on recommendations made by the prime minister and the opposition leader.

In general elections held in May 2017, the ruling Progressive Liberal Party (PLP) was defeated by the FNM, which won 35 out of 39 seats in the House of Assembly; Minnis, the FNM leader, was then appointed prime minister. International monitors praised the electoral process, but expressed concern about an outdated voter registration system, and the replacement of the Parliamentary Commissioner and the redrawing of electoral districts just before the polls.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

The electoral process is regulated by the Parliamentary Elections Act and managed by the Parliamentary Registration Department. The Parliamentary Commissioner heads the Department and is appointed by the governor general acting on the recommendation of the prime minister after consultation with the opposition leader. In 2017, international monitors expressed concern about the designation of a new Parliamentary Commissioner just days prior to the elections.

The delimitation of electoral boundaries was approved just a few months before the elections took place. International observers expressed concern that the setting of boundaries so close to the elections could leave insufficient time for other electoral preparations, and reiterated calls for authorities to introduce standard technical criteria to enhance the Constituency Boundaries Commission's impartiality and independence in drawing electoral boundaries.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 16 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4

Political parties can organize freely, and operate unhindered. However, electoral financing is not regulated, there is no legal obligation to disclose funding sources, and there are no limits on campaign spending.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

Opposition parties operate without undue interference. Political power has alternated between the PLP and the FNM since the country achieved independence from the United Kingdom in 1973.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

Voters and candidates are generally able to exercise their political choices freely. However, a lack of campaign finance regulations leaves open the possibility for the outsized role of money in politics.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 4 / 4

Protracted and obscure citizenship and naturalization proceedings continue to affect the rights, including political rights, of people born in the Bahamas to foreign parents.

Cultural norms may discourage women from participating in politics, and though the 2017 polls saw an increase in women candidates, women remain underrepresented. The government and political parties generally have not taken specific action to encourage the political participation of women.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 10 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4

Freely elected officials are generally able to determine national policies in a free and unhindered manner.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4

The country's anticorruption mechanisms are relatively weak, and there is no agency specifically empowered to handle allegations of government corruption. Domestic transparency advocates have alleged that widespread government corruption has been a significant contributor to a recent economic downturn. The Minnis government has initiated several prosecutions of government officials suspected of corruption.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 3 / 4

Government procurement lacks transparency and political parties and campaigns are not required to disclose their finances. A long-awaited Freedom of Information Act was passed in February 2017 but lacked key provisions, including whistleblower protection.

Legislators and other high-ranking public officials are required to disclose their income and assets under the Public Disclosure Act of 1976, but the requirements are not well enforced.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 53 / 60**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 15 / 16****D1. Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4**

Press freedom in the Bahamas is constitutionally guaranteed and generally respected in practice. However, defamation is still considered a crime. The country's privately owned newspapers and radio broadcasters freely express a variety of views, although partisanship is not uncommon in many media outlets, and the government has been accused of favoring state-owned media through advertising funds.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Religious freedom is generally respected.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic institutions are generally free from political pressure and other interference.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

People can freely express personal views in private and in public. Defamation is still considered a criminal offense punishable with imprisonment, but this law is rarely invoked.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 12 / 12**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4**

Freedom of assembly is protected by the constitution, and the government respects this right in practice.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Freedom of association is generally protected, and there is no specific legislation governing registration procedures for civil society organizations. A variety of nongovernmental organizations operate in the country.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

Labor, business, and professional organizations are generally free from government interference. Unions have the right to strike, and collective bargaining is prevalent.

F. RULE OF LAW: 13 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 4 / 4 (+1)**

The judicial system is headed by the Supreme Court and a court of appeals, with the additional right of appeal to the Privy Council in London under certain circumstances. The Bahamian judiciary is predominantly independent, and there have been no major reports in recent years of attempts to use political or other influence to secure favorable rulings.

Score Change: The score improved from 3 to 4 because the judiciary is generally independent, and there have been no major reports of individuals seeking to leverage political or other influence to secure favorable rulings.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 3 / 4 (-1)

Due process in civil and criminal matters generally prevails. However, the government only appoints counsel to defendants in capital cases, leaving some people without legal representation.

Additionally, in 2017, rights groups reported that a number of migrants were detained without being granted access to legal counsel or bail, and that their cases did not go before courts within the legally required 48 hours. At least two Bahaman-born children, according to the groups, were deported to Haiti with their mother under such circumstances. There were reports of police entering the homes and shelters of migrants without probable cause, and sometimes soliciting bribes.

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 due to persistent reports of authorities denying migrants due process under the law.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 4 / 4

Homicide and violent crimes rates in the Bahamas continue to be among the highest in the region. However, state security agents generally do not engage in the illegal use of force against civilians, and the population is not threatened by large-scale violence or insurgencies.

Prison conditions are poor, and reports of violence against prisoners by guards continue

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

The Constitution does not grant equal rights between men and women in the transmission of nationality to their children and spouses, effectively denying many Bahaman-born people the rights and access to services associated with citizenship.

Despite a change in government, the harsh immigration policies enacted in 2014 are still in effect, and police actions against migrants surged after Prime Minister Minnis announced that all irregular migrants had until December 31, 2017, to become regularized, or be “aggressively pursued and deported.” A serious backlog of Bahamian nationality applications for individuals of Haitian descent born in the Bahamas has become more problematic in face of this context. Allegations of inhumane conditions at migrant detention centers have persisted. Civil society groups have reported that individuals held at Carmichael Road immigration detention center are often unable to receive family visits, and guards have forced them to pay to receive food or other supplies brought by family members. Increased enforcement of immigration measures, and aggressive rhetoric from Minnis and others, have served to exacerbate stigma and discrimination against Haitian-Bahamans and Haitian migrants.

Discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity is not prohibited by law, and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people report discrimination in employment and housing.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 13 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4

The freedom of movement is protected. However, the immigration policies adopted by the previous government are still enforced and have had an impact on people of Haitian descent in the exercise of their individual rights, including their ability to move freely and

choose their places of employment and education. In 2017, roadblocks were erected in some places as part of an immigration crackdown.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 4 / 4

The country has a strong private sector and the economy relies mostly on tourism and financial services.⁵ Individuals are free to establish businesses subject to legal requirements.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

The government does not place explicit restrictions on social freedoms. Violence against women, including domestic violence and marital rape, constitutes a serious issue in the country. The government has taken steps to address this issue, including by establishing the Department of Gender and Family Affairs in 2016.

Same-sex sexual activity is legal.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

The Bahamas is a source, destination, and transit country for men, women, and children for forced labor and sexual exploitation. The government fully complies with minimum international standards to address the problem and has made significant efforts to prosecute traffickers. Migrant workers, many of whom arrive in the Bahamas to work in agricultural and domestic service industries, are particularly vulnerable to exploitation.

Bahrain

Population: 1,400,000

Capital: Manama

Political Rights Rating: 7

Civil Liberties Rating: 6

Freedom Rating: 6.5

Freedom Status: Not Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: Once a promising model for political reform and democratic transition, Bahrain has become one of the Middle East's most repressive states. Since violently crushing a popular prodemocracy protest movement in 2011, the Sunni-led monarchy has systematically eliminated a broad range of political rights and civil liberties, dismantled the political opposition, and cracked down harshly on persistent dissent in the Shiite population.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In April, the king approved a constitutional amendment that enabled military trials for civilians who “threaten the security of the state.”
- The government dissolved the country's largest secular opposition political society, the National Democratic Action Society, in May.

⁵ http://www.caribbeanhotelandtourism.com/wp-content/uploads/data_center/destinations/Bahamas-IDB-BahamasPrivateSectorAssessmentReportOct2014.pdf

- In June, the authorities shuttered *Al-Wasat*, the country's only independent and critical newspaper, indefinitely.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 2 / 40**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 2 / 12****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4**

The 2002 constitution gives the king power over the executive, legislative, and judicial authorities. The monarch appoints and dismisses the prime minister and cabinet members, who are responsible to him rather than the legislature. Khalifa bin Salman al-Khalifa, who has served as prime minister since independence from Britain in 1971, is the uncle of the current king, Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4

The king appoints the 40-member Consultative Council, the upper house of the National Assembly. The lower house, or Council of Representatives, consists of 40 elected members serving four-year terms.

Al-Wefaq, a largely Shiite group that has long been the kingdom's main opposition political society, boycotted legislative elections in 2014. Largely progovernment independents won 37 of the 40 lower house seats, and the remainder went to two Sunni Muslim political societies. The government reported voter turnout of more than 50 percent, while the opposition estimated that less than 30 percent of eligible voters participated. The two sides also accused each other of engaging in voter intimidation.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 1 / 4

Bahrain's electoral framework is unfair, with electoral districts deliberately designed to underrepresent Shiites, who form a majority of the citizen population. The government has also allegedly drawn district borders to put certain political societies, including leftist and Sunni Islamist groups, at a disadvantage. The government directorate responsible for administering elections is headed by the justice minister, a member of the royal family, and is not an independent body.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 0 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 0 / 4**

Formal political parties are illegal, and a 2005 law makes it illegal to form political associations based on class, profession, or religion. A 2016 amendment bans serving religious clerics from engaging in political activity. For many years, political societies were allowed to operate after registering with the government, but the authorities have recently shuttered the country's main opposition societies. Al-Wefaq was forcibly disbanded in 2016 for allegedly encouraging violence. Bahrain's second-largest opposition group, the secular National Democratic Action Society (Wa'ad), was banned in May 2017 after it criticized the execution of three men on terrorism charges in January and expressed solidarity with Al-Wefaq following its dissolution.

The regime has also cracked down on opposition leaders. Al-Wefaq's general secretary, Ali Salman, was arrested on various incitement charges in 2014 and fought a series of legal

battles, finally receiving a four-year prison sentence from the Court of Cassation in April 2017. However, in November he faced new charges for allegedly conspiring with Qatar's government in 2011. Ibrahim Sharif, the former general secretary of Wa'ad, was charged in March 2017 for criticizing the government on Twitter; he had already served several years in prison since 2011.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 0 / 4

The ruling family maintains a monopoly on political power, and the system excludes the possibility of a change in government through elections. Shiite opposition forces chose to boycott the 2014 legislative elections rather than participate in an unfair process, and the recent bans on Al-Wefaq and Wa'ad further reduced the possibility that the opposition could increase its representation in the 2018 elections.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 0 / 4

The monarchy generally excludes the public from any meaningful political participation. Since 2011 it has used the security forces to isolate the country's Shiite population and suppress political dissent.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 0 / 4

Although Shiites make up a majority of the country's citizens, they have long been vastly underrepresented in both chambers of the National Assembly and the cabinet, and the Sunni-led regime is committed to preventing them from organizing independently to advance their political interests. Women formally enjoy full political rights, but they are marginalized in practice, holding just three seats in the Council of Representatives and nine in the upper house. Noncitizens make up just over half of the total population and have no political rights.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 3 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 1 / 4

The king and other unelected officials hold most authority over the development and implementation of laws and policies. The National Assembly may propose legislation to the government, but it is the government that drafts and submits the bills for consideration by the legislature. With the main opposition groups no longer participating in the National Assembly, the body has become increasingly moribund.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

There are some laws in place to combat corruption, but enforcement is weak, and high-ranking officials suspected of corruption are rarely punished.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 0 / 4

Parliamentary proceedings are public, but the government issues orders and laws without providing insight or allowing public consultation on their development. There is no law guaranteeing public access to government information, and officials are not obliged to disclose their assets or income.

ADDITIONAL DISCRETIONARY POLITICAL RIGHTS QUESTION

Is the government or occupying power deliberately changing the ethnic composition of a country or territory so as to destroy a culture or tip the political balance in favor of another group? -3 / 0

The government has made concerted efforts to erode the Shiite citizen majority and tip the country's demographic balance in favor of the Sunni minority, mostly by recruiting foreign-born Sunnis to serve in the security forces and become citizens. Meanwhile, hundreds of Bahrainis have had their citizenship revoked in recent years, including a number of Shiite leaders and activists. Since 2011, the government has maintained a heavy security presence in primarily Shiite villages. Security personnel restrict the movements of Shiite citizens and periodically destroy their property.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 10 / 60**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 2 / 16****D1. Are there free and independent media? 0 / 4**

The government owns all broadcast media outlets, and the private owners of Bahrain's main newspapers have close ties to the state. Self-censorship is encouraged by the vaguely worded Press Law, which allows the state to imprison journalists for criticizing the king or Islam or for threatening national security. Insulting the king is punishable by up to seven years in prison. The government continues to block a number of opposition websites. A 2016 edict regulates newspapers' use of the internet and social media to disseminate content, and requires the outlets to apply for a one-year renewable license. Authorities blocked access to Qatari news outlets as diplomatic relations with Qatar broke down during 2017, and a June decision by the Interior Ministry prohibited published expressions of sympathy or support for Qatar, with a penalty of up to five years in prison.

Journalists continued to face legal and bureaucratic obstacles to their work in practice. France 24 correspondent Nazeha Saeed, originally charged in 2016, was fined in May 2017 for working for foreign outlets without a license. Bahraini authorities have refused to renew the credentials of at least four other Bahraini journalists working with foreign media outlets. In June, the government shut down the country's only independent newspaper, *Al-Wasat*, citing its coverage of antigovernment protests in Morocco. Six journalists remained behind bars as of December 2017, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 1 / 4

Islam is the state religion. However, non-Muslim minorities are generally free to practice their faiths. Muslim and non-Muslim religious groups are required to register with government ministries, though the government has not actively punished groups that operate without permits.

The Islamic Ulema Council, a Shiite group, was banned in 2014. Shiite clerics and community leaders often face harassment, interrogation, prosecution, and imprisonment, typically due to allegations that they have incited sectarian hatred or violence. Some Sunnis have also been charged with such offenses. The government revoked the citizenship of senior Shiite cleric Isa Qassim in 2016, and he was given a suspended one-year prison sentence for money laundering in May 2017. Other Shiite clergy were among those detained or questioned for allegedly participating in a sustained sit-in protest around Qassim's home that led to clashes with security forces. Protests and police restrictions periodically obstruct access to mosques.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 0 / 4

Academic freedom is not formally restricted, but scholars who criticize the government are subject to dismissal. In 2011, a number of faculty members and administrators were fired for supporting the call for democracy, and hundreds of students were expelled. Those who remained were forced to sign loyalty pledges.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 1 / 4

There are strong suspicions that security forces use networks of informers, and that the government monitors the personal communications of activists, critics, and opposition members. Users of social media have faced criminal charges for their online comments.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 1 / 12**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 0 / 4**

Citizens must obtain a permit to hold demonstrations, and a variety of onerous restrictions make it difficult to organize a legal gathering in practice. Police regularly use force to break up political protests, most of which occur in Shiite villages. Participants can face long jail terms, particularly if the demonstrations involve clashes with security personnel. In May 2017, security forces attempted to clear sit-in protesters from around the home of Isa Qassim in the village of Diraz, killing five of the protesters and arresting more than 280 others amid the clashes that ensued.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 0 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations are prohibited from operating without a permit, and authorities have broad discretion to deny or revoke permits. Bahraini human rights defenders and their family members are subject to harassment, intimidation, and prosecution. Nabeel Rajab, head of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights, remained in detention throughout 2017 after his arrest in 2016, and in July he was sentenced to two years in prison for disseminating “false news” that undermined the “prestige and status” of the kingdom. Rajab had suffered harsh treatment in prison and faced more than 15 years of additional imprisonment on other pending charges, including for his criticism of Bahrain’s support for the Saudi-led military campaign in Yemen.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 1 / 4

Bahrainis have the right to establish independent labor unions, but workers must give two weeks’ notice before a strike, and strikes are banned in a variety of economic sectors. Trade unions cannot operate in the public sector, and collective-bargaining rights are limited even in the private sector. Harassment and firing of unionist workers occurs in practice. Household servants, agricultural workers, and temporary workers do not have the right to join or form unions.

F. RULE OF LAW: 1 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 0 / 4**

The king appoints all judges and heads the Supreme Judicial Council, and courts are subject to government pressure. The country’s judicial system is seen as corrupt and biased in favor of the royal family and its allies.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

Law enforcement officers reportedly violate due process during arrests and detention, in part by obstructing detainees' access to attorneys. Detainees are sometimes held incommunicado in practice. Judicial proceedings often put defendants at a disadvantage, with judges denying bail requests or restricting defense attorneys' attendance or arguments without explanation. The government claims it does not hold political prisoners, but scores of opposition figures, human rights and democracy advocates, and ordinary citizens have been jailed for their political views and activities.

In January 2017, the government restored the National Security Agency's power to make arrests, which had been revoked in a 2011 reform; the domestic intelligence agency has been accused of torture and other abuses. In April, the constitution was amended to permit military trials for civilians in security-related cases, further threatening due process rights. In December, a military court sentenced a Shiite soldier and five Shiite civilians to death for alleged terrorism offenses.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 0 / 4

Torture is criminalized, but detainees frequently report mistreatment by security forces and prison officials, who are rarely held accountable for abuse. The police ombudsman's office has failed to provide a meaningful check on such impunity.

In January 2017, three Shiite men were executed by firing squad for allegedly killing police officers in 2014. The men received an unfair trial and were reportedly subjected to torture. The executions were the first in the kingdom since 2010.

Police have been targeted in small bombings and armed attacks in recent years. Four officers were reportedly killed over the course of 2017, including one in a bomb attack on a police bus in October.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 0 / 4

Women enjoy legal equality on some issues, and gender-based discrimination in employment is prohibited. Nevertheless, discrimination is common in practice, and women are generally at a disadvantage in matters of family law.

In addition to the discrimination faced by certain ethnic communities, particularly Shiites of both Arab and Persian ethnicity, discrimination based on sexual orientation is common. The law does not provide protections against such bias, though same-sex sexual activity is not criminalized for those aged 21 and older.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 6 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 1 / 4

Authorities restrict movement inside the country for residents of largely Shiite villages outside Manama, where the government maintains a heavy security presence. The government also obstructs foreign travel by numerous opposition figures and activists. In 2017, officials prevented activists from traveling to participate in a UN human rights review of Bahrain.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

Although registered businesses are largely free to operate, obtaining approval can be difficult in practice. Legal reforms in recent years have sought to lower the capital requirements and other obstacles to registering and operating businesses. For the wealthy elites who dominate the business sector, property rights are generally respected and expropriation is rare. However, Shiite citizens encounter difficulties obtaining affordable housing and in some cases face bans on purchasing land. Women may inherit property, but their rights are not equal to those of men.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Personal status issues such as marriage, divorce, and child custody are governed by a unified family law ratified by the king in July 2017. Previously only a Sunni family code was in place, with Shiite personal status matters adjudicated by Shiite religious courts according to their interpretation of Islamic jurisprudence. Some Shiite leaders objected to the new law. The law's provisions are still based on Sharia (Islamic law) principles that put women at a disadvantage on many issues.

Citizenship generally must be inherited from a Bahraini father, and foreign men married to Bahraini women do not have access to naturalization.

Accused rapists can avoid punishment by marrying their victims, and spousal rape is not specifically outlawed. Adultery is illegal, and those who kill a spouse caught in the act of adultery are eligible for lenience in sentencing.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

Some employers subject migrant workers to forced labor, and there are reports that abusers withhold workers' documentation in order to prevent them from leaving or reporting abuse to the authorities. The government has taken steps to combat human trafficking in recent years, but efforts to investigate and prosecute perpetrators remain weak. Bahrain rolled out a new "flexible" work permit in July 2017 that would allow some expatriate workers to be their own sponsors. However, the permit is prohibitively expensive for household workers and laborers who have been historically exploited.

Bangladesh

Population: 162,900,000

Capital: Dhaka

Political Rights Rating: 4

Civil Liberties Rating: 4

Freedom Rating: 4.0

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: The ruling Awami League (AL) has consolidated political power through sustained harassment of the opposition and those perceived to be allied with it, as well as of critical media and civil society voices. Security forces carry out a range of human right abuses with near impunity, while Islamist extremist groups threaten and attack those with dissident views.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- The dominance of the ruling Awami League (AL) party remained unchallenged. The opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) was hampered by arrests and harassment of key party officials and activists, as was the Islamist Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) party.
- Following a crackdown on extremist militant groups in mid-2016, attacks by these groups lessened, but human rights abuses such as extrajudicial executions and secret detentions targeted not only suspected extremists, but also opposition political factions and other dissident voices.
- Strikes by garment workers in December 2016 led to a crackdown on workers and labor rights activists, with hundreds fired from their jobs and union leaders arrested.
- Restrictive laws such as the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Act were used to detain and charge several dozen individuals for online speech.
- Starting in August, a crackdown in neighboring Myanmar led to a massive influx of more than 650,000 Rohingya refugees along Bangladesh's southern border, creating a humanitarian crisis that the government struggled to respond to.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 19 / 40 (-1)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 7 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4

A largely ceremonial president, who serves for five years, is elected by the legislature. The leader of the party that wins the most seats in the unicameral National Parliament assumes the position of prime minister and wields effective power. Given the conditions under which the 2014 elections were held, the legitimacy of the current prime minister, Sheikh Hasina, is questionable.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4

Due to an opposition boycott of the 2014 elections, the majority of seats (153) were uncontested, ensuring an AL victory. The AL won 234 parliamentary seats, the Jatiya Party (JP) won 34, and independents and minority parties captured the remainder.

In addition, a high level of electoral violence—some of which directly targeted members of the country's Hindu and Christian minority groups—and political intimidation hindered turnout. Western monitoring groups declined to send election observers and criticized the conditions under which the polls were held.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4

Under the electoral framework, members of the National Parliament are elected by universal secret ballot to five-year terms; of 350 total members, 300 are directly elected. The independence of the Election Commission and its ability to investigate complaints has been questioned both by opposition parties and outside observers, and the BNP and 17 allied parties boycotted the 2014 national elections to protest what they said were unfair circumstances.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 7 / 16 (-1)**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 2 / 4**

Bangladesh has a two-party system in which power alternates between political coalitions led by the AL and BNP; third parties have traditionally had difficulty achieving traction. Both parties are non-democratic in terms of internal structure, and are led by families that have competed to lead Bangladesh since independence, along with a small coterie of advisers. The constitution bans religiously based political parties, and the JI party was prohibited from taking part in the 2014 elections because of its overtly Islamist charter.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 1 / 4

The primary opposition BNP and JI parties have been weakened by regular harassment and arrests of key members. Many BNP party leaders are in prison, under house arrest, living in hiding or exile, or facing serious legal charges that could bar them from office, including BNP head Khaleda Zia. Meanwhile, the AL government continued to harass JI leaders, and implemented verdicts handed down against them by the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT).

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 2 / 4

The rival AL and BNP parties dominate politics and limit political choices for those who question internal party structures or hierarchy, or who would create alternative parties or political groupings. Severe levels of antagonism between the two party leaders as well as lower-level cadres ensures that the overall level of political violence remains high; in 2017, the human rights group Odhikar registered 77 deaths and more than 4,635 people injured as a result of inter- or intraparty clashes.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 2 / 4 (-1)

In the national parliament, 50 seats are allotted to women, who are elected by political parties based on their overall share of elected seats, and women lead both main political parties. Religious minorities remain underrepresented in politics and state agencies, though the AL government has appointed several members of such groups to leadership positions. Societal discrimination against religious minorities, women, and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) communities limited their participation in politics.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 due to a lack of Hindu representation in politics, and the inability of the LGBT population to openly serve in government and therefore to have full representation.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 5 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 2 / 4**

Policy is set by the ruling AL party, with few checks on its processes or decision-making. Regular opposition boycotts of the National Parliament—and since the 2014 election boycott, the complete shutout of the main opposition party from that body—have

significantly hampered the legislature's role in providing thorough scrutiny of or debate on government policies, budgets, and proposed legislation.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

Under the AL government, anticorruption efforts have been weakened by politicized enforcement and subversion of the judicial process. In particular, the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) has become ineffective and subject to overt political interference. The government continues to bring or pursue politicized corruption cases against BNP party leaders.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

Endemic corruption and criminality, weak rule of law, limited bureaucratic transparency, and political polarization have long undermined government accountability. The 2009 Right to Information Act mandates public access to all information held by public bodies and overrides secrecy legislation. Although it has been unevenly implemented, journalists and civil society activists have had some success in using it to obtain information from local governing authorities.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 26 / 60 (-1)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 7 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4

Media face myriad forms of pressure, including the use of lawsuits and regulatory restrictions, and harassment of and physical attacks against reporters and bloggers. The use of criminal defamation lawsuits by ruling party loyalists against independent and opposition news outlets and journalists remained a concern in 2017, with a number of cases reported. The 2014 National Broadcasting Policy allows for restrictions on coverage that is critical of the government or security forces or that is determined to threaten national security.

The threat of physical reprisals against bloggers and publishers in connection with their work remains high; Islamist militant groups linked to either Al-Qaeda or the Islamic State were frequently behind the threats. A climate of impunity remains the norm, with little progress made on ensuring justice for the string of killings that has taken place since 2015, and dozens of bloggers remain in hiding or exile. Although no murders took place in 2017, outspoken individuals continue to receive serious threats, such as those leveled against activist Sultana Kamal in May.

Various forms of artistic expression, including books and films, are occasionally banned or censored.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 2 / 4

As reaffirmed by a 2011 constitutional amendment, Bangladesh is a secular state, but Islam is designated as the official religion. Although religious minorities have the right to worship freely, they face societal discrimination as well as harassment and legal repercussions for proselytizing. Members of minority groups—including Hindus, Christians, and Shiite and Ahmadiyya Muslims—and their houses of worship are occasionally the targets of harassment and violent attacks. Those with secular or nonconformist views can face societal opprobrium and possible attacks from hardline Islamist groups.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 2 / 4

While authorities largely respect academic freedom, research on sensitive political and religious topics is reportedly discouraged. Political polarization at many universities, including occasional clashes involving the armed student wings of the three main parties, inhibits education and access to services. Changes made to the Bengali-language textbooks used widely throughout the educational system and distributed in January 2017—at the behest of Islamist groups, who demanded the removal of content they claimed was “atheistic”—raised concerns among intellectuals regarding the influence of these groups over government policy and standards.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 2 / 4

Open private discussion of sensitive religious and political issues is restrained by fear of harassment. Censorship of digital content and surveillance of telecommunications and social media have become increasingly common. The ICT Act was used to arrest and charge several dozen individuals for exercising freedom of expression online in 2017, including journalists and activists.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 5 / 12 (-1)

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 2 / 4

The constitution provides for the rights of assembly and association, but the government regularly bans gatherings of more than five people. Many demonstrations took place in 2017, though authorities sometimes try to prevent rallies by arresting party activists, and protesters are frequently injured and occasionally killed during clashes in which police use excessive force.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 2 / 4

Many NGOs operate in Bangladesh and are able to function without onerous restrictions, but the use of foreign funds must be cleared by the NGO Affairs Bureau, which can also approve or reject individual projects. The 2016 Foreign Donations (Voluntary Activities) Regulation Act, which made it more difficult for NGOs to obtain foreign funds and gave officials broad authority to deregister NGOs that make “derogatory” comments about government bodies or the constitution, has had a negative impact on the sector in 2017, according to local sources. Groups such as the leading human rights NGO Odhikar, which is deemed to be overly critical of the government on rights issues, are regularly denied permission for proposed projects and are subject to repeated instances of harassment and surveillance.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 1 / 4 (-1)

Legal reforms in 2015 eased restrictions on the formation of unions. However, union leaders who attempted to organize or unionize workers continued to face dismissal or physical intimidation, and organizations that advocate for labor rights, such as the Bangladesh Center for Workers’ Solidarity (BCWS), have also faced increased harassment. Worker grievances fuel unrest at factories, particularly in the garment industry, where protests against low wages and unsafe working conditions are common. Beginning at the end of 2016, strikes by garment workers prompted a widespread crackdown, with mass arrests of labor rights activists and firings of hundreds of workers, and attempts to shutter a BCWS community center.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 due to the ongoing crackdown on manufacturing associations and garment union federation activists in the wake of a late 2016 strike.

F. RULE OF LAW: 5 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 2 / 4**

Politicization of the judiciary remains an issue despite a 1999 Supreme Court directive ordering the separation of the judiciary from the executive. Political authorities continue to make appointments to the higher judiciary, in some cases demonstrating an overt political bias. Harassment of witnesses and the dismissal of cases following political pressure are also of concern.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

Individuals' ability to access justice is compromised by endemic corruption within the court system as well as severe backlogs, with several million pending cases. Pretrial detention is often lengthy, and many defendants lack counsel. Suspects are routinely subject to arbitrary arrest and detention, demands for bribes, and physical abuse by police. Meanwhile, criminal cases against ruling party activists are regularly withdrawn on the grounds of "political consideration," undermining the judicial process and entrenching a culture of impunity.

The 1974 Special Powers Act permits arbitrary detention without charge, and the criminal procedure code allows detention without a warrant. A 2009 counterterrorism law includes a broad definition of terrorism and generally does not meet international standards. Concerns have repeatedly been raised that the current International Crimes Tribunal's procedures and verdicts do not meet international standards on issues such as victim and witness protection, the presumption of innocence, defendant access to counsel, and the right to bail.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 1 / 4

Terrorist attacks by Islamist militant groups dramatically lessened in 2017 following a crackdown on these groups in the latter half of 2016 during which more than 15,000 people were arrested. The South Asia Terrorism Portal counted only 13 civilian and security-personnel fatalities related to Islamist extremism in 2017, almost a quarter the number of the previous year.

However, a range of human rights abuses by law enforcement agencies—including enforced disappearances, custodial deaths, arbitrary arrests, and torture—continue unabated. A July 2017 Human Rights Watch report documented the use of detention and enforced disappearance against political opponents, despite the government's promise to reform the practice, with more than 300 cases reported since 2009. One high-profile detainee, Humam Quader Chowdhury, was released in March 2017 after more than six months, but others who have been convicted by the tribunal remain unaccounted for. The incidence of custodial deaths has remained high. Odhikar reported a total of 154 extrajudicial killings perpetrated by law enforcement agencies in 2017, in addition to 86 enforced disappearances. In one case, Mubashar Hassan, an academic and policy analyst whose work focused on extremism, was disappeared in early November and only released from state custody in late December.

Prison conditions are extremely poor; severe overcrowding is common, and juveniles are often incarcerated with adults.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

Members of ethnic and religious minority groups face some discrimination under law as well as harassment and violations of their rights in practice. Indigenous people in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) remain subject to physical attacks, property destruction, land grabs by Bengali settlers, and occasional abuses by security forces.

Bangladesh has hosted roughly 270,000 ethnic Rohingyas who fled from Myanmar beginning in the 1990s. The vast majority do not have official refugee status; suffer from a complete lack of access to health care, employment, and education; and are subject to substantial harassment. In response to a sharp escalation in violence directed against Rohingyas in Rakhine state in August 2017, hundreds of thousands poured across the border into Bangladesh, creating a humanitarian crisis, with an estimated 650,000 arrivals by December 2017.

A criminal ban on same-sex sexual acts is rarely enforced, but societal discrimination remains the norm, and dozens of attacks on LGBT individuals are reported every year. In May 2017, police arrested 27 men at a community gathering. A number remain in exile following the April 2016 murder of Xulhaz Mannan, a prominent LGBT activist, by Islamist militants. Despite legal recognition for transgender people as an optional “third gender,” they face persecution.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 9 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4

The ability to move within the country is relatively unrestricted, as is foreign travel, though there are some rules on travel into and around the CHT districts by foreigners. There are few legal restrictions regarding education or employment, but socioeconomic barriers to mobility remain in practice.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

Property rights are unevenly enforced, and the ability to engage freely in private economic activity is somewhat constrained. Corruption and bribery, inadequate infrastructure, and official bureaucratic and regulatory hurdles hinder business activities throughout the country. State involvement and interference in the economy is considerable. The 2011 Vested Properties Return Act allows Hindus to reclaim land that the government or other individuals seized, but it has been unevenly implemented. Tribal minorities have little control over land decisions affecting them, and Bengali-speaking settlers continue to illegally encroach on tribal lands in the CHT. A commission set up in 2009 to allocate land to indigenous tribes has suffered from delays.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Under personal status laws affecting all religions, women have fewer marriage, divorce, and inheritance rights than men, and face discrimination in social services and employment. Rape, acid throwing, and other forms of violence against women occur regularly despite laws offering some level of protection. A law requiring rape victims to file police reports and obtain medical certificates within 24 hours of the crime in order to press charges prevents most cases from reaching the courts. Giving or receiving dowry is a criminal offense, but coercive requests remain a problem; Odhikar reported more than 250 cases of dowry-related violence against women in 2017. A high rate of early marriage persists, with 52 percent of girls married by age 18, according to UN statistics for 2016. Despite a stated government

commitment in 2014 to abolish the practice by 2041, in February 2017 parliament approved a law that would permit girls under the age of 18 to marry under certain circumstances, reversing a previous legal ban on the practice.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Socioeconomic inequality is widespread. Working conditions in the garment industry remain extremely unsafe despite the renewal of a legally binding accord between unions and clothing brands to improve safety practices; a fire at a textile in September 2017 claimed at least six lives. Comprehensive reforms of the industry are hampered by the fact that a growing number of factory owners are also legislators or influential businesspeople.

Bangladesh remains both a major supplier of and transit point for trafficking victims, with tens of thousands of people trafficked each year. Women and children are trafficked both overseas and within the country for the purposes of domestic servitude and sexual exploitation, while men are trafficked primarily for labor abroad. A comprehensive 2013 antitrafficking law provides protection to victims and increased penalties for traffickers, but enforcement remains inadequate.

Barbados

Population: 300,000

Capital: Bridgetown

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 1

Freedom Rating: 1.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Barbados is a democracy that regularly holds competitive elections and upholds civil liberties. Challenges include official corruption and a lack of government transparency, discrimination against the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) population, violent crime, and poverty.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Several new political parties formed during the year, and will challenge the dominant Barbados Labour Party (BLP) and Democratic Labour Party (DLP) in the 2018 elections.
- In April, the judiciary adopted a protocol to prevent gender discrimination in the administration of justice.
- In December, legislation requiring workplaces to articulate a policy against sexual harassment was enacted.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 38 / 40 (-2)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The prime minister, usually the leader of the largest party in parliament, is head of government. The British monarch is head of state, and is represented by a governor general.

Freundel Stuart of the DLP was appointed prime minister after the DLP narrowly won the 2013 general elections, which were regarded as competitive and credible. Philip Greaves was sworn in as governor general in July 2017.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

Members of the 30-member House of Assembly, the lower house of the bicameral Parliament, are directly elected for five-year terms. The governor general appoints the 21 members of the Senate: 12 on the advice of the prime minister, 2 on the advice of the leader of the opposition, and the remaining 7 at their own discretion.

Legislative elections were held in 2013. In a narrow win, the governing DLP took 16 of 30 seats in the House of Assembly. The BLP, under former prime minister Owen Arthur, took the remaining 14 seats. The polls were peaceful and stakeholders accepted their results.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

The independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission oversees elections in Barbados in a professional manner. Its five commissioners, chosen on the basis of expertise, are selected by the prime minister and the opposition for a maximum term of five years.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 16 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4

Political parties form and operate freely. As the 2018 general elections approach, new parties have emerged to challenge the traditionally dominant BLP and DLP. These include the United Progressive Party, the Barbados Integrity Movement, and Solutions Barbados.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

Opposition parties have a realistic chance of gaining power through elections, and power has historically rotated between the BLP and DLP. The results of polling by the Caribbean Development Research Services (CADRES), released in June 2017, suggested that the BLP was on course to defeat Stuart's DLP by a wide margin in the 2018 elections.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

Voters and candidates are generally able to express their political choices without interference from actors not democratically accountable. However, the governor general—who represents the British monarch—appoints one-third of senators, and there have been some calls for amendments that would remove the British monarch as head of state.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 4 / 4

Barbados' population is fully enfranchised, with adult citizens, Commonwealth citizens, and foreigners with seven years' residency able to vote. Laws protect the political rights of women, but commonly held societal attitudes can discourage women from running for office, and women actively participating in politics face marginalization. Women comprise

only 17 percent of the House of Assembly. However, a woman, Mia Mottley, serves as the head of the main opposition BLP.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 10 / 12 (-2)

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4

The prime minister and members of the national assembly are largely unimpeded in their ability to craft and implement policy, notwithstanding the powerful role played by labor unions.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4 (-1)

Barbados's government has failed to implement key anticorruption measures, even as allegations of official corruption continue. Barbados has not yet enacted promised Integrity in Public Life legislation, and despite signing the Prevention of Corruption Act into law in 2012, it is yet to be proclaimed, and thus is not currently enforceable. When the transparency group Integrity Group Barbados in December 2017 called for the Stuart government to proclaim the law, the Stuart government cited anticorruption legislation passed in 1929 as providing adequate protections. Barbados has yet to sign or ratify the Inter-American Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters, or ratify the UN Convention on Corruption and the Inter-American Convention against Corruption.

Meanwhile, civil society groups and some individuals in the business community have continued to voice concerns about corruption in Barbados. In August 2017, UPP leader Lynette Eastmond alleged that some political figures were protecting drug traffickers, and exercised personal control over the police. In 2016, former chief justice David Simmons told the press that corruption had increased in both the public and private sectors, and called for a local chapter of Transparency International to be set up in Barbados. Civil society groups claim that direct allegations of corruption are rare because potential whistleblowers are unwilling to risk costly defamation suits.

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 because Barbados has failed to implement key anticorruption measures, even as allegations of official corruption continue.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 3 / 4 (-1)

The government largely operates with openness and transparency. However, Barbados lacks key laws that would help ensure transparency—notably a long-promised Freedom of Information Act, and a measure that would require public officials to disclose income and assets. Information on the budget is difficult to obtain.

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 because the government has yet to implement a long-promised Freedom of Information Act, and the country lacks other laws that would help ensure government transparency.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 58 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 16 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 4 / 4

The media are free from censorship and government control. Newspapers, including the two major dailies, are privately owned. Four private and two government-run radio stations operate in the country. The government-owned Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) presents a wide range of political viewpoints.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

The constitution guarantees freedom of religion, which is widely respected for mainstream religious groups. However, members of Barbados's small Rastafarian and Muslim communities have reported discrimination.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is respected, though members of the government occasionally disparage academics who criticize government policy.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

Freedom of speech is largely respected in Barbados, with commentators and members of the public free to express their views on most topics without encountering negative consequences.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 12 / 12**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4**

Barbados's legal framework guarantees freedom of assembly, which is upheld in practice. A number of protests took place peacefully in 2017, with large crowds attending opposition rallies and a demonstration against a tax hike.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operate without restriction or surveillance. There are a number of NGOs active in the country, which are primarily active around cultural, homelessness, environmental, and women's issues.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

The right to form labor unions is respected, and unions are active and politically influential. Several major strikes took place peacefully in 2017. In June, workers affiliated with the island's four largest unions called a general strike in response to a hike in import taxes, and accompanying fears of inflation. In September, staff at the CBC went on strike over the government's alleged failure to honor promised pay increases.

F. RULE OF LAW: 15 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 4 / 4**

The judiciary generally operates with independence. The Supreme Court includes a high court and a court of appeals. Barbados has ratified the Caribbean Court of Justice as its highest appellate court.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 4 / 4

Constitutional guarantees of due process are generally upheld. The government in 2017 was working to reduce excessive delays in the court system through new legislation. Separately, in April, the judiciary adopted a protocol to prevent gender discrimination in the administration of justice. The protocol, drafted with UN support, is the first of its kind in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 4 / 4

Barbados is free from war and insurgencies. However, there are occasional complaints of excessive force by the Royal Barbados Police Force. There is also growing concern about gun violence, and the ability of police to address it. In one major incident, a shooting at a concert in Bridgetown in August 2017 killed one person, and wounded 20. Thirty-one murders were recorded in 2017, 20 of which were perpetrated with firearms.

The government has taken some positive steps to address prison overcrowding and abuse.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

Women comprise roughly half of the country's workforce, although they tend to earn less than men for comparable work. LGBT people face discrimination in housing, employment, and access to health care.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 15 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4

Individuals in Barbados are generally free to move, live, and work across the territory as they see fit.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 4 / 4

The legal framework generally supports property rights and private businesses activity. The government has worked to ensure a healthy environment for business and to attract domestic and foreign investment, particularly in the tourism industry.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

Violence against women remains widespread, and laws addressing domestic violence are not well enforced. Reports of child abuse have increased in recent years, according to the US State Department. In December 2017, legislation requiring workplaces to articulate a policy against sexual harassment was proclaimed.

Same-sex marriage remains illegal in Barbados.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 4 / 4

Residents generally have access to economic opportunity, and the law provides some protections against exploitative labor practices. However, about 18 percent of the population lives in poverty.

The government has recently enacted harsher penalties for offenses related to human trafficking, and has conducted awareness trainings with government officials and people working in the tourism industry. However, prosecutions are low, and both government agencies and NGOs that work on trafficking-related issues are poorly funded.

Belarus

Population: 9,500,000

Capital: Minsk

Political Rights Rating: 6↑

Civil Liberties Rating: 6

Freedom Rating: 6.0

Freedom Status: Not Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Rating Change: Belarus's political rights rating improved from 7 to 6 due to efforts by government agencies to make official information available online.

Overview: Belarus is an authoritarian state in which elections are carefully managed and civil liberties are minimal. Limited displays of dissent have been permitted in recent years, as the war in neighboring Ukraine, growing regional tensions, and a struggling economy motivate the government to seek better relations with the European Union (EU) and the United States.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Hundreds of people were arrested in February and March over their participation in demonstrations against the so-called parasite tax, which was implemented by presidential decree in 2015 and introduced taxation on people who work fewer than 183 days per year.
- Bowing to social pressure, Lukashenka suspended the tax in March.
- Hanna Bakhtsina, a prominent lawyer known for her work defending political activists, was disbarred in September. The Ministry of Justice cited a "lack of qualifications," though she had been practicing law for over 35 years.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 6 / 40 (+1)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 0 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

The president is elected for five-year terms without limits. In 2015, Alyaksandr Lukashenka secured his fifth term in a noncompetitive presidential race. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) observers concluded that the poll fell considerably short of democratic standards. The observers did take note of several positive developments, including the participation of the first-ever female presidential candidate and the peaceful pre- and postelection environment; the latter was welcomed as an improvement given the brutal crackdown on protests surrounding the 2010 election.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

The 110 members of the Chamber of Representatives, the lower house of the rubber-stamp National Assembly, are popularly elected to four-year terms from single-mandate constituencies. The upper chamber, the Council of the Republic, consists of 64 members serving four-year terms; 56 are elected by regional councils, and 8 are appointed by the president.

An OSCE observation mission assessing the 2016 parliamentary elections concluded that the polls took place in a restrictive environment, and that electoral procedures lacked

transparency. However, there was less pressure on independent candidates, the general atmosphere was calm, and two candidates not associated with Lukashenka gained seats in the lower chamber.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 0 / 4

The legal framework for elections fails to meet democratic standards. Among other problems, electoral commission members of all levels are politically aligned with and dependent on the government, and independent observers have no access to the ballot-counting process. The access of the opposition to state-run media has improved somewhat, but it remains under tight control while heavily favoring Lukashenka.

In 2017, authorities indicated that electoral reforms recommended by the OSCE would not be implemented before municipal elections in February 2018, citing a lack of time to pursue them.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 4 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 1 / 4

There is no official progovernment political party, and very few lawmakers are affiliated with any party. Individuals associated with the opposition tend to avoid political discussions on the phone or online due to fears of government monitoring.

Political parties face near-insurmountable challenges when seeking official registration. In May 2017, after six failed applications, the Tell the Truth movement was registered. However, government has continued to block the registration of the Belarusian Christian Democracy party.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 1 / 4

Two parliamentarians not aligned with Lukashenka entered the parliament in 2016, ending a long period in which there was no parliamentary opposition. Some analysts dismissed their election as immaterial and designed to placate the opposition, though others have argued that their activity in the parliament may create stronger incentives for people to exercise independent political activity aimed at gaining power through elections.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 1 / 4

While private citizens and political candidates have some limited opportunities to express their views and make political choices, Lukashenka's regime is unaccountable to voters, and meaningful participation in politics is generally not possible. Involvement in politics and activism is considered risky in Belarus and can result in lost jobs, expulsion from educational institutions, smear campaigns in the media, fines, and the confiscation of property.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 1 / 4

No registered party represents the specific interests of ethnic or religious minority groups. Women formally enjoy equal political rights, but are underrepresented in political

leadership positions. Women’s advocacy groups have diverging positions on promoting the political rights of women, with some such groups taking the position that there is no need for gender equality initiatives in Belarus. There has been some visible activism by women’s groups seeking to raise awareness of violence against women.

The Roma minority is politically marginalized.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 2 / 12 (+1)

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 0 / 4

The Constitution vests most power in the president, giving him control over government, judiciary, and legislative processes by stating that presidential decrees have higher legal force than legislation. Lukashenka, who was not freely elected, considers himself head of all branches of government.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

The state controls 70 percent of the economy, feeding widespread corruption. Graft is encouraged by the lack of transparency and accountability in government. There are no independent bodies to investigate corruption cases, and graft trials are typically closed. Lukashenka often uses his powers to free convicted officials, and has the power to place them back into positions of authority.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 1 / 4 (+1)

Governmental institutions for the most part fail to adhere to legal requirements providing for access to information. However, in recent years, the authorities have moved to make some basic information about government operations available online. Additionally, in 2017, authorities announced that all websites will publish information in both Belarusian and Russian, and other languages as necessary, beginning in 2019.

Score Change: The score improved from 0 to 1 due to recent efforts by government agencies to make official information available online.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 15 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 3 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4

The government exercises almost total control over mainstream media. The 2008 media law secures a state monopoly over information about political, social, and economic affairs. Libel is both a civil and criminal offense, and the criminal code contains provisions protecting the “honor and dignity” of high-ranking officials, including greater penalties in cases of defamation or insult.

The government owns the only internet service provider, and controls the internet through legal and technical means. The government’s definition of mass media includes websites and blogs, placing them under Ministry of Information’s supervision.

In 2017, the state renewed its attacks on independent media, especially during large protests against the so-called social parasite tax. Dozens of journalists attempting to cover the events were detained for days, or punished with heavy fines. Journalists working for foreign, unaccredited news outlets also face harassment and persecution.

However, independent journalists are occasionally able to place pressure on authorities. In October 2017, the death of army conscript Alyaksandr Korzhych—which was widely believed to be the result of brutal hazing—was formally deemed a suicide. His death saw

wide media coverage, which likely contributed to authorities' later decision to open an investigation into the matter.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 1 / 4

Despite the constitutional guarantees of religious equality, government decrees and registration requirements maintained some restrictions on religious activity. Legal amendments in 2002 provided for government censorship of religious publications and barred foreigners from leading religious groups. The amendments also placed strict limitations on religious groups active in Belarus for less than 20 years. In 2003, the government signed a concordat with the Belarusian Orthodox Church, which is controlled by the Russian Orthodox Church, giving it a privileged position.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 0 / 4

Academic freedom remains subject to intense state ideological pressures, and academic personnel face harassment and dismissal if they use liberal curriculum or are suspected of disloyalty. Students and professors who join opposition protests face immediate dismissal and revocation of degrees.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 1 / 4

The use of wiretapping and other surveillance by state security agencies limits the right to free private discussion. Private citizens often avoid discussing sensitive issues over the phone or via internet communication platforms, for fears that state security agents are monitoring conversations.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 3 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 1 / 4

The government restricts freedom of assembly. Protests require authorization from local authorities, who can arbitrarily deny permission. In the past, police would routinely break up public demonstrations and arrest participants. However, moves toward a rapprochement with the EU and United States have prompted authorities to rely somewhat more on fines as a means of punishing demonstrators.

In February and March 2017, thousands of Belarusians took to streets in a series of peaceful protests against the so-called social parasite tax, which introduced taxation on people who work fewer than 183 days per year, and had been implemented by presidential decree in 2015. Initially, authorities tolerated the protests. But as they gained momentum, authorities turned to preventive detentions and mass arrests; more than 100 arrests were reported by late March. According to Amnesty International, at least 177 people arrested in connection with the protest movement were convicted of administrative crimes and received jail terms of up to 25 days. Nevertheless, the protest movement prompted Lukashenka in March to suspend the parasite tax.

In a related case, in March, police arrested 35 people and opened a criminal case against them alleging preparing mass disturbances. Authorities the following month charged 20 of them—some of whom were former members of the long-disbanded nationalist group White Legion—with forming an illegal armed group. All arrested were released after several months of incarceration, and in November the investigation was closed.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 1 / 4

Freedom of association is severely restricted. Participation in unregistered or liquidated parties or organizations was criminalized in 2005. Registration of groups remains selective. Regulations ban foreign assistance to entities and individuals deemed to promote foreign meddling in internal affairs.

A few groups focused on rights work continue to operate, but staff and supporters risk prosecution and jail time for their activism.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 1 / 4

Independent trade unions face harassment, and their leaders are frequently fired and prosecuted for engaging in peaceful protests. No independent trade unions have been registered since 1999, when Lukashenka issued a decree setting extremely restrictive registration requirements.

F. RULE OF LAW: 2 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 0 / 4**

Courts are subservient to the president, who appoints Supreme Court justices with the approval of the rubber-stamp parliament.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

The right to a fair trial is often not respected in cases with political overtones. The power to extend pretrial detention lies with a prosecutor rather than a judge, in violation of international norms. The absence of independent oversight allows police to routinely and massively violate legal procedures. The vast majority of people convicted of administrative offenses in connection with their participation in the early 2017 protests were convicted in summary trials.

The government attacked attorneys during legal proceedings against the “White Legion” defendants accused of forming an armed group in connection with their involvement in the early 2017 protests. Hanna Bakhtsina, who worked on the case, was disbarred by the Ministry of Justice, which cited her “lack of qualifications;” Bakhtsina had been a lawyer for 35 years, and had represented a number of political activists in her career. The Justice Ministry also delayed the accreditation of several other lawyers who had been involved in the case, saying it would be granted after six months on condition that they followed the ministry’s recommendations.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 0 / 4

Law enforcement agencies have broad powers to employ physical force against suspects, who have little opportunity for recourse if they are abused. Human rights groups continue to document instances of beatings, torture, and pressure during detention.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

Authorities create advantageous conditions to increase dominance of the Russian language, and UNESCO recognizes Belarusian as “vulnerable.” The regime in recent years has been less wary of issues involving Belarusian national identity, though official usage of Belarusian remains rare. Ethnic Poles and Roma often face undue pressure from authorities.

Widely held societal values emphasize that women should be mothers, and while this has helped maintain social benefits including generous maternity leave, these views in practice restrict the opportunities of women. Men and women face significant discrepancies in income.

LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people face widespread societal discrimination, and law enforcement authorities are reluctant to investigate prosecute attacks and other abuses against them. In May 2017, police raided an LGBT event at a nightclub and recorded the attendees' identities.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 7 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 2 / 4

Opposition activists are occasionally detained at the border for lengthy searches. Passports are used as a primary identity document in Belarus, and authorities are known to harass people living in a different location than as indicated by domestic stamps in their passport.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

Limits on economic freedom eased in recent years, allowing for greater property ownership and small business operations. However, state interference in the economy still affects larger businesses, and large business owners are subject to government pressure and harassment.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

The constitution explicitly bans same-sex marriage. The Belarusian government led an effort in 2016 to block LGBT rights from being part of a UN international initiative focused on urban areas.

Domestic violence is a pervasive problem in Belarus. Some ostensibly protective mechanisms can make finding help more difficult for victims, who are usually women. For example, families with minor children can be deemed to be in a "socially precarious" situation if a parent reports domestic violence, a designation that can allow social services to take any children into custody.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

Mandatory unpaid national work days, postgraduate employment allocation, compulsory labor for inmates in state rehabilitation facilities, and restrictions on leaving employment in specific industries have led labor activists to conclude that all Belarusian citizens experience forced labor at some stage of their life. The lack of economic opportunities led many women to become victims of the international sex trade.

Belgium

Population: 11,200,000

Capital: Brussels

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 1

Freedom Rating: 1.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Belgium is an electoral democracy with a long record of peaceful transfers of power. Political rights and civil liberties are legally guaranteed and largely respected in practice. Major concerns in recent years have included the threat of terrorism and corruption scandals that have unsettled the country's complex governing coalitions.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- After the media revealed improper payments to politicians by a public utility company in late 2016, multiple executives and elected officials in Wallonia were forced to resign in January, and a commission of inquiry was established the following month.
- The mayor of Brussels resigned in June amid a scandal over similar payments he received as a board member at a publicly funded nonprofit organization that provides aid to the homeless.
- Later that month, to protest the involvement of the Francophone Socialist Party (PS) in the recent scandals, the Humanist Democratic Centre (CDH) party withdrew from the governing coalitions in Wallonia, Brussels, and the French Community of Belgium, resulting in a new government for Wallonia that left the PS in opposition.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 39 / 40 (-1)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The Belgian monarchy is largely ceremonial, although the king retains constitutional authority to mediate during the process of government formation. The prime minister, who is the leader of the majority party or coalition, is appointed by the monarch and approved by the legislature. After the 2014 parliamentary elections, Charles Michel of the Movement for Reform (MR), a center-right Francophone party, became prime minister in a government that also included the separatist New Flemish Alliance (N-VA), the Christian Democratic and Flemish (CD&V) party, and the Open Flemish Liberals and Democrats (VLD).

Belgium's multilayered subnational administrative units have their own governments with varying degrees of autonomy. In addition to the three main geographic divisions of French-speaking Wallonia in the south, Flemish-speaking Flanders in the north, and the bilingual Brussels capital region, there are overlapping governments for the French Community, the Flemish Community, and the German-speaking community. Beneath these are provincial and various local governments.

In June 2017, following corruption scandals that implicated the PS, the CDH withdrew from governing coalitions that included the PS in Wallonia, Brussels, and the French

Community. In July, the CDH and MR formed a new government in Wallonia, forcing the PS into opposition.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

Belgium's Federal Parliament consists of two houses: the Chamber of Representatives and the Senate. The 150 members of the lower house are elected directly by proportional representation. The Senate is composed of 50 members selected by community and regional parliaments, and an additional 10 members chosen by the first 50 based on the results of the Chamber of Representatives elections. Members serve five-year terms in both houses.

In the 2014 elections, the N-VA took 33 seats in the Chamber of Representatives, while outgoing prime minister Elio Di Rupo's PS won 23 seats. The MR captured 20 seats, the CD&V took 18, the VLD won 14, and the Flemish Socialist Party secured 13. Several smaller parties, including the CDH with 9, accounted for the remainder.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

Despite the complexity of the political system, the electoral laws and framework are generally fair and impartially implemented.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 16 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4

The party system is robust but highly fragmented, with separate Flemish and Walloon political parties representing various positions on the left-right spectrum.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

Belgium's coalition-based politics allow individual parties to move easily in and out of government, and there is a long record of peaceful transfers of power between rival parties at the federal level. The most recent such transfer occurred after the 2014 elections, when the center-right MR captured the premiership from the left-leaning PS.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

The political choices of voters and candidates are generally free from undue interference.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 4 / 4

Members of minority groups are free to participate in national and subnational politics, and women also enjoy full political rights. In the 2014 elections, women won approximately 39 percent of the seats in the Chamber of Representatives and 50 percent of the seats in the Senate, which must have a minimum of 20 women senators.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 11 / 12 (-1)

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4

Elected officials generally adopt and implement laws and policies without improper interference from unelected entities, though the difficulty of forming majority coalitions has sometimes disrupted governance over the past decade. The country went roughly 19 months without a government in 2010–11 due to protracted coalition talks.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4 (-1)

Public officials can face heavy fines and up to 10 years' imprisonment for corruption-related offenses, and enforcement of anticorruption legislation is generally adequate. However, recent scandals have drawn attention to abuses involving politicians who hold multiple positions on the boards of public and private entities, with some officials holding more than a dozen paid positions. At the end of 2016, a news outlet revealed that local officials in Wallonia had received remuneration for sitting on advisory boards at the public utility company Publifin without in fact attending the supposed board meetings. Several politicians and Publifin executives were forced to resign, and Wallonia's legislature established a commission of inquiry in February 2017 to investigate the scandal. In May, similar revelations implicated the mayor of Brussels and Samusocial, a publicly funded nonprofit that assists the homeless. The mayor, Yvan Mayeur, resigned in June, and another official investigation was launched.

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 due to a number of corruption scandals at the subnational level that illuminated weaknesses in safeguards meant to prevent abuse of office.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 4 / 4

The law provides mechanisms for the public to access government information, and these procedures generally function in practice. Legislators and other high-ranking elected officials are required by law to regularly disclose their assets as well as paid or unpaid mandates, executive functions, and occupations to the Court of Audit. Information about asset declarations is not publicly accessible, but declarations of interests are published in the official government gazette.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 56 / 60 (+1)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 15 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 4 / 4

Freedom of the press is guaranteed by the constitution and generally respected by the government, though there have been some concerns in recent years about protection of journalists' sources. Belgians have access to numerous public and private media outlets that present a range of views. Internet access is unrestricted.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4

More than half of the country's population identifies as Roman Catholic. Freedom of religion is protected, but members of minority religious groups have complained of discrimination by the government as well as in housing and employment. A ban on the partial or total covering of the face in public locations, which is understood to target ultraconservative Muslims, has been in effect since 2011. Offenders can face a fine or up to a week in jail.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

The government does not restrict academic freedom. Schools are free from political indoctrination, and there are no significant impediments to scholarly research or discussion.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

Private discussion is open and vibrant, and freedom of expression is guaranteed by the constitution, though there are laws banning incitement to hatred and other such offenses.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 12 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4

Freedom of assembly is protected by law and generally respected in practice.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Freedom of association is guaranteed by the constitution, and nongovernmental organizations operate without undue restrictions.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

Workers at companies that employ more than 50 people have the right to organize and join unions and to bargain collectively. Employers found guilty of firing workers because of union activities are required to reinstate the workers or pay an indemnity. During 2017, labor organizations mounted several strikes and mass demonstrations against the economic policies of the Michel government.

F. RULE OF LAW: 14 / 16 (+1)

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 4 / 4

The judiciary is independent by law and in practice, and court rulings are duly enforced by other state entities.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 4 / 4 (+1)

The judicial process generally guarantees a fair trial, and the authorities typically observe safeguards against arbitrary arrest and detention. In the period surrounding November 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris and a March 2016 attack in Brussels, the authorities took a number of extraordinary security measures, including a rapid series of police raids, a lockdown that restricted movement across the capital for several days, an increase in searches and short-term detentions amid heavy deployments of police and soldiers, and a large number of trials in absentia against militants who had allegedly gone to fight in Syria. These measures had eased significantly by 2017, though legislative reforms continued. In October, lawmakers increased the maximum length of detention in police custody without a judicial order from 24 to 48 hours.

Score Change: The score improved from 3 to 4 due to a reduction in the extraordinary security measures and deployments that had followed terrorist attacks in France and Belgium in 2015 and 2016.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 3 / 4

Although conditions in prisons and detention centers meet most international standards, many facilities continue to suffer from overcrowding. Torture is illegal, though human rights organizations have criticized Belgian authorities for holding prisoners in terrorism cases in prolonged solitary confinement.

There were no major terrorist attacks in Belgium during 2017, but the threat persisted. Police carried out a number of arrests targeting individuals who were suspected of plotting attacks or colluding with perpetrators of the 2016 bombings.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

Antidiscrimination legislation prohibits bias and acts of hatred and incitement based on categories including gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, and sexual orientation. Nevertheless, some groups, including immigrants and Romany residents, continue to face a degree of discrimination in practice.

In November 2017, the parliament adopted legislation that tightened asylum policies, in part by reducing the time and scope for appeals of negative asylum decisions and expanding the grounds for detention of asylum seekers. Advocacy organizations said that the changes often reduced Belgium's standards to the minimum allowed by the European Union.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 15 / 16**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4**

The law provides for freedom of domestic movement and foreign travel, and the government upholds these rights in practice. There are no restrictions on the right to change one's place of residence, employment, or education.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 4 / 4

The legal framework supports property rights, and commercial activity is regulated without arbitrary interference.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 4 / 4

There are few significant restrictions on personal social freedoms. Belgium legalized same-sex marriage in 2003, and in 2006 same-sex couples gained the right to adopt children.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

Immigration has increased in recent years, but labor-market integration of non-EU immigrants and their native-born children is comparatively low. Despite government efforts to combat the problem, Belgium remains a destination country for human trafficking, particularly for sexual exploitation and domestic labor; victims generally originate in Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa.

Belize

Population: 400,000

Capital: Belmopan

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 2

Freedom Rating: 1.5

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Belize is a democracy that has experienced regular rotations of power through competitive elections. However, government corruption is a problem. Authorities have also been reluctant to address persistent problems with police brutality, and human trafficking within the country's borders.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In January, a new attorney general, Michael Peyrefitte, was sworn in. He replaced Vanessa Retreage, who had resigned the previous month. Retreage and Prime Minister Dean Barrow denied that she had been forced out over her efforts to reform the Lands Department.
- In April, a viral video emerged in which a woman was seen being thrown to the ground and kicked by police officers during a confrontation between police and residents of San Pedro.
- In September, police reportedly deployed tear gas against anticorruption demonstrators who had blocked a road and refused orders to disperse.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 36 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The prime minister, usually the leader of the largest party in parliament, is head of government. Formally, the prime minister is appointed by the governor general, who represents the British monarch as head of state. The legitimacy of the prime minister is largely dependent on the conduct of legislative elections, which are typically professionally run and credible.

Dean Barrow returned as prime minister following the victory of the United Democratic Party (UDP) victory in 2015 elections, which the Organization of American States (OAS) said were conducted in a fair and professional manner.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The 31 members of the House of Representatives are directly elected to five-year terms. The Senate has 12 seats; the ruling party, opposition, and several civil associations select the senators, who are then appointed by the governor general.

In the 2015 legislative polls, the incumbent UDP increased its representation to 19 seats in the House of Representatives, and entered an unprecedented third consecutive term. The opposition People's United Party (PUP) took the remaining 12 seats. OAS observers said the polls were conducted in a fair and professional manner.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

Electoral laws are generally fair, although ahead of the 2015 polls it was reported that the Chief Elections Officer and her family were threatened by masked men ahead of election day. In response, police provided added security at her home. Separately, the OAS has suggested that the role of the Elections and Boundaries Commission and the Elections and Boundaries Department be strengthened, and that authorities work to reduce partisanship associated with the confirmation of appointees. It further noted that voter lists should be reviewed.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 14 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4**

Political parties can organize freely. The effects of the country's "first-past-the-post" electoral system has entrenched two-party politics; while a number of small political parties have competed, only the PUP and UDP have won seats in parliament.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

There are realistic opportunities for opposition parties to increase their support or gain power through elections. Since 1984 there has been a fairly regular transfer of power between the two parties.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

Recent elections, including those in 2015, have been viewed as generally free and fair. However, the OAS has raised concerns about the potential impact of unregulated campaign financing on the transparency of the electoral process.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 2 / 4

Women hold only 2 seats in the current National Assembly, and 3 seats in the Senate. There were only 11 women candidates out of a total of 88 in the 2015 elections. However, women play a significant role in the political system more generally.

Indigenous groups, particularly of Mayan descent, are not well represented in politics. The LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) community is marginalized, and this impacts the ability of LGBT people to engage fully in political and electoral processes.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 10 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4**

The elected prime minister, cabinet, and national legislative representatives are duly seated following elections and are able to determine the policies of the government.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

Belize continues to struggle with corruption, and there is little political will to address the issue. Anticorruption laws are poorly enforced; for example, no one has ever been

prosecuted under the Prevention of Corruption in Public Life Act, which has been on the books for over 20 years. Members of the country's business community allege that favoritism influences the government's awarding of licenses and public contracts. In 2016, the government faced accusations of corruption over the issuance of visas and passports; in August of that year, a special audit that confirmed the involvement of high-ranking officials became public.

Controversy and financial disputes continue in connection with the government's recent nationalization of the heavily indebted Belize Telemedia Limited.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 4 / 4

The government of Belize generally operates with openness and transparency. However, while the law requires public officials to submit annual financial disclosure statements for review by the Integrity Commission, the body had been defunct for years before members were finally appointed by the ruling party and opposition in early 2017. There is little opportunity for the public to challenge the disclosures.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 50 / 60 (-1)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 15 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4

The Constitution guarantees freedom of the press, and in general, reporting covers a wide range of opinions. However, authorities can restrict press freedom in the interests of national security, public order, or morality. Separately, in September 2017, media coverage of an anticorruption demonstration was reportedly disrupted when police deployed tear gas against protest participants.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Freedom of religion is constitutionally protected and respected in practice. The various religious groups in the country are integrated and, despite some minor political disagreements, coexist peacefully.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is generally respected.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

Individuals are free to express their views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 10 / 12 (-1)

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 3 / 4

Freedoms of assembly and association are constitutionally protected, and the government generally respects these rights. However, protests occasionally become unruly. In September 2017, clashes between protesters and police took place after anticorruption demonstrators refused police orders to stop blocking roads. Officers reportedly deployed tear gas against the protesters.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights—and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations are generally free from government interference.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4 (-1)

Unions are free to form and operate. Official boards of inquiry adjudicate labor disputes, and businesses have been penalized for labor-code violations. However, while labor unions are active and are politically influential, their ability to protect workers' rights is limited in practice. In 2016, the Belize National Teacher's Union (BNTU) held several national strikes, prompting the government that fall to accept a number of workers' demands, including a 3 per cent salary adjustment. Nevertheless, reports of teachers not being paid continued in 2017. The country's definition of "essential" workers—whose ability to strike is limited—is broader than the International Labor Organization's definition.

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 because despite their robust activity, unions have struggled to secure protections for workers.

F. RULE OF LAW: 12 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 3 / 4**

The judiciary is generally independent, if underresourced. However, there have been attempts by political and business interests to interfere with the composition of the judiciary. Litigants may appeal cases to the Caribbean Court of Justice, the country's highest appellate court.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 3 / 4

Detainees and defendants are guaranteed a range of legal rights, which are mostly respected in practice. However, police have reportedly detained suspect without charge for longer than is permitted by the law, and have used the threat of extended detention to intimidate suspects. Judicial delays and a large backlog of cases contribute to lengthy trial and other procedures.

In January 2017, a new attorney general, Michael Peyrefitte, was sworn in. He replaced Vanessa Retreage, who had resigned the previous month. Retreage and Prime Minister Dean Barrow denied rumors that she had been forced out for her work in reforming the Lands Department.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 3 / 4

Belize is free from war and insurgencies, and ordinary citizens have little reason to fear for their general safety. However, cases of police brutality continue to emerge. In April 2017, a viral video depicted a woman being thrown to the ground and kicked by police officers during a confrontation between police and residents of San Pedro. While two officers were charged in connection with that incident, the government frequently ignores or dismisses reports of abuses by police, or transfers accused officers to other areas within their department.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

Legal and societal discrimination against LGBT people persists. Although in August 2016 the country's Supreme Court declared unconstitutional a portion of the criminal code that outlawed same-sex sexual activity; the case is currently being appealed. Belize held its first Pride Week in August 2017.

Women face employment discrimination and are less likely than men to hold managerial positions. However, the government has actively pursued programs aimed at encouraging gender equality and protecting women's rights.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 13 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4

The government generally respects freedom of internal movement and foreign travel. In April 2016, authorities temporarily prohibited citizens from accessing the Sarstoon River in response to a spike in tensions with Guatemala over its contested border. The decision was widely criticized, and was subsequently rescinded.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or non-state actors? 3 / 4

Individuals have the right to own property and establish private businesses. However, legal regulations are at times poorly enforced, and the indigenous Maya community say that their ancestral land rights are not protected.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

Violence against women, particularly domestic violence, remains a serious problem. Rape, including spousal rape, is illegal, but there are poor conviction rates and when there are convictions, sentences are sometimes light.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

Belize is a source, transit, and destination country for women, men, and children trafficked for sexual exploitation and forced labor. In 2017, the US State Department's *Trafficking in Persons Report* continued to rank Belize in the lowest tier. The report cited widespread sex and labor trafficking, and a lack of government efforts to address the problem.

Economic inequality is significant, and unemployment remains a problem.

Benin

Population: 10,800,000

Capital: Porto-Novo

Political Rights Rating: 2

Civil Liberties Rating: 2

Freedom Rating: 2

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Benin remains among the most stable democracies in sub-Saharan Africa, having witnessed multiple free and fair elections and peaceful transfers of power since its transition

to democracy in 1991. Freedom of expression and association are generally respected, although student association activities were banned for months beginning in late 2016 and corruption remains a challenge.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In April, the National Assembly rejected constitutional reforms that would have reduced presidential term limits from two terms to one and increased the term lengths for constitutional judges. Analysts argued that longer judicial terms would have strengthened the independence of the judiciary.
- In May, the High Authority for Audiovisual Media and Communication (HAAC) was ordered by a court in Cotonou to pay damages for the wrongful closure of one of seven broadcasters shut down in 2016 for broadcasting without public authorization.
- In October, the government lifted a 2016 ban on student association activities at all public universities that had been declared unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court in March. The ban drew criticism for impinging on free expression at universities.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 33 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 9 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

The president is elected by popular vote for up to two five-year terms and serves as both the chief of state and head of government. Former president Thomas Boni Yayi respected the constitutionally mandated term limits and did not seek reelection in 2016. None of the 33 candidates who ran in the 2016 presidential election won a majority of votes in the first round, leading to a second round in which Patrice Talon defeated Prime Minister Lionel Zinsou with 65 percent of the vote. Talon, Benin's richest businessman, ran as an independent, supported by the business sector and a number of small political parties. Zinsou represented the incumbent party, the Cowry Forces for an Emerging Benin (FCBE). The election was generally held in accordance with international standards, although some delays in voting were reported due to voter card shortages and the late delivery of materials to polling stations.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

Delegates to the 83-member, unicameral National Assembly serve four-year terms. International observers deemed the last legislative elections held in 2015 to be credible, noting only minor logistical issues, including delays in poll openings and shortages of voting materials.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4

Elections are conducted by the Autonomous National Electoral Commission (CENA), which includes representatives from both the ruling party and the opposition. The CENA generally administers elections fairly and transparently. However, concerns about the accuracy of the computerized voter roll introduced in 2013 have persisted; due to resource constraints and organizational shortcomings, the voter roll has not been updated frequently enough.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 16 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4

Dozens of political parties operate openly regardless of ethnic or regional affiliation, and there are no unreasonable constraints on the formation of new parties. Five major parties and several minor parties are represented in the legislature.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

The opposition has a realistic opportunity to gain power through elections. Talon's defeat of Zinsou, the incumbent president's chosen successor in the 2016 election, marked Benin's fourth electoral turnover at the presidential level since multiparty elections were restored in 1991. The weakening of the FCBE in the National Assembly following the 2015 elections also significantly increased the power of opposition forces.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from interference by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

Politics are generally free from by the military or other powerful groups.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 4 / 4

Women and minority groups are not legally constrained from participation in the political process, but cultural factors do limit women's political engagement. Only 4 out of 22 government ministers are women. In April 2017, the government increased funding for the National Institute for the Promotion of Women, which aims to empower women to participate more robustly in politics.

Benin has historically been divided between northern and southern ethnic groups, but presidential candidates from both the north and the south have won the presidency.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 8 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 3 / 4

The president and the National Assembly generally determine government policies. In many rural areas, the government struggles to deliver basic services and citizens rely on local customary and religious leaders to fulfill those functions. Foreign donors can influence policymaking. For example, Benin's decentralization policies have been largely donor-driven.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

Corruption remains a widespread problem in Benin. The government's main anti-corruption body, the National Anti-Corruption Authority (ANLC), has the ability to hear complaints, recommend measures, and pass cases to the courts, but it has no enforcement authority. Corrupt officials rarely face prosecution, contributing to a culture of impunity. Parliamentary immunity is often used to avoid corruption charges. High-level corruption cases are handled by the Supreme Court of Justice, and the referral process is complex, which hinders prosecutions.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 3 / 4

The 2015 Information and Communication Code provides for access to government information. However, information deemed sensitive, including national security, trade, and judicial documents, remains restricted.

Critics complained that the legislative process for significant constitutional reforms proposed by President Talon was rushed and opaque, and moved forward without adequate public debate. The president's proposed reforms included moving from two five-year terms for the president to a single six-year term. The reforms were narrowly defeated in the National Assembly in April 2017.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 49 / 60**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 15 / 16****D1. Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4**

Constitutional guarantees of freedom of expression are largely respected in practice. Print media exhibit pluralism of opinion and viewpoints. However, most media outlets receive direct financial support from politicians and few are considered genuinely independent.

Defamation remains a crime punishable by fine. In May 2017, the HAAC was ordered by a court in Cotonou to pay damages for the wrongful closure of one of seven broadcasters shut down in 2016 for broadcasting without public authorization. All of the broadcasters had resumed programming by mid-2017. Critics contend that the HAAC does not act impartially. One of the broadcasters suspended in 2016, Sikka TV, is owned by an opposition leader who claimed that the closure was politically motivated.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Religious freedom is constitutionally guaranteed and generally respected in practice.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is largely respected. However, in 2016 the government suspended student associations at all four public universities. The ban was lifted by the government in October 2017 after the Constitutional Court ruled it unconstitutional in March.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

Individuals are generally free to express their views on politics without fear of surveillance.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 12 / 12**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4**

Freedom of assembly is generally respected; permit and registration requirements for demonstrations are not always enforced.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), including human rights groups, generally operate freely.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

The right to form unions is respected. However, employees in the public sector are restricted in their ability to bargain collectively. In January 2017, during a teachers' strike, the government prohibited union assemblies in public primary schools. In December, the National Assembly passed a controversial law that prohibited public-sector workers from striking.

F. RULE OF LAW: 12 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 3 / 4

Judicial independence is generally respected by the executive branch, but the courts are inefficient and susceptible to corruption. The process of nominating and promoting judges lacks transparency.

The Constitutional Court has demonstrated independence, including in its March 2017 decision that the government ban on student associations was illegal. The constitutional reforms proposed by President Talon and rejected by the National Assembly in April included increasing constitutional judges' terms from five to nine years. Analysts argue that longer judicial terms would have further strengthened judicial independence.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 3 / 4

Due process usually prevails in criminal and civil matters. However, judicial inefficiency, corruption, and a shortage of attorneys in the north inhibit the right to a fair trial. Lack of resources contributes to often lengthy pretrial detentions. Arbitrary arrest and detention occasionally occurs.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 3 / 4

Benin is free from war and insurgencies. Prison conditions are often harsh, and prisoners face overcrowding, lack of access to food and water, and occasional physical abuse, despite a ban on torture. Police brutality remained a problem in 2017, including beatings and torture of suspects. Perpetrators are frequently shielded from prosecution by their superiors.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

Relations among Benin's ethnic groups are generally amicable. Minority ethnic groups are represented in government agencies, the civil service, and the armed forces. The constitution prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, and disability, but not sexual orientation. The only legislation directly restricting the rights of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people is the penal code of 1996, which imposes a higher age restriction on the age of consent for same-sex sexual activity (21) than for heterosexual activity (13). LGBT people face social stigma and discrimination in practice.

Women experience discrimination in employment and access to credit, healthcare, and education.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 10 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4

Individuals can generally move freely throughout the country. However, in some rural areas, cultural traditions force women to remain indoors for extended periods. Roadblocks

set up by the police can make travel difficult, and police officers occasionally demand bribes for travelers to pass through.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 3 / 4

Improvements to the business registration process, anticorruption efforts, and regulatory reform since 2010 have improved Benin's commercial environment.

It is difficult to register property in Benin, and the enforcement of contracts is uneven. Despite laws guaranteeing equal rights to inheritance for women, many women are denied the right to inherit property in practice.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Domestic violence remains a serious problem, and there is no law that specifically addresses it. Women are often reluctant to report instances of domestic abuse. A 2003 law that prohibits female genital mutilation (FGM) reduced the incidence of the practice, but it still persists, particularly in the northeast. Although the law prohibits marriage for those under 18 years old, the government allows exceptions for 14 to 17-year-olds if there is parental consent. Child marriage and forced marriage remain common in rural areas.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Human trafficking is widespread in Benin, despite a recent uptick in prosecutions for the crime. Trafficking of children is illegal; legislation that specifically addresses adult trafficking remains under review. The practice of sending young girls to wealthy families to work as domestic servants has led to cases of exploitation and sexual slavery.

Bhutan

Population: 800,000

Capital: Thimphu

Political Rights Rating: 3

Civil Liberties Rating: 4

Freedom Rating: 3.5

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: Bhutan is a constitutional monarchy that has made significant strides toward becoming a consolidated democracy over the past decade. It has held credible elections and undergone a transfer of power to an opposition party. Ongoing problems include media self-censorship and discrimination against Nepali-speaking and non-Buddhist minorities.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- By year's end, a freedom of information bill first passed by the National Assembly in 2014 had still not received final approval.
 - Early in the year, one of Bhutan's most famous journalists left the country for Nepal after an influential businessman pressed a defamation case against her, though the suit was withdrawn just before reaching a verdict.
-

- In June, the head of state-run Bhutan Telecom and 11 other people were charged with graft in a case related to land acquisition.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 28 / 40**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 10 / 12****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4**

King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck formally succeeded his father in 2008. The monarch is head of state, appoints a number of high officials in consultation with other bodies, and retains a waning degree of influence over ministerial positions. The king nominates the leader of the majority party in the elected National Assembly to serve as prime minister. Tshering Tobgay took office as prime minister in 2013 after parliamentary elections that were viewed as credible by international observers.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The constitution provides for a bicameral parliament, with a 25-seat upper house, the National Council, and a 47-seat lower house, the National Assembly. Members of both bodies serve five-year terms. The king appoints five members of the nonpartisan National Council, and the remaining 20 are popularly elected as independents; the National Assembly is entirely elected. In the 2013 National Assembly elections, the opposition People's Democratic Party (PDP) won 32 seats. The Druk Peace and Prosperity Party (DPT), which had dominated the first national elections in 2008, won the remaining 15 seats. International observers deemed the 2013 elections credible.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4

Elections are administered by the Election Commission of Bhutan (ECB). The commission is thought to act impartially, although some of its regulations regarding which parties can compete in elections are controversial. In 2013, the ECB was criticized for disqualifying the Bhutan Kuen-Nyam Party (BKP) from competing in the primary elections because it did not produce candidates in two local constituencies.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 10 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 3 / 4**

Citizens must receive government approval to form political parties. Obtaining approval is difficult, and the government has denied registration to several newly formed parties. The Bhutan Happiness Party, formed in 2017, had not yet been approved by the government at the end of the year. Bhutan has two officially registered major parties, the PDP and the DPT, and three officially registered smaller parties.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

The opposition has a realistic chance to increase its support through elections. In 2013, the PDP, then the main opposition party, won the parliamentary elections with 68 percent of the vote.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 2 / 4

India still has a strong influence over the choices of Bhutanese voters and politicians. In 2013, just before the parliamentary elections, India withdrew subsidies for oil and kerosene. Many observers viewed the move as retaliation for the DPT government's closer ties to China and an attempt to swing the elections toward the PDP.

The royal family also retains significant influence. Most members of the political elite, including members of parliament, steadfastly support the king and are hesitant to take any positions in direct opposition to the royal family.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 1 / 4

Electoral rules stipulate that political parties must not be limited to members of any regional, ethnic, or religious group. There is no party that represents Nepali speakers. Citizenship rules are strict, and many Nepali-speaking people have not attained citizenship, effectively disenfranchising them. International election monitors have noted that Nepali speakers have been turned away from voting.

Women are underrepresented in public office, occupying only 8 percent of the seats in the National Assembly. Traditional customs inhibit women's political participation. The government has supported several programs to empower women and increase their engagement in politics.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 9 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 3 / 4

Bhutan has made a successful transition from a system in which the monarch and his advisers dominated governance to one in which policies and legislation are mostly determined by elected officials.

India still has an influence on policymaking in Bhutan, and China has also become an important player in recent years. India provides significant foreign aid to Bhutan and accounts for 75 percent of its trade. As a result, the Bhutanese government is hesitant to make policies that will upset the relationship with India. In a 2017 incident that highlighted the impact of Bhutan's powerful neighbors, India sent troops to confront Chinese military personnel attempting to build a road on the Doklam plateau, on territory claimed by both Bhutan and China. Indian and Chinese troops withdrew after a standoff that lasted from June 2017 until late August.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4

The government generally enforced anticorruption laws effectively. The 2006 Anti-Corruption Act established whistle-blower protections. The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), which had its role strengthened and expanded in 2011, is tasked with investigating and preventing graft, and has successfully prosecuted several high-profile cases. The chief executive officer of state-owned Bhutan Telecom Ltd. was charged with graft in June 2017, along with 11 others, in connection with an attempt to acquire government land.

Neptotism and favoritism in public procurement and government employment remained a problem in 2017.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 3 / 4

Although Bhutan lacks comprehensive freedom of information legislation, Prime Minister Tobgay has strengthened transparency by making the salaries of officials public and using his office to make the central and local budgets more open to review. A right to information law passed by the National Assembly in 2014 was designed to put the onus on government officials and agencies to release information. However, the National Council did not approve the bill, and by the end of 2017 it had yet to win final passage.

ADDITIONAL DISCRETIONARY POLITICAL RIGHTS QUESTION

Is the government or occupying power deliberately changing the ethnic composition of a country or territory so as to destroy a culture or tip the political balance in favor of another group? -1 / 0

The government has for decades attempted to diminish and repress the rights of ethnic Nepalis, forcing many of them to leave Bhutan. The government expelled a large percentage of Nepali speakers in the early 1990s; in 1992, well over 100,000 refugees living in Nepal were denied reentry to Bhutan. A resettlement effort aimed at transferring the refugees to other countries began in 2007. By November 2017, close to 111,000 Bhutanese refugees in Nepal had been resettled, mostly in the United States. Approximately 2,000 more were undergoing screening before being resettled, after which 8,500 refugees would remain in Nepal awaiting resettlement.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 27 / 60**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 9 / 16****D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4**

While there are multiple private media outlets, many depend on advertising from state bodies, and Bhutan's media environment remained subject to a high degree of self-censorship, especially regarding criticism of the royal family. Powerful individuals can use defamation laws to retaliate against critics. One of the country's most prominent journalists, Namgay Zam, left for Nepal in early 2017, after a prominent businessman filed a defamation lawsuit against her in 2016 over one of her postings on social media. Zam said she could not find a lawyer to represent her. The suit was withdrawn shortly before reaching a verdict in January 2017.

In December 2017, the Bhutan Information Communications and Media Act was passed, replacing a 2006 law. The government said it would strengthen the independence of the media and promote a free and vibrant media industry. The legislation called for the establishment of an independent body called the Media Council, which will be responsible for monitoring and regulating the media and will determine whether any media content is harmful or offensive. Press freedom advocates fear that the new body will further erode press freedom and contribute to greater self-censorship.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 2 / 4

The constitution protects freedom of religion, but local authorities are known to harass non-Buddhists. While Bhutanese of all faiths can worship freely in private, people experience pressure to participate in Buddhist ceremonies and practices.

Christian churches have often been unable to obtain registration from the government, which means that they cannot raise funds or buy property, placing constraints on their activities. Christian children are sometimes not allowed into schools based on their religion.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 2 / 4

Few restrictions on academic freedom have been reported. However, Bhutanese university students are often hesitant to speak out on controversial political issues and practice self-censorship. Students, in conducting research, tend to receive negative feedback for posing questions that could be considered offensive or too blunt.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4

Freedom of expression is constitutionally guaranteed and generally respected. However, under the National Security Act, speech that creates or attempts to create “hatred and disaffection among the people” or “misunderstanding or hostility between the government and people,” among other offenses, can be punished with imprisonment. The broad language of the law makes it vulnerable to misuse.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 4 / 12**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 2 / 4**

The constitution guarantees freedom of assembly, but this right is limited by government-imposed restrictions. Public gatherings require government permission, which is sometimes denied. Curfews and restrictions on the location of demonstrations also serve to curtail assembly rights.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 1 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that work on issues related to ethnic Nepalis are not allowed to operate, but other local and international NGOs work with increasing freedom. Under the 2007 Civil Society Organization Act, all new NGOs must register with the government. Registration is granted to NGOs that are determined by the government to be “not harmful to the peace and unity of the country.”

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 1 / 4

The constitution nominally guarantees the right of workers to form unions, but the right to strike is not legally protected. Workers may bargain collectively, and antiunion discrimination is prohibited. Most of the country’s workforce is engaged in small-scale agriculture and is therefore not unionized.

F. RULE OF LAW: 6 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 3 / 4**

The independence of the judiciary is largely respected. Senior judges are appointed by the king on the recommendation of the National Judicial Commission. However, the rulings of judges often lack consistency, and many people view the judiciary as corrupt.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

Although the right to a fair trial is largely guaranteed and arbitrary arrest is not a widespread problem, plaintiffs and defendants in civil disputes often represent themselves. The U.S. State Department and NGOs continue to document instances of alleged political prisoners being held in Bhutan, usually because of their work advocating for ethnic Nepalis.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 1 / 4

The civilian police force generally operates within the law, and incidents of excessive force are rare. However, insurgents from the Indian state of Assam sometimes enter Bhutan and undermine security. Occasional instances of kidnapping and robbery occur along the border with India.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

The constitution protects against discrimination based on sex, race, disability, language, religion, or societal status. However, Nepali-speaking people reportedly face employment discrimination and other forms of bias.

LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people experience societal discrimination and social stigma, and there are no specific legal protections for transgender people. Same-sex sexual activity remains a criminal offense and can be punished with up to a year in prison, although the law is not generally enforced. Despite recent gains, discrimination in employment and education persists for women in Bhutan.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 8 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 2 / 4

Bhutanese citizens generally have the freedom to travel domestically and internationally. However, the government has established different categories of citizenship, which restricts foreign travel for some. These restrictions reportedly have the greatest effect on Nepali speakers. Bhutanese security forces sometimes arrest Nepali people seeking to enter the country.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

Individuals generally have rights to own property and establish businesses, but the process of registering a new business can be cumbersome and hinder business development. Some ethnic Nepalis who lack a security clearance certificate face difficulties in starting a business. The property registration process can also be lengthy.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Reports of domestic violence have increased in recent years. Societal taboos lead many incidents of rape and domestic violence to go unreported. Child marriage still occurs with some frequency; according to UNICEF, 26 percent of women are married before age 18.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Female household workers, who often come from rural areas or India, are vulnerable to forced labor and other abuse, as are foreign workers in the construction and hydropower sectors. Child labor continued to be a problem in 2017, mostly in the agriculture and construction sectors. Girls often served as household workers and were vulnerable to abuse.

Sex trafficking remained a problem in 2017, and the government's enforcement efforts were inadequate to address it effectively; no prosecutions for trafficking were reported during the year. However, the government funded an NGO that shelters victims of trafficking.

↓ Bolivia

Population: 11,000,000

Capital: La Paz (administrative), Sucre (judicial)

Political Rights Rating: 3

Civil Liberties Rating: 3

Freedom Rating: 3.0

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Trend Arrow: Bolivia received a downward trend arrow due to a constitutional court ruling that abolished term limits and paved the way for President Evo Morales to run for a fourth term in 2019.

Overview: Bolivia is a democracy where credible elections are held regularly. However, respect for freedom of expression and the rights of indigenous peoples and women remain issues, as does corruption, particularly within the judicial system. A 2017 ruling by the Constitutional Tribunal cleared the way for President Evo Morales, head of the ruling Movement for Socialism (MAS) to run for a fourth term in 2019. The decision effectively overturned the results of a 2016 referendum in which a majority of voters had indicated a desire to retain presidential term limits.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In November, the Constitutional Tribunal, ruling in response to a challenge brought by MAS deputies, struck down presidential term limits, clearing the way for President Morales to seek a fourth term.
- A majority of ballots cast in December's judicial elections were spoiled, in what was viewed as a signal of broad discontent with Morales and his presidency.
- In June, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal determined that transgender persons who have legally changed their gender may get married.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 28 / 40 (-1)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 10 / 12 (-1)

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

Bolivia's president is both chief of state and head of government, and is directly elected to a five year term. In the 2014 general elections, Evo Morales of the Movement for Socialism (MAS) was reelected president with 61 percent of the vote. An Organization of American States (OAS) electoral observation mission stated that the election reflected the will of the people.

In 2015 subnational elections, the MAS won control of more departments and municipalities across the country than any other party. However, the opposition won key mayoralties and governorships, including those of La Paz and Santa Cruz. An OAS electoral observation mission reported overwhelming citizen participation in the elections, but expressed concern about the last-minute disqualification and substitution of candidates, which occurred after the ballots had been printed.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The Plurinational Legislative Assembly consists of a 130-member Chamber of Deputies and a 36-member Senate. Legislative terms are five years. All senators and 53 deputies are elected by proportional representation; 70 deputies are elected in individual districts. Seven seats in the Chamber of Deputies are reserved for indigenous representatives. In the 2014 legislative elections, Morales's MAS maintained a two-thirds majority in the legislature, the share necessary to pass constitutional reforms.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 2 / 4 (-1)

For some years, Bolivian politics have been characterized in part by efforts by Morales and the MAS to abolish presidential term limits. In 2015, the Plurinational Legislative Assembly voted to amend the constitution in order to allow presidents to run for three consecutive terms instead of two, but voters rejected the change in a 2016 referendum. However, in 2017, MAS lawmakers filed a suit asking the Constitutional Tribunal to declare that certain legal provisions and articles in the constitution that ban reelection were unconstitutional and "inapplicable." (While Constitutional Tribunal justices are elected by voters, judicial candidates are selected by the MAS-dominated legislature, and the Tribunal tends to favor the MAS.) In November, the court assented, effectively overturning the results of the previous year's referendum and clearing the way for Morales to run for a fourth term in 2019.

Separately, a 2014 election monitoring mission by the Organization of American States (OAS) expressed some concern about the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE)'s mechanisms for maintaining accurate voter rolls.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 because the Constitutional Tribunal struck down presidential term limit provisions, effectively reversing the outcome of a 2016 referendum in which a majority of voters had indicated a desire to maintain presidential term limits.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 11 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 3 / 4

Citizens have the right to organize political parties. Since Morales's election to the presidency in 2005, the formerly dominant parties have all but collapsed, giving way to a series of new political groupings and short-lived opposition coalitions. The MAS draws support from a diverse range of social movements, unions, and civil society actors. Opposition politicians have claimed that the Morales administration persecutes them through the judiciary.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 2 / 4

There are no formal institutional barriers impeding opposition parties from participating in elections. However, the overwhelming dominance of the MAS makes it difficult for opposition parties to gain power through elections.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 3 / 4

People are generally free to make their own political decisions without undue influence from the military, foreign powers, or other influential groups. However, opposition members

claimed that November 2017 rallies held in favor of Morales's reelection were filled with public employees coerced by their employers to attend.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

The constitution recognizes 36 indigenous nationalities, declares Bolivia a plurinational state, and formalizes local political and judicial control within indigenous territories. Adult citizens enjoy universal and equal suffrage. Although they are well represented in government, the interests of indigenous groups are often overlooked by politicians. Women are well-represented in politics, but cases of violence and harassment against them continue.

Judicial elections originally scheduled for October 2017 were postponed for several weeks due to concerns that not enough women and indigenous candidates were registered in some regions of the country.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 7 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 3 / 4

Elected officials are free to set and implement government policy without undue interference from nonstate actors. However, opposition members charge that the MAS majority in the legislature, in conjunction with the country's powerful presidency, allows for strong executive influence on legislative processes.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

Corruption affects a range of government entities and economic sectors, including law-enforcement bodies and extractive industries, and anticorruption laws are unevenly enforced. However, there were some notable investigations and other developments in 2017. In June, Guillermo Acha, the former president of the state company Yacimientos Petroliferos Fiscales Bolivianos (YPFB), was placed on house arrest during an ongoing investigation of irregularities in the purchase of drilling equipment by YPFB officials. In September, a Ministry of Defense official brought to light five cases involving fraud and other corruption within the armed forces they said amounted to roughly \$40 million. And the Caja Nacional de Salud (CNS), the national health fund, was investigating dozens of cases of suspected corruption within the institution over 2017.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

Bolivia has no law guaranteeing access to public information. Elected officials by law must make asset declarations, but these are unavailable to the public.

A law enacted in September 2017 mandates that state and public-private entities establish "transparency units" to investigate suspected corruption and oversee transactions of public services and goods.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 39 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 14 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4

While the constitution guarantees freedom of expression, in practice, journalists and frequently encounter harassment in connection with critical or investigative reporting. Such harassment at times comes from government officials, who have characterized journalists as liars and participants in an international conspiracy against Morales.

Journalists also face interference with their work. In January, the online newspaper *Sol de Pando* and the website of the newspaper *Página Siete* experienced cyberattacks that took them offline temporarily. In September, journalist Agustín Aldo Maman was arrested while covering a violent demonstration by people angry over poor road connections between their town and La Paz. He was detained for several days and charged with property destruction.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Freedom of religion is guaranteed by the constitution and generally upheld in practice. The 2009 constitution ended the Roman Catholic Church's official status, and created a secular state.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is legally guaranteed and upheld in practice.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

Private discussion is robust and free from surveillance or other interference by authorities.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 9 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 3 / 4

Bolivian law protects the right to peaceful assembly. However, protests sometimes become violent. In February, more than 140 coca producers from Yungas, who were protesting a proposed bill that would have limited legal areas for coca production, were placed in custody after a violent clash with police in La Paz. In September, police forces reportedly used tear gas against residents of Achacachi who were protesting against the local mayor, who was accused of corruption. Earlier in the year, demonstrators had set fire to his home and car.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 3 / 4

Many nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operate, but they are subject to some legal restrictions. In 2016, the Constitutional Court dismissed a petition arguing that two statutes in the country's NGO law gave the government license to improperly dissolve such groups.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

Labor and peasant unions are an active force in society and wield significant political influence. The country's official labor code is inconsistent with Bolivian law; for example, it prohibits public sector unions, yet many public workers are able to legally unionize. A National Labor Court hears cases of antiunion discrimination, but tends to hand down verdicts slowly, and penalties for antiunion discrimination are not consistently applied.

F. RULE OF LAW: 6 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4

Bolivia stands as the sole country that appoints justices via popular elections. Judges on the Supreme Court, the Constitutional Tribunal, and other entities are nominated through a two-thirds vote in the legislature, which allows the MAS to dominate the candidate selection

process and has produced a judiciary that favors the party. In addition to its politicization, the judiciary remains overburdened and beset by corruption.

Days after the Constitutional Tribunal ruled that Morales could run for another term in 2019, elections were held to fill positions for 26 judges on four high courts. A majority of participating voters heeded the opposition's calls to spoil their ballots.

Prior to the polls, opposition figures argued that MAS legislators had coordinated their votes on judicial candidates improperly, and that the candidates were selected through opaque processes. There were also complaints brought to electoral authorities that some candidates had violated the prohibition on campaigning.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

Many people have difficulty accessing the justice system due to a lack of the relevant offices in the areas where they live, and also because services, where provided, are often insufficient. Police are poorly paid and receive inadequate training, and corruption within the police force remains a problem. Police officers who attempted to expose corruption often face repercussions.

Bolivia was governed by a military regime for most of the period between 1964 and 1982, and in August 2017, the government installed a Truth Commission tasked with investigating human rights violations that occurred during that time. It is tasked with producing a report in two years, and can report violations to judicial authorities.

While the constitution and jurisdictional law recognize indigenous customary law on conflict resolution, reform efforts have not fully resolved questions regarding its jurisdiction and proper application.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 2 / 4

Several pardon programs enacted in recent years, as well as fast-track trial procedures, have eased severe prison overcrowding, though some critics contend that fast-track trials push innocent people to plead guilty in exchange for reduced sentences and less time spent in court. Assaults in prisons continue to pose a significant problem.

Impunity for crimes has prompted some to engage in vigilante justice against alleged criminals, including lynchings.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

The 2010 antiracism law contains measures to combat discrimination and impose criminal penalties for discriminatory acts. However, racism and associated discrimination is rife in the country, especially against indigenous groups.

Bolivia has laws in place that prohibit discrimination against LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people. However, these laws are rarely enforced, and LGBT people experience widespread societal discrimination. Many transgender people have resorted to sex work in dangerous conditions due to employment discrimination and groundless rejection of their credentials.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 10 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4

While the law protects freedom of movement, protesters often disrupt internal travel by blocking highways and city streets. There are no formal limits on people's ability to

change their place of residence, employment, or education, but choices can be limited by socioeconomic difficulties.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

Women enjoy the same formal rights to property ownership as men but discrimination is common, leading to disparities in property ownership and access to resources. The situation has improved somewhat in recent years.

Two controversial Supreme Decrees in 2015 threaten the right to prior consultation in cases of natural resource extraction, which is established in international legal provisions recognized by Bolivian law. Opposition leaders and human rights organizations have criticized the decrees, saying authorities failed to adequately consult with indigenous groups before issuing them.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

The constitution reserves marriage as a bond between a man and a woman, and makes no provision for same-sex civil unions. In June 2017, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal determined that transgender persons who have legally changed their gender on their identification documents may get married.

Domestic violence, which mainly affects women, is a serious problem, and laws criminalizing violence against women are not well enforced. Many women lack access to birth control and reproductive health care.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Child labor and forced labor are ongoing problems. A law approved in 2014 allows children aged 12 to 14 to enter work contracts as long as they do not work for longer than six hours a day. Children as young as 10 are permitted to work in independent jobs such as shoe shining as long as they are under parental supervision.

Bolivia is a source country for the trafficking of men, women, and children for forced labor and prostitution. The government has been slow to address the problem, though in recent years it has allocated greater resources toward investigations and public awareness campaigns.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Population: 3,500,000

Capital: Sarajevo

Political Rights Rating: 4

Civil Liberties Rating: 4

Freedom Rating: 4.0

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) is a highly decentralized parliamentary republic distinguished by a fragmented constitutional regime embedded within the Dayton Peace Agreement, which ended the 1992–95 Bosnian War. Politics are characterized by severe

partisan gridlock among nationalist leaders from the country's Bosniak, Serb, and Croat communities. Corruption remains a serious problem.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Milorad Dodik, president of the Republika Srpska (RS) entity, continued to question the Constitutional Court, and to suggest that the RS could try to secede.
- In November, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) found former Bosnian Serb military leader Ratko Mladić guilty of genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity, and sentenced him to life in prison. The same month, the ICTY confirmed the sentences of several former Bosnian Croat leaders, and in December it shut down permanently after over two decades of operations.
- In May, Sarajevo Canton authorities failed to issue a permit in time for a planned gathering of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) activists to take place.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 21 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 7 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

The 1995 Dayton Accords that ended the civil war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) created a loosely knit state composed of two entities—the Federation, whose citizens are mainly Bosniak and Croat, and the largely Serb Republika Srpska—that operate under a weak central government. The role of head of state is fulfilled by a three-member presidency comprising one Bosniak, one Serb, and one Croat; each is elected to a four-year term, which the three presidents serve concurrently.

In 2014 elections deemed generally free and fair, Mladen Ivanić of the Party of Democratic Progress (PDP), Dragan Čović of the Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina (HDZ-BiH), and Bakir Izetbegović of the Party of Democratic Action (SDA) were respectively elected to the Bosnian Serb, Bosnian Croat, and Bosniak seats of the tripartite presidency.

October 2016 mayoral polls were marred by violence and irregularities. Due to an ongoing electoral dispute concerning ethnic representation, local elections have not been held in the city of Mostar—the largest urban center in the Herzegovina region—since 2008. No progress was made on the Mostar question in 2017, nor were meaningful steps taken to ensure that scenes like those in 2016 would not be repeated in 2018.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4

The Parliamentary Assembly, a state-level body, has two chambers. The 15-seat upper house, the House of Peoples, consists of five members from each of the three main ethnic groups, elected by the Federation and Republika Srpska legislatures for four-year terms. The lower house, the House of Representatives, has 42 popularly elected members serving four-year terms, with 28 seats assigned to representatives from the Federation and 14 to representatives from the Republika Srpska. The House of Representatives elects the head of the Council of Ministers (equivalent to the prime minister), who leads the state-level government.

The SDA, HDZ-BiH, and Serb Democratic Party (SDS) dominated the 2014 general elections, which were deemed generally free and fair. Denis Zvizdić of the SDA was appointed as head of the Council of Ministers.

October 2016 municipal council polls, held concurrently with the mayoral elections, were marred by violence and irregularities. None were held in Mostar due to the ongoing dispute there.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 2 / 4

Within the context of BiH's deeply segmented and fragmented constitutional regime, the Central Election Commission (CIK) administers elections with the help of municipal election commissions, which are sometimes the source of political party interference. The CIK is a largely ineffectual body, unable to act stridently without political support.

Conflicts over fair ethnic representation continue to surround aspects of the complex Dayton constitution and its implementation. For example, Bosnian citizens who do not identify as members of the country's Bosniak, Serb, or Croat "constitutive peoples" remain constitutionally barred from the presidency and membership in the House of Peoples, despite 2009 and 2016 rulings by the European Court of Human Rights that the exclusion of members of other ethnic groups violated the European Convention on Human Rights.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 10 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 3 / 4

Political parties typically organize and operate freely, though the political arena in the Federation is generally limited to Bosniaks and Croats, while Serbs dominate politics in the Republika Srpska. While coalitions at all levels of government shift frequently, vast patronage networks controlled by governing parties dominate the country's politics, and reform-oriented forces have struggled to make meaningful breakthroughs.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 3 / 4

There are no legal barriers preventing opposition parties from winning power. However, expansive veto powers granted to the constitutive peoples and their representatives have allowed the dominant nationalist parties to shut out reformist and multiethnic challengers.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 2 / 4

The Office of the High Representative (OHR), which was created by the Dayton Accords, operates under the auspices of the United Nations and has the authority to remove elected officials if they are deemed to be obstructing the peace process. In recent years, the OHR has been reluctant to intervene in the country's politics.

Both Serbia and Croatia wield outsized influence in the Bosnian political sphere through their respective proxies; the Dodik government, in the case of Serbia, and the HDZ-BiH, in the case of Croatia. Two other foreign governments, Russia, and Turkey, have offered support to preferred candidates. Religious leaders are influential in all three ethnic communities.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 2 / 4

Political rights in BiH are in large part contingent on one's ethnic background and place of residence. Ethnic minorities including Jewish and Roma Bosnians are constitutionally

barred from the presidency and from membership in the House of Peoples, despite the European Court of Human Rights rulings against those provisions. Serbs who live in the Federation and Croats and Bosniaks who live in the RS are also excluded from the presidency. Bosnian Croats argue that their rights to representation are violated by electoral laws allowing non-Croats a significant voice in the selection of the Croat member of the presidency and Croat members of the House of Peoples. Women are underrepresented in politics and government.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 4 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 2 / 4

Elected leaders are promptly seated, but their ability to implement legislation is limited by a number of factors.

Under the Dayton Accords, representatives from each of the three major ethnic groups, at both state and entity levels, may exercise a veto on legislation deemed harmful to their interests, which hampers policymaking.

The federal government is undercut by movements within each of BiH's entities for greater autonomy. In the Republika Srpska, hard-line president, Milorad Dodik continued agitating for greater autonomy in the wake of a 2016 political crisis that saw his government defy a Constitutional Court ruling in order to hold an unlawful plebiscite concerning a holiday commemorating the entity's founding in 1992. He additionally suggested in 2017 that the entity might rewrite its constitution in a manner he explained as allowing it to "break away" from BiH, but which also would not contain "secessionist tendencies." Separately, Bosnian Croats continued their drive to modify electoral laws in order to achieve greater autonomy from Bosniaks in the Federation, but have been unsuccessful.

Croatia and Serbia have influence over policymaking through their allies in the HDZ-BiH and Dodik's Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD).

The influence of religious leaders can extend to policymaking.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

Corruption remains widespread and systemic, and enforcement of legislation designed to combat corruption is weak. When corruption probes are actually opened, they rarely result in convictions. In June 2017, Transparency International BiH said it had noted a significant decline in the efficiency of corruption jurisprudence in the country over the last eight years, and particularly in 2015 and 2016. Amir Zukić, the general secretary of the Bosniak nationalist SDA, was arrested in February 2017 on suspicion of a number of corruption-related offenses. In July, he was released from detention for the remainder of his trial, over the objections of the prosecutor.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 1 / 4

Government remains largely inaccessible to the public. Procurement awards are often made in secret and, according to a March 2017 report published by Mediacentar Sarajevo, a local nongovernmental organization (NGO), most public institutions do not comply with BiH's legal requirements related to freedom of information. Candidates for major offices are required to make financial disclosures, but the relevant laws do not meet international standards and the resulting disclosures are considered unreliable. Debate and decisions on matters of great public interest, including legislation and matters pertaining to EU accession, routinely occur during interparty negotiations that take place behind closed doors, outside of government institutions.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 34 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 10 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4

Freedom of expression is legally guaranteed but limited in practice. Journalists face harassment and threats as well as political pressure. In August 2017, the Institution of Human Rights Ombudsman of Bosnia and Herzegovina issued a report recommending that the country build a stronger legal infrastructure for punishing attacks on journalists. In September, police officers reportedly threatened members of a Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) crew while preventing them from filming a protest in front of the parliament building in Sarajevo; the treatment of the journalists prompted a protest by media workers in the city.

In general, the media situation is worse in the Republika Srpska entity than it is in the Federation. In January, Dodik blocked reporters from the CNN affiliate N1 from attending a press conference, and struck the network from the president's mailing list; the incident occurred just days after Dodik had publicly lashed out at an N1 journalist and criticized the network's coverage. In July, opinion writer Dragan Bursać was forced to flee Banja Luka and go into hiding after receiving death threats following his criticism of a planned rally in support of former Bosnian Serb military leader Ratko Mladić. Mladić later in the year was convicted of war crimes and genocide at the ICTY.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4

Religious freedom is not subject to formal restrictions, but in practice the ability to express religious belief openly can be contingent on remaining in areas where one's own religious group dominates.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 2 / 4

Like most public sectors, the education system is wracked by corruption and clientelism, and curriculum is politicized at all levels of education. At some schools in the Federation, Bosniak and Croat students are divided into classes on the basis of their ethnicity, meeting in segregated classrooms despite attending school in the same building. Some Bosniak returnees in the Republika Srpska have sent their children to temporary alternative schools in protest of curricula they call discriminatory, and some Serb families have described discriminatory educational environments in the Federation.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4

Free speech in BiH is generally protected from overt government interference. However, public reaction and peer pressure remain significant curbs on the discussion of sensitive topics. Media often report on "controversial" social viral media posts by members of the public.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 7 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 3 / 4

Freedom of assembly is generally respected in BiH, and peaceful protests are frequent. However, police at times have overreacted to public demonstrations. In August, police violently dispersed a peaceful protest against the building of a dam in the village of Kruščica.

Separately, in May, Sarajevo Canton authorities failed to issue a permit in time for a planned gathering of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) activists to take place. In the Republika Srpska, people are not allowed to assemble in front of public institutions.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 2 / 4

The NGO sector in BiH remains robust but is sometimes exposed to government pressure and interference. There have been reports of prolonged tax investigations by the Republika Srpska government into NGOs. Many organizations rely on government funding, posing a potential conflict if they seek to criticize the government.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

Labor unions operate freely in the whole of BiH, although the general position of working people is vulnerable. The right to strike is legally protected, but labor law in the Federation erects significant barriers to the right. Enforcement measures of labor laws and their protections for workers are weak. The leading political blocs in the country have significant sway over unions.

F. RULE OF LAW: 7 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4

The judiciary is formally independent, but very weak in practice, and the Constitutional Court continues to face challenges from Dodik in the Republika Srpska, and the HDZ-BiH in the Federation. The high-profile 2016 decision by Dodik to hold the Republika Srpska holiday referendum in defiance of the Constitutional Court marked a significant deterioration of constitutional governance in BiH, though it was one of dozens of disregarded Constitutional Court decisions. In August 2017, the Constitutional Court ruled that all military installations in the RS were BiH state property. Dodik criticized the ruling as politicized and other figures in the RS entity government indicated that they would ignore it. In January, the president of the HDZ-BiH joined Dodik in questioning the inclusion of foreign judges on the Constitutional Court.

The lack of a single, supreme judicial body and the existence of four separate court systems—for the central state, the Republika Srpska, the Federation, and the self-governing Brčko district—contributes to overall inefficiency.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 2 / 4

Guarantees of due process are inconsistently upheld. Access to adequate legal counsel can be contingent on one's financial standing. Police corruption is a problem, sometimes in connection with organized crime.

The process of prosecuting war crimes in domestic courts has been slow, with political interference and courts' lack of resources and capacity contributing to a backlog of several hundred cases. A push to reinvigorate the process was ongoing at year's end, but impunity for war crimes including killings and sexual violence continues.

In November, the ICTY issued a major ruling, finding Mladić guilty of genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity, and sentencing him to life in prison. The same month, the ICTY confirmed the sentences of several former Bosnian Croat leaders, and in December it shut down permanently after over two decades of operations.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 2 / 4

Harassment by police remains routine for vulnerable groups. Many prisons are run down or overcrowded, and detainees risk abuse by prison authorities. The thousands of active mine fields still in place following the war continue to pose a danger. Two civilians were killed and one was injured in mine accidents between January and September 2017.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

Discrimination against minorities is illegal but nevertheless widespread, particularly against members of the Romany minority. Bosniaks and Croats in the RS experience difficulties accessing social services. Members of the LGBT community face discrimination, harassment, and occasional physical attacks, and authorities fail to investigate and prosecute crimes against LGBT individuals adequately. People displaced during the war but who later returned to their homes, face discrimination in employment and housing in regions that are not dominated by their own ethnic group. Women are legally entitled to full equality with men but face discrimination in the workplace.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 10 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4

The law protects freedom of movement and this right is generally upheld in practice. However, land mines threaten movement in some areas. Corruption can hamper people's ability to freely choose their place of employment.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

Widespread corruption and patronage remain major barriers to free enterprise in BiH.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

Sexual harassment is common. Domestic violence remains a serious concern but the government has launched several initiatives to combat gender-based violence. Individuals are largely free to marry and dress as they please.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

According to the U.S. State Department's 2018 *Trafficking in Persons Report*, men, women, and children are subject to trafficking for the purposes of prostitution and forced labor, with Romani children particularly vulnerable to forced begging, and forced marriages that amount to sexual servitude. According to the report, the government was making efforts towards prosecuting perpetrators, protecting victims, and preventing trafficking, though its efforts in the first two areas decreased somewhat in 2017.

Patronage and clientelism continue to adversely affect hiring practices and contribute to de facto restrictions on labor markets in BiH.

Botswana

Population: 2,200,000

Capital: Gaborone

Political Rights Rating: 3

Civil Liberties Rating: 2

Freedom Rating: 2.5

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: While it is considered one of the most stable democracies in Africa, Botswana has been dominated by a single party since independence. President Ian Khama's critics accuse him of becoming increasingly authoritarian. Media freedom remains under threat. The indigenous San people, as well as migrants, refugees, and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people, face discrimination.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In March, security agents temporarily detained three journalists attempting to access one of President Khama's homes to investigate corruption allegations. The agents threatened to shoot the journalists if they attempted to enter the property again.
- In February, the Botswana Congress Party (BCP) joined the Umbrella for Democratic Change (UDC), an opposition coalition that will compete in the 2019 parliamentary elections. Analysts contended that the addition of the BCP could allow the UDC to mount a strong challenge against the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP), which has governed since the country gained independence in 1966.
- Also in February, the Court of Appeal ruled that Khama's reappointment of six judges was illegal. The reappointment was one of several apparent attempts by the president to increase his influence over the judiciary.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 28 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 10 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

The president is indirectly elected by the National Assembly for a five-year term and is eligible to seek reelection. The vice president is appointed by the president and confirmed by the legislature. Despite being indirectly elected, the president holds significant power, including the authority to prolong or dismiss the National Assembly, which must dissolve itself if it votes no confidence in the government.

The incumbent president, Ian Khama of the BDP, was elected to a second term in 2014 after his party's victory in that year's parliamentary elections. He originally took office in 2008, rising from the vice presidency when then president Festus Mogae retired a year before the 2009 elections, just as his predecessor had done. This pattern of controlled succession has been criticized in part for giving new BDP leaders the advantages of incumbency before elections.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

Botswana has a unicameral, 65-seat National Assembly. Voters directly elect 57 members to five-year terms, six members are nominated by the president and approved by the National Assembly, and the other two members are the president and the speaker. The 2014 parliamentary elections were declared credible by regional and international monitoring bodies. The BDP won 37 of the 57 seats. The UDC won 17, and the BCP won the remaining 3.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4

The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) administers elections. Although it has a reputation for running well-organized and credible elections, the IEC has been criticized for a lack of public consultation in making changes to the electoral framework.

Legislation passed in 2016 that would introduce electronic voting for the 2019 parliamentary elections caused controversy throughout 2017. In late 2016, the opposition BCP sued the IEC over the legislation, claiming that electronic voting was prone to manipulation in favor of the BDP.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 10 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 3 / 4

The right to organize in political parties is largely respected. There is no public financing for political parties, which critics argue gives the BDP an unfair advantage. Electoral reforms passed in 2016 that increased fees for candidates contesting elections drew criticism for further disadvantaging the opposition.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 2 / 4

The BDP has dominated the political landscape since 1966—no opposition party has won power. However, in 2014 the BDP's vote total slipped below 50 percent for the first time in its history. In 2012, several of the largest opposition parties formed a coalition, the UDC, to contest elections. The BCP joined the UDC in February 2017. Analysts argued that with this addition, the coalition could overcome the BDP's structural advantages to compete for power in 2019.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 3 / 4

People's political choices are largely free from domination by unelected outside groups. However, the House of Chiefs, a 35-member body composed mostly of traditional leaders, advises legislators and can influence their political stances.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 2 / 4

Women have full political rights, but cultural factors limit their participation, and their interests are not necessarily addressed by elected leaders. Only 9.5 percent of legislators in the National Assembly are women, and two women serve in the House of Chiefs. In May 2017, after a nine-year delay that was criticized by women's rights groups, Khama signed

the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development, which aims to empower women and reduce gender-based discrimination.

Smaller ethnic and tribal groups tend to be left out of the political process. People with disabilities participated at low levels in the 2014 parliamentary elections, and Botswana is not a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Political parties generally do not represent the interests of LGBT people.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 8 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 3 / 4

Elected executive and legislative officials determine the government's policies. However, opposition parties have criticized the executive branch for dominating the National Assembly and rushing bills through the legislative process without adequate deliberation. In 2016, lawmakers approved an amendment that increased the number of National Assembly members appointed by the president from four to six. Opposition leaders argued that the change would further strengthen executive power at the expense of the National Assembly's independence.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4

Although corruption laws are generally enforced, the main anticorruption agency, the Directorate on Corruption and Economic Crime (DCEC), has been ineffective in pursuing cases of high-level corruption. Observers have noted an erosion in the independence of the DCEC in recent years. In July 2017, David Mosetse, an ally and friend of Isaac Kgosi, director general of the Directorate of Intelligence and Security Services (DISS), was appointed to lead the anticorruption body. Because Kgosi had been implicated in a money-laundering scandal, critics denounced the appointment as a bid to shield him from prosecution.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

Botswana lacks a freedom of information law, which limits the government's transparency. Press freedom advocates have criticized Section 44 of the Corruption and Economic Crime Act, which prohibits publishing information on investigations by the DCEC. Many government expenses, including military acquisitions and taxpayer-funded construction of the president's private residences, are shrouded in secrecy. In March 2017, the Public Procurement and Assets Disposal Board (PPADB) passed reforms to begin publishing state procurement plans.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 44 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 12 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4

Although freedom of expression is constitutionally guaranteed, journalists continued to endure harassment and intimidation from the government in 2017. In March, three journalists from the INK Center for Investigative Journalism were temporarily detained while trying to access one of President Khama's homes in the village of Mosu for a report on corruption. Security agents threatened to shoot the journalists if they attempted to access the property again.

The state-run media dominate television broadcasting. In August, the country's ombudsman found that Botswana Television favors the ruling party. State-run outlets frequently censor stories that may conflict with the government's interests, including reports on

corruption investigations or opposition rallies. Authorities are known to pressure independent media outlets to publish stories that present the government in a positive light.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Religious freedom is generally respected in practice, though all religious organizations must register with the government. In June 2017, Mormon missionaries from the United States were allowed to return to Botswana following a four-year ban on all foreign missionaries. In April, the government drew criticism for excluding non-Christians from the newly formed Societies Advisory and Arbitration Council, which was created to advise the government on religious matters.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 3 / 4

Although academic freedom is generally respected, professors often practice self-censorship when addressing sensitive topics. In the past, foreign academics have been deported for publishing work that was critical of the government, contributing to cautiousness among many scholars.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4

Although freedom of expression is constitutionally protected and typically respected in practice, the law restricts the ability of public-sector workers to air their political views. In April 2017, the Court of Appeal ruled that teachers could not make statements for or against a political party in the media, affirming existing law; the ruling affects all public-sector workers.

In recent years, the DISS has developed technology to monitor the private communications of Botswanans. In September, Trade and Industry Minister Vincent Seretse suggested that the government would present a bill to greatly expand surveillance powers before the 2019 elections. In May, an official at the Ministry of Defence, Justice, and Security stated in an interview that the government would be drafting an amendment to the Cyber Crime Act to increase the monitoring of social media for fake news and defamation. Civil society leaders expressed concern that any new social media legislation could result in a crackdown on freedom of expression.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 10 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4

Freedom of assembly is guaranteed by the constitution and largely upheld in practice. However, in February 2017, students protesting their delayed allowances at the University of Botswana were violently dispersed by police. Officers used rubber bullets and tear gas, and some students were beaten. One transgender student who was arrested claimed that she was made to strip.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), including human rights groups, generally operate without restrictions.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

The right to form a union is respected, but the government places restrictions on who can strike. The Trade Dispute Act was amended in 2016 to include teachers, diamond cutters, and veterinarians among those providing “essential services” who are not legally allowed to strike. Because of limitations on the right to strike, the government declares many strikes to be illegal, and workers can be terminated for their participation in these cases. The law does not always protect workers from antiunion discrimination by employers.

F. RULE OF LAW: 11 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 3 / 4**

The judiciary is generally independent and free from executive interference. Several incidents in 2017 raised concerns that President Khama was attempting to exert undue influence on the courts, but the judiciary showed resilience in the face of executive pressure. In February 2017, the Court of Appeal invalidated the president’s reappointment of six of its justices, ruling that they could not be reappointed after serving a fixed three-year term under the law. In May, the same court ruled against Khama’s refusal to appoint Omphemetse Motumise to the bench as recommended by the Judicial Services Commission (JSC). The president’s appointment that month of a close subordinate, his permanent secretary, to the JSC, which recommends judicial appointments, added to concerns about executive influence.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 3 / 4

The right to a fair trial is protected by the constitution and generally upheld in practice. However, the judiciary lacks human and financial resources, which has led to a backlog that results in lengthy pretrial detentions. Attorneys are provided to all defendants in capital cases, but defendants in noncapital cases must pay for their own counsel. The DISS has the power to arrest suspects without a warrant if agents believe they have committed or will commit a crime. Some civil society groups have raised concerns about the DISS’s expansive powers and insufficient oversight and accountability.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 3 / 4

Although citizens are largely protected from the illegitimate use of force, corporal punishment is imposed in some cases, a practice that many human rights groups criticize as cruel and degrading. Instances of police brutality have been reported, and perpetrators are rarely held accountable. Although the parliament passed a motion in 2012 calling for an Independent Police Investigations Directorate (IPID) to handle allegations of police abuse, the Ministry of Defence, Justice, and Security has not yet established the body.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

Customary law, commonly applied in rural areas, often discriminates against women economically and perpetuates the view that women play a subordinate role in society.

The indigenous San people tend to be economically marginalized and lack access to education. There have been reports of beatings, abuse, and arbitrary arrests of San by police and park rangers.

Same-sex sexual relations remain implicitly criminalized under a law against “unnatural” sexual acts, though it is not actively enforced. LGBT people continue to experience discrimination, especially in accessing health care. In September 2017, the High Court ruled

in favor of a transgender man seeking to change the gender listed on his identification card, a decision that was seen as a major victory for the rights of LGBT people.

Refugees in Botswana are detained in encampments where they are denied the ability to work and integrate into local communities. Many asylum seekers are held at the Francistown Center for Illegal Immigrants, where deteriorating conditions have reportedly included leaking tents and communicable diseases. In November 2017, the Court of Appeal rejected a High Court ruling that the detention of 165 asylum seekers was illegal. It ruled that only recognized refugees, not asylum seekers, were permitted at the Dukwi refugee camp, and ordered asylum seekers back to Francistown.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 11 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4

Most Botswanans can move freely throughout the country and travel internationally. However, in addition to the movement restrictions on refugees and asylum seekers, San have limited access to their traditional lands in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve. The government's long-standing policy has been to relocate San out of the reserve, and those who still have relatives living there must apply for a permit to visit them.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 3 / 4

Botswana has generally sound legal protections for property rights, and they are enforced in practice. However, customary law discriminates against women in property and inheritance matters—a woman has no right to her husband's property upon his death. The country's regulatory framework is considered conducive to establishing and operating private businesses.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Domestic violence and rape are pervasive problems. The law does not recognize spousal rape as a crime. Customary law restricts women's rights within a marriage, as women are considered legal minors. When husbands and wives separate, custody is traditionally granted to the father. Child and forced marriages still occur under customary law.

Women can experience harassment for not dressing conservatively. In June 2017, a woman was sexually assaulted by a group of men at a bus station for wearing a miniskirt, which prompted protests in defense of women's rights.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

Workers enjoy a number of protections against exploitative labor practices. However, employer abuses in retail stores, the tourism industry, and the private security sector are an ongoing problem. Botswana lacks a strong regulatory framework for labor brokers that dispatch workers to clients on short-term contracts, in which exploitation is common. Human trafficking remains a challenge. While the government increased trafficking prosecutions in 2017, efforts to identify and protect victims were inadequate.

Brazil

Population: 206,100,000

Capital: Brasília

Political Rights Rating: 2

Civil Liberties Rating: 2

Freedom Rating: 2.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Brazil is a democracy with competitive elections and a vibrant civil society sector. However, economic and political crises have challenged the functioning of government. Corruption, crime, and economic exclusion of minorities are among the country's most serious difficulties.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- The controversial bribery investigation known as Operation Car Wash, which focuses on the state oil company, Petrobrás, continued in 2017.
- The attorney general issued separate charges against President Michel Temer for bribery and obstruction of justice. However, the lower house twice voted to block the Supreme Federal Court from proceeding with trials on the respective charges.
- President Temer's proposed austerity reforms prompted protests.
- In September 2017, the government deployed troops to Rocinha, among the country's largest favelas, to quell a spate of violence between gangs that was also accompanied by shootouts between gang members and police.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 31 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 11 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

Brazil is a federal republic governed under a presidential system. Presidential elections are generally free and fair. The president is elected by popular vote for a four-year term and is eligible for reelection to a second term. Dilma Rousseff, the incumbent and the candidate of the Workers' Party (PT), won the 2014 presidential election by a slim margin, taking 51.6 percent of the vote in a runoff against Aécio Neves of the centrist Brazilian Social Democratic Party (PSDB).

In 2016, the Senate impeached Rousseff on charges that she had manipulated the federal budget in an effort to hide Brazil's economic problems. Temer, Rousseff's vice president and one of the leading figures in the Brazilian Democratic Movement Party (PMDB), was installed as interim president at the outset of the impeachment trial, and was confirmed in August 2016 to serve for the remainder of Rousseff's term, which ends in 2018.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

Legislative elections are generally free and fair. The bicameral National Congress is composed of an 81-member Senate and a 513-member Chamber of Deputies. Senators serve staggered eight-year terms, with one- to two-thirds coming up for election every four

years. Members of the Chamber of Deputies serve four-year terms. In the 2014 legislative elections, the PT remained the largest party in the lower house with 70 deputies, followed by the centrist, PT-allied PMDB with 66 seats, and the opposition PSDB with 54 seats. The PMDB maintained its lead in the Senate with 18 seats, while the PT captured 12 seats, and the PSDB took 10.

Electoral bodies reported that as many as 20 politicians were killed ahead of the 2016 municipal elections, in attacks that were generally suspected to have been carried out by organized crime groups.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

Brazilian election laws are generally well enforced. A Supreme Electoral Court presides over cases related to violations of electoral law. In June 2017, the Supreme Electoral Court, in a 4-3 ruling, decided not to annul Rousseff and Temer's electoral victory in 2014 in connection with allegations of accepting bribes and improper donations to fund their campaign. The court had excluded damaging testimony from executives of the construction firm Odebrecht, who said they had directed millions of dollars toward Rousseff and Temer's campaign, raising some concerns about its impartiality. An annulment of the results would have effectively forced Temer from office.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 14 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4

Brazil has an unfettered multiparty system marked by vigorous competition between rival parties. The electoral framework encourages the proliferation of parties, a number of which are based in a single state. Some parties display little ideological consistency. Party switching is common by members of congress, rendering electoral coalitions fragile. The sheer number of parties means that the executive branch must piece together diverse and ideologically incoherent coalitions to pass legislation, which may encourage corruption.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

Opposition parties are able to compete freely and gain power through elections.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 3 / 4

Recent investigations into corruption have exposed how wealthy business interests undermine democratic accountability by facilitating or encouraging corruption among elected officials. Criminal groups have carried out attacks against political candidates.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

The Constitution guarantees equal rights without prejudice, but some groups have greater political representation than others. Afro-Brazilians and women remain underrepresented in electoral politics. The Senate has one self-identified black representative. Women hold 12 seats (14.8 percent) in the Senate and 55 seats (10.7 percent) in the House. Temer's cabinet does not include any women or Afro-Brazilians.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 6 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 2 / 4**

Widespread corruption undermines the government's ability to make and implement policy without undue influence from private or criminal interests. Political crises linked with the numerous ongoing corruption investigations against senior officials dominated the political sphere in 2017, severely weakening the functioning of government.

Despite an economic crisis and accompanying austerity proposals that helped drive his approval ratings into single digits, Temer managed to push through significant and controversial reforms to the country's labor laws in 2017.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

Corruption and graft are endemic in Brazil, especially among elected officials. The controversial bribery investigation known as Operation Car Wash, which focuses on the state oil company, Petrobrás, continued in 2017. The investigation, which began in 2014, focuses on bribery, money-laundering, and bid-rigging involving Petrobrás and private construction companies. Its findings have implicated former Petrobrás executives, heads of major construction firms, cabinet members, and elected officials from across the political spectrum. A number of prominent figures associated with Temer have been convicted on charges related to the investigation.

In 2017 the lower house voted twice to shield Temer from trial on corruption charges. In June, Attorney General Rodrigo Janot charged Temer with involvement in a bribery scheme worth millions of dollars, but the lower house voted against advancing the charges to the Supreme Federal Court in August. The following month, Janot charged Temer with obstruction of justice in connection with alleged attempts to derail Operation Car Wash, and with leading a criminal organization within the executive branch. The lower house failed to advance those charges to the Supreme Federal Court in a vote in October. In an apparent attempt to maintain his congressional coalition and avoid trial—which can only be initiated against the president by the lower house—in 2017 Temer directed hundreds of millions of dollars to congressional members' favored projects.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

Brazil enacted an Access to Information Law in 2012, but in practice, the government does not always release requested information.

The National Controller's Office (CGU) had been an important resource for members of the public seeking information about government operations. However, President Temer reorganized ministerial cabinets in 2016 and converted the CGU into a new Ministry of Transparency, Monitoring, and Oversight. This decision was considered to be detrimental to the independence of the agency.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 47 / 60 (-1)**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 15 / 16****D1. Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4**

The constitution guarantees freedom of expression, and the media scene is vibrant. However, politicians and influential businesspersons continued to make use of existing laws, including criminal defamation laws, to curtail critical reporting in 2017.

Investigative journalists, particularly those who cover corruption and crime, face threats, harassment, obstruction, and violence, which in some cases has been deadly. In March 2017, a car belonging to investigative journalist Rodrigo Lima of the daily newspaper *Diário da*

Região was set on fire, in what he said was likely retaliation for work on corruption. In June, blogger Luís Gustavo da Silva was shot and killed, and a police investigation concluded that his murder came as a result of his writings on drug trafficking and other crime.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

The constitution guarantees freedom of religion, and the government generally respects this right in practice.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is generally unrestricted.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

People are generally able to express political or controversial views in public without fear of surveillance or retaliation.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 10 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 3 / 4

While freedom of assembly is generally respected, demonstrations are sometimes met with excessive force by police or other security agents. There were a number of protests in 2017 against austerity measures proposed by President Temer. In May, troops deployed in response to a protest in the capital, and reportedly opened fire with live ammunition amid clashes with protesters. Dozens of injuries were reported, including one involving a bullet, but no one was killed.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations are able to operate freely in a variety of fields. However, activists working on land rights and environmental protection issues have faced serious threats and encountered deadly violence.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

Industrial labor unions are well organized, and although they are politically connected, Brazilian unions tend to be freer from political party control than their counterparts in other Latin American countries. However, controversial labor reforms enacted in 2017 will diminish the strength and role of unions in collective bargaining with businesses.

F. RULE OF LAW: 9 / 16 (-1)

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 3 / 4

The judiciary, though largely independent, is overburdened, inefficient, and often subject to intimidation and other external influences, especially in rural areas. Access to justice also varies greatly due to Brazil's high level of income inequality. Despite these shortcomings, the country's progressive constitution has resulted in an active judiciary that often rules in favor of citizens over the state.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 2 / 4

The right to a fair trial is generally upheld by the judiciary. However, federal, state, and appellate courts are severely backlogged. The state struggles to provide legal counsel for defendants and prisoners who are unable to afford an attorney.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 2 / 4

Brazil's police force remains mired in corruption, and serious police abuses, including extrajudicial killings, continued in 2017. Police officers are rarely prosecuted for abuses, and those charged are almost never convicted.

The country's favelas, or slums, are heavily affected by gang violence. Highly organized and well-armed drug gangs frequently clash with security forces or with private militias comprised of off-duty police officers and prison guards. In September 2017, the government deployed troops to Rocinha, among the country's largest favelas, to quell a spate of violence between gangs that was accompanied by shootouts between gang members and police.

Brazil has a relatively high homicide rate; the UN Office on Drugs and Crime reported 27 homicides per 100,000 residents in 2015, compared with a global average of less than 6 per 100,000. The victims are predominantly young, black, and poor. Many are bystanders caught in crossfire between police and suspected gang members.

Conditions in Brazil's severely overcrowded prisons are life-threatening, characterized by disease, a lack of adequate food, and deadly gang-related violence. Violence is more likely to affect poor, black prisoners. Wealthy inmates often enjoy better conditions than poorer prisoners.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4 (-1)

Some populations are not able to fully exercise their human rights in practice. Indigenous peoples make up less than 1 percent of the population. Many indigenous communities suffer from poverty and lack adequate sanitation and education services. The government's National Indian Foundation (FUNAI) in September lodged a complaint with state prosecutors over the alleged killing of up to 10 members of a previously uncontacted indigenous tribe by gold miners.

Just over half of Brazil's population identifies as black or of mixed race. Afro-Brazilians suffer from high rates of poverty and illiteracy, and almost 70 percent of Brazilians living in extreme poverty are black. Victims of violence in Brazil are predominantly young, black, and poor.

Although Brazil has a largely tolerant society, it reportedly has one of the world's highest levels of violence against LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people. According to Grupo Gay da Bahia, an LGBT advocacy group, 445 LGBT people were killed in 2017 as a result of homophobic violence, marking a 30 percent increase from the group's figures for the previous year.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 due to persistent human rights violations and violence committed against LGBT people and black youths.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 13 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4

Brazilians enjoy freedom to travel within and outside of the country, and to make decisions about their places of residence and employment. However, access to high-quality education across all levels remains a challenge. Gang violence in favelas at times has impeded free movement, and has prompted schools to shut down temporarily.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 3 / 4

While property rights are generally enforced, laws granting indigenous populations exclusive use of certain lands are not always upheld, sometimes leading to violent conflicts. Requirements for starting new businesses are often onerous, and corruption and organized crime sometimes pose obstacles to private business activity.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

The government generally does not restrict social freedoms. Same-sex marriage became legal in 2013. While a 2006 law sought to address Brazil's high rates of impunity for domestic violence, violence against women and girls remains widespread. Abortion is legal only in the case of rape, a threat to the mother's life, or a rare and usually fatal brain deformity in the fetus. These restrictions limit women's reproductive choices and infringe on family planning.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

Slavery-like working conditions pose a significant problem in rural—and increasingly urban—zones. A constitutional amendment in 2012 allows the government to confiscate all property of landholders found to be using slave labor. However, under President Temer, the Ministry of Labor and Social Security in October 2017 announced it would not continue automatically making public its “dirty list” of employers who subject workers to abusive conditions. The ministry also altered its internal definition of “slave-like conditions” to a more limited set of conditions that focus on freedom of mobility.

The government has sought to address the problem of child labor by cooperating with various nongovernmental organizations, increasing inspections, and offering cash incentives to keep children in school. Legislation enacted in 2014 classifies the sexual exploitation of minors as “a heinous crime,” with penalties of four to ten years in prison without eligibility for bail or amnesty.

Brunei

Population: 400,000

Capital: Bandar Seri Begawan

Political Rights Rating: 6

Civil Liberties Rating: 5

Freedom Rating: 5.5

Freedom Status: Not Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Note: Due to a methodological change affecting certain monarchies, Brunei's aggregate score for political rights declined by one point; for more information see the report methodology.

Overview: Brunei is an absolute monarchy in which the sultan exercises executive power, and in which there are no elected representatives at the national level. Freedom of the press and of assembly are significantly restricted. Online speech is monitored by authorities, but lively nevertheless.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Nineteen Indian residents of Brunei were fined in February for gathering without a permit to support playing a south Indian sport called Jallikattu.
- In July, a government employee was charged with sedition after criticizing on Facebook new government halal certification regulations, and expressing concern about the impact they might have on local businesses.
- Brunei delayed implementation of further phases of its Sharia-based penal code. The first phase was implemented in 2014.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 6 / 40 (-1)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 0 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

The hereditary sultan, Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah, is the head of state and prime minister, and continues to wield broad powers under a long-standing state of emergency imposed in 1984.

In 2017, Brunei appeared, in the fiftieth year of the sultan's rule, to be paving the way for Hassanal's son, Prince Al-Muhtadee Billah, to eventually take power. There are no indications that any transition would also involve moving away from a traditional monarchy.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

The unicameral Legislative Council has no political standing independent of the sultan, who appoints most members. Brunei has not held direct legislative elections since 1962.

Elections are held for village-level councils that play a consultative role, though candidates are vetted by the government.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 0 / 4

There are no national-level electoral laws, since there have not been any national, direct legislative elections in over five decades.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 3 / 12

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 1 / 4

Genuine political activity by opposition groups remains extremely limited. The National Development Party (NDP) was permitted to register in 2005 after pledging to work as a partner with the government and swearing loyalty to the sultan; it is the only registered party.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 0 / 4

There are no national-level elections in which opposition forces could gain power. Since the National Solidarity Party was deregistered without explanation in 2008, the NDP has been Brunei's sole legal political party. It has no formal political role, few activities in practice, and a small membership, and is unable to challenge the sultan's power in any meaningful way.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 1 / 4

The dominance of the sultan and lack of elections leaves people with few avenues for genuine and autonomous political participation. However, people have some very limited ability to challenge unpopular policies through the organization of social movements. In 2015, for example, authorities found a compromise solution to address the concerns of vendors who had been ordered to relocate. Analysts suggested that the government was amenable to the compromise because it aided the sultan's public image.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 1 / 4

Ethnic and religious minorities have few opportunities for political participation, even on a local level. Village council candidates must be Muslim, and ministers and deputy ministers must be Muslim and Malay unless the sultan grants an exception.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 3 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 0 / 4**

None of Brunei's national-level policymakers are chosen through elections. The sultan wields broad powers, and is advised by appointed advisory bodies and the appointed legislature.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

The government claims to have a zero-tolerance policy on corruption, and its Anti-Corruption Bureau has successfully prosecuted a number of lower-level officials. In August 2017, a civil servant in the Defense Ministry was sentenced to six months in jail for misappropriating state funds.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 1 / 4

Although the appointed Legislative Council has no independent power, it formally passes the state budget and engages in question-and-answer sessions with government officials. The Council meets once each year for a session lasting approximately two weeks. However, in general there is little transparency in the operations of the Brunei government, and this lack of transparency is exacerbated by the country's lack of press freedom.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 22 / 60**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 6 / 16****D1. Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4**

Officials may close newspapers without cause and fine and imprison journalists for up to three years for reporting deemed "false and malicious." Brunei's only television station

is state-run. The country's main English-language daily newspaper, the *Borneo Bulletin*, is controlled by the sultan's family and its journalists often practice self-censorship. Another former English-language newspaper, the *Brunei Times*, closed abruptly in 2016, allegedly after complaints from the Saudi embassy in Brunei over critical coverage of Saudi hajj policies.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 1 / 4

The state religion is the Shafi'i school of Sunni Islam, but the constitution allows for the practice of other religions. Non-Shafi'i forms of Islam are actively discouraged, and marriage between Muslims and non-Muslims is not allowed. Muslims require permission from the Ministry of Religious Affairs to convert to other faiths.

Christians are allowed to hold low-key Christmas celebrations inside churches or at homes, but not outdoors or at shopping malls. In 2017, it appeared that the government no longer issued permits for the construction of new churches.

In 2014, Brunei implemented new criminal regulations based on Sharia law (Islamic law), which include limits on the use of certain words and expressions deemed to be sacred to Islam in reference to other religions. The new code also includes a ban on proselytizing of a religion other than Islam to Muslims or atheists, and requires Muslims to participate in fasts and other religious observances. In 2017, the Brunei government had yet to implement a planned second phase of the law, which prescribes much tougher penalties for violations.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 2 / 4

Academic freedom is respected to some extent, although institutions must seek approval from authorities to host visiting scholars, public lectures, and conferences. Scholars reportedly practice self-censorship or release their work under pseudonyms in overseas publications to avoid repercussions in Brunei.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 2 / 4

The government utilizes an informant system to monitor suspected dissidents, and online communications are monitored for subversive content. In July 2017, a government employee complained, in a social media post on Facebook, about new government halal certification regulations and the impact that might have on local businesses. He was charged with sedition and pleaded not guilty in September. Nevertheless, Brunei has an active online discussion community.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 3 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 1 / 4

Long-standing state-of-emergency laws continue to restrict freedom of assembly. No more than 10 people can assemble for any purpose without a permit, and these laws are frequently enforced. Nineteen Indian residents of Brunei were fined in February 2017 for gathering without a permit to support playing a south Indian sport called Jallikattu.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 1 / 4

Most nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are professional or business groups, although a few work on issues related to social welfare. All groups must register, registration can be refused for any reason, and registered groups can be suspended.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 1 / 4

The law guarantees the right to form and join a union, but the agreement that had permitted Brunei's only active union, the Brunei Oilfield Workers Union, is now expired. Strikes are illegal, and collective bargaining is not recognized.

F. RULE OF LAW: 6 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4

Brunei has a dual judicial system of secular and Sharia courts; all senior judges are appointed by the sultan. The courts appear to act independently when handling civil matters, and have yet to be tested in political cases.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 2 / 4

Civil and criminal law is based on English common law and is enforced in secular courts, while Sharia is enforced in Sharia courts. People detained under the Internal Security Act (ISA) lack due process rights including the presumption of innocence.

The country's controversial new penal code, based on Sharia law, continued to be delayed; Brunei implemented the first phase of the new code in 2014 but has held off implementing phases two and three, which contain more severe penalties for violations. The Sharia penal code includes rules that apply to non-Muslims as well as Muslims. Many of the new Sharia rules overlap with existing provisions of the civil and criminal codes, but under the new Sharia code there are different sentences and burdens of proof.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 2 / 4

Phased amendments to the new Sharia code permit the death penalty for drug-related offenses and other, more serious offenses, but these amendments have not yet been enacted. Brunei retained the death penalty for crimes including drug trafficking before the new Sharia code was launched. Secular law allows for dozens of offenses to be punished by caning. Prison conditions generally meet international standards.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

Brunei citizenship is inherited automatically from citizen fathers. Citizen mothers must complete an application to pass citizenship on to children born to a noncitizen father.

Thousands of stateless residents of Brunei, including longtime ethnic Chinese residents, are denied the full rights and benefits granted to citizens. Same-sex sexual activity is a crime, and there are no protections against discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 7 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 2 / 4

Freedom of movement is respected. All government employees, domestic and foreign, must apply for permission to travel abroad, but permission is easily obtained. Stateless

children do not have free access to education and instead must apply to enroll in schools; if accepted they sometimes have to pay tuition not required of citizens.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

Brunei citizens are able to own property and establish businesses, and can establish businesses with relative ease, but protections for private property are not strong. State-linked firms dominate many sectors of the economy and the government heavily subsidizes many sectors. Islamic law generally disadvantages women in cases of inheritance.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 1 / 4

Islamic law generally disadvantages women in matters involving divorce and child custody. The new Sharia penal code criminalizes “indecent behavior” and enjoins women to dress “modestly.” There is no specific law against domestic violence, and although rape is a crime, spousal rape is not criminalized. The results of a study released in March 2017 by the Women Graduates Association of Brunei Darussalam (PSW) found that more than half of the female respondents had faced sexual harassment at work.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

There is no private-sector minimum wage in Brunei. Labor inspections are frequent, but are often aimed at identifying undocumented migrant workers.

Migrants who come to Brunei to serve as household workers are often coerced into involuntary servitude or debt bondage, and can be subject to varying forms of abuse. Workers who overstay visas are regularly imprisoned and, in some cases, caned.

According to the US State Department’s 2017 *Trafficking in Persons Report*, Brunei made its first trafficking conviction in four years during the reporting period. However, authorities still struggle to confront trafficking; for example, the report cited instances in which trafficking victims, particularly foreign victims, were themselves charged with crimes, or were fined.

Bulgaria

Population: 7,100,000

Capital: Sofia

Political Rights Rating: 2

Civil Liberties Rating: 2

Freedom Rating: 2.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Multiple parties compete in Bulgaria’s democratic system, and there have been several transfers of power between rival parties in recent decades. The country continues to struggle with political corruption and organized crime. While the media sector remains pluralistic, ownership concentration is a growing problem. Journalists sometimes encounter threats or violence in the course of their work. Ethnic minorities, particularly Roma, face

discrimination. Despite funding shortages and other obstacles, civil society groups have been active and influential.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In the March parliamentary elections, the far-right United Patriots alliance won 27 seats and formed a coalition with the Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria (GERB) party—marking the first time a far-right party has been part of the Bulgarian government and raising concerns about the normalization of xenophobia and discrimination.
- In June, the government completed a new fence along the border with Turkey to keep out migrants. Harsh treatment of migrants and asylum seekers remained a problem throughout 2017.
- In December, parliament approved new anticorruption legislation, but President Rumen Radev vowed to veto the bill.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 33 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 11 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The president, who is directly elected for up to two five-year terms, is the head of state but has limited powers. Presidential elections were held in November 2016, resulting in the victory of Rumen Radev, an independent candidate. The election was generally well administered and stakeholders accepted the results. The legislature chooses the prime minister, who serves as head of government. The current prime minister, Boyko Borisov, leader of GERB, the center-right party, was appointed after his party's victory in the 2017 parliamentary election held in March.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The unicameral National Assembly, composed of 240 members, is elected every four years in 31 multimember constituencies. The last parliamentary election in March 2017 was deemed credible by international observers. GERB led with 95 seats, followed by the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) with 80, and the United Patriots alliance with 27. Following the elections, the third Borisov government took office in May in a coalition between GERB and the United Patriots. The success of the United Patriots marks the first time in Bulgarian history that far-right nationalist parties have been part of the government. Members of the United Patriots delivered inflammatory speeches attacking the Roma population and migrants during the campaign period, raising concerns about the normalization of xenophobia and discrimination.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4

The Central Election Commission administers Bulgarian elections and generally works professionally and impartially. Parliament passed controversial reforms to the electoral laws in 2016, including the introduction of compulsory voting and new restrictions on voting abroad. The new rules on voting abroad limited the number of polling places and led to protests throughout the diaspora. In February 2017, the constitutional court abolished compulsory voting.

Further attempts to change the electoral system, such as a referendum proposed by GERB to introduce a first-past-the-post system, were supported by a majority of voters but failed to reach the threshold required to become law.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 14 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4**

The Bulgarian party system is competitive and characterized by a relative degree of instability, with several new parties and alliances emerging in each election. Notably, the far-right United Patriots alliance won 27 seats in parliament in their first election in 2017.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

The opposition has the opportunity to increase its support and gain power through elections. In the 2017 parliamentary elections, the BSP, the main opposition party, gained 41 seats.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 3 / 4

Bulgarians are generally free to make independent political choices. However, oligarchs dominate the major political parties and influence their platforms, a problem that is exacerbated by a lack of transparency in campaign finance law.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

The law dictates that electoral campaigns must be conducted in the Bulgarian language, which hinders outreach to non-Bulgarian speaking minority groups. The ethnic Turkish minority is represented by the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (DPS), but the Romani minority is more marginalized. Small Romani parties are active, and many Roma reportedly vote for the DPS.

Political parties sometimes take positions that undermine women's rights. In late 2017, the United Patriots Alliance came out strongly against Bulgaria's ratification of the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 8 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4**

National legislative representatives and the government effectively determine the policies of the country. However, oligarchs dominate the government and greatly influence policymaking. The Bulgarian subsidiary of Lukoil, for example, a Russian company that supplies 100 percent of Bulgaria's oil, has gained monopoly power due to favorable legislation passed by several governments.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

Bulgaria, which joined the European Union (EU) in 2007, has struggled to meet the bloc's anticorruption requirements amid resistance from much of the political class. The 2017 CVM (cooperation and verification mechanism) report issued by the European

Commission highlighted the need for a new legal framework on the fight against corruption. Anticorruption laws are not adequately enforced, including in high-profile cases, contributing to a culture of impunity.

In December 2017, parliament approved new legislation that would create a centralized anticorruption agency, but President Rumen Radev vowed to veto the bill amidst concerns from analysts that the new anticorruption framework was prone to being politicized—parliament would appoint the agency’s leadership and it would no longer grant anonymity to whistleblowers.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

Although Bulgaria has laws meant to ensure that the government operates with transparency, they are inadequately enforced. Public access to information about the budgets and spending of various government agencies was often lacking in 2017.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 47 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 14 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4

The constitution protects freedom of expression, including for the press, but journalists faced threats and occasional violence in 2017. In October, television journalist Viktor Nikolaev was threatened by Deputy Prime Minister Valeri Simeonov and member of parliament (MP) Anton Todorov, who said Nikolaev would be fired if he continued investigating an aircraft purchase by the government.

The media sector is pluralistic, but dependent on financial contributions from the state, often in the form of advertising, which can lead to demands for favorable coverage of the government. Domestic ownership of media has become more concentrated in the hands of wealthy Bulgarian businessmen, leaving the sector vulnerable to political and economic pressures, as well as limiting the diversity of perspectives available to the public. News outlets often tailor coverage to suit the interests of their owners.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4

Religious freedom is generally respected, but Muslims and members of other minority faiths have reported instances of harassment and discrimination, and some local authorities have prohibited proselytizing or the construction of religious buildings. In 2016, parliament passed a law banning the wearing of full face veils in public locations.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is generally upheld in practice.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

Freedom of expression is guaranteed by the constitution and there are no significant impediments to free and open private discussion.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 11 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4

The authorities generally respect constitutional guarantees of freedom of assembly. In 2016, a counterterrorism bill was passed by parliament that critics described as overly

broad; under it, the president has the power to declare a state of emergency in the event of a terrorist attack, which would allow the government to ban rallies and demonstrations.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operate freely and have a degree of influence, though they suffer from funding shortages, often rely on foreign donors, and sometimes face hostility from politicians and interest groups.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

Workers have the right to join trade unions, but some public employees cannot legally strike, and none are permitted to bargain collectively. Private employers often discriminate against union members, including terminating them, without facing serious repercussions.

F. RULE OF LAW: 10 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 3 / 4

Bulgaria's judiciary has benefited from legal and institutional reforms associated with EU accession, but is still prone to politicization. Constitutional amendments passed in 2015 strengthened the Inspectorate, which investigates conflicts of interest and the assets of magistrates, and is involved in disciplinary proceedings.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 2 / 4

Constitutional rights to due process are not always upheld. Incidents of misconduct by police were reported in 2017, including arbitrary arrests and failing to inform suspects of their rights. Public trust in the court system is low because most Bulgarians believe that magistrates are vulnerable to political pressure and therefore do not always provide a fair trial for defendants.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 3 / 4

Police brutality, including occasional torture of suspects in custody, continued in 2017. Overcrowding and violence plague many of Bulgaria's prisons. Organized crime is still a major issue, and scores of suspected contract killings since the 1990s remain unsolved.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

Ethnic minorities, particularly Roma, face discrimination in employment, health care, education, and housing, though the government and NGOs operate a number of programs meant to improve their social integration. Authorities periodically demolish illegally constructed or irregular housing—mostly in areas occupied by Roma—without providing alternative shelter.

The Ataka (Attack) party and other members of the United Patriots alliance regularly use hate speech in their campaigns, targeting ethnic Turks, Roma, Jews, Muslims, and Syrian refugees, among other groups. In 2017, human rights groups noted continued reports of mistreatment of migrants and refugees by both security forces and vigilante groups that conducted their own border patrols. In June 2017, the government completed the installation of a fence along Bulgaria's southern border with Turkey to block the irregular entry of migrants and refugees, which in effect denies people the right to access Bulgaria's asylum procedures.

Discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity is illegal, but societal bias against LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people reportedly persists. The 2017 Sofia gay pride parade was held in June despite threats and counterprotests.

A gender equality law passed in 2016 was designed to foster equal opportunity for women, but they still face discrimination in employment, with higher levels of unemployment and lower pay than their male counterparts.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 12 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4

For the most part, Bulgarians face no restrictions on their freedom of movement. Corruption and bias can sometimes restrict access to jobs. In September 2017, parliament passed a law that restricted the ability of asylum seekers to move outside of prescribed areas.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 3 / 4

Property rights, although legally guaranteed, are not always respected in practice. The tax regime and low cost of doing business, however, encourages investment in Bulgaria.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

Domestic violence remains a problem. The National Study on Domestic and Gender Based Violence in Bulgaria, published in 2016, found that one-third of Bulgarians had experienced domestic or gender-based violence at least once. Victims have complained that state authorities were often ineffective in providing protection when violence was reported.

Same-sex marriage is illegal in Bulgaria, and same-sex couples are barred from adopting children.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Human trafficking continued to be an issue in 2017, with the Roma population particularly vulnerable. Although the government stepped up efforts to combat trafficking, shelter victims, and punish perpetrators, these measures have not matched the scale of the problem, and punishments remain light in practice.

Burkina Faso

Population: 19,000,000

Capital: Ouagadougou

Political Rights Rating: 4

Civil Liberties Rating: 3

Freedom Rating: 3.5

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Multiparty presidential and legislative elections held in late 2015 ushered in a new government and laid a foundation for the continued development of democratic institutions.

Despite extreme poverty, terrorism, and corruption, civil society and the media remain strong forces for democracy and for the respect of civil liberties.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- An August terrorist attack in downtown Ouagadougou resulted in the deaths of 18 people. The strike was the second such attack in the capital in as many years. Other militant attacks in the north also reflected growing insecurity in the country.
- Roadblocks and curfews instituted in response to a worsening security situation posed obstacles to free movement.
- In June, the trial of former president Blaise Compaoré on charges of authorizing the use of force against unarmed demonstrators was delayed.
- In April, soldiers on trial for attacking a weapons depot in 2016 accused gendarmeries of engaging in torture to obtain confessions from them, contributing to concerns about whether security reforms under the new administration had resulted in improvements.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 23 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 7 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4

The president is chief of state and is directly elected to up to two five-year terms. Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, of the People's Movement for Progress (MPP), won the 2015 presidential election with just over 53 percent of the vote. Observers described the elections as the freest, fairest, and most competitive ever to be held in the country. However, a number of politicians who had supported an ultimately unsuccessful attempt by former president Blaise Compaoré to amend the constitution to allow himself a third presidential term were barred from contesting the election. (Compaoré's 2014 move to amend the constitution had prompted profound political instability and violent protests, prompting the dissolution of the National Assembly by the military; Compaoré subsequently stepped down from office. Following a brief period of military rule, a transitional government was established in late 2014, and administered presidential and parliamentary elections in 2015.)

The prime minister is head of government and is appointed by the president with the approval of the National Assembly, and is responsible for recommending a cabinet that is formally appointed by the president. Kaboré appointed economist Paul Kaba Thieba to the post in early 2016.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4

The 127 members of the National Assembly are directly elected to five-year terms under a proportional representation system. The transitional government successfully organized and administered the 2015 legislative elections, which were held concurrently with the presidential election and were also viewed as generally credible, despite the exclusion of a number of candidates who had supported Compaoré's term-limit changes. The MPP won a plurality, but not a majority, in the National Assembly, with 55 of the 127 seats, and the newly elected members of parliament were inaugurated in late December.

Municipal elections held in 2016 reflected continuing erosion of support for the Congress for Democracy and Progress (CDP), the former ruling party, and increasing support for the MPP. Election observers from local civil society groups and international missions noted only minor irregularities in the polls. However, election-related violence prevented

polling in some districts. Makeup elections for several constituencies were held peacefully in 2017, though once again some candidates were reportedly excluded.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4

The Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) is responsible for organizing elections, and the 2015 and 2016 polls were generally well administered. In July, new CENI members were appointed after previous commissioners' terms expired, reflecting the functionality of the country's electoral framework.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 10 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 2 / 4

The constitution guarantees the right to form political parties. Following the 2015 legislative elections, 14 parties held seats in the National Assembly, though 99 parties had participated in the elections. The 2015 Election Code prohibits some former ruling party members from participating in elections.

In 2016, at least three party activists were killed amid clashes that accompanied municipal councils' processes of electing new mayors.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 3 / 4

The end of former president Compaoré's 27-year regime in 2014 has given way to a freer environment, in which opposition parties were able to consolidate popular support and gain power through recent elections. However, a history of rotation of power between parties has yet to be firmly established.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 2 / 4

Burkina Faso's military is powerful, and maintains a significant presence the political sphere. In 2015, the presidential guard, which was loyal to former president Compaoré, attempted to stage a military coup. The maneuver sparked widespread protests, and failed after the national military's chief of staff moved to support the transitional government.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

The constitution enshrines full political rights and electoral opportunities for all segments of the population. However, a small educated elite, the military, and labor unions have historically dominated political life.

Women are underrepresented in political leadership positions, and within parties are frequently relegated to women's secretariats that have little influence. However, there have been some initiatives aimed at establishing greater legal protections for women and encouraging women's political participation, including proposed revisions to an unevenly enforced quota law. Women's groups are vocal in civil society.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 6 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 2 / 4**

Laws are promulgated and debated by the elected National Assembly members. However, while democratic institutions continue to develop, they are not yet strong enough to fully balance the military's power in Burkina Faso.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

Corruption is widespread, and particularly affects the police force. Anticorruption laws and bodies are generally ineffective, though local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) provide some accountability by publicizing official corruption and its effects.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

The successful elections and installation of a civilian government at the end of 2015 signified a marked improvement in government representation, accountability, and transparency. However, government procurement processes are opaque. Government officials are required to make financial disclosures, but the information is not made public and penalties for noncompliance do not appear to be enforced.

The president has promoted dialogue on newly proposed constitutional reforms to ensure their adoption will have broad support.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 37 / 60 (-3)**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 13 / 16 (-1)****D1. Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4**

The environment for media has improved since the end of Compaoré's rule. Since then, defamation has been decriminalized, reporters at the public broadcaster have experienced less political interference, self-censorship among journalists has eased, and journalists are generally able to report freely and critically on the government and its activities. There are several private television stations and dozens of private radio stations and newspapers.

Nevertheless, libel convictions still carry onerous financial penalties, journalists at times have experienced pressure from government officials, and the economic environment for media workers remains difficult.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Burkina Faso is a secular state, and freedom of religion is generally respected. The population is predominately Muslim with a large Christian minority. Followers of both religions often engage in syncretic practices.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 3 / 4

Academic freedom is unrestricted, though due to the former regime's repressive tactics against student-led protests, a legacy of tension between the government and academic organizations persists. Islamic militants groups in the north have threatened teachers in an effort to force them to adopt Islamic teachings, resulting in the closure of schools.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4 (-1)

Private discussion is unrestricted in much of the country. However, activity by militant Islamic groups in the north, who have attacked and intimidated civilians, and the increased security presence that has come in response to their presence, has discouraged people from speaking freely about local news and politics and other sensitive topics.

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 because militant activity and a heightened security presence in the north have discouraged free private discussion among civilians.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 9 / 12**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 3 / 4**

The constitution guarantees freedom of assembly, which is largely upheld in practice. Under the new government, space for demonstrations and protests has opened. Peaceful protests took place throughout 2017, including in October against the pretrial release to house arrest of Djibril Bassolé, who is accused of involvement in the 2015 attempted coup. A demonstration against terrorism was held in August. However, past government repression of peaceful demonstrations can still discourage such events, and the ability to demonstrate is restricted in areas affected by militant activity.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 3 / 4

While many NGOs operate openly and freely, human rights groups have reported abuses by security forces in the past.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

The constitution guarantees the right to strike, and unions frequently and freely engage in strikes and collective bargaining, despite that a minority of workers are unionized. Labor organizers can face fines or prison time if a labor action results in property damage.

F. RULE OF LAW: 7 / 16 (-1)**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 2 / 4**

The judiciary is formally independent but has historically been subject to executive influence and corruption.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 2 / 4

Constitutional guarantees of due process are undermined by corruption and inefficacy of the judiciary and police force. A 2017 report by the Anticorruption National Network (REN-LAC) identified the municipal police as the government office perceived to be the most corrupt. Police often use excessive force and disregard pretrial detention limits. In April 2017, police officers held demonstrations across the country to protest corrupt within the force.

In May 2017, the trial against Compaoré and other former government officials began, but stalled in June; he is accused of authorizing the use of force against unarmed demonstrators during the 2014 uprising that led to his ouster.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 1 / 4 (-1)

The security environment has declined in recent years due to activity by Islamic militant groups and bandits. In August 2017, an attack in downtown Ouagadougou claimed the lives of at least 18 people, marking the second major attack in the city in as many years. Dozens

have been killed in attacks by militant groups and bandits in the north, mainly along the borders with Mali and Niger. A self-defense militia known as Kogleweogo, which mainly counts farmers and cattle breeders among its members, continues to commit abuses, and government pledges to regulate it remain unfulfilled.

Accusations of torture against police and security authorities cast doubts on whether security reforms under the new administration have resulted in improvements. Under the former regime, police abuses were routine and at times resulted in the deaths of detained individuals. Renewed accusations of torture under Kaboré's leadership suggest these practices continue. Among other claims, in April 2017, soldiers on trial for attacking a weapons depot in 2016 accused gendarmeries of engaging in torture to obtain confessions from them.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 due to continued activity by militant Islamic groups and bandits in the north, and the second large-scale terrorist attack in Ouagadougou in as many years.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

Discrimination against ethnic minorities occurs, but is not widespread. LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people, as well as those infected with HIV, routinely experience discrimination. While illegal, gender discrimination remains common in employment and education.

Reports of growing racial, ethnic, and religious stigmatization within historically tolerant Burkinabè society emerged in the wake of continuing terrorist activities in the north. These reports suggested that the targeting of teachers by violent extremist organizations in the north led many people in other parts of the country to be suspicious of and prejudiced against those appearing to be of Tuareg, Fulani, or Arab descent.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 8 / 16 (-1)

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 2 / 4 (-1)

Due to increasing insecurity, the government has established a number of heavily guarded checkpoints on roads near the northern border and the capital, and has instituted curfews in some places. Since November 2017, schools have been targeted by armed groups in the north of the country, and the number of people that have fled their homes has increased.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 because free movement has been impeded by terrorist threats and security measures instituted by the state in response to them, including checkpoints and curfews.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

In recent years, the government has implemented reforms in the business sector by reducing the amount of capital necessary to start a business, facilitating the ability to obtain credit information, and improving the insolvency resolution process. However, the business environment is hampered by corruption. Laws and practices involving inheritance discriminate against women.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Women face discrimination in cases involving family rights. Early marriage remains an issue, especially in the north of the country. The practice of female genital mutilation is less common than in the past, but still takes place. Domestic violence remains a problem despite government efforts to combat it.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Burkina Faso is a source, transit, and destination country for trafficking in women and children. Child labor is present in the agricultural and mining sectors, among other industries. Women from neighboring countries are recruited by traffickers and transported to Burkina Faso, where they are forced into prostitution. In the U.S. Department of State's 2017 *Trafficking in Persons Report*, Burkina Faso was downgraded to a Tier 2 Watch List country for failing to accelerate its efforts to combat human trafficking.

Burundi

Population: 11,100,000

Capital: Bujumbura

Political Rights Rating: 7

Civil Liberties Rating: 6

Freedom Rating: 6.5

Freedom Status: Not Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: Democratic gains made after the 12-year civil war ended in 2005 are being undone by a shift toward authoritarian politics, and ongoing repression of and violence against the opposition and those perceived to support it.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Repression and persecution of private individuals, activists, and others suspected of opposing President Pierre Nkurunziza continued. The crackdown began in 2015, when Nkurunziza's decision to run for a constitutionally dubious third term in office prompted widespread unrest.
- A June report published jointly by the International Federation for Human Rights and Burundian human rights groups said that over the two years of the conflict, at least 1,200 people had been killed, 400 to 900 had been forcibly disappeared, at least several hundred had been tortured, and more than 10,000 had been detained arbitrarily.
- Data from the UN refugee agency released in December indicated that more than 420,000 people had fled the country since 2015.
- In October, the International Criminal Court (ICC) opened an investigation into crimes against humanity allegedly committed by government actors and supporters against Nkurunziza opponents since 2015. The ICC announcement came two days before Burundi withdrew from the international body.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 4 / 40 (-1)**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 1 / 12****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4**

A new constitution was adopted in 2005 after a series of agreements ended Burundi's 12-year civil war. According to the charter, the president, who is directly elected for up to two five-year terms, appoints two vice presidents, one Tutsi and one Hutu, who must be approved separately by a two-thirds majority in both the lower and upper houses of Parliament.

In April 2015, the ruling National Council for the Defense of Democracy–Forces for the Defense of Democracy (CNDD–FDD) announced that President Pierre Nkurunziza would seek a third presidential term in elections scheduled for later that year. Critics charged that the move contravened the constitution and would jeopardize the country's fragile peace. Nkurunziza and his supporters argued that he was eligible to run again because he had been elected by Parliament rather than through a popular vote for his first term in office. Despite widespread public protests and international condemnation of the move, the Constitutional Court in May 2015 ruled in favor of Nkurunziza, even as one of the court's justices fled abroad. Days later, a group of military leaders led a coup attempt against Nkurunziza while he was in Tanzania. Government forces quickly reasserted control and began a harsh crackdown on those suspected of involvement in the plot or opposition to the president. Due to ongoing unrest in the country, the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) postponed the presidential poll until that July.

In the election, Nkurunziza defeated National Forces of Liberation (FNL) leader Agathon Rwasa, 69 percent to 19 percent, even though the latter boycotted the elections. International observers from some organizations, including the EU and African Union (AU), refused to monitor the elections, saying they could not be free or fair given the growing violence and climate of intimidation. A UN mission observing the poll stated that the overall environment had not been conducive to a free and fair electoral process, and that violence had "remained an unfortunate feature of the entire process."

Nkurunziza's move to pursue a third term sparked violence including assassinations, arrests, torture of government critics, and attacks by antigovernment forces in 2015. The unrest has continued, though at a lower rate in 2016 and 2017.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

The 100 members of the lower house, the National Assembly, are directly elected by proportional representation for five-year terms. The upper house, the Senate, consists of 36 members chosen by locally elected officials for five-year terms.

Due to the unrest taking place in the country in 2015, the CENI postponed the year's National Assembly elections by several weeks, and they eventually took place in late June 2015. Indirect senatorial elections were held that July. The volatile environment surrounding the legislative vote prevented it from being free or fair. The opposition boycotted the polls, and the CNDD–FDD took significant majorities in both the National Assembly and the Senate.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 1 / 4

The CENI is made up of five members. In 2015, two CENI members who fled the country amid the year's unrest were replaced with pro-Nkurunziza appointments approved by a CNDD–FDD–controlled Parliament.

In May 2017, the president created a 15-member commission tasked with revising the constitution, and in December, launched a campaign for a May 2018 constitutional referendum. The revised constitution was expected to allow Nkurunziza to run for president yet again in 2020 and 2027.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 3 / 16 (-1)

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 1 / 4

Legally, political party formation is not difficult. In practice, the activities of parties and political leaders perceived as opposing Nkurunziza are severely discouraged by the threat of retaliatory violence or repression. Many political parties include youth branches that intimidate and attack opponents, the most prominent of which is the ruling party's Imbonerakure.

In February 2017, eight members of the FNL were arrested at a bar in northern Burundi and accused of holding an illegal meeting.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 0 / 4

The opposition has little realistic opportunity to increase its popular support through elections. Opposition parties, politicians, and their supporters have faced harassment, intimidation, and violence since the failed 2015 coup attempt, which triggered a crackdown on those suspected of involvement. Many opposition politicians and groups continue to operate in exile, and face arrest if they return home.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 0 / 4

Many opposition parties, politicians, and their supporters faced harassment, intimidation, and violence throughout 2017. Such acts were perpetrated by the Imbonerakure, the National Intelligence Services (SNR), and the Burundian police, and were largely intended to limit victims' range of political choices.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 2 / 4 (-1)

Constitutional provisions require certain numbers of ethnic Hutu and Tutsi lawmakers in the National Assembly and Senate, and additionally stipulate that women and members of the Twa minority be seated in both houses. Women face social pressure that can deter active political participation, and few women hold political office at senior levels.

The current political environment is characterized by the dominance of the CNDD–FDD party and repression of its opponents, reducing meaningful openings for effective political representation of ethnic and religious minorities and other distinct groups.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 because the ongoing crisis in the country prevents minority and other relevant groups from exercising their full political rights.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 0 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 0 / 4

The ruling CNDD–FDD, which took power in 2015 elections that fell far short of international standards for democratic elections, controls policy development and implementation.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 0 / 4

Corruption is a significant problem in Burundi, and there is little political will to address it. Violators generally enjoy impunity, even when corrupt activities are exposed by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and other actors. Anticorruption organizations are underresourced and ineffective. Domestic anticorruption researchers blamed a national fuel shortage in 2017 on corruption within Burundi’s sole legal oil importer.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 0 / 4

Government operations are opaque, and government officials are generally unaccountable to voters. There are few opportunities for civil society actors and others to participate in policymaking. Due to recurrent assassinations and assassination attempts, politicians are wary of organizing town hall–style meetings or making other public appearances before voters.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 14 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 6 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 0 / 4

Freedom of expression is constitutionally guaranteed, but severely restricted in practice by draconian press laws and a dangerous operating environment for media workers, who risk threats, harassment, and arrest in response to their coverage. A 2013 media law limits the protection of journalistic sources, requires journalists to meet certain educational and professional standards, and bans content related to national defense, security, public safety, and the state currency. The law empowers the media regulatory body to issue press cards to journalists, suspend or withdraw cards as a result of defamation cases, and impose financial penalties for media offenses. The government dominates the media through its ownership of the public television and radio stations; it also runs *Le Renouveau*, the only daily newspaper. Key independent news outlets destroyed in the political violence of 2015 have yet to be reestablished. Many journalists have been forced to flee the country in recent years.

In 2017, the government continued to harass and intimidate outlets and journalists that questioned or criticized its policies. In April, the SNR summoned Joseph Nsabayabandi of Radio Isanganiro for questioning in connection with his alleged collaboration with two Burundian radio stations operating from abroad, and about other alleged offenses related to the station’s editorial practices. In September, the government temporarily suspended CCIB FM+ after it broadcast a critical editorial about the government’s response to the shooting deaths of 36 Burundian refugees by security forces in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in a camp in that country.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4

Freedom of religion is generally observed in Burundi. However, relations between the government and the Roman Catholic Church, of which a majority of Burundians are members, has been strained at times; senior government officials have engaged in strongly worded verbal attacks against the church that could discourage open worship. In January 2017, the government set up a commission to monitor religious groups and guard against political subversion within them.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 2 / 4

For many years, civil strife and Tutsi social and institutional dominance impeded academic freedom by limiting educational opportunities for the Hutu, but this situation has improved since 2005. However, there have been allegations that both university students and staff who support the CNDD–FDD receive preferential treatment at academic institutions. Continued intimidation of opposition supporters has created an atmosphere of fear and limited free speech on university campuses.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 1 / 4

The SNR and the Imbonerakure actively conduct surveillance activities on private citizens. There is a reluctance to engage in speech critical of or which could be perceived as critical of the ruling party due to fears of harassment, threats of violence, and other reprisals.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 2 / 12**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 0 / 4**

Opposition or antigovernment meetings and rallies are usually prevented or dispersed, and participants in gatherings seen as antigovernment face harassment or arrest. Many people who participated in 2015 protests against Nkurunziza fled Burundi amid the subsequent crackdown.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 1 / 4

NGOs in Burundi face increasingly restrictive registration laws and persecution for activity seen as hostile to the government. A number of human rights and other groups perceived as antigovernment have been banned, and many of their members have chosen to flee abroad rather than face surveillance, intimidation, threats, and arrest in Burundi.

In late 2016, the parliament passed measures imposing further restrictions on domestic and international NGOs, including a mandate that foreign funding for local NGOs be processed through the country's central bank. In August, Germain Rukuki—a former employee of the Burundi chapter of Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture (ACAT), which is now banned—was accused of a slew of national security–related charges including “rebellion,” and remained in detention at year's end.

Some groups considered apolitical, such as those addressing poverty, continue to operate. There appears to be some tolerance of groups that criticize abuses by the police and security services.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 1 / 4

The constitution provides protections for organized labor, and the labor code guarantees the right to strike. However, it is unlikely that union members would feel free to exercise the collective bargaining rights guaranteed by the law in the current political climate.

F. RULE OF LAW: 1 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 0 / 4**

Burundi's judiciary is hindered by corruption and a lack of resources and training, and is generally subservient to the executive. In 2015, justices on the Constitutional Court were reportedly intimidated into ruling in favor of Nkurunziza's decision to stand for a third term.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 0 / 4

Constitutional guarantees of due process are poorly enforced. Arbitrary arrest and lengthy pretrial detention are common. There have been reports that detainees' families were able to secure their release only upon making large payments to the SNR or Imbonerakure.

Defendants must provide their own legal representation, making trial rights dependent on the ability to afford a lawyer. Some detainees accused of participating in the 2015 protests or subsequent antigovernment violence did not have access to lawyers and were forced to make false confessions under threat of death. Because the courts, police, and security forces do not operate independently or professionally, critics argue the country is not capable of handling cases involving human rights violations.

In October 2017, the government followed through on its threat to leave the International Criminal Court (ICC), becoming the first country ever to do so. The move came two days after the ICC opened an investigation into alleged crimes against humanity committed by government actors and Nkurunziza supporters against Burundians protesting Nkurunziza's April 2015 announcement that he would run for a third term.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 0 / 4

The general security situation in Burundi is poor. A September 2017 report issued by a Commission of Inquiry on Burundi convened by the UN Human Rights Council documented crimes committed over the last two years that were "frequently of an extremely cruel nature, particularly extrajudicial executions, arbitrary arrests and detentions, enforced disappearances, acts of torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, and sexual violence." The report said the defense and security forces were the "principal perpetrators of human rights violations in Burundi." It noted that armed opposition groups had also committed human rights violations, but said that they were harder to document, in part because the government declined to cooperate with investigators.

Bodies—presumed to be the victims of extrajudicial killings—were frequently found on the streets of the capital during the year, and refugees claimed that the murders of family members by the Imbonerakure prompted them to flee the country. More than 420,000 refugees had fled Burundi in response to the ongoing crisis, according to December 2017 data from the UN refugee agency. A June 2017 report published jointly by the International Federation for Human Rights and Burundian human rights groups said that over the two years of the conflict, at least 1,200 people had been killed, 400 to 900 forcibly disappeared, at least several hundred tortured, and more than 10,000 detained arbitrarily.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

Albinos face a particular threat from discrimination and violence in Burundi. LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people face official and societal discrimination. The 2009 penal code criminalizes same-sex sexual activity, and punishments include up to two years in prison.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 5 / 16**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 1 / 4**

Since 2015, concerns for personal safety have restricted free movement, particularly in neighborhoods regarded as opposition strongholds, where security forces frequently conduct search operations.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

The deteriorating security situation hampers private business activity in the country, as does rampant corruption.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 1 / 4

Sexual and domestic violence are serious problems, but are rarely reported to law enforcement agencies. Rights monitors continue to report sexual violence against women by security forces and Imbonerakure. In April 2017, a video surfaced of dozens of Imbonerakure members chanting, “Impregnate female opponents so that they can give birth to Imbonerakure,” a chant that been noted on other occasions.

Nkurunziza has regularly made statements of his intent to “moralize society,” and signed orders in May 2017 to force unmarried couples to regularize their unions with state- or church-sanctioned ceremonies.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

Women have limited opportunities for advancement in the workplace. Much of the population is impoverished. In October 2017, “vagrancy” and begging by able-bodied persons became formal offenses under the penal code, with both punishable by fines and weeks-long prison sentences.

The government has conducted some trainings for government officials on handling cases of human trafficking. However, the government has largely failed to prevent domestic human trafficking, to protect victims, and to prosecute perpetrators.

Cambodia

Population: 15,800,000

Capital: Phnom Penh

Political Rights Rating: 6

Civil Liberties Rating: 5

Freedom Rating: 5.5

Freedom Status: Not Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Trend Arrow: Cambodia received a downward trend arrow due to a crackdown on the political opposition, including the dissolution of the main opposition party and treason charges against its leader.

Overview: Cambodia’s political system has been dominated by Prime Minister Hun Sen and his Cambodian People’s Party (CPP) for more than three decades. The country has held semicompetitive elections in the past, but in 2017 it moved much closer to outright authoritarian rule with the banning of the main opposition and shuttering of independent media outlets.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Kem Sokha was arrested in September, removing the last remaining opposition leader from Cambodian society.

- The Supreme Court ordered the Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) banned in November, and many CNRP legislators fled the country.
- The *Cambodia Daily* was closed in September for failure to pay its taxes, and the government shut down 15 local radio stations.

Executive Summary

In the run-up to 2018 national elections, Cambodia's shaky semidemocracy collapsed. The Hun Sen government pursued an intense crackdown on the opposition CNRP and on civil society. Multiple nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) were closed or forced out of the country, and the two main opposition leaders were, respectively, in jail and in exile at the end of the year. The Supreme Court banned the CNRP in November, and government critics were charged with defamation. The *Cambodia Daily*, one of the most prominent newspapers, was shuttered, along with 15 independent radio stations. Corruption is rife, and powerful politicians and military officers have a strong role in the economy. The country struggles with social and economic inequality, and although there are some personal social freedoms, domestic violence against women is common.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 10 / 40 (-1)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 4 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4

King Norodom Sihamoni is chief of state, but he has little political power. Hun Sen first became prime minister in 1985. He was nominated most recently after 2013 National Assembly polls, which were marred by reports of duplicate voter names, vote buying, and large groups of voters casting ballots in communes where they were not registered. The National Election Committee identified hundreds of thousands of duplicate or missing names from voter rolls.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4

After the CPP was declared the winner in the 2013 National Assembly elections, the CNRP rejected the official results, charging that it had won 63 rather than 55 of the total 123 seats. As a result, the CNRP parliamentarians refused to take their seats until the party reached an agreement with the CPP in 2014. Cambodia also has a 61-seat Senate; 57 members are elected by parliamentarians and commune councils, 2 are elected by the National Assembly, and 2 are appointed by the king.

The opposition made gains in June 2017 commune elections, although the CPP still won overall. Intimidation by authorities was rampant. Hun Sen himself warned during the campaign that he could "eliminate 100 to 200 people" if necessary to ensure peace in the country, and that the country could return to civil war if his party were to lose.

Before the commune elections, the interior minister publicly stated that the government was trying to intimidate civil society organizations so they would refrain from monitoring the elections and assessing their fairness. In July, the government barred two election-monitoring groups from continuing their activities.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 2 / 4

In 2015, Cambodia passed two new election laws, which are broadly enforced. Human Rights Watch criticized the laws for limitations such as the ability of security forces to take part

in campaigns, punishing of parties that boycott the assembly (as happened after the previous national elections), and a shorter campaign period of 21 days. Voting is tied to a citizen's permanent resident status in a village, township, or urban district, and this status cannot be changed easily. In July 2017, a new amendment to the electoral law banned political parties from association with anyone convicted of a criminal offense.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 3 / 16 (-1)

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 1 / 4

The environment of repression of opposition parties in 2017 became more extreme than at any time since the late 1990s. In addition to Rainsy and Kem Sokha, many other CNRP members were threatened with arrest and harassed during the year. In November, the Supreme Court ordered the CNRP dissolved. Many of the party's legislators fled the country or switched parties. The police also raided the headquarters of the Khmer Power Party in August.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 0 / 4 (-1)

As of 2017, the political opposition has been almost completely quashed. Co-opposition leader Rainsy has remained abroad since his parliamentary immunity was stripped in 2015, and he faces multiple defamation charges. In September 2017, the authorities arrested co-opposition leader Kem Sokha on treason charges. While the opposition did make gains in the June 2017 commune elections, the November CNRP ban will likely make it impossible for the party to contest the 2018 elections. Other parties exist, but they have little support in the country.

Score Change: The score declined from 1 to 0 due to a Supreme Court decision banning the main opposition party and the arrest of the opposition leader on treason charges, effectively leaving the country with no political opposition.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 1 / 4

The ruling party is not democratically accountable, and top leaders, especially Hun Sen, increasingly use the police and armed forces as a tool of repression. The military stood firmly behind Hun Sen and his violent threats during commune election campaigning, and there were reports that soldiers were strategically deployed and illegally registered to vote in key races.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 1 / 4

Ethnic Vietnamese are regularly excluded from the political process and scapegoated by both parties. Women make up 20 percent of the National Assembly, but their interests, like those of all citizens, are not well represented.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 3 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 1 / 4

Hun Sen has increasingly centralized power, and representatives outside of his close circle have little impact on policy-making. While the CPP and the CNRP had agreed to a “culture of dialogue” after the 2013 elections, that had collapsed by 2017.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

Corruption remains a serious challenge in Cambodia, despite the 2010 establishment of an Anti-Corruption Unit. A 2016 Global Witness report suggested that Hun Sen’s family had amassed wealth totaling between \$500 million and \$1 billion, claims that the prime minister and his family deny.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 1 / 4

Neotism and patronage undermine the functioning of a transparent bureaucratic system.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 20 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 8 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4

The government uses lawsuits, criminal prosecution, and occasionally violent attacks as means of intimidation against the media. There are private print and broadcast outlets, but many are owned and operated by the CPP. The CNRP has a license to operate a television station, but it still has not been set up due to bureaucratic delays.

The Ministry of Information ordered the closure of 15 local radio stations in August. Many of these stations were independent and carried Voice of America and Radio Free Asia (RFA), as well as programming that covered the CNRP. In September, the *Cambodia Daily*, one of the leading independent outlets, closed permanently. The government claimed that the *Daily* did not pay its tax bills, but the *Daily*’s owners said that the bills were politically motivated. RFA announced the closure of its in-country bureau in Cambodia in August. In April, an RFA journalist who worked in Cambodia had fled the country after facing legal charges.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4

The majority of Cambodians are Theravada Buddhists and can practice their faith freely, but societal discrimination against religious and ethnic minorities remains a problem.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 2 / 4

Teachers and students practice self-censorship regarding discussions about Cambodian politics and history. Criticism of the prime minister and his family is often punished.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 2 / 4

The state generally does not intervene in people’s personal views on sensitive topics, though risks remain. The authorities have made arrests for online speech, but the internet is a much freer space for discussion than print or broadcast media. In July 2017, a social media user was arrested for posting a video accusing Hun Sen and his family of involvement in the 2016 murder of prominent activist Kem Ley. A Facebook user was arrested in August for a post that went viral claiming that Vietnamese men kidnap Cambodian children to traffic their organs; Hun Sen subsequently warned citizens not to spread rumors on social media.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 3 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 1 / 4

Crackdowns on free assembly are unpredictable, and the climate for dissent became even more severe in 2017. The shooting deaths of five postelection protesters by security forces in 2014 put a chill on opposition protests, and the government spoke openly in 2017 about the fact that antigovernment protests would not be tolerated.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 1 / 4

Civil society groups work on a broad spectrum of issues, but those dedicated to justice and human rights generally face more state harassment. Prominent activist Kem Ley was murdered in broad daylight in 2016. While an apparently mentally unbalanced man with no motive was given a life sentence for the crime in 2017, the International Commission of Jurists and others have questioned whether it was investigated thoroughly. In February, prominent political analyst Kim Sok was jailed for defamation. In August, the government forced the National Democratic Institute's operations in Cambodia to shut down and expelled its foreign staff. In September, local environmental NGO Mother Nature closed after its founder cited threats by the authorities against its members. In November, Hun Sen called for a ban on the Cambodian Center for Human Rights.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 1 / 4

Cambodia has a small number of independent trade unions, and workers have the right to strike, but many face retribution for doing so. A 2016 law on trade unions imposed restrictions such as excessive requirements for union formation.

F. RULE OF LAW: 3 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 0 / 4

The judiciary is marred by corruption and a lack of independence. Judges have played a central role in the government's ability to pursue charges against a broad range of opposition politicians.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

Due process faces considerable challenges in Cambodia. Abuse by law enforcement officers and judges, including illegal detention, remains extremely common. Impunity of elites and sham trials are frequent. When lawyers or others criticize judges, they often face retribution.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 1 / 4

Cambodians live in an environment of tight repression and fear. The torture of suspects and prisoners is frequent. The security forces are regularly accused of using excessive force against detained suspects.

The ongoing work of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, established to try the leaders of the former Khmer Rouge regime, has brought convictions for crimes against humanity, homicide, torture, and religious persecution. While others closer to the regime have faced allegations of involvement in these crimes, there is little indication the Hun Sen government will support additional cases.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

Minorities, especially those of Vietnamese descent, often face legal and societal discrimination. Officials and opposition leaders, including Sam Rainsy, have demonized minorities publicly.

The Cambodian government frequently refuses to grant refugee protections to Montagnards fleeing Vietnam, where they face persecution by the Vietnamese government. In September, the Cambodian government was reportedly planning to deport 29 Montagnards without allowing them to go through the normal United Nations process to seek resettlement in a third country.

While same-sex relationships are not criminalized, LGBT individuals have no legal protections from discrimination.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 6 / 16**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 2 / 4**

The constitution guarantees the rights to freedom of travel and movement, and the government generally respects these rights in practice. However, restrictions do occur, notably when the government tries to prevent activists from traveling around the country.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 1 / 4

Land and property rights are regularly abused for the sake of private development projects. Over the past several years, hundreds of thousands of people have been forcibly removed from their homes, with little or no compensation, to make room for commercial plantations, mine operations, factories, and high-end residential developments. In August 2017, a court upheld a 30-month jail sentence for land rights activist Tep Vanny for protesting alleged unlawful evictions.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

The government does not frequently interfere in personal social freedoms, but women suffer widespread social discrimination. Rape and violence against women are common.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

Equality of opportunity is severely limited in Cambodia, where a small elite controls most of the economy. Labor conditions can be harsh, sometimes sparking protests.

Cameroon

Population: 24,400,000

Capital: Yaoundé

Political Rights Rating: 6

Civil Liberties Rating: 6

Freedom Rating: 6.0

Freedom Status: Not Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: President Paul Biya has ruled Cameroon since 1982. His Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) has maintained power by rigging past elections, using state resources for political patronage, and limiting the activities of opposition parties. Security forces use violence to disperse antigovernment protests, especially in the country's two Anglophone regions. The Boko Haram insurgent group continues to attack civilians in northern Cameroon, and security forces responding to the insurgency have been accused of committing human rights violations against civilians.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- The government continued to repress an antigovernment protest movement in the Anglophone Northwest and Southwest Regions. The protests began in late 2016 with strikes by lawyers and teachers, who objected to a general lack of acceptance of the English language in courts and schools, despite its constitutional status as one of Cameroon's two official languages.
- In October, at least 20 people were killed when security forces responded to demonstrations in the Anglophone regions with live bullets and tear gas. At least 500 people were arrested in response to the protests.
- Internet access was shut down for 93 days in the two Anglophone regions, with the disruption lasting from January into April.
- In December 2017, government forces were accused of burning several whole villages in one of the Anglophone regions, in response to a deadly separatist attack against a military base in which four soldiers were killed.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 9 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 3 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4

The president is directly elected to a seven-year term in a single voting round and may serve an unlimited number of terms. Cameroon's fragmented opposition was unable to coalesce around a single candidate ahead of the 2011 presidential election, and Biya easily beat out nearly two dozen opponents to claim 78 percent of the vote. Turnout was low, with one civil society organization reporting it at 35 percent. A Commonwealth election monitoring mission noted problems with voter registration, and said abuse of public resources by the ruling party during the election campaign had tilted the playing field significantly. The mission also noted a general sense of apathy among voters.

The country still lacks an obvious successor to the 84-year-old President Biya, whose current term is scheduled to end in 2018.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4

In 2013, Cameroon held National Assembly elections, direct elections for municipal councilors, and long-delayed elections for its first Senate. The ruling CPDM won 56 of the elected Senate seats, while the main opposition party, the Anglophone-led Social Democratic Front (SDF), won the remaining 14. Biya appointed an additional 30 senators, three from each of the country's 10 regions. The CPDM took 148 assembly seats and won 305 of the country's 360 communes.

While some observers characterized the elections as credible, there were also accusations that the CPDM paid bribes to certain municipal councilors of up to \$90 each. The

CPDM also enjoyed an advantage over fragmented and weak opposition parties due to preexisting party infrastructure.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 1 / 4

The electoral commission, Elections Cameroon (ELECAM) was created in 2006 to address concerns about the fair management of previous elections. However, Biya chooses its members, and CPDM partisans have traditionally dominated the body. The ruling party has benefited from electoral gerrymandering.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 3 / 12

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 1 / 4

The ability to organize political groups and those groups' freedom to operate is subject to the whims of the central government, and opposition leaders risk arrest and imprisonment. In January 2017, the Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC), an Anglophone political grouping, was banned. In October 2017, a military court convicted Aboubakar Sidiki, a critic of Biya and the head of the small Cameroon's Patriotic Salvation Movement, of attempting to incite a revolution and sentenced him to 25 years in prison, prompting condemnation from Amnesty International and others.

In February 2017, authorities banned a rally and a march planned by the main opposition SDF, which were to have taken place in the capital. In October, authorities in the capital granted the SDF a permit to hold a march and a rally intended to show solidarity with protests in the Anglophone regions. However, the permit was revoked days later on grounds that the activities constituted a threat to public safety.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 0 / 4

Despite having almost 300 political parties, Cameroon remains essentially a one-party state. The numerous opposition parties are highly fragmented, preventing any one from becoming a credible threat to the ruling CPDM.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 1 / 4

State patronage and Biya's control of high-level appointments help the CPDM retain power.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 1 / 4

Anglophone Cameroonians, LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) individuals, and individuals from some ethnic groups, such as the Bamiléké, are generally excluded from political processes, and their interests are poorly represented by elected officials.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 3 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 1 / 4

In principle, laws and policies in Cameroon are created and approved by the parliament and president. But in practice, policy is often made by presidential decree.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

Corruption is systemic and bribery is commonplace in all sectors. There have been some anticorruption initiatives, but senior officials in the ruling party generally enjoy impunity for corrupt behavior.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 1 / 4

Decisions, especially those made by presidential decree, are often made with little or no public consultation.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 13 / 60 (-2)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 6 / 16 (-1)

D1. Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4

Journalists face pressure and the risk of detention or arrest in connection with their work. Defamation remains a criminal offense, and the National Communications Council (CNC) has a history of harassing independent journalists and outlets.

In 2017, the government clamped down on media coverage of the Anglophone protest movement. The CNC issued an official statement warning that media outlets that covered the demonstrators' grievances could "adversely affect the Republican system, unity and territorial integrity, and the democratic principles on which the state stands," which was interpreted as a threat to impose sanctions against outlets that covered the issue. In January, authorities shut down a radio station after it aired a debate about the Anglophone protest movement. The same month, the German news agency DW reported that its journalists and others had been threatened with sanctions if they covered the demonstrations. And in December 2017, Cameroonian-American author Patrice Nganang, known for his criticism of Biya, was jailed for three weeks and then deported. The government said he had threatened Biya's life in a Facebook post, but Nganang's family said he was detained after writing an article for the French-language, pan-African magazine *Jeune Afrique*, in which he criticized Biya's repression of the Anglophone protest movement. Radio journalist Mancho Bibixy remained in detention at year's end on charges related to his calls for the secession of the Anglophone regions.

Ahmed Abba—a Nigerian journalist arrested in 2015 in connection with his reporting on Boko Haram—in 2017 was convicted on terrorism-related charges and sentenced to 10 years in prison. However, he was freed after being credited with time served when a court later reduced his sentence to 24 months.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 2 / 4

Religious freedom is somewhat restricted in areas affected by the presence of Boko Haram, which has carried out violent attacks against places of worship. In 2015, the government banned full face veils in the Far North region following two suicide bombings that were attributed to Boko Haram and thought to have been carried out by veiled women. However, the ban is not usually enforced.

Separately, the government has at times closed churches in order to encourage resolutions to leadership disputes.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 2 / 4

There are no legal restrictions on academic freedom, but state security informants operate on university campuses.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 1 / 4 (-1)

Public criticism of the government and membership in opposition political parties can have a negative impact on professional opportunities and advancement. Cameroonians tend to avoid discussing sensitive political issues for fear of reprisals, notably the potential for a return to a federal system that would grant the Anglophone regions more autonomy, or the regions' outright secession.

Internet access in the Anglophone regions was completely shut down for a total of 93 days between January and April of 2017 after several days of demonstrations in Bamenda, the regions' main city, inhibiting online discussion of the Anglophone protest movement. Internet outages hit the region again in October, following that month's protests. The mass arrests of protest participants in October further discouraged discussion of the Anglophone issues.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 because the mass arrest of many Anglophone-rights activists and a 93-day internet shutdown in the country's Anglophone regions demonstrated that discussion of the Anglophone protest movement is not tolerated.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 2 / 12 (-1)**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 0 / 4 (-1)**

Freedom of assembly is subject to significant restrictions. In 2017, the Cameroonian government violently repressed a protest movement in the country's Anglophone regions. In October, security forces responded to demonstrations there with live bullets and tear gas. At least 20 people were killed in the crackdown, and at least 500 people were arrested, largely in mass sweeps.

Score Change: The score declined from 1 to 0 due to authorities' violent repression of protests in the Anglophone regions of the country.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 1 / 4

The influence of civil society has gradually weakened over the years, with many nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) relying entirely on foreign assistance, and others coopted or overtly supported by the regime.

In January, the Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium (CACSC) was banned, and its president and secretary general were arrested and charged under terrorism laws. They were both detained until August, when Biya ordered their release.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 1 / 4

Trade unions, strikes, and collective bargaining are legally permitted, although unions are still subject to numerous restrictions.

F. RULE OF LAW: 1 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 0 / 4**

The judiciary is subordinate to the Ministry of Justice, and political influence and corruption weaken courts. Judges are appointed by the president, who may also dismiss them at will.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

Due process rights are generally not respected. Lengthy pretrial detentions are commonplace. State security forces have carried out arbitrary detentions in both the Far North region, in response to the Boko Haram conflict, and in the Anglophone regions. French legal customs are frequently imposed upon Anglophone regions.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 0 / 4

Boko Haram insurgents continue to conduct attacks in the country's Far North region, and state security forces there have been accused of torturing alleged Boko Haram collaborators, many of whom are held without charge. Prison conditions are often dire.

In December 2017, government forces were accused of burning several whole villages in one of the Anglophone regions, in response to a deadly separatist attack against a military base in which four soldiers were killed.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 0 / 4

Discrimination against Anglophone Cameroonians and individuals from certain ethnic groups including the Bamiléké is common. The government imposes the French language in Anglophone regions, and Anglophone Cameroonians are frequently denied senior jobs in the civil service. Discrimination against the LGBT community is rife, and violence against LGBT people is not uncommon.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 4 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 1 / 4

Free movement is difficult in parts of the Far North due to Boko Haram activity. In 2017, the government issued bans on "the movement of persons" in the Anglophone regions during protest periods.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 1 / 4

Harassment of small business owners by state agents is common. Agribusinesses and logging operations are operated without consulting local inhabitants.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 1 / 4

The constitution guarantees equal rights to men and women, but traditional legal values often take precedence and do not always provide women full rights. Traditional legal codes often forbid women from owning property, exclude women from inheritance rights, and allow rapists to escape punishment if the victim consents to marriage.

The penal code forbids "sexual relations with a person of the same sex" and includes prison sentences of up to five years. In practice, people are prosecuted with no evidence of sexual activity, but rather on suspicions that they are gay.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

Despite a 2011 law against human trafficking, Cameroon remains a source, transit, and destination country for forced labor and sex trafficking of children, as well as a source country for women who are subject to forced labor and prostitution in Europe.

Canada

Population: 36,200,000

Capital: Ottawa

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 1

Freedom Rating: 1.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Canada has a strong history of respect for political rights and civil liberties. While indigenous peoples and other vulnerable populations still face discrimination and other economic, social, and political challenges, the federal government has acknowledged and made some moves to address these issues.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In June, lawmakers approved a bill explicitly prohibiting discrimination based on gender identity or gender expression.
- In October, a law allowing journalists to better protect their sources took effect.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 40 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The British monarch is head of state, represented by a ceremonial governor general who is appointed on the advice of the prime minister. The prime minister is the head of government and is designated by the general governor after elections; the office is usually held by the leader of the majority party or coalition in the parliament.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The parliament consists of an elected 338-member House of Commons, and an appointed 105-member Senate. Lower-house elections are held every four years, with early elections called only if the government loses a parliamentary no-confidence vote. The most recent elections were held in 2015. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) conducted a needs assessment mission before the election, as well as a mission during the vote. The group concluded that the elections were competitive and credible, but called for greater minority participation.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

Electoral laws are generally fair and are well enforced by the relevant bodies. However, some observers have expressed concern about the 2014 Fair Elections Act, arguing that its stringent voter identification requirements place indigenous peoples at a disadvantage. The Liberal government elected in 2015 has introduced a bill that would relax some the law's provisions, but it has not advanced past a first reading in the House of Commons.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 16 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4**

Canadians are free to organize in different political parties, and the system is open to the rise and fall of competing parties. While two parties have traditionally dominated the political system—the Conservative Party, espousing a center-right to right-wing political position, and the Liberal Party, espousing a center to center-left position—recent years have seen the rise of new groups.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

A total of 23 political parties were registered in the 2015 elections. The center-left New Democratic Party (NDP) lost its status as the official opposition party in the House of Commons after the vote, and the Conservatives became the dominant opposition to the Liberal government.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

People's political choices are generally free from domination by actors that are not democratically accountable.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 4 / 4

Members of religious minorities and indigenous people are seated in the parliament, as are many women. However, the political interests of such groups are not always well represented. For example, critical issues facing Canada's indigenous peoples, including high rates of suicide, violent victimization, and murder, received little attention in the 2015 electoral campaign.

The rights and interests of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people were visibly defended in Canadian politics in 2017. In November, the federal government formally apologized to LGBT Canadians who were convicted of homosexual activity and purged from the Canadian military and civil service in the past. Earlier, in June, lawmakers approved a bill explicitly prohibiting discrimination based on gender identity or gender expression, affording transgender individuals among others more protection against hate crimes.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 12 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4**

Canada's freely elected government determines policy.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 4 / 4

Canada has a reputation for clean government and a record of vigorous prosecution of corruption cases.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 4 / 4

Despite the existence of the Access to Information Act, there are some challenges to obtaining information, including delays and excessive costs. The Liberal government has proposed a number of reforms to the information act, but the measures have been criticized as inadequate; the Information Commissioner of Canada has argued that the proposal would actually “result in a regression of existing rights” by creating new hurdles for requesters and giving agencies additional grounds for refusing requests. The reform bill had not been approved by the end of 2017.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 59 / 60**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 16 / 16****D1. Are there free and independent media? 4 / 4**

Canada’s media are generally free; journalists are mostly protected from violence and harassment in their work and are able to express diverse views. In October 2017, a new law permitting journalists greater ability to protect their sources took effect. It stipulates that journalists cannot be required to disclose confidential sources unless a Superior Court judge is persuaded that the information cannot be obtained through other means, and that it is in the public interest for the source to be revealed.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

The constitution and other legislation protect religious freedom. However, controversy erupted over a bill passed by the Quebec legislature in October 2017 that bans the wearing of face coverings, including religious face coverings, while providing or receiving public services. A judge suspended the ban in December.

There are occasional instances of vandalism of Jewish and Muslim places of worship and cultural centers.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is generally respected.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

Private discussion in Canada is generally free and unrestrained. However, in 2015, the former Conservative government passed a controversial antiterrorism law granting the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) wider authority to conduct surveillance and share information about individuals with other agencies. Its passage elicited considerable condemnation from Canadian intellectuals as well as both domestic and foreign civil liberties watchdogs, who warned that it undermined the concept of privacy and could harm freedom of expression. In June 2017, the Liberal government introduced a bill that would reverse some of the law’s provisions, and establish an independent review and complaints body and a parliamentary committee to monitor Canada’s intelligence-gathering agencies. At year’s end, it had only received a first reading in the House of Commons.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 12 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4

Freedom of assembly is constitutionally protected and upheld in practice.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operate freely and frequently inform policy discussions.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

Trade unions and business associations enjoy high levels of membership and are well organized. In June 2017, the new Liberal government reversed two controversial labor laws approved by the previous government. The laws had been criticized by unions for putting in place onerous financial disclosure rules, and making it more difficult to organize new unions in federally regulated sectors.

F. RULE OF LAW: 15 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 4 / 4

Canada's judiciary is generally independent.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 4 / 4

Constitutionally protected due process rights are generally upheld in practice. Canada's criminal law is based on legislation enacted by Parliament; its tort and contract law is based on English common law, with the exception of Quebec, where it is based on the French civil code.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 4 / 4

The use of solitary confinement for extended periods of time in Canada's prisons made headlines in 2017, with many critics charging that the time that inmates are excluded from the general population of prisoners was becoming excessive, and that solitary confinement is frequently targeted at prisoners with mental health issues. In response to these criticisms, the federal government in June introduced legislation mandating that federal inmates may not stay in solitary confinement for longer than 21 consecutive days—with the cap lowered to 15 days 18 months after the legislation comes into force—unless the prison warden specifically orders otherwise. Legal advocates for prisoners claim the bill would have little practical effect other than to force wardens to review solitary confinement orders slightly earlier than they do presently.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

The government had made increasing efforts to enforce equal rights and opportunities for minority groups, although some problems persist, particularly for Canada's indigenous peoples, who remain subject to discrimination and have unequal access to education, health care, and employment.

The number of visible minorities in prison has risen significantly in the last decade; while the indigenous population comprises about 4 percent of Canada's population, they represent close to one-quarter of all inmates.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 16 / 16**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4**

Freedom of movement is constitutionally protected and upheld in practice.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 4 / 4

Property rights are not constitutionally guaranteed, but in practice they are protected by laws and through the enforcement of contracts.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 4 / 4

Canada legalized same-sex marriage in 2005. Women's rights are generally well protected in law and in practice.

Domestic violence is a problem that disproportionately affects women, particularly indigenous women, and is underreported. There have been initiatives in recent years to train police in handling of domestic violence cases.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 4 / 4

In 2012, Canada enacted the National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking, and the government continued efforts in 2017 to hold perpetrators accountable and to provide aid to victims.

Cape Verde

Population: 500,000

Capital: Praia

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 1

Freedom Rating: 1.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Cape Verde is a stable democracy with competitive elections and periodic transfers of power between rival parties. Civil liberties are generally protected, but access to justice is impaired by an overburdened court system, and crime has been a growing concern. Other outstanding problems include persistent inequities for women and migrant workers.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Prime Minister Ulisses Correia e Silva completed his first year in office, having been appointed in April 2016 after his Movement for Democracy (MpD) won that year's parliamentary elections.
 - In March, Culture Minister Abraão Vicente was criticized by the journalists' union for his public remarks about hiring and programming at state-owned media, which are meant to be independently managed.
-

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 37 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The president is directly elected for up to two consecutive five-year terms. The prime minister, who holds most day-to-day executive authority, is formally appointed by the president based on legislative election results and is responsible to the National Assembly.

Incumbent president Jorge Carlos Fonseca of the MpD was reelected in October 2016 with 74 percent of the vote. His main challenger was independent Albertino Graça, who took about 23 percent. The voting was generally considered free and fair. Correia e Silva, also of the MpD, had been appointed as prime minister in April, following the legislative elections in March.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

Members of the 72-seat National Assembly are directly elected in multimember constituencies to serve five-year terms. In the March 2016 elections, the MpD, then in opposition, won 40 seats. The governing African Party for the Independence of Cape Verde (PAICV) was reduced to 29 seats, and the Democratic and Independent Cape Verdean Union (UCID) took three. International observers found the elections to be largely free and fair.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

The legal framework provides for fair and competitive elections. The National Elections Commission, whose members are elected by a two-thirds majority in the National Assembly, is generally considered impartial, despite some criticism of its performance.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 15 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4

There are no significant impediments to the formation and competition of political parties. A number of different parties are active, though only the PAIGC and the MpD have held power at the national level.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

There have been three democratic transfers of power between the PAIGC and the MpD since independence in 1975. The most recent was in 2016, when Correia e Silva replaced José Maria Pereira Neves of the PAIGC as prime minister.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

The political choices of voters and candidates are free from undue external influence. However, there were some reports of vote buying and of voters being pressured near polling stations in 2016.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

Women have full and equal political rights, but traditional social constraints have impaired their participation somewhat in practice. Women won 17 seats in the 2016 National Assembly elections.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 10 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4**

The prime minister and cabinet determine the policies of the government, under the supervision of the National Assembly and the president. The government is able to implement laws and policies without undue interference from unelected entities.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4

Cape Verde has relatively low levels of corruption overall, but bribery and nepotism have been problems at the municipal level in particular. Allegations of graft have surrounded costly infrastructure projects and other spending measures in recent years.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 3 / 4

The current government has taken a number of steps to improve transparency, including the publication of more information about state operations and finances online. The government generally adheres to legal guarantees of public access to information. However, many officeholders fail to comply with rules requiring them to declare their personal assets and income.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 53 / 60**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 15 / 16****D1. Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4**

Freedom of the press is guaranteed by law and generally respected in practice, although Article 105 of the electoral code prohibits media organizations from disseminating opinions on or criticism of parties and candidates after a certain date in the campaign period. Both public and privately owned media are for the most part free and independent from government control, though public remarks by the culture minister about hiring and programming at state-owned media in March 2017 raised concerns about improper government meddling, drawing objections from the journalists' union. The main constraints affecting the media are precarious finances—which undermine journalists' job security and ability to engage in more in-depth reporting—and a degree of self-censorship among journalists.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

The constitution establishes the separation of church and state, though the Roman Catholic Church receives some special privileges. While all religious groups are required to register with the Justice Ministry to obtain tax and other benefits, the process is not restrictive, and there are no limitations on freedom of worship.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is respected, and the educational system is not affected by political indoctrination.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

There are no significant constraints on individuals' freedom of expression. The government is not known to engage in online surveillance or improper monitoring of personal communications.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 11 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4

Freedom of assembly is legally guaranteed and observed in practice. There have been no recent reports of prosecutions related to participation in protests or demonstrations.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Numerous nongovernmental organizations operate freely in the country, focusing on a variety of social, economic, environmental, and cultural issues. International human rights institutions, local organizations, and journalists are able to monitor prison conditions and other human rights indicators without government interference.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

The constitution protects the right to unionize, and workers may form and join unions in practice. The state generally does not interfere with union activity. However, labor unions have complained that the government restricts the right to strike in broadly defined essential industries, and formal collective bargaining is reportedly uncommon in the private sector.

F. RULE OF LAW: 14 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 4 / 4

The judiciary is independent, though the courts are overburdened and understaffed.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 3 / 4

Police and prosecutors generally observe legal safeguards against arbitrary arrest and detention. Defense attorneys are provided to indigent defendants. However, due to the limited capacity of the court system, there are often delays in detainees' first hearing before a judge, and many cases are dropped because defendants in detention are denied a timely trial.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 4 / 4

Law enforcement officials are sometimes accused of excessive force, but perpetrators are reportedly investigated and punished by oversight bodies. Although the country is generally free from major violence or unrest, street crime and smuggling have been growing problems in recent years. Prison conditions are poor, with some facilities subject to overcrowding.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

Discrimination based on gender is prohibited by law, but wage discrimination and unequal access to education persist for women. Immigrants also tend to face discriminatory treatment by employers. Same-sex sexual activity is not criminalized, and the law provides protections against job discrimination based on sexual orientation.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 13 / 16**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4**

Individual freedom of movement is recognized by law, and there are no significant restrictions in practice.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 3 / 4

Property rights are generally respected. The legal framework and government policies are supportive of private business activity, though obstacles such as corruption and legal and bureaucratic inefficiency remain a concern.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

Personal social freedoms are generally protected, including in matters of marriage and family law. Authorities enforce laws against rape and domestic abuse, but such violence remains a serious problem, and insufficient public resources are dedicated to supporting and protecting victims.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

The law prohibits forced labor and other exploitative practices, and the government actively enforces such safeguards in the formal sector. However, migrant workers who lack employment contracts remain vulnerable to abuses, and children are reportedly exposed to sex trafficking and illegal work in agriculture or domestic service.

Central African Republic

Population: 5,000,000

Capital: Bangui

Political Rights Rating: 7

Civil Liberties Rating: 7

Freedom Rating: 7.0

Freedom Status: Not Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: The Central African Republic suffers from pervasive insecurity and an absence of state authority in much of the country. Efforts to reach a negotiated settlement between the government and various armed groups have not yet achieved political reconciliation. The country faces a humanitarian crisis, and violent attacks against civilians, including sexual violence, are an acute risk in many areas.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- The government remained unable to restore the authority of the state beyond the capital city, despite the initiation of several mediation efforts aimed at reaching a ceasefire and national reconciliation.
 - Intercommunal violence and targeted attacks on civilians by armed militias escalated during the year.
-

- A special prosecutor was named in February to the Special Criminal Court, which has jurisdiction to investigate human rights violations committed since 2003. However, at year's end the court was not yet operational.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 4 / 40**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 3 / 12****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4**

The president is chief of state and is directly elected to up to two five-year terms. President Faustin-Archange Touadéra was elected in February 2016. The elections were monitored by the African Union Election Observation Mission (AUEOM), and were regarded as generally successful and a step towards peace and stabilization. Fears about widespread electoral violence were not realized, but there were many reports of serious irregularities at the polls. Moreover, many voters were unable to participate because insecurity prevented voter registration, or because they had fled to other countries as refugees and the state was unable to set up effective absentee voting procedures.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4

Members of parliament are directly elected to five-year terms. The current parliament was elected in February 2016, followed by a second round of by-elections that March. The polls were generally regarded as successful, but like the presidential polls, were plagued by irregularities and the disenfranchisement of voters unable to access the polls due to security concerns or refugee status. Moreover, a first round had to be nullified following a slew of allegations of fraud and other misconduct, by actors ranging from armed groups to political candidates to the National Electoral Authority.

A new constitution adopted in 2015 stipulated the creation of a Senate, but this institution is not yet active.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 1 / 4

The electoral laws of the Central African Republic permit multiparty competition, and adult citizens enjoy universal and equal suffrage. However, the broader electoral framework of the country remains challenged by a weak judicial system, inadequate funding and training for election officials, and a lack of transparency in the composition of national election authorities.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 2 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 1 / 4**

While political parties are legally able to form and operate, party members conducting political activities are at risk of intimidation and violence in areas controlled by irregular armed groups.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 1 / 4

Several opposition parties exist in the parliament. However, politicians are at risk of intimidation, harassment, or violence in areas controlled by armed groups, and opposition

parties are limited in their ability to garner support in those areas. Current national-level negotiations envision the insertion of armed group leaders into positions of local administration, but these positions have not yet been filled.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 0 / 4

Citizens are vulnerable to pressure and intimidation from nonstate armed groups. Due to enduring insecurity, voters outside the capital are largely unable to participate in political processes.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 0 / 4

Enduring insecurity and an accompanying lack of access to political processes precludes many minority groups from achieving political representation. Sectarian violence affecting Muslims has decreased their ability to participate in politics. Women are underrepresented in politics, and just 11 sit in the 140-seat parliament. Societal and legal discrimination against LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people prevent them from working to see their interests represented in the political sphere.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 0 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 0 / 4

Presidential and parliamentary elections held in early 2016 led to a peaceful transfer of power from the National Transitional Council to an elected government. However, while the elected representatives can determine the policies of the government, the weak authority of the state in many areas severely limits the government's ability to implement policy decisions.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 0 / 4

Corruption and nepotism have long been pervasive in all branches of government, and addressing public-sector corruption is difficult given capacity limitations. In March 2017, the president appointed members of the independent High Authority for Good Governance, which is charged, among other things, with ensuring the equitable distribution of natural resource revenues.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 0 / 4

Government operations are largely nontransparent, and civil society groups and others have limited opportunity to comment upon or influence impending policy decisions.

ADDITIONAL DISCRETIONARY POLITICAL RIGHTS QUESTION

Is the government or occupying power deliberately changing the ethnic composition of a country or territory so as to destroy a culture or tip the political balance in favor of another group? -1 / 0

Targeted violence against civilians by armed groups such as the Muslim-dominated Popular Front for the Renaissance of Central Africa (FPRC) as well as Christian anti-Balaka militias escalated in 2017, particularly in the northern and eastern regions of the country. Hundreds of thousands of civilians remain internally displaced or confined to ethnic and sectarian enclaves.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 5 / 60 (-1)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 4 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4

While direct state censorship of media is uncommon, reporters face restricted access to many areas of the country due to insecurity. Few residents outside Bangui enjoy access to national or international media sources or the internet. Since the onset of conflict in 2013, many community radio stations have been shuttered. However, some independently run stations continue to operate and host robust debates, with active participation from callers-in.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 0 / 4

Officially Central African Republic is a secular state, but religious and sectarian cleavages often overlap with the country's political divisions. In 2017, sectarian clashes between Christian and Muslim populations continued to threaten the free practice of religion.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 2 / 4

While the educational system is generally free of extensive political indoctrination, many schools and universities remain closed, or operate without adequate resources.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 1 / 4

Public discussion and political debates are generally free from surveillance by state authorities. However, a sense of political instability and the risk of violent retaliation for challenging the presence of armed groups or expressing opinions on other sensitive topics inhibits free expression.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 1 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 0 / 4

Although freedom of assembly and the right to political protest is guaranteed under the constitution, in practice these liberties continued to be curtailed in 2017 due to widespread insecurity.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 0 / 4

While the government does not restrict nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and frequently cooperates with them, their operations in practice are severely restricted by poor security conditions.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 1 / 4

Trade unions and collective bargaining are permitted, although union organizers are sometimes subject to arbitrary detention or arrest. Small-scale agricultural organizations and cooperatives exist throughout the country, including organizations for women farmers.

F. RULE OF LAW: 0 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 0 / 4

Courts are inefficient and politicized. Judicial salaries have often gone unpaid, and there is a shortage of judges.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 0 / 4

Arbitrary detention and lengthy pretrial detention are commonplace in Central African Republic, and the state justice system has limited presence beyond Bangui. Impunity for violence, economic crimes, and human rights violations remained widespread in 2017. A special prosecutor, Toussaint Muntazini Mukimapa, was named in February 2017 to the Special Criminal Court (SCC) which has jurisdiction to investigate human rights violations perpetrated since 2003, but the court is not yet operational and suffers from a lack of human and financial resources.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 0 / 4

Armed nonstate actors—many of which are successors to the Muslim Séléka rebels and Christian anti-Balaka militias involved in violent atrocities since the onset of the country's current crisis in 2013—continue to operate with impunity in the eastern, northern, and northwestern regions of the country. These groups were responsible for violent attacks against civilians, often on the basis of ethnic and religious identity, as well as attacks against international peacekeeping forces and humanitarian aid workers. Violent competition among larger insurgent groups for control of territory and natural resources has internally displaced nearly 600,000 people. Armed groups and state security forces and police reportedly engaged in torture.

In response to the escalating crisis, 2017 saw a raft of new mediation efforts—including by the African Union (AU), neighboring states, and the Roman Catholic group Sant Egidio—to reach a ceasefire and national reconciliation. However, these negotiations appear to have had little effect on the behavior of armed groups on the ground.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 0 / 4

Same-sex sexual acts are illegal, and punishable by fines and imprisonment. While enforcement of these laws is uncommon, societal discrimination against LGBT people remains acute. Discrimination continues against the nomadic pastoralist Mbororo minority, as well as the forest-dwelling Ba'aka.

The independent High Authority for Good Governance, whose members were appointed in March 2017, is tasked with protecting the rights of minorities and the handicapped, though its efficacy has yet to be proven.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 0 / 16 (-1)**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 0 / 4**

Free movement by citizens is inhibited by the lack of security and targeted violence in 2017. Transportation routes are threatened by banditry and theft in many areas.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 0 / 4

Businesses and homes are regularly looted by armed militants, with little prospect for compensation or legal recourse for victims. The agricultural economy—the livelihood of the majority of the population—remained restricted by ongoing violence and insecurity.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 0 / 4 (-1)

Domestic abuse, rape, and sexual slavery against women by armed groups threaten the security of women and girls, and sexual violence is increasingly used as a deliberate tool of warfare, and attackers enjoy broad impunity. Constitutional guarantees for women's rights are rarely enforced, especially in rural areas. Sexual abuses by UN peacekeeping forces have been documented, but many instances have not been investigated or prosecuted.

Score Change: The score declined from 1 to 0 due to the magnitude of sexual violence by armed groups as well as peacekeepers during the conflict, which has worsened and has been met with impunity.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 0 / 4

Economic opportunity is heavily restricted by the presence of armed groups in many areas of the country. Approximately one in two Central Africans depend on access to humanitarian assistance for survival. Many armed groups exploit gold and diamond mines, and forced labor and child recruitment for soldiering are common practices.

Chad

Population: 14,500,000

Capital: N'Djamena

Political Rights Rating: 7

Civil Liberties Rating: 6

Freedom Rating: 6.5

Freedom Status: Not Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: Chad has held regular presidential elections since 1996, but no election has ever produced a change in power. Legislative elections are routinely delayed, and opposition activists risk arrest and severe mistreatment while in detention. The state typically represses antigovernment protests.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In April, security forces arrested two organizers of a gathering in protest of state corruption. After a time in detention, they each received six-month suspended sentences. They said they experienced severe abuse at the hands of security forces while detained.
- In July, police removed Laokein Médard, an opposition presidential candidate in 2016 and the mayor of Moundou, Chad's second largest city, from office and imprisoned him for allegedly embezzling public funds.
- Public sector workers continued to face unpaid or late compensation, despite an April agreement between unions and the government to form an arbitration committee.
- Attacks by Boko Haram around Lake Chad led to increased internal displacement.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 4 / 40**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 2 / 12****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4**

The president is directly elected to a five-year term. Incumbent president Idriss Déby Itno took power in 1990 during a rebellion, and then overwhelmingly won elections in 1996, 2001, 2006, and 2011. In the 2016 poll, he took just under 60 percent of the vote, defeating opposition leader Saleh Kebzabo, who took 13 percent. The opposition rejected the result, citing a variety of electoral irregularities. A 2005 constitutional amendment abolished presidential term limits.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

The unicameral National Assembly consists of 188 members elected for four-year terms. Legislative elections are routinely delayed. Parliamentary elections set for 2015 had still not been held at the end of 2017.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 1 / 4

While there is an Independent Electoral Commission (CENI), its leadership is appointed by the country's entrenched political leadership, prompting deep skepticism of its impartiality.⁶ Despite its perceived subordination to Déby, who effectively controls most government bodies through patronage, political divisions within CENI have prevented it from adjudicating many electoral disputes.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 1 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 1 / 4**

There are more than 130 registered political parties in Chad, though most of them are aligned with the ruling Patriotic Salvation Movement (MPS). The MPS enjoys significant influence and has held a majority since the first legislative elections under the current constitution took place in 1997.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 0 / 4

While the political opposition is given legal recognition, opposition leaders who publicly criticize the government risk harassment and arrest on trumped-up or fictitious charges. In July 2017, authorities imprisoned Laokein Médard, opposition leader and mayor of Moundou, the country's second largest city, for allegedly embezzling public funds. In September, an audit assigned to investigate the charges by a judge cleared Médard of any wrongdoing. He remained in prison until November.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 0 / 4

⁶ <https://issafrica.org/pscreport/situation-analysis/tense-elections-in-chad-and-the-republic-of-congo-a-challenge-for-the-psc>

Members of Déby's northeastern Zaghawa ethnic group, and other northern ethnic groups, control Chad's political and economic systems, causing resentment among the country's more than 200 other ethnic groups. The extensive and complicated kinship networks tied to the president and his family have resulted in a concentration of power.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 0 / 4

Although they comprise roughly 44 percent of the population, Christians in the south have largely been excluded from political power for more than 30 years. While some southerners hold positions in the current government, their representation and voice are limited to a few token ministerial positions.

Despite some government efforts to encourage their political participation, women hold few senior positions in government and political parties. Women living in rural areas are largely excluded from local governance bodies. The LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) community is severely marginalized, and this impacts the ability of LGBT people to engage in political processes and advocate for their interests.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 1 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 1 / 4

Déby enjoys unlimited discretionary power over the composition of the government, and reshuffled the cabinet several times in 2017. The power of the president to reshuffle the government without justification impedes the ability of the prime minister, as head of government, and the National Assembly to steer national policies.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 0 / 4

Corruption, bribery, and nepotism are endemic in Chad and prevail at all levels of government, from the presidential cabinet to the police force and local bureaucracies. High-profile journalists, labor leaders, and religious figures have faced harsh reprisals for speaking out about corruption, including arrest, prosecution, and expulsion from the country. Corruption investigations and cases against high-level officials that do go forward are widely viewed as selective prosecutions meant to discredit those who pose a threat to Déby or his allies.

In November 2017, US authorities charged a former Senegalese foreign minister for transferring to Déby a \$2 million bribe from a Chinese oil company. Déby denied the charges in a speech later that month, reassuring citizens that "he did not steal, was not corrupt and would never be corrupt."

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 0 / 4

Chad has no law establishing the right to access official information, and access remains difficult in practice. Déby, his family, and his associates dominate government and have little incentive to share even basic information about government operations with journalists, transparency advocates, or ordinary citizens.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 14 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 6 / 12

D1. Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4

The constitution formally provides for freedom of the press, but press freedom is restricted in practice. Although criticism of the government is generally permitted within

certain boundaries, some reporters and editors practice self-censorship to avoid reprisals, including arbitrary detention and other harassment and abuse. Many of Chad's most prominent news outlets are either state-owned or controlled by those with close ties to the government, thus limiting their editorial independence.

In October 2017, Juda Allahondoum, publisher of the newspaper *Le Visionnaire*, was arrested on charges of pretending to be a journalist after releasing an article about a privately owned Chadian airline that had allegedly transported weapons to Syria illegally.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 1 / 4

The state imposes a number of religious restrictions. Several Muslim sects deemed to promote violence are banned. Imams are subject to governance by the state High Council for Islamic Affairs (HCIA). Terrorist attacks are considered an acute threat against Muslim and Christian places of worship, and the state provided security to some houses of worship in response to such concerns. The government has engaged in a highly visible campaign to raise awareness of a ban on burqas, though in practice women who choose to wear them rarely face penalties.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 2 / 4

The government does not restrict academic freedom, but funds meant for the education system, as well as government-funded stipends, are regularly in arrears. In May 2017, university lecturers at the University of N'djamena went on strike, citing over seven months of unpaid research bonuses. Strikes have resulted in incomplete academic years.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 2 / 4

Space for open and free private discussion exists, but tends to be heavily self-censored due to fears of reprisal from the state's repressive apparatus.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 4 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 1 / 4

Constitutional guarantee of free assembly are not upheld by authorities, who routinely ban opposition gatherings and persecute organizers. A number of demonstrations were banned in 2017, and in April, security forces arrested two organizers of a gathering in protest of state corruption. After a time in detention—during which they alleged that security forces had suffocated them with plastic bags containing hot peppers—they each received six-month suspended sentences.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 1 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) must receive explicit approval from the government to operate legally, and few such applications are approved; most legal NGOs operate in the humanitarian and development sectors. Intelligence agents target and intimidate local activists who attempt to address issues related to governance or human rights.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

The constitution guarantees the rights to strike and unionize, but a 2007 law imposed limits on public sector workers' right to strike. In April 2017, trade unions and the government reached an agreement to form a new tripartite arbitration committee composed of state officials, employers, and union representatives. However, unpaid or late compensation to public sector workers continued throughout the year.

F. RULE OF LAW: 1 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 0 / 4**

The rule of law and judicial system remain weak because the political leadership, especially the executive, heavily influences the courts. In March 2017, newly appointed justice minister Ahmat Mahamat Hassan called for the stamping out of corruption in the justice system, but it continued to be an issue throughout the year. He was replaced in a December 2017 cabinet shuffle.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

Security forces routinely ignore constitutional protections regarding search, seizure, and detention. A state of emergency imposed in the Lake Chad region since 2015 grants security forces increased authority to perform searches. Detained persons may be denied access to lawyers, notably those detained in connection with their involvement in antigovernment protests or other activity challenging the government. Many people suspected of committing crimes are held for lengthy periods without charge.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 0 / 4

Civilian leaders do not maintain control of the security forces, who stand accused of killing and torturing with impunity. The militant group Boko Haram operates near Lake Chad, and in 2017 it continued to carry out abductions and killings of civilians, and burned dozens of homes, leading to increased internal displacement. Figures vary, but some reports claim the number of internationally displaced persons (IDPs) in Chad from the Lake Chad region alone may be as high as 120,000. Prison conditions are severe.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 0 / 4

The government struggles to provide services to IDPs and the more than 400,000 refugees in Chad who fled conflicts in neighboring Central African Republic, Sudan, Nigeria, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The government restricts the movement of both IDPs and refugees.

Due to cultural stigmatization, LGBT citizens are forced to conceal their sexual orientation and gender identity. Additionally, in August 2017, Déby approved a revised penal code that criminalized same-sex sexual activity.

Women face pervasive discrimination. Girls have limited access to education.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 3 / 16**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 1 / 4**

Although constitutional guarantees for the freedom of movement exist, in practice militant activity and government restrictions imposed in response to it limit free movement. The state of emergency declared in the Lake Chad region allows local authorities to ban movement as they deem necessary. In January 2017, insecurity from terrorist activities in

Libya led to a complete closure of the border between the two countries, which was partially lifted in March.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 1 / 4

Laws establishing land and property rights are nominally in force, but they are functionally irrelevant to the majority of the country's population owing to the state's minimal presence in rural areas; customary law governs land ownership and use rights in practice. Laws protecting the right of women to inherit land are not enforced.

Due to high levels of corruption, establishing and operating a business in Chad is extremely difficult.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 0 / 4

Violence against women is common. Female genital mutilation is illegal but widely practiced. Revisions to the penal code approved in 2016 increased the legal marriage age from 16 to 18 years old, but the rate of child marriage remains high. A report by the Centre for Studies and Training for Development (CEFOD) released in June 2017 cited early marriage as a key cause of girls dropping out of school.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

Chad is a source, transit, and destination country for child trafficking, and the government has made minimal efforts to eliminate the problem. Children can be found engaged in forced begging and forced labor in the agricultural sector and other industries. Young girls who travel to look for work often end up either forced into prostitution or abusive domestic servitude.

Restrictions on movement in the Lake Chad region in practice also prevents the movement of food and goods, hampering economic activity and opportunity there.

Chile

Population: 18,200,000

Capital: Santiago

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 1

Freedom Rating: 1.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Chile is a stable democracy that has experienced a significant expansion of political rights and civil liberties since the return of civilian rule in 1990. Ongoing concerns include corruption and unrest linked to land disputes with the indigenous Mapuche population.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- The conservative presidential candidate of the Chile Vamos coalition, Sebastián Piñera, won a runoff election held in December with 55 percent of the vote. He defeated Alejandro Guillier, the candidate of the governing Nueva Mayoría coalition.
-

- Congressional elections held in November resulted in a fractured legislature, with no party able to win an outright majority in either the lower or upper house. Piñera's coalition took a plurality of seats in both chambers, but will need some support from opposition lawmakers to pass legislation.
- In September, a law introduced by center-left President Michelle Bachelet that decriminalize abortion in the events of rape, an inviable fetus, or danger to the life of the mother, took effect.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 37 / 40**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4**

Presidential elections in Chile are widely regarded as free and fair. The president is elected to a four-year term, and consecutive terms are not permitted. Piñera was elected in December 2017 to serve his second term; he had served as president previously, from 2010 to 2014.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The Senate's 38 members serve eight-year terms, with half up for election every four years, and the 120 members of the Chamber of Deputies are elected to four-year terms. Since 1990, congressional elections have been widely regarded as free and fair.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

Chile's electoral framework is robust and generally well implemented. The 2017 legislative polls were the first to take place under new rules that established more proportional districts, and increased the number of seats in both houses. The Chamber of Deputies now has 155 seats, up from 120 previously. The number of Senate seats was increased from 38 to 50, but the new seats will be introduced gradually, with the Senate reaching its new 50-seat capacity in 2022.

Chile still operates under a constitution drafted during the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet, though in 2017 lawmakers were working to reform it.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 15 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4**

Chile has a multiparty political system with dominant center-right and center-left coalitions, though the center-left coalition fractured in 2017, contributing to the strong showing by Chile Vamos in the year's elections. Parties operate freely, and many new parties have emerged in recent years.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

Power alternation between parties occurs regularly, both in Congress and for the presidency. In 2014, center-left President Michelle Bachelet succeeded conservative President Sebastián Piñera, who in turn will succeed Bachelet in 2018.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

People are generally free to exercise their political choices without undue influence from actors that are not democratically accountable.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

Women are represented in government, and the new electoral system includes a quota for women in the legislature. However, the presence of women in Congress and in other government positions does not guarantee that their interests are represented, and women report difficulty gaining influence in intraparty debates.

The interests of the Mapuche minority, which represents about 9 percent of the population, are present in political life, with Mapuche activists regularly making their voices heard in street demonstrations. However, this activism has yet to translate into significant legislative power. In November 2017, two candidates from the Mapuche indigenous group were elected; one to the Senate and one to the Chamber of Deputies.

Indigenous people have been consulted in the ongoing drafting of a new constitution, but activists claim that key issues are still not being addressed during the process.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 10 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4

While lobbying and interest groups exist and work to shape policy, there is little significant intervention by actors who are not democratically accountable in the policymaking process.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4

Anticorruption laws are generally enforced, though high-level corruption scandals crop up with some regularity. In 2017, members of the militarized *carabineros* police force were implicated in an embezzlement scandal worth some \$40 million. Corruption scandals dented Bachelet's popularity during her presidency, as well as that of her coalition. One of the major right-wing parties, Independent Democratic Union, has also been involved in a campaign-finance scandal in recent years.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 3 / 4

The government operates with relative transparency. In 2009 the Transparency and Access to Public Information Law came into force; it increases public access to information and created a Council on Transparency. Agencies have generally been responsive to information requests, and failures to comply with the law or other measures designed to encourage transparent operations have been punished with fines.

However, the legislature has limited ability under the constitution to supervise or alter the executive budget. Moreover, a legal provision reserves 10 percent of copper export revenues for the military, with little independent oversight.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 57 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 16 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 4 / 4

Guarantees of free speech are generally respected, though some laws barring defamation of state institutions remain on the books. Media ownership is highly concentrated.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

The constitution provides for religious freedom, and the government generally upholds this right in practice.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is unrestricted.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

Chileans enjoy open and free private discussion.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 12 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4

The right to assemble peacefully is generally respected, though protests are sometimes marred by violence. In 2017, clashes between demonstrators and police erupted at several large demonstrations, including one comprised of Mapuche activists, and at a student protest at which demonstrators called for free education. In July, skirmishes broke out between conservative and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) demonstrators, and police employed water cannons and tear gas in an effort to separate them.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) may form and operate without interference. A number of NGOs working on governance and rights groups operate, including ones that address inefficiencies and other problems in the courts, and hazardous conditions in prisons.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

There are strong laws protecting worker and union rights, but antiunion practices by private-sector employers continue to be reported.

F. RULE OF LAW: 14 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 4 / 4

The constitution provides for an independent judiciary, and the courts are generally free from political interference.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 4 / 4

The right to legal counsel is constitutionally guaranteed and due process generally prevails in civil and criminal matters. However, indigent defendants do not always receive effective legal representation.

Rights groups and the United Nations have criticized the government's use of antiterrorism laws, which do not guarantee due process, to prosecute acts of violence by Mapuche activists.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 3 / 4

The government has developed effective mechanisms to investigate and punish police abuses and corruption. However, excessive force and human rights abuses committed by the *carabineros* still occur.

The slow and delayed repatriation of the ancestral land of the Mapuche indigenous group has been a cause of years of violent protest, and a number of arson attacks led by Mapuche activists took place in 2017. Targets included churches and equipment belonging to logging operations. In September, security forces, including the *carabineros*, launched a series of sometimes-violent raids in the south of the country, leading to the arrest on arson charges of eight Mapuche community leaders.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

While indigenous people still experience societal discrimination, their poverty levels have declined somewhat, aided by government scholarships, land transfers, and social spending. In 2017, Bachelet offered a formal apology to the Mapuche for “errors and horrors” committed against them by the state.

LGBT people continue to face societal bias, despite a 2012 antidiscrimination law that covers sexual orientation and gender identity.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 15 / 16**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4**

The constitution protects the freedom of movement, and the government respects this right in practice.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 4 / 4

Individuals generally have the right to own property and establish and operate private businesses, and are able to do so without interference from the government or other actors. However, Mapuche activists continue to demand territorial rights to land, ancestral waters, and natural resources.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 4 / 4

The government generally does not restrict personal social freedoms. However, violence against children and women remains a problem. In July 2017, the Chamber of Deputies rejected a report by a congressional investigating committee that documented governmental negligence of children in state care. The opposition accused the Bachelet administration of lobbying to reject the report in an effort to protect a former minister.

A law against femicide went into force in 2010, but gender violence remains, and dozens of femicides were reported in 2017.

In September 2017, a law introduced by Bachelet that decriminalized abortion in the events of rape, an inviable fetus, or danger to the life of the mother, took effect.

A 2015 law recognizes civil unions for same-sex and opposite-sex couples.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

While compulsory labor is illegal, forced labor, particularly among foreign citizens, continues to occur in the agriculture, mining, and domestic service sectors.

China

Population: 1,378,000,000

Capital: Beijing

Political Rights Rating: 7

Civil Liberties Rating: 6

Freedom Rating: 6.5

Freedom Status: Not Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Note: The numerical ratings and status listed above do not reflect conditions in Hong Kong or Tibet, which are examined in separate reports.

Overview: China's authoritarian regime has become increasingly repressive in recent years. The ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is tightening its control over the media, online speech, religious groups, and civil society associations while undermining already modest rule-of-law reforms. The CCP leader and state president, Xi Jinping, is consolidating personal power to a degree not seen in China for decades. The country's budding civil society and human rights movements have struggled amid a multiyear crackdown, but continue to seek avenues for protecting basic rights and sharing uncensored information, at times scoring minor victories.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- At the CCP's 19th Party Congress in October, Xi Jinping further strengthened his hold on power and secured an additional five years as the party's general secretary, but his departure from previous norms—including his failure to appoint a potential successor to the Politburo Standing Committee—could have negative consequences for China's future political stability.
- Internet censorship and surveillance reached new heights as a Cybersecurity Law came into effect in June, alongside other new regulations restricting online communications.
- The authorities' crackdown on civil society continued, with arrests and criminal prosecutions of bloggers, activists, human rights lawyers, and religious believers.
- Imprisoned Nobel Peace Prize laureate and democracy activist Liu Xiaobo died in July, less than a month after prison authorities announced that he had late-stage liver cancer.
- Executive Summary
- Xi Jinping, who took office as general secretary of the CCP in November 2012, continued to concentrate personal power in 2017 to an extent not seen in China for decades. At the CCP's 19th Party Congress in October, Xi secured an additional five years as general secretary and a place in the CCP constitution for himself, his key policy initiatives, and his contributions to party ideology. A new Politburo Standing Committee was announced, featuring five new members and heavily weighted with Xi's allies. However, the body lacked any members young enough

- to replace Xi in 2022 after he completes the customary two five-year terms, reinforcing speculation that he planned to break with precedent and seek a third term.
- In a lengthy speech at the congress, Xi emphasized that “socialism with Chinese characteristics” had entered a “new era,” one that required further increases in party control over information, society, culture, the military, and the economy. He also spoke confidently about China’s rise on the world stage and for the first time called for its governance system to serve as a model for other countries, especially developing economies.
 - Party authorities tightened political, social, and media restrictions in Beijing and across China in the months ahead of the October gathering. Implementation of a Cybersecurity Law and other new regulations resulted in a crackdown on virtual private networks (VPNs), penalties for private technology companies whose censorship measures were deemed insufficient, tighter enforcement of real-name registration rules online, and greater pressure on users to censor themselves and each other. Several activists responsible for websites or blogs that monitor protests and human rights conditions were arrested or sentenced during the year, and court documents related to the prosecution of rights lawyers cited their online activities and interviews with foreign media.
 - In July, democracy advocate and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Liu Xiaobo died soon after prison authorities sent him to a hospital with a diagnosis of late-stage liver cancer. He was allowed to see his wife, Liu Xia, who has been under house arrest since 2010, but officials refused to permit him to travel abroad for treatment. Activist and netizen efforts to commemorate Liu Xiaobo were strongly suppressed, with several people detained and online censorship spiking in the days following his death.
 - New regulations that were adopted in August further restricted the scope for religious freedoms, particularly for children’s religious education. Authorities continued to engage in acts of persecution against religious believers and leaders during the year, including the extralegal detention of a Catholic bishop, the jailing of a Protestant pastor, the sentencing of two Muslim clerics to 10 years in prison, and the death in custody of a Falun Gong practitioner. An already massive security presence in Xinjiang grew, and restrictions on free expression, travel, and religious practice in the region expanded to affect not only Uighurs but also Kazakhs and other Muslim ethnic minorities, thousands of whom were sent to extralegal political indoctrination centers.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 0 / 40 (-1)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 0 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

There are no direct or competitive elections for national executive leaders. The CCP’s seven-member Politburo Standing Committee (PSC), headed by Xi Jinping in his role as the party’s general secretary, sets government and party policy. Xi also holds the position of state president and serves as chairman of the state and party military commissions. At the 19th Party Congress in October 2017, Xi was awarded a second term as general secretary, and an opaque intraparty process resulted in the announcement of a new PSC membership. In a departure from precedent, none of the incoming PSC members was young enough to serve as Xi’s successor and then rule for the customary two five-year terms, reinforcing speculation that Xi would seek a third term in 2022.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

The 3,000 members of the National People's Congress (NPC) are formally elected for five-year terms by subnational congresses, but in practice candidates are vetted by the CCP. The NPC formally elects the state president for up to two five-year terms, and confirms the premier after he is nominated by the president, but both positions are decided in advance at the relevant CCP congress. Only the NPC's standing committee meets regularly, with the full congress convening for just two weeks a year to approve proposed legislation; party organs and the State Council, or cabinet, effectively control lawmaking. The current NPC was seated in March 2013 and named Xi as state president that month.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 0 / 4

Political positions are directly elected only at the lowest administrative levels. Independent candidates who obtain the signatures of 10 supporters are by law allowed to run for seats in the county-level people's congresses, and elections for village committees are also supposed to give residents the chance to choose their representatives. In practice, however, independent candidates for these posts are often kept off the ballot or out of office through intimidation, harassment, fraud, and in some cases detention. Only a very small number of independent candidates have gained office in elections, though some attempt to do so in each election cycle.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 0 / 16 (-1)

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 0 / 4

The CCP seeks to monopolize all forms of political organization and does not permit any meaningful political competition. Citizens seeking to establish independent political parties and other democracy activists are harshly punished. China's most prominent political dissident, Nobel Peace Prize winner Liu Xiaobo, was sentenced in 2009 to 11 years in prison for organizing a prodemocracy manifesto; he died from cancer in July 2017 after an apparently delayed diagnosis and officials' refusal to allow him to travel abroad for treatment.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 0 / 4

China's one-party system rigorously suppresses the development of any organized political opposition. Even within the CCP, Xi Jinping has steadily increased his own power and authority since 2012, pursuing a selective anticorruption campaign that has eliminated potential rivals and personally heading an unusually large number of "leading groups" that give him direct supervision over a variety of policy areas. At the party congress in October 2017, Xi's official contributions to party ideology were formally added to the CCP constitution, elevating his status above that of his immediate predecessors and further bolstering him against any intraparty challenge.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 0 / 4

The authoritarian CCP is not accountable to voters and denies the public any meaningful influence or participation in political affairs.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 0 / 4 (-1)

Restrictions on political activity remain especially harsh for religious and ethnic minorities, including Tibetans, Uighurs, and Mongolians. Nominal representatives of these groups participate in party and state bodies like the NPC, but their role is largely symbolic. Women are severely underrepresented in top CCP and government positions, and the situation has grown slightly worse in recent years. Just one woman was named to the 25-member Politburo at the 19th Party Congress in 2017, down from the previous two, and women secured 4.9 percent of the seats on the party's Central Committee. No woman has ever sat on the PSC.

Score Change: The score declined from 1 to 0 because societal groups such as women, ethnic and religious minorities, and LGBT people have no opportunity to gain meaningful political representation and are barred from advancing their interests outside the formal structures of the CCP.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 2 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 0 / 4**

None of China's national leaders are freely elected, and the legislature plays no significant role in policymaking or the development of new laws. The continuing concentration of power in Xi Jinping's hands, an emerging cult of personality, and Xi's calls for greater ideological conformity and party supremacy have further reduced the limited space for policy debate even within the CCP.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

Since becoming CCP leader in 2012, Xi has pursued an extensive anticorruption campaign. Scores of senior state and party officials had been investigated and punished by the end of 2017, including from the security apparatus, the military, the Foreign Ministry, state-owned enterprises, and state media. In July 2017, for example, Sun Zhengcai, party secretary of Chongqing and a candidate for promotion to the PSC, was put under investigation by the party for "violations of discipline"; he was formally expelled from the CCP in September, and by year's end a criminal investigation had been opened. The anticorruption effort has generated a chilling effect among officials and reduced ostentatious displays of wealth, but corruption is believed to remain extensive at all levels of government. Moreover, the initiative has been heavily politicized, as many of those targeted are Xi's rivals. A change to party regulations in July shifted the focus of disciplinary inspections from fighting corruption to enforcing party ideology and loyalty.

The authorities have failed to adopt basic reforms that would address corruption more comprehensively, such as requiring officials to publicly disclose their assets, creating genuinely independent oversight bodies, and allowing independent media, courts, and civic activists to function as watchdogs. Instead, in January 2017, the CCP's antigraft department announced a plan for a new national supervisory commission that would merge the anticorruption functions of various party and state entities to improve effectiveness, but still limit the potential for independent oversight. Such a commission would further blur the lines between party norms and institutions and the state legal system.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 1 / 4

The Chinese government and CCP are notoriously opaque. Since open-government regulations took effect in 2008, more official documents and information have been made available to the public. However, resistance on the part of government organs to providing specific information requested by citizens has dampened initial optimism, and officials have yet to disclose budgets at all levels of government. Citizens who were part of a movement to require officials to disclose their assets have been arrested and monitored since a crackdown in 2013.

The scope for public input and consultation on laws and policies narrowed further in 2017 as nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), particularly policy advocacy groups, and intellectuals came under intensified pressure, including those working in areas that were previously not considered sensitive, such as the environment, public health, and women's rights.

ADDITIONAL DISCRETIONARY POLITICAL RIGHTS QUESTION

Is the government or occupying power deliberately changing the ethnic composition of a country or territory so as to destroy a culture or tip the political balance in favor of another group? -2 / 0

The government continued to pursue policies, including large-scale resettlement and work-transfer programs, that have altered the demography of ethnic minority regions, especially the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, Tibet, and Inner Mongolia, contributing to a steady increase of Han Chinese as a proportion of the regional populations. Cash incentives encourage marriages between Uighur and Han Chinese and reward Uighur families that have fewer children than the permitted limit for ethnic minorities. In 2017, more than 47,000 rural residents of southern Xinjiang, most of whom were likely Uighurs, were reportedly moved to nonagricultural jobs in other parts of the region. [Note: Tibet is examined in a separate report.]

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 14 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 3 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4

China is home to one of the world's most restrictive media environments and its most sophisticated system of censorship. The CCP maintains control over news reporting via direct ownership, accreditation of journalists, harsh penalties for online criticism, and daily directives to media outlets and websites that guide coverage of breaking news stories. State management of the telecommunications infrastructure enables the blocking of websites, removal of mobile-phone applications from the domestic market, and mass deletion of microblog posts, instant messages, and user accounts that touch on banned political, social, economic, and religious topics. Thousands of websites have been blocked, many for years, including major news and social media hubs like the *New York Times*, *Le Monde*, YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook.

The already limited space for free expression shrank further during 2017 in advance of the 19th Party Congress in October. Implementation of the new Cybersecurity Law, which came into effect in June, along with other regulations and increased pressure on private technology companies resulted in greater internet censorship, including on video-streaming platforms and the popular WeChat instant-messaging tool. In June, public social media accounts were banned from producing or republishing news without a permit. Over the course of the year, U.S.-based Apple removed over 600 applications used to access blocked websites from its online app store in China amid a broader crackdown on VPNs. The increased restrictions on expression also affected the creative arts, with at least 60 social media accounts about

entertainment news ordered closed in June and the release of a movie by a prominent director abruptly canceled in the run-up to the party congress.

According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, 41 people were jailed in China as of December 2017 for reporting or blogging, although the actual number of those held for exercising their right to free expression, including in more informal contexts, is much greater. Harassment of foreign journalists continued during the year, including physical abuse, detention to prevent meetings with certain individuals, intimidation of Chinese sources and staff, withholding or threatening to withhold visas, and surveillance. Access to whole regions of the country, including Tibet and Xinjiang, remains restricted for foreign journalists.

Despite heavy restrictions on freedom of expression, Chinese journalists, grassroots activists, and internet users continue to seek out and exploit new ways to expose official misconduct, access uncensored information, and share incisive political commentary. In a number of cases during 2017, investigative reports by Chinese outlets led to public debate and official responses on social issues such as weak enforcement of safety regulations, pyramid schemes, debt-collection rackets, pension fraud, and abuse of children and other vulnerable people.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 0 / 4

The CCP regime has established a multifaceted apparatus to control all aspects of religious activity, including by vetting religious leaders for political reliability, placing limits on the number of new monastics or priests, and manipulating religious doctrine according to party priorities. The ability of China's religious believers to practice their faith differs dramatically based on religious affiliation, location, and registration status. Many do not necessarily feel constrained, particularly if they are Chinese Buddhists, Taoists, Hui Muslims, or members of a state-sanctioned Christian church. However, a February 2017 Freedom House report found that at least 100 million believers belong to groups facing high or very high levels of religious persecution, namely Protestant Christians, Tibetan Buddhists, Uighur Muslims, and Falun Gong practitioners.

The space for autonomous religious practice narrowed during 2017 as the government harassed a range of religious communities and adopted new regulations on religious affairs in August, set to take effect in February 2018. The regulations reiterated many existing restrictions while strengthening controls on places of worship, travel for religious purposes, and children's religious education. Anticipating passage of the new rules, local officials in some regions reportedly intensified pressure on informal "house churches" to register and installed surveillance cameras in churches. The prospects for an agreement between Beijing and the Vatican on the appointment of Catholic bishops dimmed as authorities in Wenzhou detained Vatican-approved bishop Peter Shao Zhumin in May. In January, a court in Guizhou Province sentenced pastor Yang Hua to two and a half years in prison after he resisted officials' attempts to confiscate property from his church; he had reportedly suffered torture in custody since being detained in late 2015.

Curbs on the practice of Islam in Xinjiang remain especially intense and intrusive, affecting the wearing of religious attire, attendance at mosques, fasting during Ramadan, choice of baby names, and other basic religious activities. Several such restrictions were codified in March 2017 as part of the region's new regulations on combating extremism. The Chinese authorities often punish peaceful religious practices under charges of "religious extremism" or treat them as signs of disloyalty among Uighur government employees. Among other cases during the year, Uighur religious scholar Hebibulla Tohti and an ethnic

Kazakh imam were each sentenced to 10 years in prison for providing religious teachings and performing traditional funeral rites, respectively.

The regime's campaign against the Falun Gong spiritual group continued in 2017. Many Falun Gong practitioners receive long prison terms or are arbitrarily detained in "legal education centers," where they typically face torture aimed at forcing them to abandon their beliefs. Yang Yuyong, detained for practicing Falun Gong, died in police custody in Tianjin in July amid reports of visible signs of abuse on his body. Nevertheless, repression of the group appears to have declined in some locales, possibly because top officials associated with the crackdown have been purged in Xi's anticorruption effort and grassroots Falun Gong activists have had some success in dissuading local police from persecuting them.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 1 / 4

Academic freedom is restricted with respect to politically sensitive issues, and the space for academic discussion of democratic concepts has shrunk since 2015. The CCP controls the appointment of top university officials. Many scholars practice self-censorship to protect their careers. Political indoctrination is a required component of the curriculum at all levels of education. International academic publishers came under pressure during 2017 to remove hundreds of journal articles with politically sensitive keywords from their China websites, and at least one complied with the demands.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 1 / 4

The government's ability to monitor citizens' lives and communications has increased dramatically in recent years. Social media applications like WeChat, used by hundreds of millions of people, are known to closely monitor user conversations. Surveillance cameras, increasingly augmented with facial recognition software, cover many urban areas and public transportation. Pilot programs for a Social Credit System—expected to become mandatory in 2020—rate citizens for trustworthiness based not only on financial responsibility or debt records, but also on purchasing behavior, video gaming habits, and social acquaintances. In June 2017, local authorities in a district of Xinjiang's capital instructed residents to submit their electronic devices to police for "registration and scanning," and the following month Xinjiang officials required installation of software that monitors mobile phone communications. The 2017 Cybersecurity Law requires companies to store Chinese users' data in China and submit to potentially intrusive security reviews, and a new set of rules that went into effect in October mandates real-name registration for posting comments online.

Court verdicts have cited private social media communications, public surveillance footage, and personal meetings as evidence in cases where citizens were punished for communicating views on political or religious topics. Electronic surveillance is supplemented with offline monitoring by neighborhood party committees, "public security volunteers" visible during large events like the 19th Party Congress, and an especially heavy police presence in places like Xinjiang.

Citizens continued to be punished, often harshly, for expressing views critical of the authorities, accessing banned content, or sharing information on taboo topics in 2017. For example, in April a court in Shandong Province sentenced Wang Jiangfeng to two years in prison for using a banned nickname for Xi Jinping in a group message on WeChat.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 3 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 1 / 4

China's constitution protects the right of citizens to demonstrate, but in practice protesters rarely obtain approval and risk punishment for assembling without permission. Spontaneous demonstrations have thus become a common form of protest. Some are met with police violence, even in instances when local officials ultimately concede to protesters' demands. Armed police have been accused of opening fire during past protests in Xinjiang. Documenting protests in China has become riskier. In August 2017, blogger Lu Yuyu was sentenced to four years in prison for tracking and sharing reports of strikes and protests throughout China.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 1 / 4

The ability of civil society organizations to engage in work related to human rights and governance is tightly constrained. Several prominent NGOs focused on policy advocacy, including in less politically sensitive areas like public health or women's rights, have been shuttered in recent years under government pressure. Hundreds of thousands of NGOs are formally registered, but many operate more as government-sponsored organizations and focus on service delivery. While a large number of NGOs operate without formal registration, this has become more difficult.

A new law on management of foreign NGOs came into effect in January 2017. The law prohibits foreign NGO activities that the government deems to "endanger China's national unity, security, or ethnic unity" or "harm China's national interests and the public interest." Foreign NGOs operating in China are required to register with the Ministry of Public Security instead of the Ministry of Civil Affairs, which has historically managed civil society organizations, and to find a "professional supervisory unit"—a Chinese entity willing to act as sponsor. The changes give the police the authority search NGOs' premises without a warrant, seize property, detain personnel, and initiate criminal procedures. The law's implementation impeded the activities of foreign and domestic NGOs during the year, though its full impact remains to be seen. Hundreds of foreign NGOs had registered offices or temporary activities by year's end; a list of sponsoring Chinese entities documented by the ChinaFile NGO Project indicated a heavy presence of state and CCP-affiliated organizations.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 1 / 4

The only legal labor union organization is the government-controlled All-China Federation of Trade Unions, which has long been criticized for failing to properly defend workers' rights. While workers in China are afforded important protections under existing laws, violations of labor and employment regulations are widespread. Local CCP officials have long been incentivized to focus on economic growth rather than the enforcement of labor laws. The authorities have increasingly cracked down on labor activists and NGOs. The imprisonment of prominent labor activists in 2016 reportedly had a chilling effect on the movement during 2017. Following a rise in reported strike incidents in 2015–16, far fewer strikes were documented by the China Labour Bulletin in 2017, although this could reflect tightening information controls rather than reduced strike activity. Lu Yuyu, the blogger and researcher sentenced in August, had worked with his partner Li Tingyu to contribute strike data to the China Labour Bulletin until their detention in June 2016.

F. RULE OF LAW: 2 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4

The CCP dominates the judicial system, with courts at all levels supervised by party political-legal committees that have influence over the appointment of judges, court

operations, and verdicts and sentences. CCP oversight is especially evident in politically sensitive cases, and most judges are CCP members. Many judges complain about local officials interfering in cases to protect powerful litigants, support important industries, or avoid their own potential liability. In January 2017, Zhou Qiang, the president of the Supreme People's Court, urged China's judges to remain vigilant against the principles of "constitutional democracy, separation of powers, and judicial independence," while also praising the conviction of prominent rights lawyer Zhou Shifeng as one of the judiciary's most important achievements in 2016.

Incremental reforms aimed at improving judicial performance, while maintaining party supremacy, have been introduced since 2014. The changes focused on increasing transparency, professionalism, and autonomy from local authorities.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

Broader judicial reforms introduced in recent decades have sought to guarantee better access to lawyers, allow witnesses to be cross-examined, and establish other safeguards to prevent wrongful convictions and miscarriages of justice. However, limitations on due process—including excessive use of pretrial detention—remain rampant, and a multiyear crackdown on human rights lawyers has weakened defendants' access to independent legal counsel. Criminal trials are frequently closed to the public, and the conviction rate is estimated at 98 percent or more. Adjudication of minor civil and administrative disputes is relatively fair, but cases that touch on politically sensitive issues or the interests of powerful groups are subject to decisive "guidance" from political-legal committees. In keeping with a growing trend in recent years, various human rights lawyers or activists were shown in the media during 2017 giving what are widely assumed to be forced confessions, undermining their right to due process.

Despite the abolition of "reeducation through labor" camps at the end of 2013, large numbers of people are still held in other forms of arbitrary detention, including a new network of extralegal political indoctrination centers in Xinjiang. Thousands and possibly well over 100,000 Uighurs were detained in such centers during 2017, according to various estimates.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 0 / 4

Recent legal amendments encourage judges to exclude evidence obtained through torture, but in practice, torture and other forms of coercion are widely used to extract confessions or force political and religious dissidents to recant their beliefs. During 2017, several human rights lawyers who were released from custody after being detained for their work reported experiencing severe abuse in custody, including forced medication. Security agents routinely flout legal protections, and impunity is the norm for police brutality and suspicious deaths in custody. Citizens who seek redress for abuse in custody often meet with reprisals and even imprisonment.

Conditions in places of detention, which are estimated to hold three to five million people in total, are harsh, with reports of inadequate food, regular beatings, and deprivation of medical care.

While the government has gradually reduced the number of crimes carrying the death penalty, currently at 46, it is estimated that thousands of inmates are executed each year; the government treats the true figure as a state secret. The government claims it has ended the transplantation of organs from executed prisoners, but a senior Chinese health official acknowledged in 2017 that violations may still occur, and critics said the lack of

transparency surrounding executions made it difficult to assess the extent to which the practice continued.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 0 / 4

Chinese laws formally prohibit discrimination based on nationality, ethnicity, race, gender, religion, or health condition, but these protections are often violated in practice. Several laws bar gender discrimination in the workplace, and gender equality has reportedly improved over the past decade, but bias remains widespread, including in job recruitment and college admissions. Ethnic and religious minorities, LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people, the disabled, and people with HIV/AIDS, hepatitis B, or other illnesses also face widespread discrimination in employment and access to education. Religious and ethnic minorities—especially Falun Gong adherents, Uighurs, and Tibetans—are at particular risk of torture in custody, extralegal detention, heavy sentences after trials lacking due process, and restrictions on hiring independent legal counsel. Legal remedies for such abuses remain weak. Despite China’s international obligation to protect the rights of asylum seekers and refugees, Chinese law enforcement agencies continue to repatriate North Korean defectors, who face imprisonment or execution upon return.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 6 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 1 / 4

Millions of people are affected by restrictions on foreign travel and passports, many of them Uighurs and Tibetans; overseas Chinese nationals who engage in politically sensitive activities are at risk of being prevented by the authorities from returning to China, or choose not to return for fear of being arrested. During 2017, ethnic Kazakh residents of Xinjiang were reportedly required to join many of their Uighur counterparts in surrendering their passports.

Many Chinese citizens also face restrictions on freedom of movement within the country. While China’s constitution gives individuals the right to petition the government concerning a grievance or injustice, in practice petitioners are routinely intercepted in their efforts to reach Beijing, forcefully returned to their hometowns, or extralegally detained in “black jails,” psychiatric institutions, and other sites, where they are at risk of abuse.

The government continued to implement a plan to gradually reform China’s *hukou* system—the personal registration rules that prevent China’s roughly 270 million internal migrants from enjoying full legal status as residents in cities where they work. The approach is to gradually expand the benefits of urban residency to 100 million migrants based on their education, employment record, and housing status, with the most stringent requirements in major cities like Shanghai and Beijing and much looser standards applied in smaller municipalities. The plan will still leave a large majority of migrants without equal rights or full access to social services such as education for their children in local schools. Beginning in November 2017, authorities in Beijing forcibly evicted tens of thousands of migrants and carried out mass demolitions in their neighborhoods; officials cited safety violations, but observers linked the clearances to government plans to cap Beijing’s population.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 1 / 4

The authorities dominate the economy through state-owned enterprises in key sectors such as banking and energy, and through state ownership of land. Chinese citizens are legally permitted to establish and operate private businesses. However, those without strong

informal ties to powerful officials can find themselves at a disadvantage in legal disputes with competitors, in dealings with regulators, or in the context of politicized anticorruption campaigns. Foreign companies can similarly face arbitrary regulatory obstacles, debilitating censorship, demands for bribes, or negative media campaigns.

Property rights protection remains weak. Urban land is owned by the state, with only the buildings themselves in private hands. Rural land is collectively owned by villages. Farmers enjoy long-term lease rights to the land they work, but they have been restricted in their ability to transfer, sell, or develop it. Low compensation and weak legal protections have facilitated land seizures by local officials, who often evict residents and transfer the land rights to developers. Corruption is endemic in such projects, and local governments rely on land development as a key source of revenue.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

A legal amendment allowing all families to have two children—effectively abolishing the one-child policy that had long applied to most citizens—took effect in January 2016. Ethnic minorities are still permitted to have up to three children. While the authorities continue to regulate reproduction, the change means that fewer families are likely to encounter the punitive aspects of the system, such as high fines, job dismissal, reduced government benefits, and occasionally detention. Abuses such as forced abortions and sterilizations are less common than in the past.

Despite passage of the country's first law designed to combat domestic violence in 2015, domestic violence continues to be a serious problem, affecting one-quarter of Chinese women, according to official figures.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Exploitative employment practices such as wage theft, excessive overtime, student labor, and unsafe working conditions are pervasive in many industries. Forced labor and trafficking are also common, frequently affecting rural migrants, and Chinese nationals are similarly trafficked abroad. Forced labor is the norm in prisons and other forms of administrative detention for criminal, political, and religious detainees. Authorities in some parts of Xinjiang reportedly continued to require Uighurs to provide unpaid labor for public works projects during 2017.

Colombia

Population: 48,800,000

Capital: Bogotá

Political Rights Rating: 3

Civil Liberties Rating: 3

Freedom Rating: 3.0

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Colombia is one of the longest-standing democracies in Latin America, but one with a history of serious human rights abuses. However, the incidence of human rights abuses has declined in recent years, and institutions are becoming more effective in

checking executive power. In 2016, the government and Colombia's main left-wing guerilla group signed a peace accord, but the country faces enormous challenges in consolidating peace and guaranteeing political rights and civil liberties throughout the territory.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Left-wing ex-guerrillas from the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) completed their demobilization in August, delivering more than 8,000 weapons to United Nations monitors.
- A wave of lethal attacks against human rights defenders and other social activists continued throughout the year. Scores of activists were murdered and there is widespread impunity for the killers.
- Several corruption scandals generated significant political fallout, including revelations of widespread bribes of political figures by the Brazilian corporation Odebrecht, and the arrest of the country's chief anticorruption prosecutor for helping rig judicial processes.

Executive Summary

Colombian politics in 2017 were dominated by the challenges of implementing the provisions of the peace accord signed in August 2016 by the government and the FARC. Although the deal was narrowly rejected in an October 2016 referendum, renegotiations yielded a revised accord the following month, which the legislature ratified without an additional plebiscite.

A historic moment occurred in August 2017, when over 7,000 FARC members completed a demobilization process by finalizing the handover of over 8,000 weapons to UN monitors. However, opponents of the accord, led by ex-president Álvaro Uribe, continued to oppose the accord throughout 2017, insisting that it was too magnanimous towards the guerrillas. Efforts to delay implementation on the most fraught element of the accord—a transitional justice system intended to resolve crimes perpetrated by guerrillas as well as both state actors and private citizens—were abetted by a Constitutional Court decision in May limiting the government's ability to pass accord-related laws via a "fast-track" judicial mechanism. Although a bill implementing the transitional justice system passed in November, lawmakers struggled to pass other high-priority bills.

Human rights defenders and other social activists were again the targets of systematic violent attack during the year. According to the local office of the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights, 105 activists were killed in 2017. Many of the crimes were attributed to either successor groups to Colombia's notorious paramilitaries seeking to expand their territory following the FARC's demobilization, or a smaller insurgent group, the National Liberation Army (ELN). Peace talks between the government and ELN began in February 2017, and a tenuous, temporary ceasefire took effect in October.

Corruption scandals, a common occurrence in Colombia, again produced political turmoil in 2017. Investigations into bribes paid by Brazilian construction firm Odebrecht led to the indictments of several senators. In June, the head of the anticorruption unit within the attorney general's office, Luis Gustavo Moreno, was arrested for allegedly helping undermine judicial processes via money laundering and bribery. His cooperation resulted in the investigation or indictment of three Supreme Court justices and multiple legislators and officials.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 29 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 10 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The president is directly elected to a four-year term. As part of a series of 2015 constitutional amendments known as the Balance of Power reform, immediate presidential reelection was eliminated. President Juan Manuel Santos won the second round of the 2014 election with 51 percent of the vote against Óscar Iván Zuluaga, who had won the first round with 29 percent to Santos's 26 percent. The balloting was considered competitive and credible.

Regional elections in 2015 fortified parties allied with the government, which won gubernatorial races in 23 of the 32 departments. The polls were marred by accusations of improper influence by illegal groups and insufficient candidate vetting by the major parties.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

Congress is composed of the Senate and the Chamber of Representatives, with all seats up for election every four years. The nation at large selects 100 Senate members using a closed-list system; indigenous communities choose two additional members. The Chamber of Representatives consists of 166 members elected by closed-list proportional representation in multimember districts. The final peace accord between the government and the FARC, ratified in November 2016, included a provision guaranteeing former guerrillas five seats in each chamber in the 2018 and 2022 elections. The status of an additional 16 Chamber seats guaranteed to victims of the armed conflict remained in limbo at the end of 2017, pending judicial resolution of a procedural dispute.

The 2014 legislative elections were relatively peaceful, but plagued by accusations of fraud, vote buying, and connections between candidates and organized crime figures. President Santos's main allies, the Liberal Party, the Social National Unity Party (U Party), and Radical Change, won a substantial majority in the Chamber of Representatives, taking 92 seats. In the Senate, however, the coalition won only 47 seats. Former president Uribe's Democratic Center took 20 seats in the Senate and 19 in the Chamber of Representatives, becoming the primary opposition force.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4

The nine members of the National Electoral Council (CNE)—elected by Congress for four-year terms based on party nominations—oversee the conduct of the country's elections, including the financing of political campaigns and the counting of votes. It has faced some criticism for partisanship, and for failing to effectively enforce electoral laws. In 2016, the Inter American Press Association criticized the body over a measure requiring media outlets to report fairly on the plebiscite regarding the peace deal between the government and FARC fighters, and to submit reports about such coverage; the group said the measures saying it threatened press freedom.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 11 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 3 / 4

The party system still includes the traditional Liberal and Conservative parties, but is increasingly split among a variety of parties and coalitions representing regional movements, ideological groups from both the right and the left, and technocratic or issue-oriented parties. Santos's centrist National Unity coalition, which enjoyed dominance in both chambers during his first term, maintained the loose support of a significant majority of legislators following the 2014 elections, despite the vocal and cohesive presence of the Uribe-led right. In August 2017, the FARC officially reorganized as a political party, the Common Alternative Revolutionary Force (also known as FARC).

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 3 / 4

Alternation in power is routine at both the national level and in the regions, though some areas remain under the control of machine-style political clans with ties to organized crime.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 2 / 4

The Colombian state has long struggled to bring effective state presence to large swathes of the national territory. In 2017, the ELN, an armed, left-wing guerilla group, and criminal gangs subjected government officials to sporadic threats, harassment, and violence. ELN activity can have negative effects on the ability of people in some areas to assert their right to participate in political processes.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

While general progress remains slow, the government has undertaken a series of steps to incorporate indigenous and Afro-Colombian voices into national political debates in recent years. The peace accord ratified in November 2016 included provisions for improving consultation mechanisms for marginalized groups.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 8 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 3 / 4

Elected officials generally determine government policy without interference, though threats from guerilla groups and criminal gangs can cast a chill over policymaking processes.

Although a bill implementing the transitional justice system passed in November 2017, lawmakers struggled to pass other high-priority bills during the year.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

Corruption occurs at multiple levels of public administration. Graft scandals have emerged in recent years within an array of federal government agencies, but arrests and convictions do take place at high levels. Numerous officials from the Uribe administrations have been convicted of corruption, trading favors, and spying on political opponents. The Odebrecht scandal led to charges against two senators, Bernardo Elías, who was arrested in August 2017, and Musa Besaile, who was arrested in October, and charges or investigations against multiple former legislators and bureaucrats. The arrest of anticorruption prosecutor Luis Gustavo Moreno in June for bribery and money laundering sent shockwaves through the justice system. His cooperation with the probe resulted in graft charges against two

ex-presidents of the Supreme Court, Francisco Ricaurte and Leonidas Bustos, and a corruption investigation of the current president of the Supreme Court, Gustavo Malo.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 3 / 4

Government information is generally available to the public, though information related to military and security affairs can be difficult to access. Congress maintains an online platform on which legislators can voluntarily publish financial disclosures.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 36 / 60 (+1)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 12 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4

The constitution guarantees freedom of expression, and opposition views are commonly expressed in the media. However, journalists face intimidation, kidnapping, and violence both in the course of reporting and as retaliation for their work. Dozens of journalists have been murdered since the mid-1990s, many of them targeted for reporting on drug trafficking and corruption. The government has prosecuted several notorious cases of murdered journalists in recent years, but convictions are rare, and the statute of limitations has expired for many cases. One journalist was killed in connection with her work in 2017, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ); María Efigenia Vásquez Astudillo was shot and killed in October in the Cauca District of southwestern Colombia. The attack took place while she was reporting on a violent confrontation between riot police and indigenous Kokonuko demonstrators who were protesting development by a private company on land the Kokonuko community considers sacred.

Self-censorship is common, and slander and defamation remain criminal offenses. The government does not restrict access to the internet, nor does it censor websites. Twitter and other social media platforms have become important arenas for political discourse.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

The constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the government generally respects this right in practice.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 3 / 4

Academic freedom is generally respected. University debates are often vigorous, though armed groups maintain a presence on some campuses to generate political support and intimidate opponents.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4

Expression is generally protected in major urban centers, but it remains inhibited in areas where the state, insurgents, and criminals vie for control.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 5 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 2 / 4

Although provided for in the constitution, freedoms of assembly and association are restricted in practice by violence. The riot police are known for moving aggressively to break up protests. In October, seven peasants were killed by the police during protests against forced coca eradication in Tumaco, located in southwestern Columbia.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 2 / 4

The government provides protection to hundreds of threatened human rights workers, but trust in the service varies widely. Hundreds of activists have been murdered in recent years, mostly by the criminal organizations that succeeded paramilitary groups following a government-backed demobilization process in 2005. Although the Santos administration has reiterated its respect for civil society groups, violations against activists have risen in recent years. The local office of the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights had registered 105 activist killings as of late December 2017; moreover, according to We Are Defenders, a coalition of local and international rights groups, the country suffered an 87 percent impunity rate for the 458 activists killed between 2009 and 2016. Land rights and victims' rights campaigners in particular are threatened by former paramilitaries and other local actors seeking to silence criticism of assets acquired during the conflict and halt the implementation of rural development programs. Defense minister Luis Carlos Villegas caused a stir in December 2017 by characterizing the causes of most of the killings as petty disputes.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 1 / 4

Workers may form and join trade unions, bargain collectively, and strike, and antiunion discrimination is prohibited. Over the past two decades, Colombia's illegal armed groups have killed more than 2,600 labor union activists and leaders. Killings have declined substantially from their peak in the early 2000s, but 19 union leaders were murdered in 2016, according to 2017 statistics from the International Trade Union Confederation. Although a special prosecutorial unit has substantially increased prosecutions for such assassinations since 2007, few investigations have targeted those who ordered the killings.

F. RULE OF LAW: 9 / 16 (+1)**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 3 / 4**

The justice system remains compromised by corruption and extortion, although the Constitutional Court and the Supreme Court have consistently exhibited independence from the executive. However, corruption allegations involving Supreme Court justices that emerged in 2017 damaged the high court's credibility.

Separately, in May 2017, the Constitutional Court contributed to uncertainty regarding the transitional justice system by limiting the government's ability to move peace-related laws through Congress via simplified, or "fast-track", legislative procedures. In a November decision upholding transitional justice provisions passed in March, the Court provided ambiguous answers to several key questions, including about the incarceration of convicted war criminals and the extent of criminal culpability for military officers whose subordinates committed grave rights abuses.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 2 / 4 (+1)

Due process protections remain weak, and trial processes move slowly. However, in recent years the government has been able to assert state control over more territory, bringing basic due process rights to more people. The prosecutorial service is relatively professional, and in July 2017 long-delayed criminal procedure code changes intended to ameliorate extended pretrial detention took effect. Separately, membership of the two key transitional justice bodies, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and the Truth Commission, was finalized in September and November, respectively.

The systematic killing of civilians to fraudulently inflate guerrilla death tolls resulted in as many as 3,000 murders by the military between 2002 and 2008. By September 2017,

more than 1,200 soldiers had been convicted of these crimes, though high-ranking officers have largely escaped punishment. Many of these judicial processes were disrupted in 2017 amid uncertainty regarding the proper judicial venue.

Score Change: The score improved from 1 to 2 because the gradual expansion of state control has brought basic due process protections to a larger portion of the national territory, and because transitional justice bodies were established in an orderly manner.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 2 / 4

Many soldiers operate with limited civilian oversight, though the government has in recent years increased human rights training and investigated a greater number of violations by security forces personnel. Collaboration between security forces and illegal armed groups has declined, but rights groups report official toleration of paramilitary successor groups in some regions. Primary responsibility for combating these groups rests with the police, who lack necessary resources, are sometimes accused of colluding with criminals, and are largely absent from many rural areas where the groups are active.

Civil-military relations have been a source of significant tension in recent years. A portion of the armed forces opposed the peace process, and public uncertainty regarding the ability of accused human rights violators within the military to receive benefits under the transitional justice system is one of the most controversial elements of the peace process.

Some areas, particularly resource-rich zones and drug-trafficking corridors, remain highly insecure. Remnant guerrillas—including a notable set of FARC dissidents—and paramilitary successor groups regularly abuse the civilian population, especially in coca-growing areas. Cultivation of the plant increased dramatically as the peace process took effect. Impunity for crime in general is rampant, and most massacres that took place during the conflict have gone unpunished. In 2016, prosecutors indicted Santiago Uribe, the former president's brother, for allegedly leading a paramilitary group responsible for dozens of deaths in the 1990s; the process continued throughout 2017.

Despite these problems, violence has significantly subsided since the early 2000s. In 2017, the homicide rate—roughly 24 per 100,000 people—declined to its lowest point in four decades, and the number of conflict-related victims plummeted as a result of the peace process.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

Afro-Colombians, who account for approximately 25 percent of the population, make up the largest segment of Colombia's more than 7 million displaced people, and 80 percent of Afro-Colombians live below the poverty line. Areas with concentrated Afro-Colombian populations continue to suffer from abuses by the FARC, security forces, and paramilitary successors. In 2017, territorial clashes among militant groups in Chocó Department displaced thousands of the area's largely Afro-Colombian and indigenous residents.

Most of Colombia's more than 1.7 million indigenous inhabitants live on approximately 34 million hectares granted to them by the government, often in resource-rich, strategic regions that are increasingly contested by various armed groups. Indigenous people have been targeted by all sides in the country's various conflicts. In late October 2017, over 100,000 indigenous Colombians initiated a strike that included highway blockades to call attention to lack of implementation of relevant peace accord provisions, and to demand a national forum to negotiate indigenous issues with the government, leading to the formation

of a high-level commission to monitor compliance of agreed-upon issues. High incidence of malnutrition and starvation among the Wayuu indigenous group has prompted international pressure on the Colombian government in recent years.

LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people suffer societal discrimination and abuse, and there are high levels of impunity for crimes committed against them. According to the local NGO Colombia Diversa, more than 31 LGBT individuals were murdered in 2017.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 10 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4

Freedom of movement, choice of residence, and property rights are restricted by violence, particularly for vulnerable minority groups. Travel in rural areas is further limited by illegal checkpoints operated by criminal and guerrilla groups.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

Violence and instability in some areas threatens property rights and the ability to establish businesses. Guerilla and paramilitary successor groups regularly extort payments from business owners. Corruption at various levels as well as undue pressure exerted on prosecutors and members of the judiciary can disrupt legitimate business dealings.

Progress remains uneven on the implementation of the landmark 2011 Victims and Land Law, which recognized the legitimacy of claims by victims of conflict-related abuses, including those committed by government forces. While affected citizens continue receiving compensation, the legal process for land restitution is heavily backlogged, and the resettlement of those who were displaced during the conflict continues to move slowly.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

Sexual harassment, gender-based violence, and the trafficking of women for sexual exploitation remain major concerns. Thousands of rapes have occurred as part of the conflict, generally with impunity. The country has restrictive abortion laws, though a 2006 Constitutional Court ruling allowed abortion in cases of rape or incest or to protect the life of the mother.

In 2016, after several years of contradictory judicial and administrative decisions regarding same-sex unions, the Constitutional Court voted to legalize them. The court legalized adoptions by same-sex couples in 2015.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Child labor, the recruitment of children by illegal armed groups, and related sexual abuse are serious problems in Colombia. A 2011 free trade agreement with the United States and a subsequent Labor Action Plan called for enhanced investigation of abusive labor practices and rights violations, but progress remains deficient in several areas.

Comoros

Population: 800,000

Capital: Moroni

Political Rights Rating: 3

Civil Liberties Rating: 4

Freedom Rating: 3.5

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: The 2001 constitution outlines a system in which the presidency rotates between the islands of the union, and this system has brought about a series of relatively peaceful elections. However, systemic corruption, violence against women, and poverty remain problems. Many journalists self-censor in order to avoid legal reprisals for critical reporting.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- President Azali Assoumani in July replaced ministers from the Juwa Party, ending the coalition between Juwa and his own political party, the Convention for the Renewal of the Comoros (CRC), amid indications that he wanted to end the rotating union government presidency and seek another term in the next election.
- In November, a car belonging to Dhoulkamal Dhoiher, the vice president of the parliament, was set on fire. Dhoiher suggested the attack came as retaliation for his investigation into suspected corruption surrounding a plan to sell Comoros citizenship to stateless people in Gulf States.
- Poverty drove many people to attempt the dangerous trip to Mayotte, a French territory, in flimsy boats known as kwassa-kwassa. Amid a crackdown on Comoros migrants in Mayotte, Comoros politicians have demanded that France relinquish control of the island and turn it over to Comoros authorities.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 24 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 9 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

Under the 2001 constitution, the president is directly elected for a single five-year term, with eligibility rotating among the islands. The three candidates who lead the vote on the designated island advance to a second, nationwide round of voting. In addition to its own assembly, each of the three islands also has a directly elected governor.

Comoros held relatively free and fair presidential elections in 2016. The presidency rotated from the island of Mohéli to the island of Grande Comore (Ngazidja). The cycle skipped the island of Mayotte, which Comoros claims but which remains under French administration. Former president and coup leader Azali Assoumani of the Convention for the Renewal of the Comoros (CRC) won the election with 41 percent of the vote. International election observers noted some flaws during the first round in administration by the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI), and disputes, in the second round, over alleged electoral fraud on the island of Anjouan that sparked violence in several constituencies. The High Constitutional Court (HCC) ordered that polling at 13 stations be rerun due to these irregularities, though the results of the rerun were roughly the same as in the annulled round.

In July 2017, Assoumani replaced ministers from the Juwa Party, ending the coalition between Juwa and his own CRC, amid indications that he wanted to end the rotating union government presidency and seek another term in the next election.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

The unicameral Assembly of the Union consists of 33 members, with 9 selected by the assemblies of the three islands and 24 by direct popular vote; all members serve five-year terms. Elections to the Assembly of the Union took place in 2015. The Union for the Development of Comoros (UPDC) won 11 seats, the Juwa Party 10, the Democratic Rally of the Comoros (RDC) 4, the CRC 2, and three smaller parties 1 each. Three independent candidates also won seats. While international observers present during the polls deemed them calm and transparent, they were marred by were accusations of fraud, and of misuse of state resources by then President Ikililou Dhoinine's UPDC.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4

The CENI, while generally able to run credible elections, has faced accusations of bias and corruption among its members. In 2016, Ahmed Djaza, president of the CENI, and three members of the commission were detained for embezzlement. However, the CENI reelected Djaza to its presidency in September 2017. Political party concerns over the commission's independence have since increased.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 11 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 3 / 4

Political parties are mainly formed around specific leaders and draw on island or ethnic bases of support. Parties may generally operate freely, though the government occasionally disrupts opposition parties' activities by denying them meeting and assembly space. In late 2017, the government denied opposition parties permission to hold a meeting in Anjouan.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 3 / 4

Comoros's numerous opposition parties have a realistic chance of gaining power through elections. However, occasional government interference in the operations of opposition parties can have a negative impact on their ability to campaign. Additionally, there were allegations during the 2015 campaign period that then president Ikililou Dhoinine's UPDC benefited from state resources and the assistance of state-run companies, placing opposition groupings at a disadvantage.

In 2017, a number of parties indicated that they would unite to challenge the government.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 3 / 4

People are generally free to exercise their political choices. However, the influence of Comoros's powerful army—which has occasionally cracked down on dissent—as well as of religious authorities can place pressure on voters and candidates.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 2 / 4

There are no laws preventing various segments of the population from having full political rights and electoral opportunities. However, traditional attitudes discourage women from participating in politics, and women won just two seats in the legislature in 2015 elections. Legal and societal discrimination against LGBT (lesbian, gay bisexual, and transgender) people makes political advocacy for LGBT rights difficult.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 4 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 2 / 4**

According to the constitution, the president decides on the policies of the state, which are executed by the government. However, irregular activity in the legislature has hampered representative policymaking. In 2015, the newly installed Union of the Assembly chose its president in an irregular election that sparked accusations of an “institutional coup” from the opposition. During the vote, opposition members were prevented from accessing the chamber, at times through the intervention of security forces. The opposition parties, deeming the election illegitimate, unsuccessfully brought a case calling for the dismissal of the assembly president to the Constitutional Court.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

There are reports of corruption at all levels, including within the judiciary, civil service, and security forces. The former government of President Ikililou Dhoinine had made progress in establishing institutions and a legal framework for combating corruption, but anticorruption laws are not consistently upheld. Moreover, the Assoumani administration dissolved the National Commission for Preventing and Fighting Corruption (CNPLC) in 2016. The Constitutional Court ruled that the president did not have executive authority to dismiss the commission, but following the decision, the administration simply declined to renew the body’s mandates or appoint members to open seats.

Separately, in 2017, a car belonging to Dhoulkamal Dhohir, the vice president of the parliament, was set on fire, in what he suggested was retaliation for his investigation into a plan to sell Comoros citizenship to stateless people in Gulf states. The attack took place a day before a commission he led was scheduled to question two former presidents, Ikililou Dhoinine and Ahmed Abdallah Mohamed Sambi, about the program.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 1 / 4

Government operations are characterized by a lack of transparency. Various reform initiatives have so far not successfully addressed the problem. Financial asset disclosures by public officials are not released to the public.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 31 / 60**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 10 / 16****D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4**

The constitution and laws provide for freedoms of speech and the press. However, the use of censorship laws to prosecute legitimate journalistic work, and other pressure, has prompted widespread self-censorship. In 2016, the owner of the La Baraka FM radio station was convicted of insulting the judiciary and assigned a fine and suspended sentence. An appeals court overturned the conviction in February 2017, but shortly afterward, authorities issued an order to close the station’s office, and confiscated equipment.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 2 / 4

Islam is the state religion, and 98 percent of the population is Sunni Muslim. The constitution proclaims equality of rights and obligations for all individuals regardless of religion or belief. The law restricts public religious events to Sunni Muslims, though typically other religious groups are not prevented from holding ceremonies. The president appoints the grand mufti, an official government position. The courts have condemned Muslims for disobeying the grand mufti; in September 2017, 28 people were arrested and found guilty for violating a one of the mufti's directives regarding the celebration of a religious holiday. Christians are prohibited from proselytizing.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 3 / 4

Academic freedom is generally respected. However, occasional disputes involving schools can hamper their normal operations. In 2017, a private electricity company shut off power at a high school in Moroni due to fraud allegations against the school. Teachers and students subsequently protested, and the demonstration was violently put down by police; seven students were injured, including one who sustained a gunshot wound.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4

Citizens may generally engage in private discussion without fear of retribution. However, the legacies of the country's volatile political history, which involves a number of coups and attempted coups, can discourage ordinary people from discussing politics in public places.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 7 / 12**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 2 / 4**

Freedoms of assembly and association are protected in the constitution, but the government continues to restrict some events, including opposition meetings, and police have occasionally respond to public protests with violence. In 2017, striking public school teachers were denied a permit to hold a march, and police dispersed participants when they attempted to hold it anyway.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 2 / 4

Civil society groups and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operate in the country. Groups occasionally face bureaucratic interference in their operations, such as requirements to secure permits from high-level officials in order to visit prisons.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

Workers have the right to form unions, bargain collectively, and strike. In cases of national interest, the government may require essential personnel to return to work. No law prohibits antiunion discrimination or protects workers from retribution for striking.

F. RULE OF LAW: 8 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 2 / 4**

The judicial system is based on both Sharia (Islamic law) and the French legal code, and the judiciary is subject to influence by the executive branch and other elites. Though the

law establishes mechanisms for the selection of judges and attorneys, the executive branch often disregards these and simply appoints people to their positions. Court decisions are not always upheld.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 2 / 4

According to the law, all defendants have the right to a fair public trial, but they often face lengthy delays. Corruption within the court system can prevent guarantees of due process. Interpreters are not usually provided to those who need them, as required by law

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 2 / 4

The law prohibits the illegitimate use of physical force, but security forces have engaged in excessive force, and are generally not held accountable for such behavior. There are questions about the will or capacity of the army to identify and punish abuses within its ranks.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

The law provides for equality of persons. However, same-sex sexual activity is illegal, with punishments of a fine and up to five years in prison. Few women hold positions of responsibility in business, outside of elite families. Laws requiring that services be provided for people with disabilities are not well enforced.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 6 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 2 / 4

The constitution and law provide for freedom of movement, both internally and externally. While these rights are generally respected by the government, in practice, poverty frequently prevents travel between the islands as well as access to higher education.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

In accordance with civil and some customary laws, women have equal rights in inheritance matters. Local cultures on Grande Comore and Mohéli are matrilineal, with women legally possessing all inheritable property. However, this is complicated by the concurrent application of Islamic law, interpretations of which can limit gender equality. In addition, a poor system of land registration and women's difficulties in securing loans hampers women's right to own land.

Endemic corruption and a lack of a culture of transparency hampers normal business activity.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 1 / 4

Early and forced marriages have been reported in Comoros. The law prohibits domestic violence, but courts rarely fined or ordered the imprisonment of convicted perpetrators, and women and children rarely filed official complaints. Sexual violence and workplace harassment are believed to be widespread, but are rarely reported to authorities.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

The Comorian economy, which is primarily agricultural, relies heavily on remittances from Comorian citizens in France. Many young people struggle to find sustainable opportunities for employment. Poverty has driven many people to attempt the dangerous trip to Mayotte, a French territory, in flimsy boats known as kwassa-kwassa.

Government efforts to identify and prosecute human trafficking are minimal, and trafficking cases, if addressed, are often done so through informal mediation processes. At times, these mechanisms have facilitated the return of trafficking victims to traffickers.

Congo, Republic of (Brazzaville)

Population: 4,900,000

Capital: Brazzaville

Political Rights Rating: 7

Civil Liberties Rating: 5

Freedom Rating: 6.0

Freedom Status: Not Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: President Denis Sassou Nguesso has maintained power for more than three decades by severely repressing the opposition. Corruption and decades of political instability have contributed to poor economic performance and high levels of poverty. Abuses by security forces are frequently reported.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- The government of President Denis Sassou Nguesso continued its military campaign in the Pool region, where fighting had displaced at least 80,000 citizens since April 2016. In late December, the government signed a cease-fire agreement with the main rebel group in Pool.
- The government continued to incarcerate journalists and political opponents.
- July 2017 legislative elections were marked by an opposition boycott and credible reports of fraud.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 2 / 40 (-3)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 0 / 12 (-1)

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

The president is directly elected to five-year terms. The 2002 constitution restricted the president to two terms, and set an age limit of 70. However, an October 2015 constitutional referendum proposed by the president removed age and term limit restrictions on the presidency so that President Denis Sassou Nguesso could run again. The referendum passed amidst protests by opposition activists.

President Sassou Nguesso has been in office since 1979 through a combination of elections and a military coup, with the exception of a five-year period in the 1990s. In March 2016, he secured a third presidential term since reclaiming power in 1997, winning 60 percent of the vote in an election marked by the intimidation of opposition figures and journalists, an election-day shutdown of mobile and internet services, and claims of electoral fraud.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4 (-1)

Congo's parliament consists of a 72-seat Senate and a 151-seat National Assembly. Councilors from every department each elect senators to six-year terms. National Assembly members are directly elected to five-year terms.

An opposition coalition boycotted the July 2017 legislative elections in protest of a process they claimed was rigged, and as a gesture of support for those affected by the conflict in Pool. Sassou Nguesso's Congolese Labor Party (PCT) claimed 96 of 151 seats and its allies won 12 in a process tainted by widespread fraud and low voter turnout. Elections were indefinitely postponed in nine districts in the Pool region because of the conflict.

Score Change: The score declined from 1 to 0 because the July 2017 legislative elections were widely acknowledged to be fraudulent and were boycotted by the opposition.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 0 / 4

The 2015 constitutional referendum to increase presidential term limits consolidated the PCT's dominance of the political system by allowing Sassou Nguesso to run for a third term. Elections are administered by the Independent National Election Commission (CENI), which was established in 2016. Analysts assert that the CENI lacks independence from Sassou Nguesso and his administration.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 2 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 1 / 4**

The government routinely intimidates and represses opposition parties. In July 2016, opposition leader Paulin Makaya of the United for Congo (UPC) party was sentenced to two years in prison following his arrest on charges of inciting disorder over his participation in protests against the 2015 constitutional referendum.

Political parties are sometimes denied registration without cause. During the 2017 campaign, the Yuki party was denied official party status, forcing its candidates to run independently.

The government banned private campaign contributions in 2016, leaving opposition parties and candidates dependent on limited public financing that is frequently not fully disbursed.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 0 / 4

There is little opportunity for the opposition to gain power through elections, and opposition leaders frequently experience harassment, intimidation, and arrest when campaigning. Two of Sassou Nguesso's rivals in the 2016 presidential race—retired general Jean-Marie Michel Mokoko and André Okombi Salissa, president of an opposition coalition called the Initiative for Democracy in Congo (IDC)—were repeatedly harassed during the campaign. After the election, Mokoko was incarcerated in June 2016 and Okombi Salissa in January 2017. They remained in prison at year's end, charged with "undermining the internal security of the state."

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 0 / 4

Both the military and nonstate militias have an impact on Congolese politics. In 2016, Aimé Hydevvert Mouagni, a member of parliament and a leader of the Republican Patriotic and Defence Platform (PPDR) militia, read a statement on national television in 2016 that called for citizens to rise up against opposition forces they argued were attempting to overthrow the Sassou Nguesso regime. There are a number of militias associated with PCT leaders that use intimidation and violence to help their party maintain its grip on power.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 1 / 4

Members of Sassou Nguesso's northern Mbochi ethnic group control key government posts. Other groups, including the Kongo, Sangha, and Teke, have some political representation, though the indigenous population does not. There are no legal restrictions on political participation by religion, gender, sexual identity, or ethnic group, but indigenous populations face many barriers to political participation, including isolation in rural areas and low levels of civic literacy.

Women are underrepresented in government, holding just 15 of 151 seats in the National Assembly and 14 of 72 seats in the Senate. In August, a new 35-member cabinet was selected, of which 8 members are women. Societal constraints limit women's political participation in practice.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 0 / 12 (-2)

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 0 / 4

Government policy is set by President Sassou Nguesso, who was reelected in a deeply flawed process in 2016 and thus lacks democratic legitimacy. There is little oversight from the parliament, which is dominated by the ruling PCT and protects the executive from accountability.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 0 / 4 (-1)

Corruption is pervasive in Congo. The country has several active anticorruption bodies, but domestic prosecutions for corruption are limited and often politically motivated. The president's family and advisers effectively control the state oil company without meaningful oversight, and offshore companies are allegedly used to embezzle funds from the company. In June 2017, the President Sassou Nguesso's daughter, Julienne Sassou Nguesso, was arrested in France for money laundering. The illicit funds were tied to the siphoning of public oil money to offshore bank accounts in the Seychelles.

Score Change: The score declined from 1 to 0 due to a complete lack of effective anticorruption mechanisms, especially involving the president's family and government ministers.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 0 / 4 (-1)

Although Congo became fully compliant with the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) in 2013, the government has reportedly developed techniques to circumvent transparency standards, and secrecy continues to shroud elements of lucrative oil deals. Although the constitution guarantees access to information, there is no implementing legislation, nor is there a specific law mandating public access to official information.

In August 2017, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) accused the government of hiding much of its debt. In March, the IMF had estimated that government debt was 77 percent of gross domestic product (GDP). By August, taking into account the hidden debt, the figure was revised upward to 117 percent of GDP.

Score Change: The score declined from 1 to 0 because in August it was revealed that the government concealed much of its debt, causing the IMF's estimate of the debt-to-GDP ratio to increase from 77 percent in March to 117 percent in August.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 19 / 60 (-3)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 7 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4

While the constitution provides for freedom of speech and the press, the government's respect for such freedoms is limited in practice. The government routinely pressures, threatens, or incarcerates journalists. In January 2017, Ghys Fortuné Dombé Bemba, editor of *Talassa*, a privately owned newspaper, was arrested after publishing a statement by a former Pool rebel leader. He remained in prison at year's end. In March, the government detained two Italian journalists investigating corruption allegations against a member of the president's family for three days.

Journalists often feel intense pressure from the government to avoid publishing material that casts authorities in a negative light, and self-censorship is rampant.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4

Religious freedom is generally respected, though in 2015, the government banned the wearing of the niqab, the full face veil, in public, citing concerns about security and terrorism.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 1 / 4

Academic freedom is tenuous. Most university professors self-censor, avoiding discussions on politically sensitive topics; many work as consultants for the government, compromising their independence.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 2 / 4

The government reportedly surveilled electronic communications of private individuals in 2017. People who spoke out against the government risked reprisal, including occasional arrests.

Internet and text messaging services were cut throughout Congo on the day of the presidential poll in 2016, in what observers described as a means of preventing the spread of information about voter turnout and suspected electoral fraud.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS 5 / 12 (-1)

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 1 / 4

The government restricts freedom of assembly. Groups must receive official authorization from local and federal authorities to hold public assemblies, and permission is sometimes denied. Government forces sometimes employ violence against protesters or disperse assemblies.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 2 / 4

Although the constitution guarantees freedom of association, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) must register with the Ministry of the Interior and Decentralization. Groups that were critical of the government often encountered a more burdensome registration process. Self-censorship is common among NGOs, with groups not reporting on government abuses for fear of reprisals. NGOs also encountered restrictions on access to certain areas, including the Pool region, where the government denied some groups permission to undertake humanitarian work.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4 (-1)

Although union rights are nominally protected, laws protecting union members are not always enforced. The government has intervened in labor disputes by harassing and arresting laborers and pressuring union leaders, tactics that were used with greater frequency in 2017, particularly against the country's largest union, Congolese Trade Union Confederation (CSC).

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 because the government increased its pressure on unions in 2017 by harassing laborers and pressuring union leaders. These tactics were often used against the CSC, the largest union.

F. RULE OF LAW: 1 / 16 (-1)**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 0 / 4**

Congo's judiciary is dominated by Sassou Nguesso's allies, crippled by lack of resources, and vulnerable to corruption and political influence. In 2015, the Constitutional Court's confirmation of the national constitutional referendum results was viewed as a rubber stamp approval of Sassou Nguesso's efforts to remain in power.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

Defendants, including the government's political opponents, are routinely denied due process. According to local NGOs, arbitrary arrests and detentions are common, despite being prohibited by the constitution. Other fair trial rights guaranteed by law, including the right to legal assistance for those who cannot afford it, are not always honored in practice.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 0 / 4 (-1)

Significant reports of torture and other abuses by security forces were not investigated by the government in 2017. Colonel Marcel Ntsourou, who was serving a life sentence for leading an insurrection against the government, died suspiciously in February while in prison.

In 2016, Sassou Nguesso launched a military assault in the Pool region after blaming a former rebel group from Pool known as the Ninjas for a series of deadly presidential election-related attacks in Brazzaville, although the group had largely disbanded a decade earlier. The ensuing clash between government forces and the resurgent Ninjas displaced more than 80,000 citizens before a ceasefire was signed in December 2017. Human rights abuses were alleged on both sides of the conflict. Humanitarian conditions among the displaced people were dire, and the government denied humanitarian organizations access to the Pool region.

Score Change: The score declined from 1 to 0 due to the ongoing military assault in the Pool region. Though the government claimed its target was a rebel group, this group was disbanded a decade ago.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 0 / 4

Discrimination against women in regard to employment and starting a business persists. Refugees and other foreign workers are prevented by the government from holding certain jobs, and refugees faced harassment and arrest by authorities in 2017.

While no law specifically prohibits same-sex sexual relations between adults, LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people experience occasional harassment from the police.

The indigenous population experiences severe discrimination in employment, housing, and education. Indigenous communities often live in substandard housing on the outskirts of villages, and beatings and murders of indigenous people by the majority Bantu population are not uncommon.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 6 / 16 (-1)

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 2 / 4

Although private citizens generally enjoy freedom of movement, activists and opposition leaders can face restrictions. In 2017, the government restricted the movement and reportedly confiscated the passports of opposition leaders Charles Zacharie Bowao and Claudine Munari.

The conflict in Pool led to the displacement of many of its residents. An estimated 81,000 people left their homes, and at the end of 2017 many of these individuals were still unable to return.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

Legal protections for business and property rights can be undermined by bureaucracy, poor judicial safeguards, and corruption. The government directly or indirectly controls property in key industries such as oil, minerals, and aviation.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 1 / 4 (-1)

Violence against women, including domestic violence and rape, is widespread, but rarely reported. There are no specific laws forbidding domestic violence other than the assault statutes already on the books. During the conflict in Pool, there was a reported increase in gender-based violence.

Men are legally considered the head of the household, and divorce settlements are thus skewed against women. Adultery is illegal for both men and women, but women convicted of the crime face a potential prison sentence, while the penalty for men is a fine.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 due to gender-based violence during the military assault in the Pool region.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

Congo is a source and destination country for human trafficking. Anti-trafficking legislation languished in parliament and allegations of complicity in trafficking by government officials did not lead to prosecutions in 2017. According to local NGOs, indigenous people are often conscripted into forced farm labor by members of the Bantu ethnic majority. Child labor laws are reportedly not effectively enforced.

Congo, Democratic Republic of (Kinshasa)

Population: 79,800,000

Capital: Kinshasa

Political Rights Rating: 7

Civil Liberties Rating: 6

Freedom Rating: 6.5

Freedom Status: Not Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: Civilians and opposition politicians are unable to influence government policies through elections. Civil liberties—including freedom of expression and association—are repressed, and corruption is systemic throughout the government. Armed groups and insecurity are pervasive in many areas of the country, and state security forces have been implicated in human rights abuses.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- No progress was made toward holding national elections, which were originally slated for late 2016 but rescheduled for December 2017 under a transition deal. In November 2017, the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) announced that the elections would be held in December 2018.
- President Joseph Kabila remained in power at the end of the year despite the fact that his term in office had technically expired in late 2016.
- Throughout the year, demonstrators across the country protested the stalled progress toward elections. In several incidents, security forces used live ammunition and tear gas, as well as arbitrary arrests and detentions, to quell the demonstrations. The authorities at times detained and harassed journalists who covered the protests, and occasionally shut down the internet in advance of protests.
- Violence across the greater Kasai region, North and South Kivu provinces, and Tanganyika province had internally displaced nearly 4 million civilians as of October 2017. The March 2017 killings of two members of the UN Group of Experts, set up to monitor the implementation of Security Council sanctions, and an attack leading to the deaths of 15 UN peacekeepers in December undermined efforts to monitor and report abuses in the country.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 4 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 0 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

Article 70 of the DRC's 2006 constitution stipulates that the president is elected for up to two five-year terms, and Article 220 prohibits amendments to key elements of the state's

political framework, including the number and length of presidential terms. Kabila was declared the winner of his second term in office in 2011 amid widespread criticism of the election by international observers; he defeated longtime opposition leader Étienne Tshisekedi, 49 percent to 32 percent, according to the CENI.

Kabila's constitutional mandate expired in December 2016 amid significant pressure from the opposition for him to step down. Under the mediation of the Roman Catholic Church, representatives of the government agreed to a new round of negotiations with the Rassemblement des Forces Sociales et Politiques Acquisés au Changement, a joint opposition bloc, and the two sides reached an agreement in December 2016 that moved the expected date for elections to December 2017. However, little progress was made to organize elections during 2017. In November 2017, the CENI announced that elections would take place in December 2018, following a statement from Kabila in June that he had not "promised anything" regarding elections. Kabila and his allies have cited funding concerns, the lack of a comprehensive voter registry, and insecurity as reasons for the delay, but critics view these as stalling tactics.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

The most recent elections for the 500-seat National Assembly were held concurrently with the 2011 presidential election; this poll was also criticized as deeply flawed. Kabila's People's Party for Reconstruction and Democracy (PPRD) won 62 seats, down from the 111 seats it had held previously, while Tshisekedi's Union for Democracy and Social Progress (UDPS) took 41. The AMP, Kabila's parliamentary coalition, took a total of 260 seats.

Legislative elections scheduled for November 2016 were not held, meaning the constitutional mandate of the National Assembly has expired as well. As a result, citizens are effectively unable to influence legislative outcomes through the electoral process.

Provincial assemblies elect the 108-seat Senate, as well as provincial governors, for five-year terms.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 0 / 4

The country's electoral framework does not ensure transparent conduct of elections, and opposition parties and civil society groups frequently criticize the CENI for lacking independence.

Progress toward elections will require the CENI to make amendments to the electoral framework, including laws regarding election financing and the distribution of seats. In February 2017, the CENI announced that it had started registering voters. However, the electoral commission faces numerous logistical challenges in this process. Opposition politicians claim the CENI is tampering with the voter registry.

In December 2017, the National Assembly approved a law that requires political parties to earn 1 percent of the national vote in order to win a seat in that body. The law would likely reduce the number of political parties in the National Assembly. Currently, there are 148 parties and 14 independent members; more than 50 parties hold just one seat. The law holds the potential to consolidate the strength of more established parties.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 3 / 12

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 1 / 4

People have the right to organize political parties. Hundreds of parties exist, with many organized along ethnic, communal, or regional lines; most lack national reach. Key parties include Kabila's PPRD and the largest opposition party, the UDPS. Many opposition parties are gathered under the Rassemblement platform, headed by UDPS leader Félix Tshisekedi, the son of Étienne Tshisekedi, who died in February 2017. In August 2017, a group of civil society actors and other leaders authored a joint "Manifesto of the Congolese Citizen," which includes calls for Kabila to step down.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 0 / 4

Despite the existence of numerous parties, political pluralism remains limited in practice, and opposition members do not have a realistic opportunity to increase support through elections. A new transitional government, headed by Prime Minister Samy Badibanga and intended to serve through the remainder of Kabila's presidency, was announced in late December 2016. Badibanga resigned in April 2017 and was replaced by Bruno Tshibala, a former member of the UDPS who had recently been expelled from the party; his appointment caused additional friction between Kabila and the largest opposition party. Opposition politicians have called for Kabila to step down, and in September 2017, Félix Tshisekedi rejected a third round of national dialogue.

Opposition party members and leaders are often intimidated and face restrictions on their movement and organizing. In August, the security forces removed Franck Diongo, a parliamentarian and president of the Movement of Progressive Lumumbists opposition party, from his hospital room and reimprisoned him; he had first been arrested in December 2016. The government arrested UDPS members prior to Félix Tshisekedi's arrival in Lubumbashi in October.

Another leading opposition figure—Moïse Katumbi, a businessman and former governor of Katanga Province who left Kabila's majority coalition in 2015—fled Congo in May 2016, and in June of that year was sentenced in absentia to 36 months in prison for selling property illegally. He remained in exile in Europe throughout 2017.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 1 / 4

The military, security services, and powerful armed groups hinder citizens' political choices. The security services interfered with the activities of opposition supporters and politicians throughout 2017. In August, the UN Group of Experts found that armed groups had impeded voter registration.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 1 / 4

Discrimination and lack of access to institutions in rural areas hinder political participation overall; certain segments of the population are particularly marginalized. Women are greatly underrepresented in government, making up only 9 percent of the National Assembly and 6 percent of the Senate.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 1 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 0 / 4

Due to the political crisis, there was no freely elected government to determine state policies in 2017.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 0 / 4

Massive corruption in the government, security forces, and mineral extraction industries continues to paralyze the functioning of the government and development efforts intended to raise living standards. Recruitment for government posts is often determined by nepotism. Accountability mechanisms are weak, and impunity remains a problem.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 1 / 4

Despite previous incremental improvements in revenue reporting, there is little transparency in the state's financial affairs. The law does not provide for public access to government information, and citizens often lack the practical ability to obtain information about state operations.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 13 / 60 (-2)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 7 / 16 (-1)

D1. Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4

Although constitutionally guaranteed, freedoms of speech and the press are limited. Radio is the dominant medium in the country, and newspapers are found mainly in large cities. While the media frequently criticize Kabila and his government, political harassment of outlets and reporters is common, and outlets face pressure to carry progovernment content. Journalists risk criminal defamation suits as well as threats, detentions, arbitrary arrests, and attacks. Throughout 2017, several journalists covering demonstrations calling for national elections were detained, and some were beaten. The state intelligence agency (ANR) has continually repressed journalists, as have state security forces.

In recent years, the government has closed media outlets linked to the political opposition. In several incidents in 2017, members of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (FARDC) attacked media outlets, including a June attack on a community radio station in Shabunda, South Kivu province, and an October raid of a radio outlet near Butembo in North Kivu.

In July 2017, the government significantly restricted the movements of international journalists, prohibiting them from traveling outside Kinshasa without government approval and restricting them from covering "strategic areas" such as military outposts and telecommunications facilities without permission. The government shut down the signal of Radio France Internationale (RFI) in Kinshasa for 10 months, allowing it to reopen in August 2017.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4

The constitution guarantees freedom of religion, and authorities generally respect this right in practice. Although religious groups must register with the government to be recognized, unregistered groups operate unhindered.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 2 / 4

There are no formal restrictions on academic freedom. Primary and secondary school curriculums are regulated but not strongly politicized. In July 2017, police arrested two students at the University of Kinshasa who were protesting a police search of the campus

for opposition figures who allegedly had been responsible for a series of attacks in the capital. Students subsequently protested the arrest of their classmates, and soldiers and police responded by firing tear gas and live rounds. The students allegedly damaged campus property during the protests.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 1 / 4 (-1)

Private discussion of politically sensitive topics can be open, though civilians can sometimes face reprisal for voicing critical views in public. As the political crisis continues, citizens have grown less free to express their personal views on politically sensitive topics. In the past, the government did not frequently restrict internet access or monitor online communications, but in 2017, the government suspended internet access and text messaging temporarily during times of political unrest. It ordered the internet speed to be slowed surrounding protests in August 2017, to prevent images from being shared through social media.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 due to increased monitoring of social media during the year.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 2 / 12 (-1)

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 0 / 4 (-1)

The constitution guarantees freedoms of assembly and association. Demonstrations are held regularly despite limits on these rights in practice. The government repeatedly banned opposition demonstrations throughout the year. In 2017, police and security forces violently dispersed protests, used deadly force against civilians, and arbitrarily arrested participants. Starting at the end of 2016, security forces also recruited former members of the M23 rebel group to break up protests. Police arrested at least 100 demonstrators during protests in numerous Congolese cities on July 31, which marked the unmet deadline for voter registration. In August, members of the religious and political Bundu dia Kongo sect demonstrated against Kabila in Kinshasa and Kongo Central province. Security forces fired live ammunition at the protesters, and at least 27 people were killed. In September, 49 activists against the postponement of elections were arbitrarily arrested across eastern DRC.

Score Change: The score declined from 1 to 0 due to increased repression of protests during the year.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 1 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and professional organizations are generally able to operate, though domestic human rights advocates are subject to harassment, arbitrary arrest, and detention. There are approximately 5,000 registered NGOs in the DRC, though many have narrow scopes devoted to ethnic and local concerns. In October 2017, 15 members of citizen movements demonstrating in favor of elections were arrested. Twenty-three members of the youth group Lutte pour le Changement (LUCHA) were arrested in April 2017 while protesting against uncleanness in Kinshasa.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 1 / 4

Congolese meeting a residency requirement of 20 years can form and join trade unions, though government employees and members of state security forces are not permitted to

unionize. It is against the law for employers to retaliate against strikers. Some labor leaders and activists face harassment.

F. RULE OF LAW: 0 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 0 / 4**

Kabila appoints members of the judiciary, which remains corrupt and subject to political manipulation. The judiciary often exhibits bias against opposition and civil society members, while government and government-allied forces often enjoy impunity for even the most heinous crimes.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 0 / 4

Courts are concentrated in urban areas; the majority of the country relies on customary courts. Civilian cases are often tried in military courts, which are subject to interference from high-ranking military personnel. Arbitrary arrests and detentions are common.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 0 / 4

Prison conditions are life threatening, and long periods of pretrial detention are common. Security forces have tortured prisoners.

Civilian authorities do not maintain effective control of security forces. The FARDC are largely undisciplined. There have been reported incidents of soldiers exchanging intelligence and weapons with armed groups. Soldiers and police regularly commit serious human rights abuses, including rape and torture. In February 2017, FARDC soldiers recorded themselves killing civilians in Central Kasai province. Kabila relies on a military unit, the Republican Guard, which is known for abuses. In June, the United States imposed sanctions on Kabila's military chief of staff, General François Olenga. The European Union also sanctioned eight high-ranking government officials and an armed group commander in May for serious human rights violations.

Peace and the rule of law remain obstructed by active rebel groups, primarily concentrated in the country's eastern and southern provinces. The impact of years of fighting on civilians has been catastrophic, with over five million conflict-related deaths since 1998. The population of the affected regions is subject to displacement and violence due to rebel activity and poor discipline among members of the armed forces. The use of child soldiers is common. Continuing fragmentation and changing coalitions among armed groups, as well as between armed groups and the FARDC, obstruct the de-escalation of conflict. Multiple jailbreaks in May and June 2017 led to the escape of around 1,000 prisoners. As of September 2017, nearly 5,000 civilians in the greater Kasai region had been killed since August 2016 and over 1 million had been displaced. Scores of mass graves had also been discovered in the region. Since the killing of the head of a militia group known as Kamuina Nsapu in August 2016, the government has used disproportionate force in the subsequent crisis, including against minors and people armed with wooden toys.

Kabila's overstay of his presidential mandate provided a pretext for another armed group, the National People's Coalition for the Sovereignty of Congo (CNPSC), to organize and start fighting in June 2017 in South Kivu. Meanwhile, the government cites insecurity as one reason for the election delay.

The premeditated killings of two members of the UN Group of Experts in Central Kasai province in March 2017, and the deadliest attack against a UN peacekeeping mission since 1993 in North Kivu in December—resulting in the deaths of 15 peacekeepers from the UN Organization Stabilization Mission for the Democratic Republic of Congo

(MONUSCO)—represent efforts to intimidate international inquiries into the causes of insecurity.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 0 / 4

Ethnic discrimination, including against Kinyarwanda-speaking minority populations, remains a significant problem in some areas of the country. The constitution prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities, but they often find it difficult to find employment, attend school, or access government services. Although discrimination based on HIV status is also prohibited, people with HIV face difficulty accessing health care and education. No law specifically prohibits same-sex sexual relations, but legislators have made efforts to criminalize same-sex sexual activity, and individuals can still be prosecuted for such activity under public decency laws.

Although the constitution prohibits discrimination against women in any domain, the Family Code prescribes more restrictive roles, requiring that women obey their husbands and obtain their permission to seek employment. Nevertheless, young women are increasingly seeking professional work outside the home, particularly in towns and urban centers.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 4 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 1 / 4

Freedom of movement is protected by law, but is frequently restricted in practice. Armed conflict in the greater Kasai region, North and South Kivu provinces, and Tanganyika province had internally displaced nearly 4 million civilians as of October 2017. In 2017, the government restricted the movements of international journalists and UN investigators looking into the violence.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 1 / 4

Individuals have the right to own property and establish private businesses. In conflict zones, armed groups and FARDC soldiers have seized private property and destroyed homes. The country's economy, reliant on the extraction of natural resources, has grown in recent years, though most Congolese are not employed in the formal economy. In its August 2017 report, the UN Group of Experts found that traceability standards led to lower gains by armed groups from different minerals in 2017, but illicit trafficking of gold that is mined artisanally continues. A complicated system of taxation and regulation has made bribery a regular aspect of business dealings, and embezzlement is pervasive.

Women face discrimination in nearly every aspect of their lives, especially in rural areas. Although the constitution prohibits discrimination against women in any domain, the Family Code prescribes more restrictive roles, requiring that women obey their husbands and obtain their permission to engage in legal transactions. Nevertheless, young women are increasingly engaging in commercial activities, particularly in towns and urban centers.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 1 / 4

Sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls is pervasive, especially in conflict zones; sex crimes often affect men and boys as well. Rebels and FARDC soldiers have been implicated in rape and sexual abuse. Convictions for these offenses remain rare. Abortion is prohibited, and access to contraception is extremely low.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

Although the law prohibits all forced or compulsory labor, the practice remains common and includes forced child labor in mining, street vending, and agriculture. Various rebel groups reportedly forced civilians to work for them and at times impose tolls on vehicles passing through territory held by the groups. The recruitment and use of child soldiers by armed groups is widespread.

Costa Rica

Population: 4,900,000

Capital: San José

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 1

Freedom Rating: 1.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Costa Rica has a long history of democratic stability, with a multiparty political system and regular rotations of power through credible elections. Freedoms of expression and association are robust. The rule of law is generally strong, though presidents have often been implicated in corruption scandals, and prisons remain overcrowded. Among other ongoing concerns, the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) community and indigenous people face discrimination, and land disputes involving indigenous communities persist.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- The current president and other high-level officials from all three branches of government were implicated in the Cementazo corruption scandal, which involved Chinese exports of cement to Costa Rica. The events fomented a widespread distrust of the current administration prior to the 2018 elections.
- Violence, primarily attributed to organized crime and drug trafficking, was a growing problem in 2017. The murder rate increased to 12.1 murders per 100,000 people, a record high.
- The legislature delayed the passage of multiple bills to advance LGBT rights in the country, including a bill to legalize same-sex marriage and a bill strengthening antidiscrimination measures.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 38 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The president is directly elected for a four-year term and can seek a nonconsecutive second term. Presidential candidates must win 40 percent of the vote to avoid a runoff. In 2014, Luis Guillermo Solís of the Citizen Action Party (PAC) was elected president in the second round of voting. Solís faced Johnny Araya of the National Liberation Party (PLN) in the runoff, and proceeded to win 78 percent of the vote. The election was considered credible by international election observers, including the Organization of American States (OAS).

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

Elections for the 57-seat unicameral Legislative Assembly occur every four years, and deputies are elected by proportional representation. Deputies may not run for two consecutive terms, but may run again after skipping a term. In the 2014 legislative elections, the PLN won the most seats, followed by the PAC. Legislative elections were held concurrently with the presidential election and were deemed credible by international observers.

The PAC lost control of the legislature in 2015 following elections for the chamber's directorate, which gave the opposition five of six seats.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

A special chamber of the Supreme Court appoints the independent national election commission, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE), which is responsible for administering elections. The TSE carries out its functions impartially and the electoral framework is fair. In the 2014 elections, Costa Ricans residing abroad were allowed to vote for the first time.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 15 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4**

People have the right to organize in different political parties without undue obstacles. Power in Costa Rica has long alternated between the two dominant parties, the PLN and the PUSC. However, dissatisfaction with party politics and political scandals resulted in defections from the PLN in the early 2000s. PAC, formed in 2002 as an anticorruption party, has become a rising force in Costa Rican politics, winning the presidency and 13 seats in the legislature in 2014, while the PUSC has been damaged by corruption scandals. By the 2014 elections, it appeared that Costa Rica's traditional two-party system had collapsed, as nine parties won representation in the legislature.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

Power regularly alternates in Costa Rica, and opposition parties compete fiercely in presidential and legislative elections. Most recently, Luis Guillermo Solís won the 2014 presidential election as the candidate of PAC, an opposition party at the time. Parties along a wide spectrum of the political order are freely competing in the upcoming 2018 elections. At the end of 2017, there were many undecided voters, as the incumbent government is unpopular due to corruption scandals.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

Citizens' political choices are free from domination by unelected elites and foreign powers, though the Roman Catholic Church can be influential on some issues.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

In 2015, the legislature passed a constitutional amendment declaring Costa Rica to be "multiethnic and plurinational." However, indigenous rights have not historically been

prioritized by politicians, and there are no indigenous representatives in the legislature. Women are represented in government—over 30 percent of seats in the Legislative Assembly are held by women, but this number is a decrease from the previous legislature. Few women are appointed to high-level government positions. The government has introduced some initiatives to increase women’s political participation, such as the institution of gender quotas in order to ensure gender parity in political parties. The legislature has also passed several key bills to advance women’s rights, including a 2016 law that ended discrimination against women in divorce proceedings.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 11 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4

Costa Rica’s freely elected government and lawmakers set and implement state policy without interference. However, legislative gridlock was an issue in 2017. The opposition continued to control the Legislative Assembly in 2017 and blocked President Solís’s attempts to pass legislation that would address the country’s worrisome annual fiscal deficits.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 4 / 4

Costa Rica has effective laws against corruption, which are generally well enforced. In a positive sign for transparency and accountability, President Solís compelled Labor Minister Víctor Morales to resign in 2016 after the newspaper *La Nación* reported that the minister’s niece had been hired by the ministry in violation of an ethics code. In July 2017, Costa Rica became a member of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Anti-Bribery Convention to help prevent corruption.

Despite its functioning anticorruption mechanisms, nearly every president since 1990 has been accused of corruption after leaving office. In September 2017, President Solís was implicated in the Cementazo scandal, involving influence peddling related to Chinese cement exports to Costa Rica. In December, a legislative commission stated that close to 30 people, including the president and other prominent officials from all three branches of government, were involved in the scandal. Cementazo loomed large over the nascent presidential campaign in late 2017, and public opinion surveys have revealed that many Costa Ricans viewed corruption as a key issue in the 2018 elections.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 3 / 4

Citizens generally have access to government information. However, there are some deficiencies in the reporting of budgets to the public, including a lack of transparency in communicating the objectives of the annual budget. Senior government officials are required to make financial disclosures, but that information is not available to the public.

In April 2017, two executive decrees were signed with the goal of ensuring transparency compliance with the law across the government and facilitating access to information. In November, the legislature passed a law to increase efficiency and establish an information access office in every public institution.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 53 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 16 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 4 / 4

Freedom of the press is largely respected in Costa Rica. Defamation laws are on the books, but imprisonment was removed as a punishment for defamation in 2010. A new

freedom of expression and press draft law was presented to the legislature in April 2017 which further narrowed the definition of defamation.

There are six privately owned daily newspapers. Both public and commercial broadcast outlets are available, including at least six private television stations and more than 100 private radio stations.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Roman Catholicism is the official religion, but the constitution guarantees the freedom of religion, which is generally respected in practice.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is constitutionally protected and generally upheld.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

Private discussion is generally free and the government is not known to surveil the electronic communications of Costa Ricans.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 11 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4

Freedom of assembly is constitutionally protected, and this right is generally upheld in practice. A diverse range of groups, including LGBT and environmental organizations, hold regular rallies and protests without government interference.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), including those engaged in human rights work, are active and do not encounter undue obstacles.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

Although labor unions are free to organize, and mount frequent protests with minimal governmental interference, the law requires a minimum of 12 employees to form a union, which may negatively impact union rights at small enterprises. Some cases of employers firing employees who attempted to organize unions were recorded in 2017.

F. RULE OF LAW: 13 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 4 / 4

The judicial branch is generally independent and impartial. Supreme Court judges are elected by a supermajority of the legislature.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 3 / 4

Due process rights are provided for in the constitution, and they are protected for the most part. However, there are often substantial delays in the judicial process, resulting in sometimes lengthy pretrial detention—approximately 16 percent of the prison population consisted of inmates awaiting trial in 2017.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 3 / 4

Violence in Costa Rica has increased in recent years and in 2017 the country documented over 600 murders, or a rate of 12.1 murders per 100,000 people, a record high. The Pacific coast serves as a drug transshipment route and the government has reported that most homicides are related to organized crime and drug trafficking. There are reports of occasional police abuse, including violence and degrading treatment—confirmed cases are investigated and prosecuted.

Overcrowding, poor sanitation, insufficient access to healthcare, and violence remain serious problems in Costa Rica's prisons. Recurrent abuse by prison police has not been thoroughly investigated due to victims' reluctance to file formal complaints.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

The constitution outlines general equal rights for all people, but those rights are not always respected. Indigenous people, who comprise 3 percent of the population, continue to face discrimination, particularly in regard to land rights and access to basic services. Costa Ricans of African descent have also faced discrimination in access to healthcare, education, and employment.

Women experience discrimination due to entrenched gender stereotypes, which can limit their equal access to employment, health services, and the justice system. Executive orders prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity and the government has expressed commitment to the protection of the LGBT community. However, law enforcement officials have displayed persistent discriminatory attitudes and practices toward the LGBT community, including attacks on transgender sex workers. Additionally, the legislature has delayed the passage of several bills that would advance LGBT rights in the country, including a bill that would strengthen antidiscrimination measures.

In 2016, a new law provided disabled people greater personal autonomy—prior to the law's passage, family members often had legal guardianship over some disabled people. A number of asylum seekers arrived in Costa Rica in 2017, and although the law entitles them to access public services, discrimination sometimes prevented them from taking advantage of those benefits.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 13 / 16**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4**

Freedom of movement is constitutionally guaranteed and Costa Ricans enjoy relative freedom in their choice of residence and employment.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 3 / 4

Property rights are generally protected, with the exception of intellectual property rights. Laws protecting intellectual property are not always adequately enforced in practice.

Individuals are free to establish businesses, and the business and investment climate is generally open, although the complicated bureaucracy can deter entrepreneurs.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

Despite the existence of domestic violence legislation, violence against women and children remains a problem and reportedly increased in 2017. In June 2017, in response to a public assault of a woman on a San José street that garnered national media attention, the National Women's Institute, a government agency committed to advancing women's rights, revealed a plan to combat violence against women and address the social and cultural factors that contribute to it.

A court decision in 2015 granted common-law marital status to same-sex couples for the first time, though the legislature has not legalized same-sex marriage. Abortions are illegal in Costa Rica except when the health of the mother is in danger. Health professionals' lack of knowledge of the law and fear of repercussions for performing even legal procedures has left many women without access to that right.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

Despite legal protections, domestic workers, particularly migrant workers, are subject to exploitation and forced labor. Employers often ignore minimum wage and social security laws, and the resulting fines for violations are insignificant. Child labor is a problem in the informal economy. According to a 2016 government report, over three percent of minors were employed.

Sex trafficking and child sex tourism are also serious problems. A law that took effect in 2013 established penalties for human trafficking and organ trafficking, as well as a fund for victims and prevention efforts. The U.S. State Department's 2017 *Trafficking in Persons Report* found that government antitrafficking efforts were improving, noting that antitrafficking funds were being disbursed for the first time and more trafficking victims were identified. However, there was only one trafficking conviction during the reporting period and the government did not provide adequate victim care services.

Côte d'Ivoire

Population: 23,900,000

Capital: Yamoussoukro (official), Abidjan (de facto)

Political Rights Rating: 4

Civil Liberties Rating: 4

Freedom Rating: 4.0

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: Côte d'Ivoire continues to recover from political turmoil and widespread conflict that ended in 2011. While the UN peacekeeping mission withdrew in 2017, the country has experienced unrest and instability within the armed forces, and growing political tensions within the ruling coalition. Several root causes of the country's violent conflict remain, including ethnic and regional tensions, land disputes, corruption, and impunity.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- The UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) reached the end of its mandate, and withdrew its peacekeeping mission in June.
- In January and May, mutinous soldiers in the national army—many of them former rebels who helped bring President Alassane Ouattara to power in 2011—demanded

the payment of bonuses from the government. While the situation ended peacefully when the government paid the bonuses, the events threatened to destabilize the country, and raised fears of a potential coup d'état.

- In October, Souleymane Koné, a top aide to National Assembly speaker Guillaume Soro, was arrested following revelations that mutinous soldiers had been given access to arms caches at a property owned by Koné. The arrest was seen as part of a widening split between the pro-Ouattara and pro-Soro factions of the current governing coalition.
- The International Criminal Court (ICC) continued its trial of former president Laurent Gbagbo for alleged war crimes.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 19 / 40 (-1)**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 7 / 12****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4**

Ouattara won the 2015 presidential election in the first round. Despite tensions and some government crackdowns on opposition rallies in the lead-up, the election itself was deemed credible by international and domestic observers, and was the first peaceful presidential election in Côte d'Ivoire in more than two decades.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4

National and local legislative elections have improved since violent conflict ended in 2011. The members of the current National Assembly were directly elected in credible, largely peaceful polls held in December 2016. The ruling Rally of Houphouëtists for Democracy and Peace (RHDP) coalition won a solid majority, taking 167 of 255 seats. Independent candidates took the majority of remaining seats. The 2016 constitution envisages the creation of a second house of parliament, a Senate, but at the end of 2017 the institution was not yet functional.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 2 / 4

Côte d'Ivoire's new constitution was approved in an October 2016 referendum and promulgated that November. The constitutional referendum was marred by low turnout (about 42 percent), and violence at some polling stations, and was boycotted by the opposition.

In November 2016, the African Court on Human and People's Rights ruled that Côte d'Ivoire's Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) is imbalanced in favor of the government, undermining independence and impartiality, and ordered that the electoral law be amended. At the end of 2017, legislators had not addressed the ruling.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 8 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 2 / 4**

The constitution of Côte d'Ivoire permits multiparty competition, and recent presidential and legislative elections have been contested by a large number of parties and independent candidates. However, the ruling RHDP coalition holds a virtual lock on national political power.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 2 / 4

Former president Gbagbo's Ivorian Popular Front (FPI) holds seats in parliament but remains relatively weak and disorganized, with members split between two main factions. The first is hardliners who insist on boycotting elections until Gbagbo's release from the custody of the International Criminal Court (ICC), where he faces charges of crimes against humanity; the second is comprised of moderates who support Pascal Affi N'Guessan, who served as prime minister during Gbagbo's presidency. Since 2015, the FPI has been bolstered somewhat by the release of political prisoners, the unfreezing of several FPI partisans' bank accounts, and the return of some FPI members from exile.

Several prominent opposition figures were detained by security forces during the lead-up to the 2016 constitutional referendum.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 2 / 4

Recent elections have been generally free from extensive voter intimidation or harassment. However, leaders within the military, especially former rebel commanders, are viewed as having significant political influence in the country.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 2 / 4

Citizenship has been a source of tension since the 1990s, when Ivorian nationalists adopted former president Henri Bédié's concept of "Ivoirité" to exclude perceived foreigners (including Ouattara) from the political process. A new nationality law relaxing some conditions for citizenship went into effect in 2014. However, its application remains challenging, and hundreds of thousands of individuals, mostly northerners, lack documentation.

The 2016 constitution abolished a rule that had required both of the president's parents to be Ivorian, instead mandating that only one parent be Ivorian.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 4 / 12 (-1)**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 2 / 4 (-1)**

Despite several years of relative calm, military mutinies in January and May 2017 exposed the fragility of the civilian government's control over the state armed forces. To quell the crisis—which renewed fears of a potential coup d'état—the government was forced to pay out bonuses to the mutineers, many of whom were former rebels who had backed Ouattara.

Though defense and security forces are nominally under civilian control, problems of parallel command and control systems within the armed forces, known as the Republican Forces of Côte d'Ivoire (RFCI), remain a significant challenge. Former rebel commanders of a particular faction, the Forces Nouvelles, dominate the military leadership.

Separately, the UNOCI reached the end of its mandate in 2017, and withdrew its peacekeeping mission in June.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 due to military mutinies against the government that threatened to destabilize the country.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

Corruption and bribery remain endemic, and particularly affect the judiciary, police, and government contracting operations. Perpetrators seldom face prosecution. Significant quantities of cacao, gold, and diamond resources are sold on illicit black markets rather than officially approved channels, with authorities frequently turning a blind eye to the issue.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 1 / 4

The government generally awards contracts in a nontransparent manner. Access to up-to-date information from government ministries is difficult for ordinary citizens to acquire, although some ministries do publish information online. In 2013, the National Assembly passed an access to information law, but enforcement has been inconsistent.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 32 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 11 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4

Conditions for the press have improved since the end of the 2010–11 conflict, and incidents of violence and intimidation against journalists are relatively rare. However, most national media sources, especially newspapers, exhibit partisanship in their news coverage, consistently favoring either the government or the opposition. In May 2017, a new media law was introduced that would have mandated heavy fines and as many as five years in prison for certain violations. However, it was withdrawn after media freedom advocates voiced strong objections.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4

Legal guarantees of religious freedom are typically upheld. A north-south, Christian-Muslim schism has been a salient feature of Ivorian life for decades, and was exacerbated by the 2002–11 crisis. However, the schism has since receded, and the current coalition government includes Muslims and Christians.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 3 / 4

Public universities were closed and used as military bases during the 2010–11 conflict, and now suffer from a lack of adequate resources and facilities. However, academic freedom is usually upheld. In 2017, there were demonstrations by the powerful university-student union, the Fédération Estudiantine et Scolaire de Côte d'Ivoire (FESCI), against a rise in tuition fees. Several of the demonstrations ended in violent clashes between demonstrators and police. There were also reports of classes being disrupted or canceled during strike actions that took place during the year.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4

People are generally free to engage in political discussion and debate without fear of harassment or detention. However, the legacy of violent conflict can chill public debate of sensitive topics.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 8 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 2 / 4

The constitution protects the right to free assembly, but in practice the government has attempted to restrict or forcibly disperse peaceable gatherings, and sometimes violence

between demonstrators and police has erupted. In May 2017, several people were hurt when mutinous soldiers fired upon demonstrators protesting the mutiny. Police also arrested and employed disproportionate force against demonstrating university students during the year. Yet despite risks and restrictions, public protests and demonstrations are common.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 3 / 4

Security conditions and freedom of movement for both domestic and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) were threatened in 2017 by military uprisings and fears of instability. However, most organizations continued to operate freely.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

The right to organize and join labor unions is constitutionally guaranteed. Workers have the right to bargain collectively. Côte d'Ivoire typically has various professional strikes every year, though sometimes strikes have become violent. In 2017, teachers' unions and civil servants organized several strikes at which they called for better wages and back pay they claimed was owed.

F. RULE OF LAW: 6 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4

The judiciary is not independent, and judges are highly susceptible to external interference and bribes. Processes governing the assignment of cases to judges are opaque.

The ICC continued its trial of former president Gbagbo in 2017 on charges of crimes against humanity committed during the 2010–11 crisis, and in September, ruled that he would remain in ICC custody. The ICC has said it is investigating pro-Ouattara actors for crimes committed by former rebels, but it has filed charges only against pro-Gbagbo defendants so far.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

The constitution guarantees equal access to justice and due process for all citizens, but these guarantees are poorly upheld in practice. Prolonged pretrial detention is a serious problem for both adults and minors, with some detainees spending years in prison without trial. The state struggles to provide attorneys to defendants who cannot afford legal counsel.

Concerns about impunity, victor's justice, and reconciliation have persisted after the close of the 2010–11 crisis. To date, only a handful of individuals have been put on trial for crimes committed during that period. In 2017, some Gbagbo supporters awaiting trial for crimes allegedly committed during the crisis were provisionally released, though many others remained in custody as they awaited their trials.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 2 / 4

Overall levels of violence in the country are lower than during the height of the political-military crisis in 2010–11. However, physical violence against civilians in the form of extortion, banditry, and sexual violence, sometime perpetrated by members of the state armed forces, remain common. In many areas of the country, and particularly in the west, disputes over land use and ownership between migrants, and those who claim customary land rights, sometimes turn violent. In October 2017, intercommunal clashes near the Goin-Débé forest reserve resulted in 2 deaths and 8 injuries.

Protests and demonstrations by soldiers at military barracks around the country in 2017, along with raids and attacks against police and gendarmerie posts by unidentified soldiers, renewed fears of instability. In October, Souleymane Koné, a top aide to Guillaume Soro—the former head of the Forces Nouvelles rebel group and current National Assembly speaker—was arrested by state authorities in Abidjan after it was revealed that mutinous soldiers had been given access to arms caches at a property in Bouaké owned by Koné. The arrest was part of a widening split between the pro-Ouattara and pro-Soro factions of the current governing coalition.

The country's prisons are severely overcrowded, and incarcerated adults and minors are not always separated.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

Same-sex sexual conduct is not specifically criminalized in Côte d'Ivoire, but LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people can face prosecution under measures criminalizing acts of "public indecency." No law prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. LGBT people face societal prejudice as well as violence and harassment by state security forces.

Intercommunal tensions over land rights frequently involve migrants from neighboring countries, who sometimes experience violent intimidation.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 7 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 2 / 4

Freedom of movement has improved since the end of the civil war in 2011, with fewer illegal roadblocks along major roads and within Abidjan. However, irregular checkpoints and acts of extortion remain a problem in some areas of the country, particularly in the west and north, and near gold and diamond-producing regions. The government's efforts to combat these practices have been undermined by inconsistent financial support and a failure to investigate and prosecute perpetrators.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

Citizens have the right to own and establish private businesses, and private industry grown since the end of the crisis in 2011. The country has also attracted significant investment. However, property and land rights remain weak and poorly regulated, especially in the west, where conflict over land tenure between migrants and those who claim customary land rights remains a significant source of tension.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 1 / 4

Women suffer significant legal and economic discrimination, and sexual and gender-based violence are widespread. However, impunity for perpetrators remains a problem, and when it is prosecuted, rape is routinely reclassified as indecent assault. Costly medical certificates are often essential for convictions, yet are beyond the means of victims who are impoverished.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Despite efforts by the government in recent years to counter the phenomenon, child labor is a frequent problem, particularly in the cocoa industry. Human trafficking is prohibited by the new constitution, however government programs for victims of trafficking—often children—are inadequate.

Croatia

Population: 4,200,000

Capital: Zagreb

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 2

Freedom Rating: 1.5

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Croatia is a parliamentary republic that regularly holds free elections. Civil and political rights are generally respected, though there are serious problems with corruption in the public sector. Minority rights have improved over the last two decades, though the Roma and Serb minorities face discrimination, as do LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In April, the governing Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) lost its coalition partner, the reformist Bridge of Independent Lists (Most), over conflict-of-interest allegations involving the finance minister. The HDZ formed a coalition with the liberal Croatian People's Party (HNS) in June.
- A controversial plaque containing a fascist-era slogan that had been placed near the World War II-era Jasenovac concentration camp was removed in September. However, President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović around the same time appeared to endorse the slogan, calling it “an old Croatian greeting.”
- In June, students and teachers led mass demonstrations against the government's reluctance to implement popular reforms aimed at updating the country's education system.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 37 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The president, who is head of state, is elected by popular vote for a maximum of two five-year terms. The prime minister is head of government, and is appointed by the president with parliamentary approval.

Croatia held the runoff to its December 2014 presidential election in January 2015. Outgoing president Ivo Josipović of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) lost to Grabar-Kitarović of the conservative HDZ by a margin of less than one percent. Stakeholders broadly accepted the poll's result.

HDZ chairman Andrej Plenković became prime minister following the 2016 legislative elections, in which HDZ won a plurality of seats.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

Members of the 151-member unicameral Croatian Parliament (Hrvatski Sabor) are elected to four-year terms.

Snap parliamentary elections in September 2016—which were held after the previous prime minister lost a no-confidence vote, and were the second legislative polls in less than a year—were marked by low turnout, though an Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE) monitoring mission found the generally well administered and the results credible. The HDZ and its allies won 61 seats, and the party has led the government since then, with support from smaller parties. The composition of the government changed in 2017, after the reformist Bridge of Independent Lists (Most) withdrew from the HDZ-led coalition after refusing to back Finance Minister Zdravko Marić, who was implicated in a conflict-of-interest controversy related to his time working at Agrokor, Croatia’s largest private company, which is now under state administration. The HDZ in June allied with the liberal Croatian People’s Party (HNS), which was part of the SDP-led opposition coalition.

The HDZ posted strong results in municipal elections held in 2017.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

While some concerns about the use of public funds for political campaigns persist, in general, the State Election Commission maintains a fair standard for elections in Croatia.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 15 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4**

Citizens may freely organize and participate in the activities of a wide variety of political parties. Small far-left and far-right parties made gains in the May 2017 local elections.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

The main opposition bloc, headed by the SDP, has won the most seats in only two parliamentary elections since 1991, although the country was headed by an SDP president from 2010 to 2015. The SDP-led opposition coalition holds a significant bloc of seats in the legislature, and is generally able to operate without facing restrictions or election-related intimidation. But in general, the HDZ has dominated politics, and draws support from members of the Catholic Church, veterans, and a growing number of conservative NGOs.

B3. Are the people’s political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

While voters and candidates are generally able to freely express their political choices, the Roman Catholic Church is politically influential, and has advocated for a ban on same-sex marriage and restrictions on abortion. Many public servants obtained their positions through patronage networks, and may be beholden to a party or special interest as a result.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

Eight parliamentary seats are set aside for ethnic minorities, including three for ethnic Serbs. However, the political interests of minority groups, notably Roma and Serbs, are underrepresented.

Women are represented across political parties, and a woman currently holds Croatia's presidency. However, the number of women in parliament decreased in 2016 after the Constitutional Court struck down a law requiring that 40 percent of a party's candidates be women. The 2016 OSCE election monitoring mission called for political parties to run more women candidates, and to promote more women into senior party leadership positions.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 10 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4

Democratically elected representatives are duly installed into office, and are generally able to make public policy.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4

A criminal code in effect since 2013 enforces stiffer penalties for various forms of corruption, and while some progress has been made, official corruption—including nepotism, bribery, fraud, and patronage—remains a serious problem. Numerous high-level corruption cases have been filed in recent years, but many have yet to see a verdict, including corruption and bribery proceedings against former president Ivo Sanader.

Politics in the first half of 2017 revolved in large part around demands by the opposition and the Most party for the resignation of Finance Minister Zdravko Marić over conflict-of-interest allegations; they claimed that he had long been aware of serious financial troubles at his previous employer, the agribusiness giant Agrokor, which had come under government administration due to its precarious financial position. Most left the government after refusing to support Marić in a parliamentary no-confidence measure, which he narrowly survived. Separately, international bodies including the European Commission have called for greater efforts to eliminate malfeasance in public procurement processes.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 3 / 4

In 2013, Croatia adopted the Law on the Right of Access to Information. The legislation includes a proportionality and public-interest test designed to determine a balance between reasons for disclosing information and reasons for restricting it, and establishes an independent information commissioner to monitor compliance. However, government bodies do not always release requested information in a timely manner.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 49 / 60 (-1)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 13 / 16 (-1)

D1. Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4

Media in Croatia is highly polarized, but generally free from overt political interference or manipulation. However, journalists continue to face harassment and occasional attacks. In May 2017, a journalist was assaulted by the mayor of Požega. And in October, a journalist for the country's public broadcaster received a death threat after reporting on refugees.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4

The Croatian constitution guarantees freedom of religion, and this is generally upheld in practice. However, the small Serb Orthodox community remains vulnerable to harassment,

and members have reported vandalism of their churches. Jewish and other groups have expressed increasing concern about Holocaust denial and displays by right-wing nationalists of symbols and slogans associated with the fascist Ustaša regime that governed Croatia during World War II.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 3 / 4 (-1)

In June 2017, students and teachers protested against the government's stalling of the planned modernization of Croatia's education system. The reforms began in 2015 and emphasize a focus on skill development over rote memorization, give teachers increased autonomy, update badly outdated history curriculum, and include modules on sex and health education, among others. The reforms, which enjoyed broad public support, have been delayed under the HDZ, which has moved to install its own members into the group tasked with developing the policies, including extremely conservative members opposed to sex education. Protests against the delays took place in over a dozen cities, with demonstrators expressing concern that the HDZ may be attempting to politicize the new curricula, or that it could abandon the modernization plan.

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 due to the government's reluctance to implement a popular program aimed at modernizing the country's outdated education system.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

People are generally free to engage in discussions of a sensitive nature without fearing surveillance or retribution.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 12 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4

Freedom of assembly is protected and respected in Croatia.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

The nongovernmental organization (NGO) sector in Croatia remains robust and active.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

The constitution allows workers to form and join trade unions, and this right is generally respected in practice.

F. RULE OF LAW: 11 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 3 / 4

While judicial independence is generally respected, there have been recent concerns about the influence of far-right-wing groups on the judiciary. For example, in July 2017, a court reversed a 1945 conviction of an academic who was found to be complicit in atrocities committed by the fascist Ustaša regime. Critics allege the courts have been ruling in line with the views of right-wing NGOs and the ruling HDZ, while the courts maintain that they are redressing partisan rulings of the Yugoslav communist courts.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 3 / 4

Due process rights are generally upheld, but the system tends to work more efficiently for individuals with abundant resources or high social standing.

The International Commission on Missing Persons has criticized Croatia for its slow progress in identifying human remains of victims of the 1991–95 conflicts, and in making reparations to survivors and their families.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 3 / 4

Violence by state and nonstate actors is uncommon. However, there were several reports of police violence against migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers during the year, primarily at the Serbian border. Prison conditions do not meet international standards due to overcrowding and inadequate medical care.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

There are concerns that the increasing visibility of far-right, nationalist groups in everyday life, and occasional moves by the government suggesting endorsement of such groups, effectively encourages discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities. In 2017, such groups continued efforts to rehabilitate icons and slogans associated with the Ustaša. For example, during the year, a plaque with a fascist-era slogan appeared on a building near the WWII-era Jasenovac concentration camp, where some 83,000 Serbs, Jews, Roma and antifascists had been killed. The plaque became *cause célèbre* for Croatia’s far-right, who were buttressed in their attempts to preserve it when the president appeared to endorse it in September, saying the slogan at the center of the controversy was not a fascist salute but “an old Croatian greeting.” Nevertheless, the plaque was removed that month.

Ethnic and religious minorities in Croatia face discrimination. Some officials have sought to discourage the use of the Cyrillic alphabet in signage in areas with high concentrations of ethnic Serbs. Both Serb and Jewish community leaders boycotted state-sponsored Holocaust remembrances in 2016 and 2017, due to perceived HDZ support of revisionism for the World War II-era fascist government. Roma have poor access to primary and secondary education.

The LGBT community continues to face discriminatory rhetoric by influential right-wing groups.

The constitution prohibits gender discrimination, but women earn less than men for comparable work and hold fewer leadership positions generally.

Croatian authorities continue pushing asylum seekers into Serbia without offering them access to asylum procedures.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 13 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4

Freedom of movement is protected by the constitution and upheld in practice.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 3 / 4

Property rights are generally well protected. However, corruption can inhibit normal business operations.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

In 2014, following a 2013 referendum that banned same-sex marriages, the parliament passed a law allowing same-sex civil unions. The law affords same-sex couples equal rights in inheritance, social benefits, and taxation, but same-sex couples may not adopt children.

Domestic violence remains a concern. Convictions for rape and domestic violence can bring lengthy prison terms. However, police sometimes fail to adhere to recommended procedures for handling reports of domestic violence.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

Human trafficking remains a problem, sentences for those convicted of it can be light, and witness statements are not always given the appropriate consideration in court cases. However, the government continues to make efforts to better identify victims of trafficking and to provide services to them.

Cuba

Population: 11,200,000

Capital: Havana

Political Rights Rating: 7

Civil Liberties Rating: 6

Freedom Rating: 6.5

Freedom Status: Not Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: Cuba is a one-party communist state that outlaws political pluralism, suppresses dissent, and severely restricts freedoms of the press, assembly, speech, and association. The government of Raúl Castro, who succeeded his brother Fidel as president in 2008, continues to monopolize most economic activity in state enterprises despite recent reforms that permit some self-employment. The regime's repressive, undemocratic character has not been significantly affected by efforts toward a "normalization" of relations with Washington under the administration of former U.S. president Barack Obama.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Systematic repression of independent civil society groups continued during the year, with a number of prominent activists facing prosecution or seeking asylum abroad.
- In August, the government announced a temporary freeze on the issuance of new self-employment licenses in many fields.
- The authorities thwarted an unprecedented effort by 175 opposition candidates to run for office in Cuba's municipal assembly elections in November, and none of them ultimately appeared on the ballot.
- In December, the government postponed national elections by two months to April 2018, giving the leadership more time to prepare for Raúl Castro's expected retirement from the presidency.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 1 / 40**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 0 / 12****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4**

Under the country's one-party political system, the Communist Party of Cuba (PCC) controls all government offices and most civil institutions. Every five years, the National Assembly designates the members of the Council of State. This body in turn appoints the Council of Ministers in consultation with its president, who serves as chief of state and head of government. The overlap between state and party is almost total: All members of the National Assembly are PCC members, and most members of the PCC Political Bureau also serve on the Council of State.

Raúl Castro became president in 2008, succeeding his brother Fidel, who died in 2016. Raúl, who secured a second term in 2013, had long promised to step down as president after the elections due in February 2018. A 2012 law imposed a limit of two five-year terms on all senior officials. However, in December 2017 the government announced that the election process would be postponed until April, citing the effects of Hurricane Irma, which struck the island in September. Castro was expected to remain first secretary of the PCC until at least 2021, having won a new five-year term in that post at a party congress in 2016.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

In the 2013 National Assembly elections, voters were asked to either support or reject a single PCC-approved candidate for each of the 612 seats. All candidates were elected. The two-month delay in elections announced in December 2017 affected both the national and provincial legislatures. Elections for the country's 168 municipal assemblies were postponed from October to November 2017.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 0 / 4

The only Cuban elections that offer a choice of more than one candidate per office are those for municipal assemblies, and no campaigning is allowed. Ahead of the municipal voting held in November 2017, the government worked to discredit or disqualify potential opposition candidates and to intimidate voters. Some candidates were convicted on trumped-up charges in summary trials, or detained to prevent them from attending nomination meetings. In other cases, local residents were never advised of the date and time of the nomination meetings, allowing government supporters to block independent candidacies. A group of 175 activists associated with the opposition coalition Otro18 sought to run in the elections, but none were ultimately able to secure a place on the ballot. Activists also faced detentions and intimidation while attempting to monitor polling places and vote counting.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 0 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 0 / 4**

Political parties other than the PCC are illegal. Political dissent is a punishable offense, and dissidents are systematically harassed, detained, physically assaulted, and frequently imprisoned for minor infractions. Supposedly spontaneous mob attacks, known as "acts of repudiation," are often used to silence political dissidents. The Cuban Commission for Human Rights and National Reconciliation (CCDHRN), a nongovernmental organization,

reported 5,155 arbitrary arrests of peaceful opponents during 2017. These brief politically motivated detentions have become a key repressive tactic for the government, with a total of 51,833 cases documented by the CCDHRN since 2010, though the 2017 figure was the lowest since 2011.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 0 / 4

The Castro brothers have dominated government and politics in Cuba since 1959, allowing no transfer or rotation of power between rival groups. The attempt by Otro18 to field independent candidates in the 2017 municipal elections was aimed in part at challenging the PCC's monopoly at higher levels of government as well, since many of the candidates submitted for election to the provincial and national legislatures are also municipal assembly members. The authorities' successful campaign to block the dissidents' candidacies helped to ensure that the 2018 elections would again feature no independent candidates for national office.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 0 / 4

The authoritarian one-party system in Cuba largely excludes the public from any genuine and autonomous political participation. The military and intelligence agencies play an important role in suppressing dissent, and several members of the extended Castro family hold government positions, though none were granted seats in the PCC's Central Committee during the Seventh Party Congress in 2016.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 0 / 4

Since political rights are denied to all Cuban citizens, women and members of minority groups are unable to choose their representatives or organize independently to assert their interests in the political sphere. The PCC leadership does exhibit some gender and racial diversity in its ranks. At the 2016 party congress, the proportion of women on the PCC Central Committee rose to 44.4 percent, from 41.7 percent in 2011. Afro-Cubans accounted for 35.9 percent, up from 31.3 percent in 2011. Women hold nearly half of the National Assembly seats, but they are far less well represented in the top decision-making bodies of the party and state.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 1 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 0 / 4

None of Cuba's nominally elected officials are chosen through free and fair contests, and major policy decisions are reserved for the PCC leadership in practice. The National Assembly, which the constitution describes as the "supreme organ of state power," has little independent influence and meets for brief sessions only twice a year.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

Corruption remains a serious problem in Cuba, with widespread illegality permeating everyday life. The state enjoys a monopoly on most business transactions, and there are no independent mechanisms to hold officials accountable for wrongdoing. Raúl Castro has prioritized the fight against corruption, and long sentences have been imposed in various

cases involving Cuban officials and foreign businessmen. However, the government has not enacted internal reforms that would make the system more transparent and less prone to abuse, nor does it allow civil society groups, journalists, or courts to serve as external checks on its authority.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 0 / 4

Cuba lacks effective laws that provide for freedom of information and access to official records. Recent demands by journalists for a new media law that would grant citizens the right to information and offer legal protection for the emerging nonstate media sector have made little headway with the government.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 13 / 60 (-1)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 5 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4

The Cuban news media are owned and controlled by the state. The tiny independent press corps is illegal, and its publications are considered “enemy propaganda.” Government agents routinely accuse independent journalists of being mercenaries, and many faced charges of “usurpation of legal capacity” or other trumped-up offenses during 2017. Despite these obstacles, a small number of independent digital media outlets have emerged in recent years.

In August 2017, a leaked video from a closed-door PCC gathering showed First Vice President Miguel Díaz-Canel, who was expected to succeed Raúl Castro as president in 2018, threatening both the unlicensed online newspaper *14ymedio* and the legally credentialed website *OnCuba*. He described *OnCuba*, owned by a Miami-based company, as “very aggressive against the revolution,” concluding, “We will shut it down.... And let the scandal ensue. Let them say we censor, it’s fine.”

Only a small percentage of the population has access to the global internet, as opposed to a government-controlled national intranet. Critical blogs and websites are often blocked. In December 2016, Etecsa, the state telecommunications company, began a pilot program to provide some residents of Old Havana with home internet access. The experiment spread gradually to a half-dozen other cities during 2017. Users can also access the internet from hundreds of public Wi-Fi hotspots that have been established across the island since 2015. Initial rates of \$5 per hour gradually fell to \$1 by late 2017.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4

Official obstacles hamper religious freedom in Cuba. Churches cannot conduct ordinary educational activities. In the context of its positive role in U.S.-Cuban diplomatic negotiations, the Roman Catholic Church has enjoyed a recent expansion of its pastoral rights, including periodic access to state media and public spaces, as well as the ability to build new churches and distribute its own publications. Smaller Protestant and evangelical groups tend to face greater restrictions, though many have expanded their activities and operated with little interference in recent years.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 0 / 4

Academic freedom is restricted in Cuba. While a variety of private supplementary education cooperatives have emerged in recent years, formal private schools and universities remain illegal. Teaching materials commonly contain ideological content, and affiliation

with the PCC is generally needed to advance in educational institutions. University students have been expelled for dissident behavior, effectively preventing them from pursuing higher education. Despite the elimination of exit visas in 2013, university faculty must still obtain permission from their superiors to travel to academic conferences abroad. Cuban officials also often prevent dissident intellectuals from traveling abroad and deny entry to prominent exile intellectuals who have been critical of the regime.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 1 / 4

Neighborhood-level “Committees for the Defense of the Revolution” assist security agencies by monitoring, reporting, and suppressing dissent. Cubans often engage in robust private discussions regarding everyday issues like the economy, food prices, foreign travel, and the lack of internet access, but they tend to avoid discussing more sensitive political issues such as human rights and civil liberties.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 0 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 0 / 4

Restrictions on freedom of assembly remain a key form of political control. The constitution limits the rights of assembly and association to prevent their “exercise against the existence and objectives of the Socialist State.” Security forces and government-backed thugs routinely break up peaceful gatherings or protests by political dissidents and civic activists.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 0 / 4

Based on the 1985 Law on Associations, the government refuses to register any new organization that is not state supervised. Nearly all politically motivated short-term detentions in recent years have targeted members of independent associations, think tanks, human rights groups, political parties, or trade unions.

A number of independent civil society organizations suffered raids and confiscations during 2017, and some activists were also detained on arbitrary charges or forced into exile. For example, 14 members of the CubaLex Center for Legal Information, a pro-bono, public-interest legal consultancy, sought asylum in the United States beginning in May after coming under government pressure.

In the video leaked in August, First Vice President Díaz-Canel denounced “counterrevolutionary” organizations including Cuba Emprende, an entrepreneurial training program supported by the Catholic Church, and the independent think tank Cuba Possible.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 0 / 4

Cuban workers do not have the right to strike or bargain collectively, and independent labor unions are illegal.

F. RULE OF LAW: 2 / 16 (-1)

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 0 / 4

The Council of State has full control over the courts and the judiciary, whose rulings typically conform to the interests of the PCC. Laws on vaguely defined offenses such as “public disorder,” “contempt,” “disrespect for authority,” “pre-criminal dangerousness,” and “aggression” are used to prosecute the regime’s political opponents.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 0 / 4 (-1)

Multiple legal cases against dissidents during 2017 illustrated the systematic violation of due process. These included a three-year prison sentence in March against Christian Liberation Movement activist Eduardo Cardet for criticizing Fidel Castro; the conviction, detention, and subsequent harassment of four family members associated with the Cuban Reflection Movement; and the detention—from May until August—of Patriotic Union of Cuba activist Jorge Cervantes on “contempt” charges. In September, Convivencia economist Karina Gálvez was convicted on charges of tax evasion in connection with the purchase of her home, which doubled as the independent think tank’s offices. The home was confiscated, and she was sentenced to three years of “deprivation of liberty.”

Score Change: The score declined from 1 to 0 due to a pattern of due process violations in multiple cases against political dissidents and civic activists.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 1 / 4

Opposition activists, human rights defenders, and other perceived enemies of the regime are routinely subjected to public assaults as well as abuse in custody. For example, in October 2017 alone, the CCDHRN documented 13 cases of physical aggression, 27 acts of harassment, and two so-called acts of repudiation against dissidents that were organized or encouraged by state security forces.

Prison conditions are poor, featuring overcrowding, forced labor, inadequate sanitation and medical care, and physical abuse.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

Women enjoy legal equality and are well represented in most professions, though their labor force participation rate stands at 41 percent, suggesting persistent economic disadvantages.

While racial discrimination has long been outlawed, Cubans of African descent have reported widespread discrimination and profiling by police. Many lack access to the dollar economy.

Discrimination based on sexual orientation is illegal in areas such as employment and housing, and Mariela Castro Espín, Raúl Castro’s daughter and the director of the National Center for Sexual Education (CENESEX), has advocated on behalf of the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) community. However, the advocacy efforts of independent LGBT groups are either ignored or actively suppressed. Independent activists have denounced CENESEX and the government for resisting further legal reforms on issues such as marriage and adoption, among other criticisms.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 6 / 16**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 1 / 4**

Freedom of movement and the right to choose one’s residence and place of employment are restricted. Cubans who move to Havana without authorization are subject to removal. Some dissidents are barred from foreign travel, despite a 2013 migration law that rescinded Cuba’s exit visa requirement. Many Cubans working abroad are bound by unfair labor contracts that transfer most of their earnings to the Cuban government.

In November 2017, the government announced that as of January 2018 it would lighten restrictions on visits by Cuban Americans by eliminating their need to periodically “habilitate” their passports, allowing them to visit on yachts, removing the residency requirement for the foreign-born children of Cuban émigrés who want to become citizens, and allowing others who had emigrated illegally to visit. Nevertheless, Cuban émigrés still face large passport fees, and Cuban doctors, diplomats, and athletes who “defected” are barred from visiting for eight years.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 1 / 4

While the number of Cubans licensed as “self-employed” reached a record of 579,415 by September 2017, in August the government banned some popular licenses and issued a freeze on the issuance of others in many of the most lucrative occupations in order to curb “illegality” such as tax evasion in the sector. Private employment opportunities remain limited, with most professions unavailable. Moreover, the small businesses of licensed entrepreneurs still lack a legal personality, stunting their growth and often placing them in legal jeopardy.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

Violent crime, including personalized forms of violence, is believed to be relatively rare, though official statistics on crime are rarely published, and domestic violence is not treated as a separate legal category. Individuals enjoy broad freedom in their interpersonal, romantic, and sexual relationships. Same-sex marriages and civil unions are not recognized, however. While divorce is common, men and women enjoy equal rights to marital goods and child custody.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

State salaries remain extremely low at about \$27 per month, and the national currency is very weak, encouraging an exodus of trained personnel into the private and tourism sectors, where the convertible peso—pegged to the U.S. dollar—is used. Cubans employed by foreign firms are often much better remunerated than their fellow citizens, even though most are contracted through a state employment agency that siphons off the bulk of their wages and uses political criteria in screening applicants. Economic opportunity in general is severely constrained by the inefficient and unproductive state sector.

State employees who express political dissent or disagreement with the authorities often face harassment or dismissal. Professionals dismissed from their jobs in the state sector have difficulty continuing their careers, as licenses for professions are not available in the private sector.

Cyprus

Population: 1,200,000

Capital: Nicosia

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 1

Freedom Rating: 1.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Note: The numerical rankings and status listed above do not reflect conditions in Northern Cyprus, which is examined in a separate report.

Overview: The Republic of Cyprus is a parliamentary democracy that has de jure sovereignty over the entire island. In practice, however, the government controls only the southern, largely Greek-speaking part of the island, as the northern area is ruled by the self-declared Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, recognized only by Turkey. Political rights and civil liberties are generally respected in the Republic of Cyprus. Ongoing concerns include societal discrimination against minority groups and flaws in the asylum system that lead to prolonged detention and premature deportations.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In January, the government restarted UN-sponsored reunification talks with Northern Cyprus under auspicious conditions. However, the talks broke down in July over the future role of the Turkish military on the island.
- Irregular migrant workers and asylum seekers faced continued discrimination and extended detentions in prison-like facilities.
- Cyprus remains without a freedom of information law—a bill first proposed in 2015 remains stalled in parliament.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 38 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 11 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The president is elected by popular vote to a five-year term. The current president, Nicos Anastasiades, won 57.5 percent of the vote in a runoff in the most recent presidential elections, held in 2013. Pledging efficient negotiations with the EU and the IMF over the bailout agreement, Anastasiades defeated Stavros Malas of the Progressive Party of the Working People (AKEL), whose platform opposed austerity.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The unicameral House of Representatives has 80 seats filled through proportional representation for five-year terms. The Turkish Cypriot community has 24 reserved seats, which have been unfilled since Turkish Cypriot representatives withdrew from the chamber in 1964. The most recent legislative elections in May 2016 were held in accordance with international standards.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4

Electoral laws are generally fair. Amendments to the electoral laws approved in 2015, just five months ahead of legislative elections, stipulated that a political party must win 3.6 percent of the vote, up from 1.8 percent previously, to participate in the second round of voting, which was widely interpreted as an attempt to shut smaller and newly formed parties out of parliament.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 16 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4**

A wide array of parties compete in the political system. Cyprus's two main parties, the center-right Democratic Rally (DISY) and the left wing Progressive Party of the Working People (AKEL), usually split the largest share of the vote in most elections, but neither has dominated politics, and other parties are often able to play significant roles in legislative coalitions.

Both DISY and AKEL lost seats in the 2016 parliamentary elections. Three new parties entered parliament for the first time: the center-left Citizens' Alliance (SYPOL), the right-wing Solidarity, and the far-right National Popular Front (ELAM).

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

Opposition parties can gain representation in Cypriot elections, and power rotates between parties regularly.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

People are generally able to express their political choices without undue interference from outside actors.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 4 / 4

Three recognized religious minorities—the Armenians, the Latins, and the Maronites—each have a non-voting representative. Members of these minority groups vote in special elections for their representative, as well as in the general elections. The Turkish Cypriot community's 24 unfilled seats remain unfilled.

Women in Cyprus are politically engaged, and in the 2016 parliamentary elections made up 75 percent of the polling stations' staff. However, they are underrepresented in political parties; no party has a woman leader, and parties have failed to meet internal quotas mandating that 30 to 35 percent of candidates be women. Women also hold only 18 percent of the seats in parliament. Sexism and patriarchal attitudes can discourage women from playing a more active role in politics.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 11 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4**

The freely elected government is able to make and implement policy.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4

Cyprus has strong anticorruption laws that are, for the most part, adequately enforced, but was plagued by a string of high-profile corruption scandals in 2017. In March, for example, former deputy attorney general Rikkos Erotokritou was sentenced to three-and-a-half years in prison for accepting bribes in 2015 while in office.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 4 / 4

In general, the government operates with openness and transparency. However, Cyprus lacks a freedom of information law—a draft bill was presented for public comment in 2015, but at the end of 2017 no vote had been scheduled in parliament.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 56 / 60**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 15 / 16****D1. Are there free and independent media? 4 / 4**

Freedom of speech is constitutionally guaranteed and generally respected. A vibrant independent press frequently criticizes the authorities. Private and public media compete.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Freedom of religion is guaranteed by the constitution and protected in practice. Nearly all inhabitants of the south are Orthodox Christians. Minority religions sometimes experience discrimination. Muslim and Buddhist groups have occasionally faced obstacles in the operation of their religious sites. The government facilitates crossings at the UN buffer zone between north and south to facilitate worship at religious sites.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 3 / 4

Academic freedom is respected in Cyprus. However, state schools use textbooks containing negative language about Turkish Cypriots and Turkey.

Though a general climate of moderation had recently prevailed, the status quo was upset in February 2017 by the passage of a motion in parliament proposed by the far-right ELAM that requires schools to honor the 1950 plebiscite in which Greek Cypriots voted for unification with Greece. In response, parliament passed a law in April requiring that the education ministry consult with the House education committee on commemorations—a move meant to undercut the controversial provision.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

People are generally free to engage in political and other sensitive discussions without fear of retribution or surveillance.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 12 / 12**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4**

Freedom of assembly is generally respected.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) usually operate without government interference. A memorandum of cooperation was signed between the police and 12 NGOs in March 2017 to improve relations and prevent misunderstandings.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

Workers have the right to strike, form independent trade unions, and engage in collective bargaining. The law provides remedies for antiunion discrimination, though enforcement is uneven.

F. RULE OF LAW: 15 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 4 / 4

Cyprus's independent judiciary operates principally according to the British tradition. Since ascension to the EU in 2004, the legal system has been harmonizing with EU law.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 4 / 4

Cyprus's legal system generally upholds due process.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 4 / 4

While Cyprus is free from war and insurgencies, the Council of Europe and other groups have noted occasional cases of police brutality, including the August 2017 beating of a 60-year-old Turkish citizen who crossed a checkpoint without showing his visa. Overcrowding at prisons and migrant detention centers has decreased but remains a problem. Force was sometimes used by authorities to suppress protests at detention centers.

Since the 2015 election of a new, pro-reunification president in Northern Cyprus, Mustafa Akinci, talks between the two sides have raised hopes for a lasting solution to the island's partition, which resulted from a 1974 Turkish invasion of the north following a coup aimed at union with Greece. After resuming UN-sponsored negotiations in January 2017, talks broke down following the Turkish insistence that their military be allowed to remain on the island to guarantee the peace.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

Antidiscrimination laws prohibit bias based on sexual orientation, but the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) community faces societal discrimination in practice. Laws barring incitement to hatred apply to both sexual orientation and gender identity. There are no explicit provisions protecting transgender people.

Despite government efforts to combat prejudice and inequality, non-Greek Cypriot minorities, including migrants and asylum seekers, face discrimination and occasional violence. Authorities' long-term detention of irregular migrants and asylum seekers in prison-like facilities, delays in processing asylum applications, and extremely rigorous conditions for asylum have all drawn criticism from NGO leaders.

Gender discrimination in the workplace is a problem, including in hiring practices and salaries, and laws against it have not been adequately enforced.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 14 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4

Although the UN buffer zone dividing the island remains in place, freedom of movement has improved since 2004 due to a growing number of border crossings.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 4 / 4

Private property rights are generally respected in Cyprus. However, the status of property abandoned by those who fled north after the 1974 invasion is a point of contention in reunification talks with Northern Cyprus. A 1991 law states that property left by Turkish Cypriots belongs to the state. Under the law in the north, Greek Cypriots can appeal to the Immovable Property Commission (IMP), which in 2010 was recognized as the responsible authority for the resolution of property disputes. As of the end of December 2017, 850 cases out of a total of 6,392 applications have been settled for over \$359,000,000.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 4 / 4

Sexual harassment is widespread in Cyprus. To address the issue, the ombudsman provides training to public-sector employees. Domestic violence is a growing problem. Two government-funded shelters are open to survivors of domestic abuse.

In 2015, the parliament passed legislation allowing same-sex civil unions, but it did not include adoption rights for same-sex couples.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

While the government has made genuine progress in combatting human trafficking, migrant workers remain vulnerable to sexual exploitation and forced labor. Migrant workers often have difficulty finding employment and social services for these vulnerable groups are inadequate.

Access to healthcare and employment opportunities are limited for people with disabilities, who experience high levels of unemployment.

Czech Republic

Population: 10,600,000

Capital: Prague

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 1

Freedom Rating: 1.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: The Czech Republic is a parliamentary democracy in which political rights and civil liberties are generally respected. However, in recent years, the country has experienced a number of corruption scandals and political disputes that hampered normal legislative activity. Illiberal rhetoric and the influence of powerful business entities in the political arena are increasingly visible.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Billionaire Andrej Babiš and his Movement of Dissatisfied Citizens (ANO) party won a plurality of seats in October's parliamentary elections. Babiš was named prime minister in December, but without a clear prospect of support for his cabinet in the new Chamber of Deputies.
- In October, Babiš was charged with fraud, in a case involving the disbursement of more than \$2 million in European Union (EU) subsidies to his agribusiness company, Agrofert, 10 years prior. His immunity had been revoked by the parliament in September. (Babiš placed Agrofert and other assets in trusts in response to 2016 conflict-of-interest legislation, but the independence of the trustees has been questioned.)

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 37 / 40 (-1)**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4**

The president is head of state, and is directly elected to up to two five-year terms. The last election, held in 2013, in which Miloš Zeman was elected, was considered free and fair. The president can veto legislation and appoints judges, central bank officials, and the prime minister and other cabinet members, but holds few other formal powers. The prime minister is head of government.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The 200 members of the Chamber of Deputies, the lower house of parliament, are elected to four-year terms by proportional representation. The Senate has 81 members elected for six-year terms, with one-third up for election every two years.

The Movement of Dissatisfied Citizens (ANO), led by controversial billionaire Andrej Babiš, won a plurality of seats in the October 2017 legislative elections. The polls were generally well administered, and the results broadly accepted by stakeholders.

Babiš was sworn in as prime minister in December, but the mainstream parties refused to cooperate with him, and he was unable to assemble a mainstream coalition. The Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSCM) and the populist, anti-immigration Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD) party revealed they would support his minority cabinet if certain programmatic conditions were met. A motion of confidence was scheduled for January 2018.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

The electoral framework is robust and generally well implemented by the State Election Commission. However, the body does not always operate with transparency, and a 2017 Organization for Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) election monitoring mission expressed concern that its meetings were typically closed to the public and opposition representatives. The OSCE mission also expressed concern about decentralized procedures surrounding the maintenance of voter lists, which made the lists difficult to verify. However, the state of voter lists was not a major concern to any party during the 2017 polls.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 15 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4**

Political parties are free to form and operate. Since the 2013 elections, the political scene has seen somewhat of a shake-up, with the establishment Civic Democratic Party (ODS) and the Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD) losing support, and space opening up for the liberal populist ANO and anti-immigration and nationalist SPD.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

Power rotates between parties regularly. The opposition holds a significant bloc of seats in the parliament.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

In an October 2017 report the Security Information Service stated that the Czech Republic faces attempted Russian and Chinese interference in its political affairs. However, these attempts have generally been ineffective.

In 2017, there was widespread discussion of the influence of politically connected media outlets, notably after a controversy arose in May involving the daily newspaper *MF Dnes*, which is among the assets Babiš placed in a trust. In a leaked recording, Babiš could apparently be heard directing the paper's staff to publish stories damaging to his political rivals. Babiš has condemned the leaked recording, but did not deny its authenticity.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

By law, all citizens have full political rights and electoral opportunities. However, the Romany minority lacks meaningful political representation. Women increased their representation in parliament in the 2017 elections, but remain underrepresented in politics and public bodies generally, and there are few initiatives aimed at boosting their political participation.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 10 / 12 (-1)**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4**

Elected officials are duly installed and generally able to craft and implement policy. However, while the ruling coalition under outgoing prime minister Bohuslav Sobotka survived its whole term, there were a number of serious conflicts between ANO and Sobotka's ČSSD that sidelined normal legislative activity and prompted talk of snap elections.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4

Corruption remains a problem in Czech politics, but institutions have been responsive to corruption allegations and scandals. Babiš was subject to a continuing investigation by Czech police and the European Anti-Fraud Office in 2017, as a result of allegations of improprieties regarding the disbursement of EU subsidy funds to small- and medium-sized enterprises in the country. It was alleged that Babiš's firm, Agrofert, had wrongfully accepted some 50 million crowns (\$2,250,000) through its anonymous ownership of a farm

complex. In September, only a month before the elections, the Chamber of Deputies lifted Babiš's immunity, and fraud charges were levied against him in October. Babiš claimed the development was a political attack on him orchestrated by his political rivals.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 3 / 4 (-1)

Although the government generally operates with transparency, the country still does not have a law regulating lobbying. In February 2017, the Minister for Human Rights and Legislation prepared a strategic document presenting different variants of potential regulation, and before the October election a proposal for a lobbying act was introduced by the government. However, the new government had not acted on the proposal by year's end. The government tends not to proactively publish information about procurement processes, public officials' salaries, and other public spending, and requires that members of the public request a time-sensitive password to view asset declarations online.

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 due to weak lobbying regulations, and obstacles in accessing public information.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 56 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 15 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 4 / 4

The media operate relatively freely, and the government does not place undue restrictions on content. Legislation protects private ownership of media outlets, but concerns remain about the extent to which the media is controlled by wealthy business figures and the potential impact of this on journalists' ability to investigate commercial interests.

Babiš placed his significant media holdings in a trust, following the approval of conflict-of-interest legislation in 2016, but the trust is controlled in part by Babiš's close associates. In 2017, leaked recording emerged in which Babiš apparently directed staff at *MF Dnes* to publish articles that could damage the reputations of his rivals, and indicated a preference that certain stories be published before or after the year's election.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4

The government generally upholds freedom of religion. Tax benefits and financial support are provided to registered religious groups. The state has initiated a process to return land confiscated from churches by the 1948–89 communist regime, which will take place over the next 30 years.

However, Islamophobic sentiment has increased in the wake of the refugee crisis confronting European states, and the country's legal battle with the EU about accepting refugee quotas. The populist and anti-immigration SPD relied heavily on Islamophobic rhetoric during the 2017 election campaign, calling Islam "incompatible with freedom and democracy" and purchasing billboards that read "No to Islam."

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is respected. Ceremonial presidential approval is required for academic positions.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

People are generally able to express controversial or political opinions without fear of surveillance or retribution.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 12 / 12**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4**

Freedom of assembly is upheld in practice, and demonstrations take place frequently and without incident. The Prague Pride Parade—an annual event held by the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) community—was attended by 35,000 people in August 2017.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Tens of thousands of registered nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operate in the country, generally without intimidation or interference from government or security forces.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

Trade unions and professional associations function freely, though they are weak in practice. Workers have the right to strike, though this right is limited for essential public employees, such as hospital workers and air traffic controllers.

F. RULE OF LAW: 14 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 3 / 4**

The judiciary is largely independent, though its complexity and multilayered composition have led to slow delivery of judgments.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 4 / 4

The rule of law generally prevails in civil and criminal matters. While corruption and political pressure remain within law enforcement agencies, the office of the public prosecutor has become more independent in recent years.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 4 / 4

The Czech Republic is one of the safest states in the world. However, prisons in the Czech Republic are overcrowded and at times unsanitary.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

The 2009 Antidiscrimination Act provides for equal treatment regardless of sex, race, age, disability, belief, or sexual orientation. The Roma minority faces discrimination in the job market and significantly poorer housing conditions than non-Roma, as well as occasional threats and violence from right-wing groups. Many Roma children attend ethnically segregated schools.

Women are underrepresented at the highest levels of business. According to data from the European Commission, the gender pay gap in the Czech Republic is one of the largest in the EU.

Asylum seekers are routinely detained, and conditions in detention centers are generally poor. Xenophobic, antirefugee rhetoric has been voiced by Interior Minister Milan Chovanec and President Zeman. In July 2017, after accepting just 12 asylum seekers of its EU-mandated quota of around 2,700, authorities announced the country would no longer comply with the program.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 15 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4

Individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 4 / 4

Economic freedoms are well respected in the Czech Republic.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 4 / 4

Authorities generally do not restrict social freedoms, though same-sex marriages are not legally recognized. While gender discrimination is legally prohibited, sexual harassment in the workplace appears to be fairly common.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

Human trafficking remains a problem as organized criminal groups use the country as a source, transit, and destination point; women and children are particularly vulnerable to being trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation. The government has made increasing efforts in recent years to fund protective services and other resources for victims, and to prosecute perpetrators.

Denmark

Population: 5,700,000

Capital: Copenhagen

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 1

Freedom Rating: 1.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Denmark is a robust democracy with regular free and fair elections. Citizens enjoy full political rights, the government protects free expression and association, and the judiciary functions independently. However, Denmark has struggled to uphold all fundamental freedoms for immigrants and other newcomers.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In June, the Danish Helsinki Committee criticized the conditions of the Kærshovedgård detention center as offering worse conditions than Danish prisons. The center houses people whose asylum applications were rejected, but whom the government is for various reasons unable to deport.
- In December, lawmakers passed a measure stipulating that Denmark was no longer bound by a UN refugee resettlement quota.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 40 / 40**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4**

The constitution retains a monarch, currently Queen Margrethe II, with mostly ceremonial duties. The monarch chooses the prime minister, usually the leader of the majority party or government coalition. Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen, representing the Liberal Party, was appointed by Queen Margrethe following competitive and free 2015 general elections.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The 179 members of Denmark's unicameral parliament are elected to four-year terms through a system of modified proportional representation.

The most recent parliamentary elections were held in 2015. Rasmussen's Liberal Party won 47 seats, and Rasmussen formed a minority government. The populist, anti-immigration, Euroskeptic Danish People's Party had a successful showing, winning 37 seats to become the second-largest party in the parliament. The elections were considered credible and free, and their results were accepted by stakeholders and the public.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

Robust electoral laws are upheld impartially by the various bodies tasked with implementation. A 2015 Organization for Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) preelection assessment mission reported a high level of public confidence in the country's election laws and administration.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 16 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4**

Numerous political parties compete freely.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

The Danish political system is open to the rise of opposition parties through elections. In recent years, the most significant political ascent has been that of the Danish People's Party, though it has never formally been in government.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

Voters and political figures are generally free from undue influences by actors who are not democratically accountable.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 4 / 4

The electoral laws guarantee universal suffrage for citizens, as well as representation in regional and municipal elections for permanent residents. Refugees and other immigrants

may vote in municipal and regional elections after having obtained permanent residence at least three years before an election date. Women, LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people, and members of ethnic and religious minorities are active in political life.

The territories of Greenland and the Faroe Islands each have two representatives in the parliament. They also have their own elected institutions, which have power over almost all areas of governance, except foreign and financial policy.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 12 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4

Denmark's freely elected government is able to craft and implement policy. Danish governments most often control a minority of seats in the parliament, ruling with the aid of one or more supporting parties. Since 1909, no single party has held a majority of seats, helping to create a tradition of compromise.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 4 / 4

Anticorruption laws and bodies are generally effective, and corruption is not considered an urgent problem in Denmark. However, a scandal that arose in 2015, which revolved around the public procurement of computer equipment, continued to play out in 2017. By year's end, several government workers had been convicted of bribery and embezzlement in connection with the scandal.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 4 / 4

Government operations are generally transparent. However, the government has come under pressure to amend the Public Information Act to remove restrictions on certain information, including documents that are shared between ministers and their advisers.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 57 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 16 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 4 / 4

Domestic media reflect a wide variety of political opinions and are frequently critical of the government.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Freedom of worship is legally protected. However, the Evangelical Lutheran Church is subsidized by the government as the official state religion. The faith is taught in public schools, though students may withdraw from religious classes with parental consent.

In 2015, a Danish citizen of Palestinian origin launched an attack on a freedom of expression event and then on a Copenhagen synagogue, killing several people. Since the attack, the government has provided security for Jewish religious and cultural facilities considered to be at risk of attack.

Representatives of Denmark's Muslim community have reported that Muslims perceive increasing scrutiny by both the government and society at large. The Danish People's Party in 2017 called on Muslims to celebrate Christmas and Easter as a means of proving that they are Danish, prompting widespread criticism. Hate speech against Muslims has been increasingly present in political discourse. A number of Muslim graves were vandalized in February 2017, and police were unable to identify the perpetrators.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is generally respected.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

Private discussion is vibrant and unrestricted.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 12 / 12**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4**

The constitution provides for freedom of assembly, which is upheld in practice. A number of demonstrations took place peacefully in 2017.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operate freely in Denmark, and frequently inform policy debates.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

Workers are free to organize and bargain collectively.

F. RULE OF LAW: 14 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 4 / 4**

The judiciary is independent. Judges are formally appointed by the monarch, but are recommended by the justice minister, in consultation with the independent Judicial Appointments Council.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 3 / 4

Citizens enjoy full due-process rights. However, individuals who were denied asylum in Denmark, but whom the government is for various reasons unable to deport, may be subject to administrative measures parallel to those imposed on people who have been convicted of crimes. For example, many such individuals must live at isolated centers with poor facilities where they are subject to travel restrictions, and have no legal option to challenge their placement. In June 2017, the Danish Helsinki Committee criticized the conditions of one detention center in particular, Kærshovedgård, for offering worse conditions than Danish prisons.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 4 / 4

People in Denmark are generally free from violent crime and physical abuse by state authorities.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

Danish immigration laws have long been some of the harshest in Europe, and immigration laws and asylum policies were further tightened in response to the massive influx of refugees and asylum seekers entering Europe beginning in 2015; the influx has since waned, with Denmark accepting roughly 3,500 asylum applications in 2017, compared to more than 20,000 in 2015. A 2016 measure permits the confiscation of valuables carried by asylum

seekers when they enter the country. In December 2017, lawmakers passed a measure stipulating that Denmark—which was among the first signatories to the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees—was no longer bound by a UN refugee resettlement quota. Denmark’s annual quota since 1989 had been 500 refugees. In apparent response to the influx of foreign-born students, a school in Aarhus began segregating students by ethnicity in 2016, and in 2017 continued to draw criticism over the policy.

Discrimination, including based on gender identity or sexual orientation, is prohibited by law. Under a 2016 law, the state of identifying as transgender is no longer considered a mental disorder. However, procedures related to legally changing one’s gender remain lengthy.

The Greenlandic Inuit community faces social marginalization, though the government has implemented programs to address this issue.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 15 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4

Freedom of movement is protected by law and generally respected by the government.

In 2015, a new law entered into force allowing police to confiscate the passport of any individual suspected of planning to leave Denmark to engage in armed conflict abroad. Critics said the law, which arose from concerns about Danish nationals traveling to Syria and Iraq in particular, has a low evidentiary threshold, allows room for arbitrary decisions, and requires only minimal judicial oversight. In a 2016 follow-up measure, the government made it illegal for Danish citizens to enter and reside in certain parts of Iraq and Syria controlled by the Islamic State (IS) militant group. A number of people have seen their passports revoked under the measures.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 4 / 4

Private business activity is free from undue influence by government officials or non-state actors.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

Refugees and other newcomers face lengthy waiting times for family reunification, including in cases involving small children, and restrictions on family reunification were tightened in the wake of the 2015 refugee crisis. The continued enforcement of restrictions on family reunification for refugees drew concern from the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) in 2017.

In 1989, Denmark became the first country in the world to adopt same-sex civil unions, and in 2012, the parliament overwhelmingly passed same-sex marriage legislation enabling couples to wed in the Lutheran state church of their choosing. Priests are not obligated to officiate but, when requested to do so, must find a colleague who will.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 4 / 4

Public- and private-sector workers are generally free from exploitation by employers. However, migrants engaged in forced labor can be found in some sectors, including the agricultural and service industries. Women and children, also primarily migrants, can be found engaged in forced sex work. The government and NGOs work, frequently in conjunction, to identify and prevent human trafficking and to provide aid to victims.

Djibouti

Population: 900,000

Capital: Djibouti

Political Rights Rating: 6

Civil Liberties Rating: 5

Freedom Rating: 5.5

Freedom Status: Not Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: Djibouti is a republic ruled by a powerful president, Ismail Omar Guelleh, who has been in office since 1999 and is not subject to term limits. While Djibouti technically has a multiparty political system, the ruling Union for a Presidential Majority (UMP) uses authoritarian means to maintain its dominant position. The opposition's ability to operate is severely constrained, and journalists and activists who air criticism of Guelleh or the UMP are regularly harassed or arrested.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In March, authorities arrested 19 members of the Movement for Democratic Renewal and Development (MRD), a banned opposition party; most were quickly released, but four were convicted of "illegal political activity" and served two months in jail.
- Ahmed Youssouf Houmed, leader of the opposition coalition Union for National Salvation (USN), died in France in September. The USN won 10 seats in the parliament in 2013, but has since splintered, and the death of its leader cast further doubt on the opposition's preparations for the next parliamentary elections in February 2018.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 7 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 2 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

The president, who holds most executive power in Djibouti, serves five-year terms under current rules. President Guelleh was elected to a fourth term in 2016, having been credited with 87 percent of the vote. The opposition fractured, with some groups boycotting the poll and others running competing candidates. The run-up to the election was marked by restrictions on the media and the harassment or detention of opposition figures. Among other reported irregularities on election day, opposition parties complained that their monitors were turned away from polling sites.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4

The 65 members of the unicameral legislature, the National Assembly, are directly elected for five-year terms. Constitutional changes in 2010 called for the creation of an upper house, the Senate, but steps to establish the new chamber have yet to be taken.

In 2013, Djibouti held the first legislative polls to be contested by the opposition in a decade. Official results showed that the UMP won 55 seats and the USN took 10, but the opposition accused the government of fraud and censorship, and USN representatives

refused to take their seats in protest. The USN reached an agreement with the UMP at the end of 2014 and ended its boycott of the parliament in January 2015, but it has since complained that the government violated the agreement by failing to enact a series of democratic reforms. The next legislative elections were set for February 2018.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 1 / 4

A core element of the 2014 political agreement was a pledge to reform the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI), which the opposition has accused of progovernment bias. No such reforms took place before the 2016 presidential election. Other provisions of the electoral framework give an advantage to the dominant party, for example by awarding at least 80 percent of the seats in each multimember parliamentary district to the party that wins a majority in that district.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 3 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 1 / 4

While Djibouti technically has a multiparty political system, parties must obtain registration from the government to operate legally, and the authorities have denied recognition to some opposition parties, including the MRD.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 0 / 4

President Guelleh has been in power since 1999, when he succeeded his uncle, the only other president since independence in 1977. The 2013 elections marked the first time that the opposition had won any seats in the National Assembly. Opposition parties have traditionally been disadvantaged by Djibouti's first-past-the-post electoral system, controls on the media, abuse of state resources to favor incumbents, and regular arrests and harassment of opposition leaders and supporters. In March 2017, the authorities arrested 19 members of the MRD without a warrant. Most were released after a few days, but four men were convicted of "illegal political activity" and sentenced to two months in jail. The four were released in May, but they and other MRD figures continued to face judicial harassment.

In September, USN leader Ahmed Youssouf Houmed died while undergoing medical treatment in France, adding to uncertainty about the opposition's unity and strategy ahead of parliamentary elections in February 2018.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 1 / 4

The ruling party dominates the state apparatus and uses security forces and other administrative resources to marginalize, disrupt, and suppress independent political activity.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 1 / 4

Minority groups, including the Afar, Yemeni Arabs, and non-Issa Somalis, are represented at all levels of the government, but the president's majority Issa group holds paramount positions in the ruling party, the civil service, and the security forces. In practice,

the authoritarian political system restricts the ability of ethnic and religious minorities to organize independently and advance their interests.

Women's ability to engage in independent political activism is also constrained, and they are underrepresented in leadership positions, partly due to societal discrimination. Women held about 10 percent of the seats in the parliament elected in 2013.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 2 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 0 / 4

The president, who is not freely elected, effectively controls policymaking and governance, and the UMP-dominated parliament does not serve as a meaningful check on executive power.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

Corruption is a serious problem, and efforts to curb malfeasance in public agencies have met with little success. State bodies tasked with combating corruption lack the resources and independence to function effectively. Prosecutions of senior officials are rare.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 1 / 4

The government has made legislation publicly available and created some mechanisms for citizens to request information, but there is no law establishing the right to access government information. Policymaking and public administration remain largely nontransparent. Rules on asset disclosure by public officials are poorly enforced.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 19 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 6 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4

Despite constitutional protections, freedom of speech is not upheld in practice, and journalists engage in self-censorship to avoid professional or legal repercussions for critical reporting. A 1992 communications law establishes defamation and distribution of false information as criminal offenses, while also imposing restrictive requirements on senior employees of media outlets. The government owns the dominant newspaper, television station, and radio broadcaster.

Approximately 13 percent of the population has internet access. While the government typically places few restrictions on the internet, some outlets have faced interference and harassment. The websites of the opposition radio station La Voix de Djibouti, run by exiles in Europe, and the Association for Respect for Human Rights in Djibouti (ARDHD) are sometimes blocked by the state-owned internet service provider. At least three bloggers and online activists were arrested during 2017 for posting critical content on Facebook, but their cases were later dismissed.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 1 / 4

Islam is the state religion, and 94 percent of the population is Sunni Muslim. The Ministry of Islamic Affairs oversees religious matters; a 2013 law gave it authority over mosques and imams. While the government has claimed that this supervision is meant to counter foreign influence, it has also been used to curb political dissent. Security services have questioned imams who give sermons on political or social justice themes, and some

have been jailed. Under the 2013 law, imams are gradually being converted into civil service employees.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 2 / 4

Academic freedom is not always respected. Teachers and other education staff have at times been dismissed for alleged affiliation with opposition groups and trade unions in recent years. The state oversees the curriculum of the secular public school system and those of the country's Islamic schools.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 2 / 4

Open discussion of sensitive political issues is impeded by restrictive laws on defamation and other speech-related offenses. The government reportedly monitors social media for critical content and conducts surveillance on perceived opponents.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 3 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 0 / 4

Freedom of assembly, while nominally protected under the constitution, is not respected in practice. Permits are required for public assemblies. In past years the police have engaged in mass arrests and violence when breaking up demonstrations, leading to a number of deaths in late 2015. Among other incidents in 2017, security personnel forcibly dispersed an MRD gathering in September 2017 and a protest by job seekers in October.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 1 / 4

Local human rights groups that work on politically sensitive matters cannot operate freely and are often the target of government harassment and intimidation. In one case in 2017, Omar Ali Ewado, a leader human rights activist, was arbitrarily detained for a week in March. Some organizations that focus on social and economic development, including women's rights groups, are tolerated or supported by the government.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

Though workers may legally join unions and strike, the government has been known to intimidate labor leaders and obstruct union activities. The Labor Ministry has broad discretion over union registration, allowing it to support progovernment unions and deny recognition to independent labor groups.

F. RULE OF LAW: 4 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 0 / 4

The courts are not independent of the government and reportedly suffer from corruption. Supreme Court judges are appointed by the president, with the advice of a judicial council dominated by presidential and UMP nominees. The president and parliamentary majority also control appointments to the Constitutional Council.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 2 / 4

Security forces frequently make arrests without the required court approval, and lengthy pretrial detention is a problem, with detainees often waiting years to go to trial. Allegations

of politically motivated prosecutions are common, and opposition groups consistently accuse the government of sanctioning arbitrary arrests and detentions.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 1 / 4

Security forces regularly engage in physical abuse and torture during arrest and detention. In March 2017, cartoonist Idriss Hassan Mohamed was arbitrarily detained for several days and reportedly suffered a broken leg due to abuse in custody after he posted criticism of the government on Facebook.

Occasional clashes between the rebel group Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy (FRUD) and Djiboutian security forces occur on the country's periphery, and the rebels took two hostages in July 2017. Tensions with Eritrea, which has been accused of supporting the FRUD, increased in June when Qatar withdrew a peacekeeping force from the contested border region. The move was seen as a response to Djibouti's decision to downgrade diplomatic relations with Qatar as part of the latter's dispute with neighboring Persian Gulf states.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

Though the law provides for equal treatment for all Djiboutian citizens, minority ethnic groups and clans suffer from discrimination that contributes to their social and economic marginalization. Women have fewer employment opportunities and are paid less than men for the same work. An estimated 60 percent of girls now receive primary education following efforts to increase female enrollment in schools; the figure for boys is more than 67 percent. While the law requires at least 20 percent of upper-level public service positions to be held by women, this rule has not been enforced.

While same-sex sexual activity is not specifically banned, such conduct has been penalized under broader morality laws, and there are no laws in place to prevent discrimination against LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people. Matters of sexual orientation and gender identity are generally not discussed publicly.

Djibouti hosted more than 27,000 refugees in 2017, mostly from Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Yemen. However, slow processing of asylum claims leaves many asylum seekers at risk of deportation. A law signed in January provides for refugees' access to health care, employment, and education; registered refugees are able to work without a permit.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 6 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 2 / 4

Due to anti-FRUD security operations and tense relations with Eritrea, movement in Djibouti's militarized border areas is restricted.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

Private property protections are weak, according to the Heritage Foundation's Index of Economic Freedom, and court proceedings on business and property matters are "time-consuming, prone to corruption, and politically manipulated."

Customary practices and personal status rules based on Sharia (Islamic law) place women at a disadvantage regarding inheritance and property ownership.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 1 / 4

The law prohibits female genital mutilation, but most women and girls in the country have undergone the procedure. Domestic violence is rarely reported and prosecuted, and spousal rape is not specifically criminalized. The Sharia-based family code requires women to obtain a guardian's consent to marry, among other discriminatory provisions surrounding marriage and divorce.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

There are limited employment prospects in the formal sector, as the president and the ruling party tightly control all large-scale economic activity, including that surrounding lucrative military bases leased by foreign powers.

A new law on human trafficking was adopted in 2016, prescribing strong penalties for trafficking offenses and providing for victim-assistance programs. However, the law was not actively implemented during 2017.

Dominica

Population: 68,000

Capital: Roseau

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 1

Freedom Rating: 1.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Dominica is a parliamentary democracy, and has been governed by the Dominica Labor Party (DLP) since 2000. While the country is committed to democratic governance and civil liberties are generally upheld, a number of concerns persist; these include effective management of elections, judicial efficiency, and government integrity—notably relating to the country's Citizenship by Investment Program (CIP).

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Concerns over the operation of the CIP were reinforced after an Iranian who held a Dominican diplomatic passport was arrested in Iran in connection with a corruption scandal there, and in the wake of a March report by the US State Department that described the CIP program as vulnerable to criminal abuse.
- An antigovernment protest in February gave way to acts of looting and vandalism, and saw police deploy tear gas against unruly protesters. The prime minister characterized the events as an attempt by the opposition to “seize the seat of power.”

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 37 / 40 (-1)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 11 / 12 (-1)

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The president, who is the ceremonial head of state, is elected by the House of Assembly for a five-year term. The prime minister is head of government and is appointed by the

president. In 2013, the government elected former minister of security Charles Savarin as president. The leader of the governing DLP, Roosevelt Skerrit, retained his position as prime minister after his party won a majority of the parliamentary seats in the 2014 general elections, which were competitive and credible.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

Dominica's unicameral House of Assembly consists of 30 members who serve five-year terms; 21 members are directly elected, 5 senators are appointed by the prime minister, and 4 are appointed by the opposition leader.

The DLP won 15 seats in the 2014 general elections, and the UWP captured 6. The electoral observation mission of the Organization of American States (OAS) deemed the elections well run and credible, although it cited some irregularities; these included stringent standards for what constituted a valid mark on a ballot, which led to the rejection of some legitimately marked ballots.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4 (-1)

The Electoral Commission manages and organizes the election process, and the electoral laws are generally fair. However, constituencies in Dominica have not changed since 1990, and the OAS has raised concerns about their unbalanced sizes, with the largest constituency having over 7,000 registered voters and the smallest having just over 1,500. The OAS has also cited concerns about Dominica's outdated voter list.

Electoral amendments were set to be discussed in parliament in May 2017, but the discussion was postponed due to protests over controversial provisions the opposition said would effectively legalize bribery.

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 due to a failure to address the unbalanced size of electoral districts, which allows unequal voting power among citizens.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 16 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4

Political parties are free to organize and operate. The effects of the country's "first-past-the-post" electoral system has entrenched two-party politics, and while there are a number of small political parties in the country, since 2005 only the DLP and UWP have won seats in parliament.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

Opposition parties are generally free to operate and unencumbered by formal restrictions. However, there has not been a change of party in government since 2000. Additionally, following a series of antigovernment protests in 2017, the government denied several demonstration permits to the opposition, citing public security grounds.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

Voters and candidates are generally able to express their political choices without undue influence from actors that are not democratically accountable.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 4 / 4

All adult citizens may vote. The indigenous Carib-Kalinago population participates in the political process. Women hold only three seats in the House of Assembly, and are underrepresented in politics generally. The LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) community is marginalized, and this impacts the ability of LGBT people to engage fully in political processes.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 10 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4

The freely elected prime minister, cabinet, and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4

While the government generally implements anticorruption laws effectively, domestic and international observers have raised concerns over Dominica's CIP, a citizenship program that allows foreigners to gain citizenship through an economic investment in the country. These have included persistent allegations that the government has sold diplomatic passports to noncitizens.

In January 2017 Iranian national Alireza Zibahalat Monfared, who had held a Dominican diplomatic passport, was arrested in Iran in connection with alleged involvement in an Iranian corruption scandal. The Dominican government subsequently stated that it does not sell diplomatic passports, but in the wake of the scandal, officials stopped issuing diplomatic passports to noncitizens in order to review the policy and update regulations. In February, the prime minister announced an interim policy to tighten the issuance of diplomatic passports. In a March 2017 report, the US State Department described CIP as vulnerable and "susceptible to abuse by criminal actors."

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 3 / 4

The government of Dominica generally operates with openness and transparency, though there are concerns that the length of the DLP's incumbency has hampered transparency on some programs, including the CIP. Government officials are required to submit financial accounts, but these accounts are frequently incomplete, and are not shared with the public prosecutor.

Access to information is not protected by law, but the government makes efforts to provide information on many topics, and makes information related to the budget available online.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 56 / 60 (-1)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 15 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4

Freedom of expression is constitutionally guaranteed, and the press is generally free in practice. However, defamation remains a criminal offense punishable by imprisonment or fines. Defamation lawsuits and threats of lawsuits are commonly used by the Skerit government against members of the media, resulting in some self-censorship.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Freedom of religion is protected under the constitution and other laws, and is generally respected in practice.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is generally respected.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

Individuals are generally free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 11 / 12 (-1)**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 3 / 4 (-1)**

Freedom of assembly is guaranteed under the constitution, and the government has generally respected these rights. However, some unrest took place at opposition protests in 2017, and the prime minister characterized the protest events as threats to state security. In February, a demonstration at which participants called for the prime minister's resignation took place in the capital, Roseau; the event saw some looting and significant acts of vandalism, and saw the use of tear gas by police against protesters. Skerrit, in his criticism of the events, suggested that the unrest amounted to an organized attempt by the opposition to "seize the seat of power." In May, police fired a warning shot in response to a protest outside Parliament, and other shots were heard.

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 due to unrest at opposition protests, including vandalism and looting by protesters, and the deployment of tear gas and firing of warning shots by police.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights—and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and advocacy groups generally operate without interference.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

Workers have the right to organize, strike, and bargain collectively, and laws prohibit antiunion discrimination by employers. However, the country's definition of "essential" workers is broad, extending to those in the agricultural sector, and there are burdensome restrictions on the ability of these workers to strike.

F. RULE OF LAW: 15 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 4 / 4**

An independent judiciary is provided for in the constitution, and judicial independence is generally respected. Courts are subordinate to the inter-island Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court (ECSC).

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 4 / 4

The constitution provides for due process rights, and these are generally observed in practice. While the judicial system generally operates efficiently, staffing shortages remain a problem and can result in prolonged pretrial detention, which can last as long as 24 months.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 4 / 4

People in Dominica generally enjoy freedom from illegitimate force. The Dominica police force operates professionally, and there have been few complaints of violations of human rights by officers in recent years.

In 2014, five police officers were charged in connection with the death of a detainee in a holding cell, and two officers were awaiting trial as of September 2017.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

Members of Dominica's small indigenous population, the Carib-Kalinago, face discrimination and a variety of accompanying challenges, including high poverty levels and difficulties in obtaining loans from banks. Rastafarians have reported discrimination and profiling by police. Same-sex sexual relations are illegal, though the government has stated that the nation's Sexual Offences Act—which criminalizes “buggery”—has never been enforced. Sexual harassment is not prohibited by law and is a widespread problem.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 15 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4

Individuals in Dominica generally enjoy freedom of movement, though those outside the established Carib-Kalinago community must apply for special access to the Carib Reserve area, which is granted by the Carib Council.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or non-state actors? 4 / 4

The government of Dominica is pro-business, and supports both domestic and foreign investment. Property rights are generally safeguarded. However, women have more limited rights because property is deeded to the head of household, who is usually a man.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

Women and children have some limitations on their personal freedoms, including freedom from violence. There is little protection against domestic abuse, and both violence against women and child abuse remain widespread problems.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 4 / 4

Although poverty and unemployment are serious issues in Dominica, the government has made efforts to improve the economic situation for the country.

In September 2017, Hurricane Maria devastated Dominica. Just under 30 people were killed, and, according to the United Nations, approximately 90 percent of the homes in Dominica were destroyed by the hurricane, which also severely affected the tourism and agricultural industries. The effects of the storm are likely to have a detrimental impact on socioeconomic mobility for many people.

Trafficking in persons was not a major problem in Dominica in 2017.

Dominican Republic

Population: 10,600,000

Capital: Santo Domingo

Political Rights Rating: 3

Civil Liberties Rating: 3

Freedom Rating: 3.0

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: The Dominican Republic holds regular elections that are relatively free, though the most recent polls exposed deficiencies in the electoral framework that disadvantage less established parties. Pervasive corruption undermines state institutions, and discrimination against Dominicans of Haitian descent and Haitian migrants, as well as against LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people, remains a serious problem.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Electoral reform efforts dominated the legislative agenda in 2017, after the previous year's polls exposed significant flaws in the electoral framework. Lawmakers debated, but ultimately failed to approve, a new electoral law and a law on political parties.
- A well-known lawyer was found murdered in October, and a police investigation indicated that he was killed as he was moving to expose a corruption scandal involving a Santo Domingo city agency.
- In May, the Senate upheld the criminalization of abortion, despite objections from civil society and President Danilo Medina.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 26 / 40 (-1)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 9 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

The president is both head of state and chief of government, and is elected to a four-year term. A 2015 constitutional amendment allowed the possibility of presidential reelection, and Medina, of the Dominican Liberation Party (PLD), won a second term in 2016.

Observers from the Organization of American States (OAS) monitored the presidential and concurrent legislative elections, and deemed them credible. However, they called for major reforms to guarantee equal access to party financing, and noted "a high degree of unfairness in access to the media by the political parties in contention." The mission also expressed concern about serious complications involving new electronic voting and vote-counting infrastructure; delays in tabulation resulted in the full final results not being made public until 13 days after the elections. Six people were killed in election-related violence the Central Election Board (JCE) head claimed had erupted out of frustration with delays created by demands for manual vote-counting.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

In the 2016 legislative elections, held concurrently with presidential elections, the ruling PLD captured 26 of the Senate's 32 seats and 106 out of 190 seats of the Chamber

of Deputies. The OAS observer mission, in its report on the presidential and legislative elections, deemed the polls credible, but called for major reforms to guarantee equal access to party financing and media coverage, questioned the efficacy of the new electronic voting and vote-counting infrastructure, and condemned the election-related violence.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4

The 2016 general elections exposed serious problems with electoral infrastructure and the capacities of the JCE, with some saying the delays in vote-counting precipitated post-election violence. The polls also exposed irregularities in party financing. Electoral reform has since been heavily debated in the legislature. In 2017, an amendment to the General Electoral Law and a separate bill on political parties were considered, though neither was passed.

Despite the JCE's shortcomings, the body operates with some transparency and cooperates with international election monitors, opposition parties, and other relevant groups.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 10 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 3 / 4

Political parties are generally free to form and operate. However, under current electoral laws, smaller parties struggle to access to public financing and secure equal media coverage, hampering their competitiveness.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 3 / 4

The ability of smaller and emerging political parties to access public financing and the media on equal terms with larger parties is restricted under the current electoral framework, making it difficult for them to increase their support or power through elections.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 3 / 4

People are generally free to exercise their political choices. However, a history of violent police responses to social and political demonstrations may deter political participation by some, and economic oligarchies and organized crime groups have some influence over the political sphere. Private donations to political parties are unlimited and unregulated, allowing wealthy donors significant influence over politics.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 1 / 4

A 2013 Constitutional Court decision stripped Dominican-born descendants of Haitian migrants of their citizenship, and thus their right to vote.

Parity laws have led to a higher number of women in the legislature, but women lawmakers report that it is difficult for them to exert influence over their parties' positions and to secure funding for political candidacies. A number of marches against gender-based violence have taken place recently, and while the problem generally affects women, a November 2017 march also drew hundreds of men.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 7 / 12 (-1)**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 3 / 4**

Government and legislative representatives are generally able to determine national policies in a free and unhindered manner. However, unequal party financing and access to media helped tilt the field in favor of larger parties in the 2016 elections.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

Corruption remains a serious, systemic problem for the country at all levels of the government, judiciary, and security forces, as well as in the private sector. A U.S. Justice Department investigation into the Brazilian construction company Odebrecht, the results of which surfaced in December 2016—revealed that \$92 million had been paid to public officials to obtain contracts for major infrastructure projects in the country during three consecutive governments. Several officials from previous administrations have been charged or linked to the investigations, and three in the current administration have been indicted—though sitting lawmakers enjoy immunity unless lawmakers vote to revoke it. The government has not responded to requests to establish an independent inquiry into these corruption allegations.

Separately, the body of Yuniol Ramírez, a well-known lawyer, was found submerged in a Santo Domingo creek in Santo Domingo in October, weighted with cinder blocks and with a gunshot wound to the head. A police investigation indicated that he was investigating acts of corruption in the procurement system of the Metropolitan Office of Bus Services (OMSA) before his killing. Two dozen arrest warrants were issued in response to the murder.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4 (-1)

Efforts to increase government transparency are ongoing, but implementation remains elusive. Although state agencies generally respond to information requests, they often provide inaccurate or incomplete information. Public officials are required to publicly disclose assets, but nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have cast doubt upon the accuracy of these disclosures. Public contracting and purchasing processes are opaque and allow for high levels of corruption, as reflected in the Odebrecht scandal.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 because authorities' continued failure to improve government transparency, particularly with regard to public contracting and purchasing processes, has permitted high levels of corruption.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 41 / 60**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 14 / 16****D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4**

The law guarantees freedom of speech and of the press, but journalists risk intimidation and violence when investigating sensitive issues, particularly drug trafficking and corruption. In February 2017, two radio journalists were shot to death during a live broadcast. The assailant, who reportedly believed that land he had purchased has been appropriated and given to one of the hosts, killed himself during the police response to the attack.

Several national daily newspapers and a large number of local publications operate in the country. There are more than 300 privately owned radio stations and several private television networks alongside the state-owned Radio Televisión Dominicana (RTVD). Ownership concentration is high.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Religious freedom is generally upheld, though the Catholic Church receives special privileges from the state.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Constitutional guarantees regarding academic freedom are generally observed.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

People are generally free to express personal views in public and privately without fear of retribution.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 10 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 3 / 4

While past years have seen numerous instances of demonstrations being violently dispersed by police, demonstrations in 2017 were mostly peaceful. A number of large protests against government corruption were held during the year. Smaller demonstrations against the denationalization policies affecting Dominicans of Haitian descent, and regarding the absolute prohibition of abortion, also took place in 2017.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Freedom of association is constitutionally guaranteed, and the government respects the right to form civic groups.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

Workers other than military and police personnel may form and join unions, though over 50 percent of workers at a workplace must be union members in order to engage in collective bargaining. Workers must exhaust mediation measures and meet other criteria in order for a strike to be considered legal.

F. RULE OF LAW: 8 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 3 / 4

The judiciary is plagued by corruption and is susceptible to political pressure. Reports of selective prosecution and the improper dismissal of cases continue.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 2 / 4

Corruption and politicization of the judiciary has significant impact on due process, and strongly limits access to justice for people without resources or political connections. Corruption within law enforcement agencies remains a serious challenge.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 2 / 4

Murder and other violent crimes rates are high. Prisons are overcrowded. More than half of all people in the country's prisons are pretrial detainees, some of whom spend as long as three years in detention.

The National Human Rights Commission and NGOs report that security forces committed more than 100 extrajudicial killings in 2017, and that law enforcement agents continue to engage in torture in order to extract confessions from detainees.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

Dominicans of Haitian descent as well as Haitian migrants face persistent systematic discrimination, including obstacles in securing legal documents such as identification, birth certificates, and marriage licenses, and have difficulty registering their children as Dominican citizens. This lack of documentation makes it difficult for those affected to attend school and university, and obtain legal employment.

LGBT individuals suffer from violence and discrimination. They are still barred from working in certain public sectors, such as the police and armed forces. An antidiscrimination bill remains stalled in Congress, despite renewed calls from civil society to pass it after the body of a transgender woman was found dismembered in the town of Higüey in June 2017.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 9 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 2 / 4

While citizens are generally free to move around the country, there have been reports of instances in which foreigners were deported before they had a chance to collect their documentation to present to police. Asylum seekers and refugees must pay a fee to gain travel documents.

Separately, the prevalence of drive-by robberies can prompt some reluctance to move about freely, particularly at night.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 3 / 4

Private business activity remains susceptible to undue influence by organized crime and corrupt officials.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Violence and discrimination against women remains pervasive. Poor medical care has left the country with one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the region. After a 2014 law decriminalizing abortion in some situations was struck down in 2015 by the Constitutional Court, a complete ban on abortion was effectively reinstated.

In May 2017, the Senate rejected proposed amendments recommended by Medina that would have decriminalized abortion when the life of the mother is endangered or in cases of incest, rape, or fetal impairment. The House in July voted against the Senate's rejection, thus setting the stage for another legislative vote on the issue.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

The Dominican Republic remains a source, transit, and destination country for the trafficking of men, women and children for sexual exploitation and forced labor. Haitians who lack documentation and clear legal status are particularly susceptible to forced labor. Many workers in the country are employed informally, leaving them without legal protections.

↑ Ecuador

Population: 16,500,000

Capital: Quito

Political Rights Rating: 3

Civil Liberties Rating: 3↑

Freedom Rating: 3.0

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Ratings Change, Trend Arrow: Ecuador's civil liberties rating improved from 4 to 3, and it received an upward trend arrow, due to reduced pressure on the media and civil society, as well as progress on anticorruption efforts, under newly elected president Lenín Moreno.

Overview: Elections take place regularly, though there are persistent concerns about politicization of the National Electoral Council (NEC). A leftist government has ruled the country since 2007. While former president Rafael Correa imposed restrictions on the media and civil society, a new administration that came to power in 2017 has begun rolling back repressive Correa-era policies.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In February's general elections, the ruling Alianza PAIS coalition won a majority in the National Assembly. Its candidate, Lenín Moreno, won a presidential run-off in April.
- Upon taking power in May, Moreno broke with the previous Correa administration by initiating dialogue with the opposition, the media, and civil society actors. In moves reflecting greater respect for civil liberties, Moreno reined in the country's aggressive media regulators, and pardoned a number of activists who had been accused of crimes related to their peaceful protest activities.
- In December, sitting vice president Jorge Glas was convicted of "illicit association" in connection with a wide-ranging corruption scandal involving the Brazilian construction company Odebrecht, and was sentenced to six years in jail.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 25 / 40 (+1)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 7 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

The 2008 constitution provides for a directly elected president. The president has the authority to dissolve the legislature once in his term, which triggers new elections for both the assembly and the presidency, and to veto individual line items in legislation.

In April 2017, Lenín Moreno of PAIS won the presidential runoff with 51 percent of the vote, defeating Guillermo Lasso of the Creating Opportunities–Society United for More Action (CREO-SUMA) alliance, who took 49 percent. Some observers expressed concerns about the use of state resources to produce materials favoring Moreno, who had served as vice president under the outgoing president, Rafael Correa, during Correa's first term.

While Lasso denounced the results as fraudulent and refused to concede, international observers generally praised the election's conduct. Lasso requested a full recount of the vote, though the CNE granted only a partial one. The CNE in mid-April proclaimed that

the recount failed to reveal any significant discrepancy from the previous count, and ratified the election's result.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

International and domestic observers generally praised the February 2017 legislative elections, though an Organization of American States (OAS) mission urged reforms including removing the names of deceased persons from the voter rolls, and called for more training to be made available to various actors in the electoral process. The ruling PAIS coalition won 74 out of 137 seats in the unicameral National Assembly, followed by opposition CREO-SUMA, which took 28. The rest of the seats were captured by nine other parties.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 1 / 4

The CNE is considered to be government-controlled. The body faced some criticism for its administration of the 2017 elections, including for slow vote counting and irregularities on the voter rolls. Its computer system also went down temporarily during the initial vote count for the presidential runoff, after showing Lasso in an early lead. After Moreno was declared the winner of the 2017 presidential election following a partial recount, outgoing president Correa gave the CNE president a medal for his handling of the year's elections, raising questions about whether such accolades were appropriate in light of the CNE's role as the election administrator. Separately, police raided a prominent polling agency that had publicized an exit poll suggesting that Lasso had won the run-off election.

Prior to the 2013 general elections, the Correa administration promoted changes to the parliament's seat-allocation formula that favored larger parties, which critics warned would benefit PAIS. The changes were still in effect for the 2017 elections.

In 2014, the National Assembly approved 15 constitutional amendments. Among other things, the changes eliminated term limits for elected officials, though they also included a provision restricting current officials who had already served two terms, including Correa, from running for president in 2017. The opposition and several civil society groups condemned the amendments. At the request of President Moreno, the legal process to call for a referendum on banning unlimited reelection was ongoing at the end of 2017, with a vote expected in 2018.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 11 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 3 / 4

The 2008 constitution mandated that political organizations register in order to be eligible for participation in the 2013 general elections, with a requirement that groupings must collect voters' signatures equivalent to 1.5 percent of the electoral rolls to win recognition. The registration process has drawn controversy in the past, with reports that voters were signed up to support parties without their knowledge, among other irregularities. For the 2017 elections, there were 70 registered political organizations, most of them at the local level.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 2 / 4

For decades, Ecuador's political parties have been largely personality based, clientelist, and fragile. The ruling PAIS coalition remains by far the largest party in the legislature.

There were reports that the government abused administrative resources ahead of the 2017 polls, tilting the playing field in PAIS's favor.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 3 / 4

The people's political choices are generally free from domination by powerful groups that are not democratically accountable. However, wealthy business interests can undermine democratic accountability by facilitating or encouraging corruption among elected officials.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

Ecuador's constitution promotes nondiscrimination and provides for the adoption of affirmative action measures to guarantee equality and representation of minorities. In practice, however, indigenous groups often lack a voice in key decisions pertaining to their land and resources. Despite gender parity measures, women's interests are not well-represented in politics, as reflected in a persistent lack of access to reproductive health care.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 7 / 12 (+1)

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 3 / 4

Elected officials are generally free to set and implement government policy without undue interference from nonstate actors. However, the executive has exhibited a strong influence on other branches of the government, and political actors are susceptible to manipulation by powerful business interests.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4 (+1)

Ecuador has long been wracked by corruption, and the weak judiciary and lack of investigative capacity in government oversight agencies contribute to an environment of impunity.

Ecuador is among a number of countries in the region where public officials were swept up in a corruption scandal involving the Brazilian construction firm Odebrecht, which has admitted to making more than \$30 million in corrupt payments to Ecuadoran officials since 2006. In December 2017, Vice President Jorge Glas—who had also served as former president Correa's vice president, and was reelected on the Moreno ticket—was convicted of "illicit association" in connection with the Odebrecht scandal and later sentenced to six years in jail. Moreno's suspension of Glas in August in connection with the corruption allegations contributed to a broader falling out between Moreno and Correa during the year.

Score Change: The score improved from 1 to 2 due to President Moreno's support of the fight against corruption, as reflected by his suspension of Vice President Glas amid a corruption investigation, and Glas's conviction in December.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

The law guarantees citizens' right to access public information, and although compliance has improved over the years, some government bodies remain reluctant to disclose public information. Public procurement processes are frequently opaque.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 35 / 60 (+2)**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 12 / 16 (+1)****D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4 (+1)**

Media freedom improved noticeably after Moreno took office in May 2017. In a symbolic break from Correa—who frequently expressed hostility toward the press, and who had ushered in powerful media and telecommunications regulators to impose vaguely worded content restrictions—Moreno in July met with the owners of private media outlets and pledged to usher in a new, more open environment for journalists. His administration then curtailed the operations of the notorious Superintendence of Information and Communication (SUPERCOM) regulator, and permitted more diverse coverage in the country's state-run media, which had previously shown clear bias toward Correa and the PAIS alliance.

However, challenges remain. Correa's long history of harassing the media both verbally and through lawsuits encouraged widespread self-censorship, which Ecuadoran media advocates say will take years for the country's press corps to shake off. Criminal defamation laws remain on the books, and journalists continued to report harassment, including death threats, in 2017.

Score Change: The score improved from 1 to 2 because the new Moreno administration adopted a more cordial attitude toward the media than the previous administration, and has reined in the operations of aggressive media regulators.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Freedom of religion is constitutionally guaranteed and generally respected in practice.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 3 / 4

In 2016, the National Assembly approved changes to the Law on Higher Education that eliminated public funding for research at universities that operate in Ecuador under international agreements. The law threatened the viability of two graduate institutions, Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar and FLACSO Ecuador. However, at the end of 2017, the National Assembly was working on revisions to the higher education law.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4

Discussion of controversial topics among private citizens is generally free. However, crackdowns on social media have led some online outlets to disable sections for public commentary for fear of reprisals, limiting the freedom of private discussion online.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 7 / 12 (+1)**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 3 / 4 (+1)**

Numerous protests occur throughout the country without incident. However, national security legislation provides a broad definition of sabotage and terrorism, extending to acts against persons and property by unarmed individuals.

In 2017, President Moreno granted pardons to a number of environmental and indigenous activists who had been charged with crimes in connection with their participation in peaceful demonstrations during the Correa administration.

Score Change: The score improved from 2 to 3 because President Moreno pardoned a number of individuals who had been accused of crimes in connection with their participation in peaceful demonstrations, signaling greater support for freedom of assembly compared to the previous administration.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 2 / 4

In October 2017, President Moreno rescinded controversial Correa-era decrees that had introduced onerous requirements for forming an NGO, granted officials broad authority to dissolve organizations, and obliged NGOs to register all members. However, while observers say Moreno's new regime for NGO regulation is an improvement, it also drew criticism for granting excessive regulatory power to the government. For example, Moreno's NGO regulations allow authorities to close an NGO deemed to be performing activities different from those for which it was created, or to be participating in politics.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

Private-sector labor unions have the right to strike, though the labor code limits public-sector strikes. Only a small portion of the general workforce is unionized, partly because many people work in the informal sector. In 2016, the government dissolved the National Union of Educators (UNE), which remained legally unrecognized in 2017.

F. RULE OF LAW: 6 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4

Ecuador's highest-ranking judicial bodies are the 21-member National Court of Justice and the nine-member Constitutional Court. Opposition members and foreign experts have expressed concern about the pronounced lack of transparency in the appointment process for the National Court of Justice, and the Constitutional Court has likewise faced criticism because members of its selection committee are closely aligned with the government.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

Judicial processes remain slow, and procedures designed to expedite cases have been implemented at the detriment of defendants' due process rights. Many people are held in pretrial detention for longer than is permitted by law. While the number of public defenders has increased over the past years, the state is still unable to provide adequate legal counsel for all defendants who are unable to supply their own.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 2 / 4

Allegations of police abuse of suspects and detainees continue. The prison system is overcrowded, and some facilities lack basic amenities like potable water. Prisoners risk ill-treatment and threats by guards, and violence at the hands of other prisoners.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

Indigenous people continue to suffer discrimination at many levels of society.

The constitution includes the right to decide one's sexual orientation, and discrimination based on sexual orientation is prohibited by law. Nevertheless, LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) individuals continue to face discriminatory treatment.

Ecuador is the largest recipient of refugees in Latin America, with about 60,000 currently living in the country. In January 2017, a new Law on Human Mobility, which secures the rights of refugees, took effect; the law won praise from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for opening new avenues for refugees to claim resident status.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 10 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4

Freedom of movement outside and inside the country is largely unrestricted. Individuals may generally determine their place of employment and education. However, many lack access to education because they are unable to afford it.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

The government does not impose significant restrictions on the right to own property and establish private businesses. However, widespread corruption by both public officials and private-sector actors can obstruct normal business activity.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

The government has taken steps to protect women's rights through public campaigns and legal measures. Sexual harassment is punishable by up to two years in prison. The criminal code includes femicide as a crime, with penalties reaching 26 years in prison. However, violence against women remains a serious problem, with police reporting 85 cases of femicide between January and September 2017.

The constitution does not provide for same-sex marriage, but civil unions are recognized.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Men, women, and children are subjected to forced labor and sex work in Ecuador; indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian individuals, as well as migrants and refugees, remain most vulnerable. The government has taken some action to address the problem, including by increasing trafficking-related law enforcement operations. However, services for victims are inadequate, and some public officials believed to be complicit in trafficking operations have escaped punishment.

Egypt

Population: 93,500,000

Capital: Cairo

Political Rights Rating: 6

Civil Liberties Rating: 6 ↓

Freedom Rating: 6.0

Freedom Status: Not Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Ratings Change: Egypt's civil liberties rating declined from 5 to 6 due to the approval of a restrictive law on nongovernmental organizations and a crackdown on activity by labor unions that are not recognized by the government.

Overview: President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, who first took power in a July 2013 coup, continues to govern Egypt in an authoritarian manner, though the election of a new parliament in late 2015 ended a period of rule by executive decree. Serious political opposition is virtually nonexistent, as both liberal and Islamist activists face criminal prosecution and imprisonment. Terrorism persists unabated in the Sinai Peninsula and has also struck the Egyptian mainland, despite the government's use of aggressive and often abusive tactics to combat it.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In April, two church bombings claimed by the Islamic State (IS) militant group killed at least 45 people in the cities of Tanta and Alexandria, prompting the government to declare a state of emergency that remained in place at year's end. In November, more than 300 people were killed in an assault on a Sufi mosque in the Sinai Peninsula that was described as the deadliest terrorist attack in Egypt's modern history.
- In May, President Sisi signed a new law on nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that threatened closure and criminal prosecution for groups that fail to comply with intrusive government controls on their activity.
- In June, ignoring an ongoing court dispute on the topic, the parliament ratified a controversial maritime border demarcation agreement that transferred two uninhabited islands to Saudi Arabia; the president signed the measure shortly thereafter.
- During the second half of the year, the authorities began intimidating, detaining, and prosecuting Sisi's potential challengers in the March 2018 presidential election.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 10 / 40 (+1)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 3 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4

President Sisi, then the defense minister and armed forces commander, seized power in a July 2013 coup that overthrew elected president Mohamed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party (FJP). The military installed a nominally civilian interim government, and a new constitution was adopted by referendum under tightly controlled conditions in January 2014, paving the way for a presidential election in May of that year. Sisi resigned his post as head of the armed forces to stand as a candidate, and garnered nearly 97 percent of the vote against a single opponent, leftist politician Hamdeen Sabbahi. However, no independent international monitors were able to verify the results. The vote was also marred by low turnout, the use of state resources and media to support Sisi's candidacy, voter intimidation, and arrests and assaults of poll monitors. The electoral commission extended voting to a third day and threatened nonvoters with fines in an attempt to increase turnout. Many opposition groups boycotted the election, including the Muslim Brotherhood, which had been declared a terrorist organization in late 2013.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4

Parliamentary elections took place in two stages from October to December 2015, and the unicameral House of Representatives was seated in January 2016. The elections featured

low turnout, intimidation, and abuse of state resources. The progovernment coalition For the Love of Egypt, consisting of some 10 parties, won all 120 bloc-vote seats. Independents, a number of whom were aligned with the coalition, won 351 of the 448 constituency seats, and the coalition parties' candidates generally outpolled their rivals in the remaining districts. Just three parties outside For the Love of Egypt won more than 10 seats: Protectors of the Homeland (18), the Republican People's Party (13), and Al-Nour (11), a Salafist group that was the only major Islamist party to participate in the elections. In addition to the elected seats, 28 seats were reserved for presidential appointees. Many parties—including moderate Islamist parties and liberal and leftist factions—boycotted the elections and voiced serious reservations about their fairness, accusing security forces of harassment and intimidation. In January 2016, the parties associated with For the Love of Egypt formed a parliamentary bloc, In Support of Egypt, that controlled a majority of the chamber.

As of 2017, Egypt remained without the elected local councils called for in the 2014 constitution, with ongoing delays indicating that elections could be postponed until 2019. The last councils were elected in 2008 and dissolved in 2011 after the ouster of longtime authoritarian president Hosni Mubarak.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 1 / 4

The current constitution was not drafted in a fair or transparent manner, and the referendum through which it was adopted was tightly controlled, with little opportunity for public debate or an opposition campaign. While the electoral laws themselves might have provided some basis for credible elections, electoral authorities largely failed in practice to ensure an open and competitive campaign environment during the most recent presidential and parliamentary elections.

In August 2017, Sisi signed a law creating a new National Electoral Commission (NEC) as called for in the 2014 constitution. While the commission's board would consist of senior judges drawn from some of Egypt's highest courts to serve six-year terms, an existing system in which voting and vote counting are directly overseen by judges will be phased out by 2024. Critics of the NEC legislation, including some parliament members, argued that the end of direct judicial supervision would damage the integrity of elections and reduce public trust in the results.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 4 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 1 / 4

Political parties are allowed to form and operate if they meet membership thresholds, pay fees, and comply with other requirements established by law. However, parties formed on the basis of religion are forbidden, and while some Islamist parties still operate in a precarious legal position, the Muslim Brotherhood has been outlawed as a terrorist organization since 2013. The authorities systematically persecute its members and supporters, as well as other activists, parties, and political movements that are critical of the government. Arrests, harsh prison terms, death sentences, and extrajudicial violence targeting the political opposition have been common in recent years and continued in 2017.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 0 / 4

The persecution of Sisi's potential challengers in the 2018 presidential election during 2017 illustrated the government's determination to eliminate any opportunity for a peaceful change in leadership. Khaled Ali, a prominent human rights lawyer, was convicted in September for supposedly making an obscene gesture and sentenced to three months in jail; an appeal was pending at year's end. Earlier in the year, Ali had won court victories in an effort to overturn Egypt's agreement to transfer two Red Sea islands to Saudi Arabia, and in November he confirmed his intention to run for president if his conviction was overturned on appeal.

Also that month, army colonel Ahmed Konsowa announced his planned candidacy, but he was arrested and sentenced to six years in prison in December for expressing political opinions as a serving military officer. He said he had repeatedly attempted to resign since 2014, but had been refused despite multiple lawsuits. Former prime minister and air force commander Ahmed Shafik was deported to Egypt from the United Arab Emirates, a close ally of Sisi's government, after declaring his intention to run in November, and family members alleged that he was being held against his will. In early December, he said in a television interview that he was reconsidering his candidacy.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 1 / 4

Since the 2013 coup, the military has dominated the political system, with most power and patronage flowing from Sisi and his allies in the armed forces and security agencies. Most of Egypt's provincial governors are former military or police commanders.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 2 / 4

The constitution and Egyptian laws grant political rights to all citizens regardless of religion, gender, race, ethnicity, or any other such distinction. However, women, Christians, Shiite Muslims, people of color, and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people face indirect forms of discrimination that limit their political participation to varying degrees.

Coptic Christians, who account for some 10 percent of the population, are allocated 24 of the parliament's 120 party-list seats. Thirty-six Christians were elected in 2015, and some were also among the lawmakers appointed by the president. Thanks in large part to quotas, women won 75 seats in the 596-seat parliament in 2015, and another 14 were appointed by the president. The party-list quotas also set aside small numbers of seats for workers and farmers, people under 35, people with disabilities, and Egyptians living abroad.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 3 / 12 (+1)

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 1 / 4 (+1)

President Sisi, who was not freely elected, ruled by decree until the new parliament was seated in 2016, as the remaining chamber of the old legislature had been dissolved at the time of the coup. Since then, the parliament has played a growing if still modest role in forming and debating laws and policies. It does not provide a meaningful check on executive power.

The 2014 constitution increased the military's independence from civilian oversight, including through the selection process for the post of defense minister, who must be a

military officer. Sisi has ruled in a style that entrenches military privilege and shields the armed forces from accountability for their actions.

Score Change: The score improved from 0 to 1 due to the parliament's more consistent pattern of participation in the development of laws and policy.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

Corruption is pervasive at all levels of government. Official mechanisms for investigating and punishing corrupt activity remain weak and ineffective. Under a 2015 amendment to the penal code, defendants in financial corruption cases can avoid imprisonment by paying restitution, and punishments are typically light in practice. In 2016, the head of the Central Auditing Authority was dismissed and convicted of spreading false information after he spoke to the media about the costs of corruption to Egypt's economy.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 1 / 4

The Sisi administration has offered very little transparency regarding government spending and operations. Civil society groups and independent journalists have few opportunities to comment on or influence state policies and legislation. The military is notoriously opaque with respect to its core expenditures and its extensive business interests, including in major infrastructure and land-development projects. This leads to an almost complete lack of accountability for any malpractice.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 16 / 60 (-1)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 5 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4

The Egyptian media sector is dominated by progovernment outlets, as most critical or opposition-oriented outlets were shut down in the wake of the coup. Moreover, over the past three years, a number of private television channels and newspapers have been launched or acquired by progovernment businessmen and individuals with ties to the military and intelligence services. Journalists who fail to align their reporting with the interests of owners or the government risk dismissal. Journalists also continued to face arrest for their work, and 20 remained behind bars as of December 2017, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists.

A law adopted in late 2016 created the Supreme Council for Media Regulation, with broad discretion to control the content of broadcast, print, and online media. In September 2017, during a crackdown on LGBT people, the council banned any media coverage of "homosexuality" except to "convey the danger of the problem."

The Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression (AFTE) reported a major escalation in the government's efforts to censor online media beginning in May 2017. It found that nearly 500 websites had been blocked by December, though the authorities had yet to acknowledge the scale of the blocking or provide a legal justification.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 1 / 4

While Article 2 of the 2014 constitution declares Islam to be the official religion of the state, Article 64 states that "freedom of belief is absolute." Most Egyptians are Sunni Muslims. Coptic Christians form a substantial minority, and there are smaller numbers of Shiite Muslims, non-Coptic Christian denominations, and other groups. Religious minorities and atheists have faced persecution and violence, with Copts in particular suffering numerous

cases of forced displacement, physical assaults, bomb and arson attacks, and blocking of church construction in recent years.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 1 / 4

The state controls education and curriculums in public schools and to a lesser degree in some of the country's private institutions. Faculty members and departments have some autonomy in shaping the specific syllabus for their courses, though many scholars self-censor to avoid any punitive measures.

Despite a ban on political protests, universities have been a center of antigovernment demonstrations and the target of violent government crackdowns since the 2013 coup. A 2015 decree allows for the dismissal of university professors who engage in on-campus political activity, and in 2016 the government reportedly began imposing more systematic requirements for academics to obtain approval from security officials for travel abroad. A March 2017 AFTE report on university students' rights documented 1,181 arrests, 1,051 disciplinary sanctions such as expulsion, 65 military trials, and 21 extrajudicial killings between 2013 and 2016.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 2 / 4

The security services have reportedly upgraded their surveillance equipment and techniques in recent years so as to better monitor social media platforms and mobile phone applications. Progovernment media figures and state officials regularly call for national unity and suggest that only enemies of the state would criticize the authorities. These pressures have led to more self-censorship and guarded discussion among ordinary Egyptians, but despite cases of arrest and prosecution for commentary on sensitive subjects, some have continued to speak out against state repression on social media and elsewhere.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 2 / 12 (-2)

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 1 / 4

According to the constitution, freedom of assembly should not be restricted. However, a 2013 decree regulating protests severely constrained such rights, giving police great leeway to ban and forcibly disperse gatherings of 10 or more people, prohibiting all protests at places of worship, and requiring protest organizers to inform police at least three days in advance. Thousands of people have since been arrested under the law. In December 2016, the Supreme Constitutional Court struck down Article 10 of the 2013 law, which empowered the Interior Ministry to unilaterally ban, postpone, or relocate protests. Under an amended version of the article signed by the president in May 2017, the ministry must obtain a court's approval for such decisions.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 0 / 4 (-1)

NGOs in Egypt have faced mass closures as well as harassment in the form of office raids, arrests of members, lengthy legal cases, and restrictions on travel in recent years. A highly restrictive new law on the creation and regulation of NGOs was signed by the president in May 2017, having been approved by the parliament in late 2016. The law establishes a new regulatory body dominated by security agencies; bans NGOs from engaging in work deemed to harm "national security, public order, public morality, or public health"; and requires the regulator's approval for any field research or polling and any type

of cooperation with foreign NGOs. All NGO funding and basic management decisions are also subject to the regulator's approval. Violations of the law can lead to fines and up to five years in prison.

Score Change: The score declined from 1 to 0 due to the approval of a restrictive new law designed to choke off funding for nongovernmental organizations and provide legal cover for their arbitrary closure.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 1 / 4 (-1)

The government only recognizes unions affiliated with the state-controlled Egyptian Trade Union Federation, which has not held board elections in over a decade; its leaders are appointed by the government. Independent unions continue to operate without recognition. While Article 15 of the constitution provides for the right to organize peaceful strikes, they are not tolerated in practice, and the 2013 law on protests prohibits gatherings that impede labor and production. Striking workers are regularly arrested and prosecuted, particularly since labor protests increased in 2016; workers at military-owned businesses are subject to trials by military courts.

In December 2017, the parliament approved a new law on trade unions that would force independent unions to dissolve and resubmit applications for recognition, effectively compelling them to join the state-controlled federation. The law also set membership threshold requirements that would make unionization impossible in enterprises with fewer than 150 workers. Employers who violate the law would face limited financial penalties, while workers involved with illegal unions could face imprisonment. The legislation was reportedly awaiting the president's signature at year's end.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 due to the government's growing efforts to criminalize peaceful strikes and bring independent unions under state control.

F. RULE OF LAW: 3 / 16 (+1)

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4

Judges led the drafting of the 2014 constitution, which significantly enhanced the judiciary's autonomy, including by allowing each major judicial entity to receive its budget as a single line item and permitting the Supreme Constitutional Court to appoint its own chairman.

However, the executive branch exerts influence over the courts, which typically protect the interests of the government and military and have often disregarded due process and other basic safeguards in cases against the government's political opponents. In April 2017, over strong objections from the Judges' Club, the parliament passed and the president signed an amendment to the Judicial Authority Law that gave the president the power to appoint the heads of four key judicial bodies: the State Lawsuits Authority, the Administrative Prosecution, the Court of Cassation, and the State Council. Whereas the four chief judges were previously selected by seniority and merely confirmed by the president, the president would now choose from three candidates submitted by each body based on seniority. Three of the entities complied with the new law, but the State Council submitted only one name in May, defying the change and effectively adhering to the old system. The president then chose his own candidate from among the council's seven most senior judges, as the law allows if a judicial body fails to comply.

In a sign of the political branches' disregard for judicial authority, the parliament and the president ratified Egypt's maritime border agreement with Saudi Arabia in May 2017, despite an ongoing legal dispute over the pact. In June, the Supreme Constitutional Court suspended all court rulings on the agreement while it conducted its own review, which was ongoing at year's end.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4 (+1)

Although the constitution limits military trials of civilians to crimes directly involving the military, its personnel, or its property, a 2014 presidential decree placed all "public and vital facilities" under military jurisdiction, resulting in the referral of thousands of civilian defendants to military courts. Charges brought in military courts are often vague or fabricated, defendants are denied due process, and basic evidentiary standards are routinely disregarded.

In October 2017, the Supreme Constitutional Court found that a set of protest-related cases from the governorate of Beni Suef should be tried in civilian rather than military courts, since the alleged crimes did not involve public facilities. It was unclear whether the decision would result in a larger shift away from military jurisdiction or improved due process. A government decree earlier that month expanded the jurisdiction of emergency courts—whose verdicts can only be overturned by the president—to include protest-related cases.

A series of mass trials in recent years have resulted in harsh sentences, including life imprisonment or the death penalty, based on negligible evidence. They have generally targeted suspected members of the Muslim Brotherhood. However, appeals of the initial verdicts have resulted in retrials, reduced sentences, and acquittals in a number of cases. Among other prominent examples during 2017, the Court of Cassation in May ordered a retrial for Brotherhood leader Mohamed Badie and 49 other defendants in a case involving a 2013 attack on a police station in Port Said. They had initially received sentences ranging from 10 years to life in prison.

Score Change: The score improved from 0 to 1 due to a pattern in which lower courts' deeply flawed decisions in politicized cases have been mitigated on appeal.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 0 / 4

Police brutality and impunity for abuses by security forces were catalysts for the 2011 uprising against Mubarak, but no reforms have since been enacted. Reports of alleged extrajudicial killings and forced disappearances continued throughout 2017, with NGOs documenting hundreds of cases. The state of emergency declared by President Sisi in April grants security forces additional powers of arrest and detention, increasing opportunities for physical abuse. Prison conditions are very poor; inmates are subject to torture, overcrowding, and a lack of sanitation and medical care. A 2015 antiterrorism law provided a vague definition for terrorism and granted law enforcement personnel sweeping powers and immunity while carrying out their duties.

Fighting continued between security forces and IS-affiliated militants in the North Sinai region during 2017, killing hundreds of combatants on both sides as well as civilians. The militant threat has increasingly expanded to other parts of Egypt; in one incident in October, dozens of police and other officials were killed in an ambush in the country's west. Terrorist attacks also targeted religious minorities. Two church bombings in April killed at least 45 people in Tanta and Alexandria, and more than 300 people were killed in an assault on a Sufi mosque in Sinai.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

Women enjoy legal equality on many issues, and their court testimony is equal to that of men except in cases involving personal status matters such as divorce, which are more influenced by religious law. In practice, however, women face extensive discrimination in employment, among other disadvantages. Other segments of the population that face various forms of harassment and discrimination include religious minorities, people of color from southern Egypt, migrants and refugees from sub-Saharan Africa, people with disabilities, and LGBT people.

While same-sex sexual activity is not explicitly banned, LGBT people have been charged with prostitution or “debauchery.” After concert attendees waved a rainbow flag in September 2017, the authorities launched a crackdown on suspected LGBT people, detaining at least 75 amid reports of abuse in custody and imposing prison sentences of up to six years.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 6 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 1 / 4

The constitution guarantees freedom of movement, but internal travel and access are restricted tightly in North Sinai and to a lesser extent in other governorates along Egypt’s borders. Sinai residents are subject to curfews, checkpoints, and other obstacles to travel.

Individuals seeking to change their place of employment or education can encounter bureaucratic barriers and in some instances scrutiny from security officials. In addition, a growing list of rights activists, journalists, political party members, bloggers, and academics have been subjected to arbitrary bans on international travel in recent years. A number of foreign researchers or activists have been expelled or denied entry to the country.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or non-state actors? 2 / 4

In May 2017, the parliament adopted a new investment law designed to encourage private investment in underdeveloped areas, in part by streamlining the process of obtaining permits. However, bureaucratic barriers and related corruption remain serious problems, and the growing role of military-affiliated companies has hindered and crowded out private businesses.

Property rights in Sinai and other border areas are affected by the activities of security forces. The military has summarily demolished buildings in the North Sinai town of Rafah to create a buffer zone along the border with the Gaza Strip.

Women are at a legal disadvantage in property and inheritance matters, typically receiving half the inheritance due to a man. Societal biases also discourage women’s ownership of land.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Domestic violence, sexual harassment, and female genital mutilation (FGM) are still among the most acute problems in Egyptian society. The country has adopted laws to combat these practices in recent years, and FGM is reportedly becoming less common over time. However, the effectiveness of such laws is hindered by societal resistance, poor enforcement, abuses by the police themselves, and lack of adequate protection for witnesses, which deter victims from reporting abuse and harassment. Spousal rape is not a crime.

Personal status rules based on religious affiliation put women at a disadvantage in marriage, divorce, and custody matters. Muslim women cannot marry non-Muslim men, for example, and the Coptic Church rarely permits divorce.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

Egyptian women and children, migrants from sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, and Syrian refugees are vulnerable to forced labor and sex trafficking in Egypt. The Egyptian authorities routinely punish individuals for offenses that stemmed directly from their circumstances as trafficking victims. Military conscripts are exploited as cheap labor to work on military- or state-affiliated development projects.

In late 2016, Egypt removed a number of controls on currency exchange, imports, and foreign loans. Combined with government efforts to reduce budget deficits and subsidies, these moves have spurred inflation and led to acute economic hardship for many Egyptians.

El Salvador

Population: 6,400,000

Capital: San Salvador

Political Rights Rating: 2

Civil Liberties Rating: 3

Freedom Rating: 2.5

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Violence linked to criminal gangs remains a grave problem, and concerns remain about the influence such groups have in politics. Authorities have pursued a harsh, militarized response to the country's gangs. Elections in El Salvador are generally credible and free. The country has a lively press and civil society sector, though journalists risk harassment and violence in connection with work related to gang activity or corruption.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- The annual homicide rate declined, with 3,947 homicides reported during the year compared to roughly 5,300 in 2016. However, murders spiked in September and October, with nearly 900 homicides reported during those two months.
- In September, a judge acquitted eight police officers of murder charges related to the so-called San Blas case, in which eight people were killed in a 2015 incident at a coffee farm. Rights advocates portrayed the acquittals as a reflection of ongoing impunity for security forces involved in the fight against gangs.
- Former president Mauricio Funes was convicted in absentia on charges of illicit enrichment in November. A similar case against former president Antonio Saca remained open at year's end.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 34 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 11 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

El Salvador's president is directly elected for a five-year term. Salvador Sánchez Cerén, the candidate of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN), won the 2014 presidential election. The runner-up, Norman Quijano of the Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA), accused the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) of fraud, but domestic and international observers considered the elections competitive and credible.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

The 84-member, unicameral Legislative Assembly is elected for three years. In the 2015 elections, ARENA won 35 seats—32 on its own and 3 in coalition with the National Coalition Party (PCN). The FMLN won 31 seats, and the rest went to smaller groupings. Turnout was 48 percent. Some vote buying was alleged in rural areas. The Organization of American States (OAS) observation mission declared the election broadly transparent and free, but noted that the TSE had difficulties in the counting and transmission of results. San Salvadoran candidates disputed their results, prompting the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court to call for an unprecedented recount that did not affect the results, but delayed the seating of 24 deputies.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

The country's electoral framework has undergone a number of changes in recent years, at times contributing to inefficiencies and confusion surrounding electoral processes. While the TSE has worked to implement reforms and clarify processes ahead of the 2018 elections, some uncertainties persist. Still pending is a complete update of the voter rolls by the TSE, a procedure the OAS and other organizations have repeatedly recommended. Political parties have expressed reservations about the capabilities of the company the TSE has contracted to process and transmit votes in the 2018 elections. There have also been concerns about whether the TSE can effectively implement a new program that calls upon citizens, rather than partisan representatives, to oversee vote counting.

In 2016, the TSE fined five political parties including ARENA and the FMLN for failing to disclose the identities of donors as required by law. A subsequent Constitutional Chamber ruling mandated that parties that fail to comply with disclosure rules by November 2017 will not receive public financing in future elections, or be able to enter candidates in the 2018 polls. Most parties complied with the rules, and in November 2017, the TSE consequently permitted the registration of those parties' candidates.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 14 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4

Salvadorans are free to organize in different political parties or organizations. While two parties, FMLN and ARENA, have dominated the country's system for the past few decades, new parties have emerged and are able to participate and compete in political processes.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

Opposition parties have the ability to increase support and gain power through elections. Historically, executive elections are closely contested between the two main parties, but in legislative elections, smaller parties stand to gain power.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 3 / 4

There have been reports of political parties paying criminal groups to deliver the votes of citizens living in areas under the groups' control. Party leaders reportedly engage in negotiations with criminal leaders in order to secure permission for their party to operate in gang-controlled areas. Salvadorans also continue to express concerns that foreign governments and multinational corporations exert influence over local and national government officials.

Since the transition to democracy, the military has been an apolitical institution.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

Ethnic, religious, and gender groups, and LGBT people, have full political and electoral opportunities, but are underrepresented in the legislature and in high-level government positions. A 2013 statute requires that 30 percent of legislative and municipal candidates be women, and 32 percent of seats in the Legislative Assembly were held by women following the 2015 elections.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 9 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 3 / 4

The freely elected government is generally able to determine policies. However, there are concerns that international actors and illicit organizations might unduly influence policy decisions, including through unreported contributions to political parties. However, in November 2017, some political parties, including ARENA and the FMLN, complied with financial transparency rules, and the information was published on the TSE website.

The government lacks authority over some areas that are controlled by criminal groups.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4

The office of the attorney general, the Probity Section of the Supreme Court, and other institutions have continued to pursue an active agenda against official corruption. High-level officials and former officials have been prosecuted on corruption charges. Former president Mauricio Funes was convicted in absentia on charges of illicit enrichment in November 2017, though after the case against him opened he had fled to Nicaragua, where he was granted asylum. Former president Antonio Saca faces similar charges and was in detention at year's end, as his case moved forward.

However, those pursuing corruption cases continue to report pressure from outside interest groups, and are hampered by budget restrictions and other obstruction. In October 2017, a Supreme Court magistrate said excessive information requests lodged with it were designed to hamper the functions of the Probity Section and impede corruption investigations.

In July 2017, the legislature approved reforms to eminent domain laws that various actors, including the attorney general and the U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador, criticized for making it more difficult to seize property and assets of corrupt government officials,

drug traffickers, and gang members. The Constitutional Chamber suspended the reforms in August, pending the decision of a current case that argues it is unconstitutional.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 3 / 4

There have been advances in the implementation of the Access to Public Information Law, but challenges remain, including delays in responding to information requests and the denial of requests on dubious grounds, or for reasons not sufficiently explained. In October 2017, the Constitutional Chamber added additional limits to the law when ruling on a case involving the travel expenses of former president Funes. The Chamber ruled that the current government does not have to disclose information related to incidents that took place during previous administrations, because it would not have sufficient information regarding those events.

However, in 2017, the government took some steps toward better ensuring the transparency regarding the funding of public works projects.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 36 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 12 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4

The Constitution provides for freedom of the press. In practice, the media scene is robust, but reporters face significant challenges. Harassment and acts of violence following coverage of corruption and gang violence have led reporters to engage in self-censorship. In August 2017, journalists from the digital news outlets *El Faro* and *Revista Factum* faced harassment and threats on social media in apparent response to an article about corruption and violence within a state security unit. Government officials have also adopted hostile rhetoric toward the media. During an April 2017 public presentation where President Cerén was also in attendance, the mayor of Villa de Panchimalco declared that the media “throws feces” at the public with their reporting.

Most of the country depends on privately owned television and radio networks for news, and ownership in the broadcast sector is highly concentrated. Access to the internet is unrestricted. Online outlets like *El Faro* and *Revista Factum* are critical sources of independent reporting.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

The government does not encroach upon religious freedom. However, religious leaders working with former gang members or critical of the government have faced harassment.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 3 / 4

Academic freedom is respected and the educational system is generally free from extensive political indoctrination. However, gang-related violence continues to present a challenge to the education system. As of mid-2017, 6 teachers and 16 students had been murdered, according to the Union of Public Education Teachers of El Salvador, with the killings generally thought to have been committed by criminal groups.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4

While private discussion is generally free, the prevalence of gang activity requires many Salvadorans to curtail discussion of gang-related topics outside of their homes.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 8 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 3 / 4

Freedoms of assembly and association are generally upheld, and public protests and gatherings are permitted. However, due to the prevalence of violence in El Salvador, the safety of participants is impossible to guarantee.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 3 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operate freely, although those involved with human rights- and governance-related topics sometimes face threats and extortion attempts from criminal groups. Impunity for such attacks, as well as occasional pressure on NGOs by police, has prompted some observers to question the government's commitment to the protection of human rights. Several NGOs and associations have reported discovering microphones or other listening devices on their premises in recent years, including the National Association of Private Companies (ANEP), the Salvadoran Foundation for Economic and Social Development (FUSADES), and the National Development Foundation (FUNDE).

Despite these difficulties, NGOs play an important role in society and can influence policy. In March 2017, the government passed a law prohibiting metal mining across the country in response to the mobilization of civil society actors fighting severe water pollution linked with the industry.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

Labor unions have long faced obstacles in a legal environment that has traditionally favored business interests, including by mandating only light penalties for employers who interfere with strikes. The law prohibits strikes in sectors deemed essential, but is vague about the type of work falling within this designation. Over 1,000 postal workers went on strike in November 2017 to protest harassment and corruption by the postal leadership. The strike was declared illegal by a labor court three days later on grounds that it was preventing the delivery of essential medicine sent from the Salvadoran Social Security Institute (ISSS).

F. RULE OF LAW: 8 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 3 / 4

The country's judicial system is hampered by corruption and obstructionism. However, civil society groups have pressed for reforms, and several were implemented in 2017. In January, the Legislative Assembly passed a measure requiring the National Council of the Judiciary (CNJ) to make public their short lists of candidates for the Supreme Court. And in October, the CNJ presented a manual detailing the selection criteria for magistrates serving in the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court, specifying that they must not have a party affiliation, nor can they have been previously sanctioned by the Government Ethics Tribunal (TEG).

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 2 / 4

Due process rights are guaranteed by the constitution, but upheld inconsistently. Powerful individuals are able to use their influence, including by pressuring members of the judiciary, to evade justice. Many cases are decided by judges, as opposed to civilian juries. Interpreters are not always provided for defendants who do not speak Spanish. Rights advocates report that police have carried out arbitrary arrests and detentions as part of the country's crackdown on gangs.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 1 / 4

Violence—with youths as the main victims—was lower in 2017 than in 2016, though there was a significant spike in homicides in September and October 2017, which saw 435 and 452 recorded homicides, respectively. The government blamed that violence on internal fighting between Mara Salvatrucha 13 (MS-13) gang factions, and gangs trying to pressure the government to release imprisoned gang leaders. Despite the spike in violence, police reported that there had been 3,947 homicides during the year, compared to roughly 5,300 in 2016 and 6,700 in 2015.

Gangs continue to target members of security forces and their families. Attorney General Douglas Meléndez received death threats in connection with anticorruption and gang-related prosecutions in 2017.

In 2017, authorities continued to pursue a harsh, militarized response to the country's criminal gangs. Police have been implicated in hundreds of extrajudicial killings as part of the campaign. A report by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) released in September 2017 found that since 2015, 1,415 people, 90 percent of whom were suspected of being gang members, had been killed in "alleged confrontations" between suspected gang members and security forces. The organization raised concerns about the large discrepancy between the number of suspected gang members killed, compared to the 238 security forces members killed in such confrontations during the same time period. In September, a judge acquitted eight police officers of murder charges related to the so-called San Blas case, in which the defendants were suspected of summarily executing eight people in a 2015 incident at a coffee farm. Rights activists portrayed the acquittals as a reflection of impunity for the security forces.

Prisons remain extremely overcrowded, and conditions within can be lethal due to disease, lack of adequate medical care, and the risk of attack by other inmates.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

Women are granted equal rights under the law, but are often subject to discrimination. Indigenous people face poverty, unemployment, and labor discrimination. Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is prevalent, and LGBT people and groups are often the targets of hate crimes. Underrepresented populations, particularly internally displaced persons and LGBT people, have limited access to the justice system.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 8 / 16**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 2 / 4**

Freedom of travel within El Salvador is complicated by gang activity. The MS-13 and Barrio 18 gangs control certain neighborhoods, making it dangerous for residents to travel, work, and attend school. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC) estimated that over 220,000 people in the country were displaced due to violence in 2016 alone.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

Businesses and private citizens are regularly subject to extortion, although the police and attorney general's office noted a drop in reported extortions in the first nine months of 2017, compared to the same period in 2016. Indigenous people face challenges with regard to land rights and access to credit.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Abortion is punishable by imprisonment even when the life of the mother is at risk. Some women have been jailed despite credible claims that their pregnancies ended due to miscarriage. The Constitutional Chamber affirmed in 2013 that the “rights of the mother cannot be privileged over the fetus.” In addition, domestic violence remains high. There were over 400 recorded femicides by the end of 2017.

Separately, in August 2017, lawmakers passed a measure banning marriage for children under 15 years of age, though it contained exceptions for cases involving pregnancy.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

El Salvador remains a source, transit, and destination country for the trafficking of women and children, though some sex trafficking cases have been prosecuted. There are instances of forced labor in the construction and informal sectors, but the government does not prosecute labor trafficking cases.

Equatorial Guinea

Population: 900,000

Capital: Malabo

Political Rights Rating: 7

Civil Liberties Rating: 7

Freedom Rating: 7.0

Freedom Status: Not Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: Equatorial Guinea holds regular elections, but the voting is neither free nor fair. The current president, who took power in a military coup that deposed his uncle, has led a highly repressive authoritarian regime since 1979. Oil wealth and political power are concentrated in the hands of the president’s family. The government frequently detains the few opposition politicians in the country, cracks down on civil society groups, and censors journalists. The judiciary is under presidential control, and security forces engage in torture and other violence with impunity.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In September the authorities arrested Ramón Nsé Esono Ebalé, a blogger and cartoonist who was based abroad and was frequently critical of the government, when he returned to the country to renew his passport. He remained in detention at year’s end.
 - In tightly controlled parliamentary and municipal elections in November, the ruling party and its allies won all contested Senate seats, all but one of the lower house seats, and control of all municipal councils.
 - During and after the elections, the authorities arrested dozens of opposition party supporters, claiming in late December that they had thwarted a coup plot.
-

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 1 / 40**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 0 / 12****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4**

President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, Africa's longest-serving head of state, has held power since 1979. He was awarded a new seven-year term in the April 2016 presidential election, reportedly winning 93.5 percent of the vote. The main opposition party at the time, Convergence for Social Democracy (CPDS), boycotted the election, and other factions faced police violence, detentions, and torture. One opposition figure who had been barred from running for president, Gabriel Nsé Obiang Obono, was put under house arrest during the election, and police used live ammunition against supporters gathered at his home.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

The bicameral parliament consists of a 70-seat Senate and a 100-seat Chamber of Deputies, with members of both chambers serving five-year terms. Fifteen senators are appointed by the president, 55 are directly elected, and there can be several additional ex officio members. The Chamber of Deputies is directly elected.

In the November 2017 legislative elections, the ruling Democratic Party of Equatorial Guinea (PDGE) and its subordinate allied parties won 99 seats in the lower house, all 55 of the elected seats in the Senate, and control of all municipal councils. The opposition party Citizens for Innovation (CI), led by Nsé Obiang, took a single seat in the Chamber of Deputies and a seat on the capital's city council. The preelection media environment was tightly controlled, and a wave of arrests of CI supporters began when police dispersed an opposition rally ahead of the voting. Among other irregularities on election day, a ban on private vehicles prevented many voters from reaching distant polling stations, and polls closed one hour earlier than scheduled.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 0 / 4

Equatorial Guinea does not have an independent electoral body; the head of the National Election Commission is also the country's interior minister, a prominent figure in the ruling PDGE. Elections are not fairly managed in practice.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 1 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 1 / 4**

The PDGE is the dominant party, operating in conjunction with a number of subordinate parties in its coalition. In July 2017, a PDGE congress reelected President Obiang to an indefinite term as the party's leader.

The regime keeps the country's handful of opposition parties under strict control. Nsé Obiang, the CI leader, was disqualified from running in the 2016 presidential vote on the grounds that he did not meet residency requirements. In May 2017, he was sentenced to six months in jail for insulting the ruling party; he was also ordered to pay financial damages and indefinitely barred from engaging in political activity.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 0 / 4

Equatorial Guinea has never had a peaceful transfer of power through elections. President Obiang appointed his son, Teodoro “Teodorín” Nguema Obiang Mangué, as vice president in 2016, paving the way for a dynastic succession.

In the wake of the 2017 legislative elections, the authorities intensified their crackdown on the CI, effectively removing it as a potential threat to the PDGE’s supremacy. Dozens of CI supporters in the cities of Malabo and Bata were arrested, and the party’s leaders were reportedly being held at the CI headquarters at year’s end, with the government claiming that it had foiled a coup plot.

B3. Are the people’s political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 0 / 4

The regime routinely uses the security forces to attack and intimidate opposition supporters, and political loyalty to the ruling party is treated as a condition for obtaining and keeping public-sector employment.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 0 / 4

The ethnic Fang majority dominates political life in Equatorial Guinea, leaving minority groups with little influence, and power is concentrated in the hands of the president’s family and regional group in particular. Women formally enjoy equal political rights, holding a number of positions in government, 20 percent of the seats in the Chamber of Deputies, and 15 percent of the seats in the Senate. However, they have little opportunity to independently advocate for their interests or organize politically.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 0 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 0 / 4

The executive branch—headed by the president, who is not freely elected—sets and implements government policy, leaving the legislature with no meaningful role in the policymaking process.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 0 / 4

There are no independent anticorruption mechanisms, and the government is marked by nepotism and graft. One of the president’s sons, Gabriel Mbega Obiang Lima, is the minister of mines, industry, and energy. Teodorín, the vice president, has been the focus of money-laundering investigations in other countries. In October 2017, a French court found him guilty in absentia on charges including money laundering and embezzlement, ordering the confiscation of more than €100 million (\$120 million) in French assets. The court also imposed a €30 million fine and a three-year prison sentence, both suspended. Swiss authorities had already seized property traced to Teodorin in response to a French request, and in July a Swiss court refused to release 24 luxury cars and a yacht that Equatorial Guinea claimed were owned by a state company.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 0 / 4

The government’s budget process and procurement system are opaque, as are the finances of state-owned companies. In 2010, Equatorial Guinea failed in its bid to join the

Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, which found that it did not meet the group's standards. The World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) have criticized the country for pouring resources into wasteful infrastructure projects while neglecting social needs. According to IMF data from 2011, the most recent year available, the government spent just 5 percent of its budget on education and health. The infrastructure projects allegedly enrich officials by steering public contracts to companies that they own.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 6 / 60 (-1)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 3 / 16 (-1)

D1. Are there free and independent media? 0 / 4

Press freedom is severely limited, despite constitutional protections. Journalists consistently exercise self-censorship, and those who do criticize the regime face dismissal and other reprisals. Internet service was cut off for several days surrounding the November 2017 elections, and Facebook was inaccessible for a longer period ahead of the election day. The government has sought to block access to the websites of opposition parties and exile groups since 2013. The handful of private newspapers and magazines in operation face intense financial and political pressure and are unable to publish regularly. Online versions of Spanish newspapers are regularly blocked. The only private television broadcaster is controlled by Teodorín.

Two journalists were briefly arrested while covering an opposition press conference in June 2017. In September, the authorities arrested Ramón Nsé Esono Ebalé, a cartoonist and blogger who is critical of the government. He had been living abroad but returned to renew his passport. He was accused of money laundering and counterfeiting, and he remained in detention at year's end.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 2 / 4

The constitution protects religious freedom, though in practice it is sometimes affected by the country's broader political repression and endemic corruption. The Roman Catholic Church is the dominant faith and is exempt from registration and permit requirements that apply to other groups. Government officials have reportedly been required to attend Catholic masses on ceremonial occasions, such as the president's birthday.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 1 / 4

Academic freedom is politically constrained, and self-censorship among faculty is common. University professors and teachers have reportedly been hired or dismissed due to their political affiliations.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 0 / 4 (-1)

Freedom of private discussion is limited. The government uses informants and electronic surveillance to monitor members of the opposition, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and journalists, including the few members of the foreign press in the country. Critics of the government are subject to arbitrary arrest, physical abuse, and trumped-up charges. In May 2017, security forces detained rapper Benjamin Ndong after he released a song in support of striking taxi drivers who faced government intimidation; Ndong, who had also complained of being followed by security personnel, was freed a day later. Such

pressure on well-known figures can have a deterrent effect on others. The internet restrictions linked to the November elections also inhibited private discussion.

Score Change: The score declined from 1 to 0 due to the continued deterioration of citizens' ability to speak freely on politically sensitive topics amid government efforts to punish dissent and monitor or disrupt online communications.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 0 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 0 / 4

Freedom of assembly is severely restricted. Opposition gatherings are typically blocked or dispersed, and citizens are sometimes pressured to attend progovernment events. Police allegedly used gunfire to disperse a CI campaign event in Aconibe in early November 2017, and some officers were reportedly injured in related clashes; the incident touched off the broader crackdown on the CI that was ongoing at year's end.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 0 / 4

All associations must register with the government through an onerous process, and independent NGOs face state persecution. In March 2017, police arrested dozens of people participating in a training on International Women's Day at the offices of the CPDS; some were beaten in custody, but all were later released. In April, the government detained Enrique Asumu and Alfredo Okenve, leaders of the Center for Development Studies and Initiatives (CEID), an NGO whose activities had been suspended by the authorities in 2016. They paid fines for allegedly violating the suspension order and were released after several days, though they were never charged or brought before a judge. In November, civil society activist Raimundo Nnandong, an artist and member of the cultural group Locos por Cultura, was arrested on election day for trying to take a photo outside a polling station; he was released a few days later.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 0 / 4

The constitution provides for the right to organize unions, but there are many legal and practical barriers to union formation, collective bargaining, and strikes. The government has refused to register a number of trade unions; a farmers' organization is the only legal union. Security forces used arbitrary arrests and beatings to suppress a taxi drivers' strike against high government fees in May 2017.

F. RULE OF LAW: 0 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 0 / 4

The judiciary is not independent, and judges in sensitive cases often consult with the office of the president before issuing a ruling. Under the constitution, the president is the nation's first magistrate. He also oversees the body that appoints judges. The court system's impartiality is further undermined by corruption.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 0 / 4

The security forces routinely detain people without charge or trial. Graft is endemic in the police and other law enforcement bodies.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 0 / 4

Beatings and torture by security forces are reportedly common. Prisons are overcrowded and feature harsh conditions, including physical abuse, poor sanitation, and denial of medical care.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 0 / 4

Women face discrimination in employment and other matters, particularly in rural areas. The ethnic Bubi minority suffers persistent societal discrimination. Immigrants, including irregular migrants, are subject to raids, physical abuse, and extortion by police. While LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people face social stigma and discrimination, same-sex sexual activity is not illegal.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 3 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 1 / 4

Freedom of movement is protected by law but restricted in practice through measures such as police checkpoints, which often require the payment of bribes. Authorities have also denied opposition members and other dissidents reentry from abroad or restricted their movements within the country.

A Ministry of Education order that took effect for the 2016–17 school year requires female students to take pregnancy tests and bars pregnant girls from school.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 1 / 4

Equatorial Guinea has one of the most difficult business environments in the world. Pervasive corruption and onerous bureaucratic procedures serve as major impediments to private business activity. Most women face disadvantages regarding inheritance and property rights under both the civil code and customary practices, though women enjoy greater customary rights among the Bubi minority.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 1 / 4

The civil code and customary law put women at a disadvantage with respect to personal status matters like marriage and child custody, with some exceptions among the Bubi. Laws against rape and domestic violence are not enforced effectively. The government reportedly does little to collect data, raise awareness, or support civil society efforts to combat such problems.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 0 / 4

The country's oil wealth is concentrated among the ruling elite, leaving much of the population without access to basic services. Equatorial Guinea continues to score poorly on social and economic development indicators.

Foreign workers in the oil and construction industries are subject to passport confiscation and forced labor. Equatoguineans are also vulnerable to forced labor, including in the sex trade. Corrupt officials are often complicit in human trafficking, according to the U.S. State Department.

Eritrea

Population: 5,400,000

Capital: Asmara

Political Rights Rating: 7

Civil Liberties Rating: 7

Freedom Rating: 7.0

Freedom Status: Not Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: Eritrea is a militarized authoritarian state that has not held a national election since independence from Ethiopia in 1993. The People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ), headed by President Isaias Afwerki, is the sole political party. Arbitrary detention is commonplace, and citizens are required to perform national service, often for their entire working lives. The government shut down all independent media in 2001.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In June, a report for the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) concluded that the Eritrean government had made no effort to address chronic human rights abuses outlined in previous reports. The special rapporteur accused the regime of continuing to perpetrate crimes against humanity.
- In October, students demonstrating against attempts to place their Islamic school under state control were allegedly attacked by security forces in the capital. Reports from opposition groups outside the country suggested that up to 28 people were killed.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 1 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 0 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

Following Eritrea's formal independence from Ethiopia in 1993, an unelected Transitional National Assembly chose Isaias Afwerki to serve as president until elections could be held under a new constitution. He has remained in office since then without ever obtaining a mandate from voters.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

A constitution ratified in 1997 calls for an elected 150-seat National Assembly, which would choose the president from among its members by a majority vote. However, national elections have been postponed indefinitely, and the transitional assembly has not met since 2002. Local and regional assembly elections have been held periodically, but they are carefully orchestrated by the PFDJ and offer no real choice to voters.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 0 / 4

The 1997 constitution has never been implemented, and national elections have never been conducted. Subnational elections are controlled by the ruling party.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 0 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 0 / 4**

The PFDJ is the only legally recognized political party in Eritrea. Alternative groups must operate from abroad among the diaspora community.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 0 / 4

President Isaias and the PFDJ have been in power without interruption since independence, and since multiparty elections have never been allowed, opposition groups have had no opportunity to compete or enter government.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 0 / 4

Eritrean society is dominated by the military, with most citizens required to perform open-ended military or other national service. The authorities' intolerance of dissent and the absence of elections or opposition parties leaves individuals with no political options other than loyalty to the PFDJ, imprisonment, or illegal emigration.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 0 / 4

Women and various ethnic groups are nominally represented within the PFDJ, but they have no practical ability to organize independently or advocate for their interests through the political system.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 1 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 0 / 4**

Power is concentrated in the hands of the unelected president, who reportedly determines policy with the help of an informal circle of advisers, leaving the cabinet and security officials to merely carry out his decisions. A 2016 UNHRC commission of inquiry noted that military personnel are overrepresented among the president's closest associates.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

Petty bribery and influence peddling are thought to be endemic, and larger-scale corruption is a problem among some party officials and military leaders. The government's control over foreign exchange effectively gives it sole authority over imports, and those in favor with the regime are allowed to profit from the smuggling and sale of scarce goods such as food, building materials, and alcohol. Senior military officials have allegedly profited from smuggling Eritreans out of the country. There are no independent agencies or mechanisms in place to prevent or punish corruption.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 0 / 4

The government operates without public scrutiny. Basic data about the state budget and its appropriations are not publicly disclosed, and officials are not required to disclose their assets.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 2 / 60**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 0 / 16****D1. Are there free and independent media? 0 / 4**

The government shut down all independent media outlets in 2001, leaving only state-controlled news services in operation. Several foreign-based organizations try to provide coverage to Eritreans who can receive it, including the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), which launched internet news services in local languages in September 2017 and planned to add radio programming. Only about 1 percent of the population has access to the internet. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, 15 journalists were in prison in Eritrea at the end of 2017, most of whom were detained in the 2001 crackdown. Several others are thought to have died in custody.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 0 / 4

The government places strict limits on the exercise of religion. Eritrea officially recognizes only four faiths: Islam, Orthodox Christianity, Roman Catholicism, and Lutheranism as practiced by the Evangelical Church of Eritrea. Followers of other denominations are subject to arrest and detention, with several roundups taking place in May 2017. The patriarch of the Orthodox Church, Abune Antonios, has been held under house arrest since he called for political prisoners to be released in 2006. He briefly appeared in public to attend mass in July 2017.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 0 / 4

Academic freedom is constrained. Students in their last year of secondary school are subject to obligatory military service at the Sawa military training center, where conditions are harsh. Academics practice self-censorship, and the government interferes with their course content and limits their ability to conduct research abroad.

In October 2017, government plans to transfer control of all schools to state-supervised community trusts sparked demonstrations by supporters of a privately run Islamic school in Asmara. When a community elder who had spoken out in support of the school was arrested, more than 100 students attempted to march to the presidential offices. According to reports from exile groups, security forces attacked the demonstrators, and 28 people were killed in the ensuing violence.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 0 / 4

Freedoms of expression and private discussion are severely inhibited by fear of government informants and the likelihood of arrest and arbitrary detention for any airing of dissent. While access to the internet is limited, the authorities attempt to monitor online communications. According to reports received by the UNHRC, internet cafes are required to register customers and track their activity.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 0 / 12**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 0 / 4**

Freedom of assembly is not recognized by the authorities, and few public demonstrations occur in practice. Major protests in past decades, such as those by war veterans in 1993 and 1995 and students in 2001, ended in mass arrests and imprisonment for the organizers.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 0 / 4

The law requires any nongovernmental organizations to undergo an onerous and arbitrary annual registration process and limit their activities to providing humanitarian relief. In reality, there are no independent civil society organizations based in Eritrea. The government continues to deny permission for external human rights organizations to enter the country.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 0 / 4

There are no independent trade unions in Eritrea. The only union umbrella group, the National Confederation of Eritrean Workers, is affiliated with the ruling party. Relatively autonomous student and teachers' unions operated during the early years of independence but were gradually shut down in the late 1990s and early 2000s. According to reports to the UNHRC, the government has prevented new unions from being formed.

F. RULE OF LAW: 0 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 0 / 4**

The judiciary has no independence from the executive branch. The Supreme Court called for in the constitution has never been established, nor has a Judicial Commission tasked with appointing judges. Instead, the president controls the appointment and dismissal of all judges; even nominally elected judges in local community courts are controlled by the Justice Ministry, according to UN investigators. Many judges are military officers.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 0 / 4

Basic principles of due process are systematically violated. Arbitrary arrests and detentions are common; targets include those who evade military service, try to flee the country, or are suspected of practicing an unauthorized religion. Eritreans who offend high-ranking government or party officials are also reportedly subject to arbitrary arrest.

Prisoners are routinely held incommunicado for indefinite periods without charge or trial, with the authorities refusing even to inform family members whether they are still alive. There is no operational system of public defense lawyers. Thousands of political prisoners and prisoners of conscience remain behind bars.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 0 / 4

UN investigators have described the routine and systematic use of physical and psychological torture in both civilian and military detention centers. Deaths in custody or in military service due to torture and other harsh conditions have also been reported. Security forces employ lethal violence arbitrarily and with impunity. Individuals attempting to escape military service or flee the country have been fired on by soldiers.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 0 / 4

There are allegations that two of Eritrea's nine ethnic groups, the Kunama and Afar, face severe discrimination. Efforts have been made to promote the rights of women, who played a critical role in Eritrea's independence struggle. Laws mandate equal educational opportunity and equal pay for equal work. However, traditional societal discrimination against women persists in the countryside, and the deeply flawed legal system does not effectively uphold their formal rights. Same-sex sexual relations are criminalized, and

LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people enjoy no legal protections from societal discrimination.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 2 / 16**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 0 / 4**

Freedom of movement is heavily restricted. Eritreans young enough for national service are rarely given permission to go abroad, and those who try to travel without the correct documents face imprisonment. Individuals also require permits to travel within the country. Eritrean refugees and asylum seekers who are repatriated from other countries are subject to detention under harsh conditions.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 0 / 4

The national conscription system denies much of the working-age population the opportunity to establish and run their own businesses. Both the authorities and private actors with regime support are able to confiscate property and evict occupants without due process.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Men and women have equal rights under laws governing marriage, nationality, and other personal status matters. However, girls in rural areas remain vulnerable to early or forced marriage. Rape of women and sexualized forms of violence against men are common in detention and in military service. The government has banned and attempted to reduce the practice of female genital mutilation, but it remains widespread in rural areas.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 0 / 4

Eritrea's conscription system ties most able-bodied men and women—including those under 18 who are completing secondary school—to obligatory military service, which can also entail compulsory labor for enterprises controlled by the political elite. National service is supposed to last 18 months but is open-ended in practice. UN human rights experts have described this system as enslavement.

Cash withdrawal limits imposed in 2015 have hampered citizens' ability to buy food and other essential goods.

Estonia

Population: 1,300,000

Capital: Tallinn

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 1

Freedom Rating: 1.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Democratic institutions are strong in Estonia and political and civil rights are widely respected. The greatest challenges facing the democracy are ethnic tensions and

economic inequality. About 7 percent of the country's population remains stateless and thus may not participate in national elections.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In October, the first local elections took place since the merging of municipalities reduced the total number of elected representatives by nearly half. The Center Party gained the most seats.
- In December, a tax reform was adopted that raised both the minimum wage for full-time workers and the amount of tax-free income for low- and middle-income earners, among other changes that aim to make the system more progressive.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 38 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The current prime minister, Jüri Ratas from the Center Party, was confirmed by the Riigikogu (parliament) following the formation of a coalition in 2016 between the Center Party and two minor partners—the center-left Social Democrats (SDE) and the conservative Union of Pro Patria and Res Publica (IRL). Ratas's selection took place according to proper legal procedures.

The president is elected by parliamentary ballot to a five-year term, filling the largely ceremonial role of head of state. Current president Kersti Kaljulaid was elected as a nonpartisan consensus candidate after six rounds of voting in 2016. Although the overall election process was free and fair, it was criticized as too lengthy.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The constitution establishes a 101-seat unicameral parliament whose members are elected for four-year terms. The 2015 elections were free and fair.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

The legal framework for conducting elections is clear and detailed. Online voting is widespread. October 2017 municipal elections witnessed record turnout online, with 32 percent of participating voters using this method, thus demonstrating strong public confidence in the e-voting system.

Administrative reform in mid-2017 merged municipalities, reduced the number of electoral seats by almost half, and abolished the county level of administration. Upon review, the Supreme Court allowed the changes to stand.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 15 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4

Estonia's political parties organize and operate freely. Party members may be citizens of Estonia or of another EU member state. The system is open to the rise and fall of different parties. For example, the 2015 election brought two new parties to power: the conservative, anti-establishment Free Party and the far-right Conservative People's Party.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

The system is open to the rotation of power. In the 2015 elections, the center-right Reform Party, which had led the previous government, captured the most seats (30), and subsequently formed a coalition with its previous coalition partner, the SDE, as well as the IRL. In 2016, the Center Party, which held 27 seats, formed a new ruling coalition with the SDE and the IRL. The Center Party won local elections in October 2017.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

People's political choices are not influenced by undemocratic forces. While the governing Center Party has not fully renounced its cooperation agreement with United Russia, the main political party in Russia, this has not led to foreign interference with Estonia's political rights.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

The political rights of ethnic Russian residents of Estonia, about 7 percent of the population whose citizenship remains undetermined, face limitations on their political rights. Only citizens may participate in national elections, and while resident noncitizens are permitted to vote in local elections, they may not run as candidates. The authorities have adopted policies to assist those seeking naturalization. Although women only make up 27 percent of members of parliament, women's interests are represented through a variety of programs and government initiatives.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 11 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4

Both the government and the parliament are freely elected and function without interference from external or nonstate actors.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4

Recent years have seen heavily publicized allegations of corruption within the main political parties as well as in the public sector. The trial of Edgar Savisaar, former leader of the Center Party and Tallinn city mayor, is ongoing for charges of bribery, money laundering, and embezzlement. Other corruption scandals involving Center Party representatives continue to emerge, and the party itself is being investigated for accepting illegal donations. While the government has taken significant action toward curbing corruption according to Council of Europe anticorruption body GRECO, key shortcomings include various measures to prevent conflicts of interest among legislators. State companies have yet to improve their corruption prevention measures.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 4 / 4

Estonia is well-known for its transparency and developed e-governance services. Public access to government information and asset declarations of officials is provided for both in law and in practice.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 56 / 60**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 16 / 16****D1. Are there free and independent media? 4 / 4**

The government generally respects freedom of the press. Public and private television and radio stations operate in Estonia, and there are a number of independent newspapers. The government does not restrict access to the internet.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Religious freedom is respected in law and in practice.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is respected. By law, public Russian-language high schools must teach 60 percent of their curriculum in the Estonian language, but this does not severely limit freedom.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

Individuals are free to express political views without fear of surveillance or retribution.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 12 / 12**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4**

The constitution guarantees freedom of assembly, and the government upholds this right in practice.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

The government honors the civic rights of associations and does not restrict or control the activities of nongovernmental organizations.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

Workers may organize freely, strike, and bargain collectively, although public servants at the municipal and state levels may not strike.

F. RULE OF LAW: 14 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 4 / 4**

The judiciary is independent and generally free from government interference.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 4 / 4 (+1)

The legal process in civil and criminal matters is generally free and fair. Laws prohibiting arbitrary arrest and detention and ensuring the right to a fair trial are largely observed.

Score Change: The score improved from 3 to 4 because legal processes are organized and orderly, and prosecutors and investigation authorities are generally not subject to political pressure.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 3 / 4 (-1)

While Estonia is generally safe and peaceful, it has one of the highest intentional homicide rates in the European Union. There have been reports of law enforcement officials using excessive force when arresting suspects. Some inmates reportedly have inadequate access to health care. The incarceration rate is the seventh highest in the OECD.

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 due to a relatively high homicide rate and because conditions in prisons and detention facilities remain inadequate.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

Russian language speakers continue to face societal discrimination, which is reinforced by laws such as the Equal Treatment Act, which does not consider Estonian linguistic requirements for public officials as discriminatory. Discrimination based on sexual orientation is legally prohibited, though harassment of members of the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) communities is reportedly common.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 14 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4

Citizens and residents enjoy free movement inside Estonia and to leave the country.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 4 / 4

Estonian residents enjoy strong property rights and can establish private businesses, although corruption in the business sector is sometimes a problem.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

Violence against women, including domestic violence, remains a problem. As of year's end, the Riigikogu still could not adopt necessary amendments to previous acts to fully implement a 2014 law permitting same-sex civil unions.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

Russian speakers face discrimination when applying for jobs, especially in the public sector, due to strict language requirements. Women in Estonia earn on average 25 percent less than men, the largest gap in the European Union. Estonia is a source, transit point, and destination for women and girls trafficked for prostitution. The unemployment rate is low at 6 percent, but according to the European Commission about a quarter of the population was at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2016. A tax reform passed in December 2017 aims to make the system more progressive.

Ethiopia

Population: 101,700,000

Capital: Addis Ababa

Political Rights Rating: 7

Civil Liberties Rating: 6

Freedom Rating: 6.5

Freedom Status: Not Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: Ethiopia is an authoritarian state ruled by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), which has been in power since 1991 and currently holds every seat in Parliament. Multiple flawed elections, the application of restrictive antiterrorism and other laws, and the imposition of a ten-month state of emergency that ended in 2017 have showcased the government's willingness to repress the opposition, independent media, and other sources of dissent.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In August, legislators voted to end a draconian state of emergency that restricted speech, assembly, and movement, which was imposed following nationwide unrest in 2015 and 2016 in which hundreds of people were killed. However, its lifting did not lead to a noticeable improvement in the political rights and civil liberties of average Ethiopians.
- Clashes in the Oromo and Somali regions over border and land issues in September and December led to the displacement of tens of thousands of people, and the deaths of at least 100.
- Several journalists were released from prison in 2017, though journalists continued to experience harassment, arrests, and imprisonment.
- In November, government and opposition negotiators agreed on changes to the electoral system that were designed to facilitate better representation of opposition parties.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 4 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 1 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

The president is the head of state and is indirectly elected to a 6-year term by both chambers of Parliament. The prime minister is the head of government, and is selected by the largest party in Parliament after elections. The credibility of the selection processes depend largely upon the conduct of Ethiopia's parliamentary elections, which are tightly managed by the ruling EPRDF.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

As in past contests, Ethiopia's 2015 parliamentary and regional elections were tightly controlled by the EPRDF, with reports of voter coercion, intimidation, and barriers to registration. The African Union (AU) was the only international organization to send election observers to Ethiopia's 2015 contest, and it declared elections "peaceful and credible," but

noted irregularities including voter coercion and inconsistent poll hours. The opposition lost their sole seat in parliament, as the EPRDF and its allies took all 547 seats in the lower House of People's Representatives.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 1 / 4

The 2015 elections were held on time, and official results were released within a month. However, opposition parties repeatedly questioned the independence of the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia, and the Unity for Democracy and Justice (UDJ) party alleged that it blocked its leaders from registering as candidates.

The government announced in 2016 that it would reform the country's electoral laws to allow for more inclusive governance. In November 2017, after months of stalled talks, a number of opposition parties and the government agreed on reforms by which 20 percent of seats in the lower house would be decided by proportional voting, as opposed to the existing simple majority system. Mixed systems would also be introduced in regional legislatures and in some cities. Another agreed change, increasing the number of seats in the lower House of People's Representatives, will require a constitutional amendment to implement.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 0 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 0 / 4

Opponents of the EPRDF find it nearly impossible to operate inside Ethiopia. Authorities frequently invoke antiterrorism legislation against dissenters. In March 2017, Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC) chairman Merera Gudina was charged with crimes including planning a coup. In May, Yonatan Tesfaye, the former spokesperson for the opposition Semayawi Party, was sentenced to prison for six and a half years; he had been arrested in 2015 after criticizing the EPRDF on Facebook, and was later charged with plotting terrorist acts on behalf of the banned Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). His term was reduced to three and a half years in November by the Supreme Court.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 0 / 4

Intense government pressure prevents opposition parties from winning political representation through elections. There are no opposition members in the national parliament, nor in regional parliaments. Both the opposition Unity for Democracy and Justice (UDJ) party and the Semayawi Party alleged that the EPRDF used procedural technicalities to block their candidates' registration in the 2015 elections. Opposition party members were intimidated, detained, beaten, and arrested ahead of the polls.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 0 / 4

The authoritarian one-party system in Ethiopia largely excludes the public from any genuine and autonomous political participation.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 0 / 4

Political parties in Ethiopia are often ethnically based. The country's major ethnic parties are allied with the EPRDF, but have no room to effectively advocate for their constituents. The government favors Tigrayan ethnic interests in economic and political matters, and the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) dominates the EPRDF. The 1995 constitution grants the right of secession to ethnically based states, but the government acquired powers in 2003 to intervene in states' affairs on issues of public security. Secessionist movements in Oromia and the Somali Region, also known as the Ogaden Region, have failed after being put down by the military.

Women hold nearly 39 percent of seats in the lower house, 32 percent in the upper house, and three ministerial posts. However, in practice, the interests of women are not well represented in politics at any level.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 3 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 0 / 12

None of Ethiopia's nominally elected officials are chosen through free and fair contests, and the country's governance institutions are dominated by the EPRDF.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

The popular unrest that began in 2015 was sparked in part by concerns about corruption, and the government has since taken some steps to address the issue. In the summer of 2017, 42 people, including state officials, were arrested for embezzlement and more than 200 people had their assets frozen in August—including a state minister. However, corruption prosecutions generally target low-level individuals, and reassignments of corrupt officials are more common than prosecution.

Coinciding with the 2017 crackdown was the announcement in August of a new inter-agency corruption task force.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 1 / 4

EPRDF operations and decision making processes are generally opaque, though in 2017 some information regarding the national budget was made available to citizens. Though mandated to take place once a decade, the country's November 2017 census was delayed to February 2018, with authorities citing technical difficulties.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 8 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 2 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 0 / 4

Press freedom in Ethiopia is severely restricted. Ethiopia's media are dominated by state-owned broadcasters and government-oriented newspapers. Privately owned papers tend to steer clear of political issues and have low circulation, and journalists operating inside the country practice self-censorship. Defamation is a criminal offense. The law allows prosecutors to seize material before publication in the name of national security. The Ethiopian government maintains, and exercises, the ability to censor critical or opposition websites.

Critical journalists continue to face harassment, arrest, and imprisonment on charges of violating a variety of laws, including antiterrorism laws. In January 2017, Khalid Mohammed and Darsema Sori of the faith-based Radio Bilal were sentenced to several years in prison for inciting violence and attempting to depose the government, in connection with their coverage of demonstrations by Ethiopia's Muslims. In April, the Supreme Court

decided that two Zone 9 bloggers could be tried for inciting violence. *Negere Ethiopia* editor in chief Getachew Shiferaw was found guilty of subversion in May, though at year's end he was expected to soon be released for time served since his December 2015 arrest. Due to the risks of operating inside the country, dozens of Ethiopian journalists work in exile.

Five journalists were in Ethiopian prisons at the end of 2017, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), down from 16 at the end of 2016. Several of those released during the year were freed after extended detentions without charge, or detention on trumped-up charges.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 2 / 4

The constitution guarantees religious freedom, but the government has increasingly harassed the Muslim community, which comprises about 34 percent of the population. Most of the 18 Muslim activists convicted under the country's antiterrorism law in 2015 remain behind bars. There have been some reports of state interference in the Ethiopian Orthodox (Tewahedo) Church.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 0 / 4

Academic freedom is restricted in Ethiopia. The government has accused universities of being pro-opposition and prohibits political activities on campuses. There are reports of students being pressured into joining the EPRDF in order to secure employment or places at universities; professors are similarly pressured in order to ensure favorable positions or promotions. The Ministry of Education closely monitors and regulates official curricula, and the research, speech, and assembly of both professors and students are frequently restricted.

Security officials have forcibly entered Ethiopian schools and universities to make arrests, sometimes intimidating or detaining minors who were involved or perceived to have been involved in civil unrest. Schools have at times been closed in connection with security crises, including in November 2017, in connection with ethnic clashes in the Oromia, Amhara, and Tigray regions. Universities were themselves the site of ethnic tensions and ethnically-motivated violence, prompting, for example, students from the Amhara region studying in Oromia to flee due to safety concerns. At some universities, the government deployed security forces and enforced a curfew in December.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 0 / 4

The presence of the EPRDF at all levels of society—directly and, increasingly, electronically—inhibits free private discussion. The EPRDF maintains a network of paid informants, and opposition members in Ethiopia and the diaspora have accused the government of tapping their phones or monitoring their electronic communications. In December 2017, the Canadian research group Citizen Lab released a technical analysis indicating that Ethiopian authorities have used malware tools to spy on government critics, with the efforts reaching far beyond the country's borders.

Internet blackouts are regularly reported, often following mass demonstrations. Social media and messaging applications including WhatsApp and Twitter became largely inaccessible in parts of Oromia starting in March 2016, and sporadic cuts to those and other social media outlets were reported throughout wider areas on numerous occasions later that year and in 2017. In May and June 2017, Ethiopian authorities instituted an internet blackout to prevent cheating on national exams, which were leaked in 2016 by activists.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 0 / 12**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 0 / 4**

Freedom of assembly is guaranteed by the constitution but severely restricted in practice. Demonstrations that erupted in late 2015 continued sporadically throughout 2016 and 2017. The protests—which began over ethnic and land rights in the Oromia region, and later spread to Addis Ababa and the Amhara Region as protesters’ grievances expanded—have been quashed violently by security forces, with some rights organizations claiming that as many as 800 protesters were killed between late 2015 and the end of 2016. The October 2016 state of emergency banned all “assembly or protest” without prior approval. The designation was lifted in August 2017, but in November, the government, citing national security concerns, again declared a ban on protests.

Following a deadly 2016 stampede reportedly started by security forces’ firing of tear gas into a crowd at a religious festival in Oromia, the government announced in September 2017 that it would deploy only unarmed police to that year’s festival. The festival occurred peacefully in October.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 0 / 4

The 2009 Charities and Societies Proclamation restricts the activities of foreign nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) by prohibiting work on political and human rights issues. Foreign NGOs are defined as groups receiving more than 10 percent of their funding from abroad. The law also limits the amount of money any NGO can spend on “administration,” a controversial category that has included activities such as teacher or health-worker training. NGOs have struggled to maintain operations as a result of the law.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 0 / 4

Trade unions rights are tightly restricted. Neither civil servants nor teachers have collective bargaining rights. All unions must be registered, and the government retains the authority to cancel registration. Two-thirds of union members belong to organizations affiliated with the Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions, which is under government influence. Independent unions face harassment, and trade union leaders are regularly imprisoned. There has not been a legal strike since 1993.

F. RULE OF LAW: 2 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4**

The judiciary is officially independent, but in practice it is subject to political interference, and judgments rarely deviate from government policy.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 0 / 4

Government critics risk arbitrary detention and politically motivated charges, notably under the 2009 antiterrorism law, which gives great discretion to security forces and allows the detention of suspects for up to four months without charge. According to Human Rights Watch, some 21,000 people were arbitrarily detained during the 2016–17 state of emergency. Hundreds of activists and protest participants have faced unfair trials under the terrorism law’s provisions in recent months, according to Amnesty International.

The government has generally refused to investigate allegations of large-scale abuses and other wrongdoing by security forces, and in April 2017 rejected calls by the United Nations and European Union for external investigations into the deadly crackdown on antigovernment protesters during 2015 and 2016. An April 2017 report by the

government-aligned Human Rights Commission determined that some police officers could be prosecuted for their role in the deadly stampede at a 2016 Oromo religious festival, though at year's end it was unclear whether anyone had been arrested.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 0 / 4

Security forces employed force against predominately peaceful protesters throughout 2016 and 2017, with rights groups estimating that hundreds of people were killed in the crackdown. Persistent conflicts between residents of the Oromia Region and Somali Region (also known as the Ogaden Region), partly over land and grazing rights along the border, resulted in clashes in September 2017 that killed at least 100 people and displaced tens of thousands. A paramilitary force known as the Liyu Police based in the Somali Region has been blamed for extrajudicial killings and carrying out attacks on homes in the neighboring Oromia Region, and the government has taken no apparent action to address the abuses.

Conditions in Ethiopia's prisons are harsh, and detainees frequently report abuse, including torture. Multiple times since 2016, Bekele Gerba, the deputy chairman of the opposition OFC, and other Oromo political prisoners have gone on hunger strike to protest poor treatment in prison; they reportedly have been denied medical attention and access to legal counsel and their families.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

Repression of the Oromo and ethnic Somalis, and government attempts to co-opt their political parties into EPRDF allies, have fueled nationalism in the Oromia and Somali (Ogaden) regions. Same-sex sexual activity is prohibited by law and punishable by up to 15 years' imprisonment.

In September 2017, Human Rights Watch reported cases going back to 2010 in which Ethiopian officials had harassed asylum seekers of Ethiopian origin who were living outside of Ethiopia, as well as cases in which Ethiopian asylum seekers were forcibly returned to Ethiopia by Ethiopian officials.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 4 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 1 / 4

While Ethiopia's constitution establishes freedom of movement, it was restricted during the 2016–17 state of emergency through curfews and road closures in Oromia and Amhara Regions. Sporadic violence in the Somali and Oromia regions further restricted free movement.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 1 / 4

Private business opportunities are limited by rigid state control of economic life and the prevalence of state-owned enterprises. All land must be leased from the state. The government has evicted indigenous groups from various areas to make way for infrastructure projects. It has also leased large tracts of land to foreign governments and investors for agricultural development in opaque deals that have displaced thousands of people.

Evictions have taken place in the Lower Omo Valley, where government-run sugar plantations and hydroelectric dams have put thousands of pastoralists at risk by diverting

their water supplies. Displacement resulting from the appropriation of land has driven much of the resentment behind recent antigovernment protests.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 1 / 4

Legislation protects women's rights, but these rights are routinely violated in practice. Enforcement of the law against rape and domestic abuse is patchy, and cases routinely stall in the courts. Forced child marriage and female genital mutilation are technically illegal, though there has been little effort to prosecute perpetrators. However, recent reports suggest that female genital mutilation is becoming somewhat less frequent due to efforts by both NGOs and the government to combat it.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

Trafficking convictions have increased in recent years, though the U.S. government continues to urge its Ethiopian counterparts to more aggressively pursue trafficking cases. Many children continue to work in dangerous sectors and lack access to basic education and services. Most agricultural labor in rural areas is performed by women, but these women are generally excluded from decision-making processes regarding their work.

Fiji

Population: 900,000

Capital: Suva

Political Rights Rating: 3

Civil Liberties Rating: 3↑

Freedom Rating: 3

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Ratings Change: Fiji's civil liberties rating improved from 4 to 3 due to greater state tolerance of protests and demonstrations compared to 2016.

Overview: The repressive climate that followed a 2006 coup has eased since democratic elections were held in 2014. However, the ruling party frequently interferes with opposition activities, the judiciary is subject to political influence, and military and police brutality is a significant problem.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In March 2017, three executives from the *Fiji Times* and an editorial contributor were charged with sedition for publishing a controversial letter about Muslims. Human rights groups claimed that the charges were politically motivated.
 - The military made several statements criticizing political parties for their rhetoric throughout the year, including remarks made by Chief of Staff Jone Kalouniwai in June criticizing Pio Tikoduadua of the National Federation Party (NFP) for sowing ethnic divisions with his advocacy of the indigenous iTaukei people.
 - Several Hindu temples were vandalized at the end of the year, raising concerns about sectarian tensions and discrimination against the Indo-Fijian population.
-

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 24 / 40 (-1)**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 8 / 12****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4**

The prime minister is the head of government and serves four-year terms. The party that wins the most seats in parliamentary elections selects the prime minister, who is then appointed by the president. In the 2014 parliamentary elections, Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama's Fiji First won 59 percent of the total vote and 32 seats in the 50-member Parliament. International observers reported that the elections were credible, with no reports of violence or intimidation. However, there were some flaws in the process: domestic observers were prohibited from polling stations and a restrictive media environment made it difficult for some political parties to obtain media coverage.

The president is elected by parliament, which chooses between two candidates: one named by the prime minister and one by the leader of the opposition. As head of state, the president—who is elected for one three-year term and is eligible for reelection—holds a largely ceremonial role. President George Konrote was elected by parliament in 2015.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4

Parliament is Fiji's unicameral legislative body, with 50 members elected to serve four-year terms. International observers regarded the last parliamentary elections, held in 2014, to be largely credible, although civil society participation was restricted.

Municipal councils continue to be run by government-appointed administrators, having been dissolved in 2009 in the wake of the abrogation of the 1997 constitution. As a result, municipal elections have not been held since 2005.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4

The legal framework for Fijian elections is considered fair. However, the structure of the electoral system has raised concerns about potential political interference. Fiji First's general secretary, Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum, serves as minister of elections, as well as attorney general. Opposition parties claim that this creates a bias in the Electoral Commission, which administers elections, and affects the independence of the body.

In 2016, the government awarded a contract to a Pakistani company to administer the 2018 parliamentary elections. The move drew criticism from opposition parties, who argued that the outsourcing of election administration threatened the integrity of the process.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 9 / 16 (-1)**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 3 / 4**

The right to form political parties is constitutionally guaranteed, but the government has eligibility requirements that discourage the formation of smaller parties: prospective parties must submit 5,000 signatures to become registered. The 5 percent nationwide threshold for representation in parliament further disincentivizes the formation of smaller parties.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 1 / 4

The dominance of Fiji First in parliament and its popularity with the public has left little space for opposition forces to assert themselves politically. After winning no seats in the 2014 elections, the Fiji Labor Party, the longstanding opposition party, became defunct and ceded that role to the Social Democratic Liberal Party (SODELPA), which won 13 seats. Fiji First allegedly used state resources to campaign in 2014, which further disadvantaged opposition parties.

The prime minister has, in the past, stated that he would not allow the opposition parties to assume office. Ahead of the 2014 elections, he issued warnings of instability in the event his Fiji First party was defeated.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 2 / 4 (-1)

Despite constitutional guarantees that it remain apolitical, the military frequently inserts itself into Fijian politics, and made several statements directed against opposition politicians in 2017. In June 2017, Chief of Staff Jone Kalouniwai criticized Pio Tikoduadua of the NFP for sowing ethnic divisions with his advocacy of the indigenous iTaukei people. The leaders of the three major political parties (including Tikoduadua) are former military officials, which contributes to the perception that the military has an undue political influence.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 due to the military's increased involvement in politics by criticizing opposition parties.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

The law does not restrict the participation of minorities and women in politics. However, due to cultural traditions, the participation of indigenous women is limited. Only 7 out of the 50 members of parliament are women.

Smaller minority groups, including Banabans, Chinese, and people from other Polynesian islands, lack significant political representation.

Historically, political affiliations have been associated with ethnicity. The Bainimarama-led interim government pushed for national unity and a national identity transcending ethnicity, race, and religion. For the 2014 general elections, all political parties were required to have English names to appeal to all ethnic groups. Reserved seats and special considerations for ethnic and religious groups were eliminated.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 7 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 3 / 4

The executive branch under Prime Minister Bainimarama determines the policies of government. However, the military is still influential in shaping the government's policies: 10 military officers were elected to parliament in 2014. With Fiji First holding a strong parliamentary majority, the government has frequently pushed through bills and budgets with minimal opposition scrutiny.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

Safeguards against corruption are limited in their effectiveness. In 2017, the Fiji Independent Commission against Corruption (FICAC) had some success combating institutional corruption, pursuing several high-profile cases. In July, for example, former

education minister Mahendra Reddy was charged with bribery, but was acquitted by a court in December. Despite the prosecutions that have resulted from FICAC's investigations, corruption remains a serious problem and many officials still act with impunity. FICAC has also allegedly pursued politically motivated corruption cases.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

Government standards of openness and transparency have improved since the restoration of elective democracy in 2014. Parliamentary sessions are broadcast live, and Hansard (an official report of parliamentary proceedings) is updated regularly. Despite these improvements, there is no law requiring parliamentarians to disclose their assets and income. Fiji lacks an access to information law, and requests for information from the media and the public are sometimes denied.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 35 / 60 (+1)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 12 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4

Fiji has an active media sector, with several private television stations, radio stations, and newspapers. The opposition and other critics of the government have accused the government of using state power to silence critics. For example, the vaguely worded Media Industry Development Decree bans reporting that is critical of the government or harmful to "national interest public order." The restrictive press laws are sometimes enforced by the government, which leads to self-censorship. In March 2017, three executives from the *Fiji Times* and an editorial contributor were charged with sedition for publishing a controversial letter about Muslims.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Freedom of religion is generally respected. However, several Hindu temples have been vandalized in recent years, including the desecration of the Tirath Dham temple in Nadi in December 2017; a temple near Suva was attacked the previous month. In Ra province, 15 people were convicted of sedition in September for attempting to form a Christian state.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 3 / 4

Academic freedom is not overtly constrained, but government control over funding has been used to exert influence over tertiary institutions. The University of the South Pacific prohibits the majority of its employees from taking on an official position with a political party or running for office.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4

There were no confirmed reports of government restrictions on private discussion on political matters or other sensitive topics in 2017. However, the government places constraints on free speech, such as a law banning the burning of the national flag.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 6 / 12 (+1)

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 2 / 4 (+1)

Assembly rights were more respected in 2017: the crackdown on public gatherings that took place in 2016 was eased. Police permits are required for public gatherings and

protests, and civil society leaders have reported that the permit process can be lengthy. The constitution gives the government wide latitude to prohibit protests, including on the basis of public safety and public morality.

Score Change: The score improved from 1 to 2 because assembly rights were better respected in the year after the 2016 crackdown on public demonstrations, with no reports of gatherings being suppressed by authorities.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 2 / 4

Fiji has an extensive nongovernmental organization (NGO) network, which largely operates without government interference. However, strict sedition laws, which criminalize criticism of the government, place sharp constraints on the range of initiatives that NGOs can undertake. NGOs have been critical of the proposed Parliamentary Powers and Privileges Bill, which they claim criminalizes criticism of parliament and could further erode civic space.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

The general environment for trade unions has improved. Since the passage of the 2016 Employment Relations (Amendment) Act, all workers have the right to form unions and strike. However, the law restricts political activities by union members, prohibiting union members from becoming parliamentarians and impeding their ability to join political parties.

F. RULE OF LAW: 7 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 2 / 4

While the constitution guarantees an independent judiciary, there have been credible allegations of political interference. The prime minister has substantial appointment powers, with the power to both appoint and dismiss judges on the Supreme Court and other high courts. These powers leave the judiciary vulnerable to interference and abuse by the executive.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

Due process rights are often not respected in practice. Corruption is a major problem in the police force. Due to resource shortages, lengthy pretrial detentions are common. The law allows suspects to be arrested without a warrant for violating the Crimes Decree. Politically motivated criminal charges are not uncommon. Amnesty International claimed that the sedition charges leveled against the *Fiji Times* in 2017 were meant to silence criticism of the government.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 2 / 4

Although the number of reported cases declined in 2017, torture and beatings by police remained a problem. Police officers and military officials who commit abuses are rarely brought to justice, and those who are convicted of crimes are frequently pardoned or have their convictions overturned on appeal. Prisons are often overcrowded, lack sanitation, and provide inadequate health services.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people face discrimination in employment and access to healthcare. Women experience discrimination in employment as well: a gender pay gap persists.

Relations between indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians remain strained. Indigenous Fijians previously enjoyed legal advantages in education and political representation. However, the interim government, after the 2006 coup, removed many of these privileges in a bid to foster a sense of national unity. Despite this progress, Indo-Fijians still experience discrimination.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 10 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4

Citizens enjoy the freedom to travel, live, work, and seek education inside and outside the country. However, the law gives the government broad powers to restrict both internal and foreign travel. The government did not utilize the law to impose any restrictions on travel in 2017.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 3 / 4

Property rights are generally respected. However, it is difficult to obtain land titles. The government amended the Land Sales Act in 2014 to require foreign nationals who fail to build a dwelling on their land within two years of acquisition to pay a fine equivalent to 10 percent of the land value every six months. Under the law, urban residential freehold land cannot be sold to foreigners.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Domestic violence remains a problem in Fiji, and perpetrators who are convicted of the crime often receive light sentences. The Minister for Women, Children, and Poverty Alleviation asserts that 72 percent of Fijian women have been victims of violence in their lifetimes. To address the problem, in March 2017, the government established a toll-free helpline to support victims of domestic violence.

Rape is also a serious issue in Fiji. Reports of rape increased dramatically in 2017, possibly because awareness of the legal consequences of the crime grew.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Sex trafficking of children remained a problem in 2017, and the government was ineffective in addressing it: there were no prosecutions for the crime during the year. Safety standards at workplaces are not always adequately enforced. Long work hours are common in some jobs, including transportation and shipping.

Finland

Population: 5,500,000

Capital: Helsinki

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 1

Freedom Rating: 1.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Finland's parliamentary system features free and fair elections and robust multi-party competition. Corruption is not a significant problem, and freedoms of speech, religion, and association are respected. The judiciary is independent under the constitution and in practice. Women and ethnic minority groups enjoy equal rights, though harassment and hate speech aimed at minority groups does occur.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- An assailant killed two women and injured eight other people in a knife attack in Turku, which was considered the country's first-ever terrorist attack. Security measures increased in response to the events.
- Finland's coalition government reconstituted after the controversial, anti-immigration Finns Party split into two separate parties. The split was precipitated by the Finns' election of a hardline right-wing party leader. His faction was left out of the new government.
- Same-sex marriage became legal in March.
- In May, the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) called on Finland to repeal laws requiring that transgender people undergo sterilization in order to change their legal gender.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 40 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The president, whose role is mainly ceremonial, is directly elected for up to two six-year terms. Former finance minister Sauli Niinistö of the National Coalition Party (KOK) handily won the presidency in 2012 elections considered broadly free and fair. The prime minister is head of government, and is selected by Finland's freely elected parliament.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

Representatives in the 200-seat, unicameral parliament, the Eduskunta, are elected to four-year terms. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) deployed a preliminary elections assessment mission ahead of the 2015 parliamentary polls; its findings cited "a high level of confidence in all the aspects of the electoral process" and the OSCE consequently declined to monitor the polls. The Center Party (KESK) took the greatest number of seats, with 49, and formed a government with the KOK and the Finns Party; KESK leader Juha Sipilä became prime minister.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

The OSCE, ahead of the 2015 polls, expressed concern about limits on election-related appeals processes, and the timely adjudication of such complaints. However, Finland's electoral laws are robust and generally well implemented by the relevant authorities.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 16 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4**

Political parties are generally free to organize and operate, and rise and fall freely according to popular support and political developments. In June 2017, the anti-immigration Finns Party split into two separate parties following the controversial election of a hardline right-wing party leader. The former party leader and all of the Finns' government ministers formed a new party called New Alternative. The Finns Party was subsequently ejected from the government, after KESK and KOK formed a coalition with the New Alternative; together they hold 106 out of 200 seats.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

Finland boasts a robust multiparty system with strong opposition parties.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

People's political choices are generally free from domination by actors that are not democratically accountable.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 4 / 4

Citizens from minority ethnic groups enjoy full political rights. The Åland Islands—an autonomous region located off the southwestern coast whose inhabitants speak Swedish—have their own 30-seat parliament, as well as one seat in the national legislature. The indigenous Sami of northern Finland have a legislature with limited powers, but they do not have guaranteed representation in the parliament. Women and women's interests are reasonably well-represented in politics, as are LGBT (lesbian, gay bisexual, and transgender) people and their specific interests.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 12 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4**

Finland's freely elected government representatives are able to effectively develop and implement policy.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 4 / 4

Corruption is not a significant problem in Finland, and is generally punished under relevant laws when discovered.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 4 / 4

Laws permitting access to public information are generally well enforced, though there are some limits on the disclosure of information related to national security, foreign affairs, and criminal investigations. All citizens including government officials are required by law to make public asset declarations, though there are no penalties for noncompliance.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 60 / 60**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 16 / 16****D1. Are there free and independent media? 4 / 4**

Freedom of expression is protected by Article 12 of the constitution and the 2003 Act on the Exercise of Freedom of Expression in Mass Media. Media outlets in Finland are typically independent and free from political pressure or censorship. Decreasing advertising spending continues to pose a challenge for the media sector, especially for print publications.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Religious freedom is guaranteed in the constitution and generally respected in practice. However, Jewish communities in Finland have reported a rise in anti-Semitic hate speech online in recent years. Some actors, including municipal-level public officials, have characterized a planned mosque complex in Helsinki as a security threat.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is generally respected.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

There are no impediments to open and free private discussion.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 12 / 12**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4**

Freedom of assembly is protected by law and upheld in practice.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations operate without restriction.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

Workers have the right to organize and bargain collectively, though public-sector workers who provide services deemed essential may not strike. Approximately 70 percent of workers belong to trade unions.

F. RULE OF LAW: 16 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 4 / 4**

The constitution provides for an independent judiciary, and the courts operate without political interference in practice.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 4 / 4

Due process is generally respected in Finland.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 4 / 4

People in Finland generally enjoy freedom from violent attacks by state and nonstate actors. However, in August 2017, a Moroccan man who had arrived in Finland as an asylum seeker the previous year killed two women and injured eight additional people in a knife attack. The attacker appeared to target women, and the incident was being investigated as Finland's first terrorist attack. Police had previously flagged the man, who was arrested in the attack's wake, as an extremist risk, and Finland raised its emergency readiness across the country. Security at airports and train stations was increased and more police officers were put on the streets.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 4 / 4

The constitution guarantees the Sami people cultural autonomy and the right to pursue their traditional livelihoods, which include fishing and reindeer herding. However, representatives of the community have said that they cannot exercise their rights in practice and that they do not have the right to self-determination with respect to land use. While Roma also make up a very small percentage of the Finnish population, they are more significantly disadvantaged and marginalized.

Women enjoy equal rights, but despite a law stipulating equal pay for equal work, women earn only about 85 percent as much as men with the same qualifications.

In 2016, Finland amended its asylum law to limit the aid available to asylum seekers. The amendments prompted concern from the UN refugee agency, which suggested that Finland abandoned good practices and sought to align its policies with the minimum required by international treaties governing the treatment of refugees.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 16 / 16**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4**

Individuals in Finland may move about freely. The country has one of the most expansive "freedom to roam" policies in the world, allowing people to use any public or private land for recreational purposes as long as the privacy of a private residence is not violated and no environmental damage is incurred.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 4 / 4

Intellectual and physical property rights are upheld in Finland. There are no major obstacles to establishing a business, and the country boasts a well-regulated, transparent, and open economy.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 4 / 4

People's social choices are for the most part unrestricted. However, legislation requires that transgender people be sterilized and have a mental health diagnosis in order to obtain legal recognition of their gender. In May, the UNHRC called for Finland to eliminate these impediments to legal gender recognition. The UNHRC has also recommended that Finland amend its criminal code to no longer define rape according to the degree of violence used by the perpetrator. Domestic violence is an ongoing concern.

A law allowing same-sex marriage took effect in March 2017.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 4 / 4

Finland remains a destination and a transit country for men, women, and children who are subjected to sex trafficking and labor exploitation in various industries. According to the U.S. State Department, the government actively prosecutes trafficking offenses, and victims have access to protection and assistance, though victim identification remained a challenge, particularly child victims.

Separately, in January 2017, Finland launched a two-year trial of basic income for the unemployed aimed at reducing poverty and boosting employment.

France

Population: 64,600,000

Capital: Paris

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 2

Freedom Rating: 1.5

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: The French political system features vibrant democratic processes and generally strong protections for civil liberties and political rights. However, due to a number of deadly terrorist attacks in recent years, successive governments have been willing to curtail constitutional protections and empower law enforcement to act in ways that impinge on personal freedoms. Anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant sentiment have also increased.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- The victory of Emmanuel Macron in the presidential election heralded the fragmentation of France's traditional party system, and reflected public distrust of once-mainstream parties. Macron, who became the youngest-ever French president, was elected a year after founding his movement, "En Marche!" (Forward!). Macron defeated Marine Le Pen, leader of France's far-right National Front (FN), in the second election round.
- Macron's centrist party, La République en Marche (LREM), and an allied party obtained a clear majority in legislative elections held later in the year.
- A state of emergency originally implemented after the November 2015 attacks in Paris, remained in place through October, when it was replaced by permanent antiterrorism legislation that retained a number of controversial measures, such as provisions that increased the powers of the police.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 38 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The French president is chief of state, and is elected to five-year terms by direct, universal suffrage in a two-round system. The prime minister is head of government, and is appointed by the president. Macron, a centrist newcomer to politics, won the first round of the presidential election in April 2017. In the second round, held in May, Macron bested

Le Pen of the far-right FN, taking 66.10 percent of the vote. Le Pen had campaigned on pledges to suspend immigration and hold a referendum on France's EU membership. The turnout in the first round was 77 percent, but lower in the second, with over 25 percent of voters abstaining.

The OSCE, following a needs assessment mission conducted in March 2017, expressed confidence in the integrity of French elections and sent only a limited observer mission to assess campaign finance processes and media coverage surrounding the presidential poll. It expressed concern over legal provisions under which journalists could be compelled to reveal their sources if it were deemed in the public interest, but generally praised the media environment surrounding the election.

Documents from the Macron campaign were leaked ahead of the election, with many analysts suggesting that Russian-based hackers were responsible. The country's election commission responded swiftly, warning media outlets to respect the campaign blackout period during which the documents were released and not to report on them, and noting that some of the leaked information appeared to have been fabricated.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

Members of the lower house of Parliament, the 577-seat National Assembly, are elected to five-year terms in a two-round system. The upper house, the 348-seat Senate, is an indirectly elected body whose members serve six-year terms. In the June 2017 legislative elections, LREM and its centrist ally won a comfortable majority in the National Assembly, with 350 out of 577 seats. The center-right Republicans (LR) and their allies finished second, and the center-left Socialist Party (PS) and its allies finished a distant third. Despite securing 13.2 percent of the vote nationally, only 8 FN candidates were elected to the National Assembly; remaining seats were split among a number of other parties. The legislative election saw record low turnout, with 49.7 percent turnout in the first round and 42.6 percent in the second.

The OSCE declined to send a mission to observe the polls, having expressed general confidence in French elections and saying there was no need for a second mission following its earlier evaluation of the presidential election.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

France's electoral laws and framework are fair and implemented impartially. While generally praising the electoral framework, the OSCE in its assessment of the 2017 presidential poll recommended that officials work to close loopholes that can allow actors to sidestep campaign finance regulations.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 15 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4

Parties are generally able to organize and operate freely. For the first time, France held live televised debates during the first round of the presidential race, providing a platform for the top five candidates to express their views, and expanding the national exposure of less dominant parties.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

The 2017 legislative elections, which saw strong performances by the LREM, the FN, and the far-left France Insoumise (FI)—demonstrated that parties outside the political mainstream can gain power through elections.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

People's political choices are generally free from domination.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

No laws restrict the political participation of women, LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people, or ethnic, religions, and racial minorities. However, the rise of far-right parties and accompanying mainstreaming of nationalist ideas have caused certain minorities to feel excluded from the political sphere, most notably Muslim communities.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 11 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4**

In general, the elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government. However, under the administration of former president François Hollande, the government used Article 49.3 of the French constitution to bypass parliament in the passage of legislation. Since becoming president, Macron has used the *ordonnance* process to similarly bypass parliamentary debate on his overhaul of labor laws.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4

Corruption in French politics remains an issue, as reflected by recent allegations against presidential candidates Le Pen of FN and François Fillon of the LR involving the payment of large salaries to close associates and family members who had been granted “assistant” positions. A 2017 law on “moralization” seeks to reduce such conflicts of interest by banning lawmakers at national and local levels as well as civil servants from employing family members, among other provisions.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 4 / 4

The government operates with openness and transparency, although the use in recent years of Article 49.3 and *ordonnances* demonstrates some desire by the executive to make policy without legislative or public scrutiny.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 52 / 60**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 14 / 16****D1. Are there free and independent media? 4 / 4**

The media operate freely and represent a wide range of political opinions. However, high concentration of media ownership remains a concern.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4

The constitution protects freedom of religion. Antidefamation laws penalize religiously motivated abuse, and Holocaust denial is illegal. France maintains the policy of *laïcité* (secularism), whereby religion and state affairs are strictly separated, though the government maintains relationships with organizations representing the country's three major religions, Christianity, Islam, and Judaism.

Since 2015, France's already damaged relationship with its Muslim communities has grown increasingly fraught in the wake of terrorist attacks, some of which the Islamic State (IS) militant group claimed responsibility for. Islamophobic rhetoric from prominent politicians and public figures on both the left and right is not uncommon. The Collective against Islamophobia in France, a domestic monitor, recorded many instances of discrimination, attacks, and threats against Muslims in 2017. However, it noted that the total number of recorded incidents was lower in 2016 and the first half of 2017 than in previous years. Nevertheless, the figures point to ongoing discrimination.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

There are no formal restrictions on academic freedom in France. However, in October 2017, Lyon University 2, a public university, cancelled a conference on Islamophobia after right-wing and secular groups applied pressure, with some opponents claiming concern about *laïcité*.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4

Private discussion remains generally open and vibrant, despite new laws that permit government surveillance. In 2015, Parliament approved a new law granting the government expanded powers to conduct domestic surveillance, including bulk collection of communications data as well as wider authority to use hidden cameras and microphones. The law authorizes the use of sophisticated intelligence technology to intercept all telephone conversations, text messages, and emails in targeted areas. The law only prescribes limited judicial oversight of these activities.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 11 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 3 / 4

Freedom of assembly is normally respected. However, the state of emergency implemented after the November 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris affected the right to demonstrate, and rights organizations expressed concern that the antiterrorism law that replaced the state of emergency would continue to restrict freedom of assembly.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations, including those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work, can generally operate freely.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

Trade unions are strong, despite declining membership.

F. RULE OF LAW: 13 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 4 / 4

France has an independent judiciary, and the rule of law generally prevails in court proceedings.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 3 / 4

Due process generally prevails in civil and criminal matters, but the state of emergency allowed authorities to take extraordinary measures, including conducting raids, detentions, and house arrests of suspects without warrants or judicial oversight. The state of emergency was extended six times, and in October 2017, an overwhelming majority of the National Assembly voted in favor of new antiterrorism legislation that formally replaced the emergency, and which gave the police increased power to perform searches, close religious facilities, and place limits on the movement of terrorism suspects.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 3 / 4

The country has not seen a large-scale terrorist attack since 2015, though the state of emergency persisted throughout most of 2017, and was eventually replaced by the new antiterrorism legislation. In 2016, the UN Committee against Torture criticized France over its use of excessive force during police operations conducted under the state of emergency.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

Migrants and refugees in France continue to suffer both from societal discrimination and abuse by government officials. Surging immigration and refugee flows from Muslim-majority countries have exacerbated anti-Muslim sentiment, and reports of vandalism of mosques, verbal assaults, and xenophobic graffiti continue.

French law forbids the categorization of people according to ethnic origin, and no official statistics are collected on ethnicity. Discrimination based on sexual orientation is prohibited by law. Legislation passed in 2016 scrapped the requirement that transgender people undergo sterilization in order to legally change their gender.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 14 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4

There are normally no restrictions on freedom of travel or choice of residence or employment in France. However, measures allowing authorities to institute restrictions on movement were permitted during the state of emergency, and retained in 2017 law that replaced it.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 4 / 4

Private businesses are free to operate. In 2016, major reforms to the labor code were enacted, further shifting power over hiring, firing, and working conditions to businesses and away from labor. These shifts were reinforced by Macron's 2017 changes to the labor code.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

Individuals generally enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance.

However, a number of laws against religious clothing have forced some women to dress against their will.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

Civil rights groups and scholars have reported evidence of employment discrimination against women, French Muslims, immigrants of North African descent, and others outside the traditional elite. While France's government takes action against human trafficking, the problem persists in the commercial sex trade; some victims are also forced into domestic labor.

Gabon

Population: 1,800,000

Capital: Libreville

Political Rights Rating: 7 ↓

Civil Liberties Rating: 5

Freedom Rating: 6.0

Freedom Status: Not Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Ratings Change: Gabon's political rights rating declined from 6 to 7 due to the postponement of legislative elections for a second time, which underscored President Ali Bongo's dominance of the political and electoral systems.

Overview: Although Gabon holds multiparty elections, President Ali Bongo Ondimba maintains political dominance through a pervasive patronage system and restrictions on dissent, having succeeded his father when he died after more than 40 years in power in 2009. Media coverage that is critical of the government can draw legal repercussions. The executive branch effectively controls the judiciary, and prisoners suffer from harsh conditions. Other significant problems include discrimination against African immigrants, marginalization of indigenous people, and legal and de facto inequality for women.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In July, the Constitutional Court authorized the postponement of legislative elections, originally due by December 2016, for a second time, setting April 2018 as the new deadline.
- In August, opposition leader Jean Ping called for a civil disobedience campaign, arguing that there was no other means of forcing political change in the aftermath of the deeply flawed 2016 presidential election.
- In December, the National Assembly passed draft constitutional amendments that, if approved by the Senate, would strengthen the president's authority over the prime minister and cabinet; lawmakers rejected opposition calls to impose presidential term limits.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 4 / 40 (-4)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 0 / 12 (-2)

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

The president, who is the chief executive authority, is elected by popular vote for seven-year terms. Presidential term limits were abolished in 2003. The president nominates and can dismiss the prime minister on his own initiative.

The August 2016 presidential election pitted incumbent Ali Bongo Ondimba against Jean Ping of the opposition Union of Forces for Change (UFC). A few days after the voting, the National Autonomous and Permanent Electoral Commission (CENAP) declared Bongo the winner with 49.8 percent of the vote, compared with 48.2 percent for Ping. In the province of Haut-Ogooué, a Bongo family stronghold, turnout was reported at a dubious 99.9 percent, with 95 percent backing the incumbent, even though turnout in the rest of the country was just 54 percent. Both Ping and observers from the European Union called for a recount, and the results were sent to the Constitutional Court for review.

Meanwhile, violent protests erupted, the parliament building was set on fire, and security forces stormed Ping's headquarters. Estimates of the death toll from the unrest ranged from fewer than 10 to more than 50, and hundreds of others were arrested, though most were later released or freed pending trial.

The Constitutional Court, headed by a longtime Bongo family ally, rebuffed an observation mission from the African Union during its deliberations on the recount results and ultimately validated Bongo's victory. The president was credited with 50.66 percent of the vote, leaving Ping with 47.24 percent. Ping refused to accept the results.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4 (-1)

Gabon's bicameral Parliament consists of a National Assembly, whose 120 members are elected by popular vote for five-year terms, and a 102-seat Senate, indirectly elected by regional and municipal officials for six-year terms. Bongo's Gabonese Democratic Party (PDG) claimed 113 of 120 seats in 2011 National Assembly elections, which were boycotted by some opposition parties over the government's failure to implement biometric technology for voter registration. PDG allies took five seats, leaving the opposition with just two. The PDG took 81 seats in the 2014 Senate elections.

The next National Assembly elections were due by December 2016, but the government postponed them until July 2017, citing a lack of funds. The Constitutional Court approved a second postponement that month, setting a new deadline of April 2018. The government claimed that it needed more time to enact electoral reforms.

Score Change: The score declined from 1 to 0 due to the expiration of incumbent National Assembly members' original mandates and the extension of their terms by more than a year.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 0 / 4 (-1)

Gabon's electoral laws and framework do not ensure free and fair elections. CENAP, the Interior Ministry, and the Constitutional Court all play important roles in managing elections, and all are widely seen as loyal to the president. Even before the controversy and violence surrounding the 2016 presidential election, an Afrobarometer poll conducted in 2015 found that of 36 African countries surveyed, Gabonese citizens had the lowest level of trust in their electoral commission.

In December 2017, the National Assembly approved draft constitutional amendments that were developed without meaningful input from opposition groups, civil society, or the general public. The text was not made public during the legislative debate. Among other changes, the amendments introduced a runoff system for presidential elections if no

candidate wins a majority in the first round, granted the president authority to set state policy unilaterally rather than in concert with the prime minister and cabinet, and required ministers to take an oath of allegiance to the president. Lawmakers rejected opposition proposals including the imposition of presidential term limits. The amendments were awaiting passage by the Senate at year's end.

Score Change: The score declined from 1 to 0 due to constitutional amendments that were adopted in an opaque manner by a National Assembly whose elected mandate had expired.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 2 / 16 (-1)

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 1 / 4

The PDG, which has retained power since it was formed in 1968, holds a dominant position in Gabon's nominally multiparty system. The country's opposition parties are fragmented, and many are spinoffs of the PDG. Ping himself is Bongo's former brother-in-law and a former foreign minister. In 2017, the authorities reportedly denied opposition parties permits for public gatherings, arrested participants in largely peaceful opposition protests, and incarcerated opposition leaders. Bertrand Zibi Abeghe, a former PDG member who campaigned against Bongo in 2016, was arrested that August and remained in prison through 2017. Among other cases during the year, security forces arrested Alain Djally, an aide to Ping, in April; he was provisionally released in June.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 0 / 4

In light of the PDG's decades-old monopoly on the executive branch, the opposition's tiny presence in the legislature, and the outcome of the deeply flawed 2016 presidential vote, there is no realistic opportunity for the opposition to gain power through elections. In August 2017, Ping called for a campaign of civil disobedience, arguing that he had exhausted all institutional remedies against what he maintained was an illegitimate election result.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 0 / 4 (-1)

The Bongo family and its associates have acquired enormous wealth and control over the economy after decades in power. These resources are allegedly used to maintain political patronage networks and engage in vote-buying activities during elections. The leadership also relies on security forces to intimidate opposition politicians and supporters, as demonstrated during the attack on Ping's campaign headquarters in August 2016.

Score Change: The score declined from 1 to 0 due to the ruling elite's continued use of economic power and control over state institutions to limit citizens' political choices.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 1 / 4

While both women and ethnic minorities formally enjoy full political rights, in practice they have little ability to organize independently and gain political influence given the dominance of the PDG structure. Key government and military posts are held by loyalists from all major ethnic groups except indigenous populations, which are poorly represented

in politics and government. In the most recent elections, women won just 15 of 120 seats in the National Assembly and 19 of 102 seats in the Senate.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 2 / 12 (-1)

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 0 / 4 (-1)

Government policy is set by the president, who is not freely elected, and his senior aides. Parliament is dominated by the ruling party and provides little oversight of the executive branch. The democratic legitimacy of the National Assembly has been further undermined by the expiration of its original mandate in late 2016.

Score Change: The score declined from 1 to 0 due to the second postponement of legislative elections, which left the country without a duly elected National Assembly for the entire year.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

Relatively robust anticorruption laws as well as anticorruption institutions launched since Ali Bongo took office are not employed effectively, and both corruption and impunity remain major problems. Authorities have reportedly used anticorruption efforts to target regime opponents. In 2017, the government criticized a French corruption probe focused on Marie-Madeleine Mborantsuo, a Bongo family ally who serves as president of the Constitutional Court.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 1 / 4

The government operates with little transparency, particularly regarding expenditures. Between 2008 and 2014, the presidency's budget increased by 1,073 percent, while the entire government budget increased by just 64 percent. The presidency's budget is not subject to the same oversight as those for other institutions. High-level civil servants are required to disclose their assets, but the declarations are not made public. Gabon was delisted as a candidate for the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) in 2013 because it submitted its validation report after the deadline. The constitutional amendments under consideration at the end of 2017 would reportedly strengthen the role of the auditor general, in cooperation with Parliament, in assessing public accounts and policy outcomes.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 19 / 60 (-5)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 8 / 16 (-1)

D1. Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4

Press freedom is guaranteed by law and the constitution but restricted in practice, and self-censorship to avoid legal repercussions for critical reporting is common. After the 2016 presidential election results were announced, the government shut down access to the internet for five days; service was then restored for 12 hours a day, with social media sites remaining blocked. Full access was not restored for about a month. A new communications code that went into effect in January 2017 was criticized by activists for several provisions that restricted media freedom, including an obligation for media to promote "the country's image and national cohesion."

In June, the National Communication Council (CNC) suspended the newspaper *Les Echos du Nord* for two months based on allegations that it had defamed Bongo, Prime Minister Emmanuel Issoze-Ngondet, and the government as a whole. Also that month, journalist Juldas Biviga and union leader Marcel Libama were arrested for defamation following a radio interview in which Libama accused a prosecutor of abuse of power. Both men received

finer and a month in jail. Landry Amiang Washington, an activist blogger arrested in August 2016, remained in prison at the end of 2017.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4

Although religious freedom is enshrined in the constitution and generally respected in the predominantly Christian country, some heterodox religious groups reportedly have difficulty obtaining registration from the government. Security forces began monitoring Muslims in full face veils in 2015 after terrorists in nearby countries used such garments to disguise themselves.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 2 / 4 (-1)

Omar Bongo University, Gabon's main center for tertiary education, is state-run, and academic freedom there is tenuous. Professors are believed to self-censor to protect their positions and avoid conflicts with the authorities. The tense political atmosphere since the 2016 election has further dampened critical discussion. Police used violence to disperse student protests regarding university tuition hikes and other grievances during 2017.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 due to further perceived pressure on academic discussion of sensitive political issues in the aftermath of the 2016 election crisis.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 2 / 4

Ordinary individuals' freedom to express criticism of the government is limited by restrictive laws and deterred by the authorities' surveillance and detention of opposition figures and activists.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 3 / 12 (-1)

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 1 / 4

Freedom of assembly is limited. In 2017, the government reportedly denied permits for meetings and repeatedly used tear gas and arrests to disperse unauthorized demonstrations. Parliament enacted a law in August that further limited the freedom to assemble, in part by making organizers responsible for offenses committed during a public gathering.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 1 / 4

Relatively few nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are able to operate in Gabon. Freedom of association is guaranteed by the constitution, but the process for formally registering NGOs is onerous and implemented inconsistently, leaving groups vulnerable to accusations that they are not in compliance with the law.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 1 / 4 (-1)

Workers have the formal right to join unions, engage in collective bargaining, and strike under certain circumstances, but authorities cracked down on union activism during 2017. In March, the government obtained a court order to halt a strike by the teachers' union CONASYSED that had begun in October 2016. The union was also barred from conducting any activities on the grounds that it had disturbed public order. In separate incidents in

February, police reportedly used excessive force to disperse striking oil workers as well as students demonstrating in support of the striking teachers. Similar tactics were used against an Oil Ministry strike later in the year.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 due to increased repression of labor unions during the year, including a ban on activities by a teachers' union involved in a months-long strike.

F. RULE OF LAW: 3 / 16 (-3)

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 0 / 4 (-1)

The judiciary is accountable to the Ministry of Justice, through which the president has the power to appoint and dismiss judges. The country's highest judicial body, the Constitutional Court, is composed of three members appointed by the president, three by the head of the National Assembly, and three by the head of the Senate. The constitutional amendments under consideration at the end of 2017 would reduce the parliamentary appointees to three and give the Superior Council of the Judiciary—headed by the president and justice minister—three appointees, potentially increasing presidential control. All nine judges' terms would be extended from seven to nine years.

The Constitutional Court's handling of the 2016 election results and its subsequent approval of two lengthy delays in the National Assembly elections further demonstrated its lack of impartiality. Critics noted that Mborantsuo, the court's president for more than 20 years, had been a mistress of late president Omar Bongo, bearing him two children and winning appointment to another high court at age 28. She has been accused of amassing illicit wealth while in office.

Score Change: The score declined from 1 to 0 due the Constitutional Court's pattern of deference to the executive, most recently demonstrated by its approval of the government's request to postpone legislative elections for a second time.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4 (-1)

Legal safeguards against arbitrary arrest and detention are not upheld by police in practice, and detainees are often denied access to lawyers. Lengthy pretrial detention is common. Cases of arbitrary arrests linked to opposition protests and activism have reportedly increased since the 2016 election crisis. The opposition figures detained during 2016 and 2017 have been denied due process. For example, Alain Djally was reportedly held in solitary confinement without access to his lawyer during his time in detention, and Bertrand Zibi Abeghe remained in detention with no trial date well over a year after his arrest. Both men were arrested without warrants.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 due to the denial of due process rights to political detainees and a reported increase in arbitrary arrests since the 2016 election.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 1 / 4 (-1)

Prison conditions are harsh, and facilities are severely overcrowded, with limited access to proper medical care. Torture is specifically outlawed by the constitution, but detainees and inmates continue to face physical abuse, including those detained for political reasons during 2017. Violent crime and ritual killings remain serious concerns.

In the postelection clashes of 2016, the authorities used indiscriminate and often deadly force against political opponents and protesters, causing a number of fatalities. Members of the security forces involved in these and other alleged abuses apparently enjoyed impunity in 2017.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 due to impunity for election-related deaths in 2016 and continuing physical abuse of political and other detainees.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

The country's large population of noncitizen African immigrants is subject to harassment and extortion, including by police. Indigenous people reportedly experience discrimination in the workplace and often live in extreme poverty.

Women have equal legal rights on some issues but face significant de facto discrimination in employment and other economic matters. Sexual harassment in the workplace, which is not prohibited by law, is reportedly common.

Gabon has no specific statute outlawing same-sex sexual activity, but bias against LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people remains a problem. Those who live openly risk housing and employment discrimination.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 5 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 2 / 4

There are no laws restricting internal travel, but police often monitor travelers at checkpoints and demand bribes. Married women seeking to obtain a passport or travel abroad must have permission from their husbands. In September 2017, the government temporarily banned senior opposition leaders, including Ping, from leaving the country.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 1 / 4

Bureaucratic and judicial delays can pose difficulties for businesses. Enforcement of contracts and property rights is weak, and the process for property registration is lengthy. Bongo and his associates play a dominant role in the economy, impairing fair competition and favoring those with connections to the leadership.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 1 / 4

Personalized forms of violence are believed to be widespread, and perpetrators generally enjoy impunity. Rape and domestic abuse are rarely reported to authorities or prosecuted. Spousal rape is not specifically prohibited. The minimum age for marriage is 15 for women and 18 for men. About 22 percent of women aged 20–24 were first married before age 18, according to UN data.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

Wage standards and laws against forced labor are weakly enforced, particularly in the informal sector and with respect to foreign workers. Both adults and children are exploited in a number of different occupations, and foreign women are trafficked to Gabon for prostitution or domestic servitude.

The Gambia

Population: 2,100,000

Capital: Banjul

Political Rights Rating: 4 ↑

Civil Liberties Rating: 5 ↑

Freedom Rating: 4.5

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Status Change, Rating Change: The Gambia's status improved from Not Free to Partly Free, its political rights rating improved from 6 to 4, and its civil liberties rating improved from 6 to 5, due to the installation of newly elected president Adama Barrow into office in January and the holding of competitive legislative elections in April. Among other openings associated with the departure of former president Yahya Jammeh, exiled journalists and activists returned, political prisoners were released, ministers declared their assets to an ombudsman, and the press union began work on media-sector reform.

Overview: The Gambia was ruled for over two decades by President Jammeh, who mounted a bloodless coup in 1994 and consistently violated political rights and civil liberties. The 2016 election resulted in a surprise victory for opposition candidate Adama Barrow. Fundamental freedoms including the rights of assembly, association, and speech improved thereafter, but the rule of law is unconsolidated, LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people face severe discrimination, and violence against women remains a serious problem.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Barrow, the winner of the 2016 presidential election, was inaugurated in Senegal on January 19, as Jammeh attempted to cling to power. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) then sent in troops under a previously authorized agreement that allowed the deployment of a standby force to intervene militarily if a peaceful transfer of power did not begin by the last day of Jammeh's mandate. Days after the ECOWAS force deployed, Jammeh conceded defeat and left the country.
- Parliamentary elections in April were commended by international monitors as transparent, peaceful, and neutrally managed by the Independent Electoral Commission.
- In separate rulings in June, the Supreme Court declared unconstitutional the amended 2013 Information and Communication Act punishing the "spreading of false news" via the internet, and a colonial-era law banning sedition.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 20 / 40 (+12)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 7 / 12 (+4)

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4 (+1)

International observers were not allowed into The Gambia ahead of the December 2016 presidential election, and internet and international telephone services were cut on election day. Despite these obstacles, the Independent Electoral Commission was able to conduct an impartial vote count, and declared that Barrow had won. Jammeh initially conceded defeat, but then reversed his position, and had not stepped down by January 19, 2017, the

day Barrow was inaugurated in Senegal. ECOWAS consequently sent in troops under a previously approved authorization to intervene militarily if a peaceful transfer of power did not begin by the last day of Jammeh's mandate. On January 21, Jammeh conceded defeat, and left the country.

Score Change: The score improved from 1 to 2 due to the successful inauguration of Adama Barrow, the legitimate winner of the 2016 presidential election, in late January, after a protracted diplomatic crisis sparked by former president Yahya Jammeh's attempts to stay in power.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4 (+2)

Of the 58 members of the unicameral National Assembly, 53 are elected by popular vote, with the remainder appointed by the president; members serve five-year terms. The April 2017 parliamentary elections were transparent, peaceful, and neutrally managed, and were commended by ECOWAS, the African Union (AU), the European Union (EU), and the United Nations. Weaknesses included low turnout, disproportionate media attention to the president, incomplete updating of the voter registry, and weak organization of vote collation processes. Nevertheless, most polling stations operated on time and vote counting was transparent. Two hundred and thirty-nine registered candidates representing 9 political parties, along with 42 independent candidates, ran for the 53 elected seats.

Score Change: The score improved from 1 to 3 due to the April National Assembly elections, which international observers judged to be credible, transparent, and peaceful.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 2 / 4 (+1)

The Independent Electoral Commission adequately managed the 2017 National Assembly elections (as well as the 2016 presidential election), but nevertheless faces serious challenges. Election observers have called for improvements to voter registration processes, improved polling station conditions, and more standardized counting and collation processes, as well as the redrawing of election district boundaries.

In February 2017, the National Assembly amended the Elections Act to dramatically reduce deposits required to run for office at various levels. Under the new rules, presidential candidates must pay 10,000 (\$230) dalasi, down from 500,000 (\$11,000) previously; parliamentary candidates must pay 5,000 dalasi, down from 50,000 previously; mayoral candidates must pay 2,500 dalasi, down from 50,000 previously, and local councilors must pay 1,250 dalasi, down from 10,000 previously.

Score Change: The score improved from 1 to 2 because the electoral commission oversaw successful National Assembly elections in 2017, and because the deposit amounts required to run for national and local offices were reduced.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 9 / 16 (+4)

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 2 / 4 (+1)

The Gambia has nine political parties. To register a new party, organizers must pay a 1 million dalasi (\$22,000) registration fee and garner the signatures of 10,000 registered

voters with at least 1,000 from each of the country's seven regions. Parties centered on a particular religion, ethnicity, or region are banned. All of a political party's executives must live in The Gambia.

All nine parties competed in the 2017 National Assembly elections; six parties and one independent won seats, compared to two parties and four independents in the 2012 elections. Jammeh and his Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction (APRC) had long dominated politics previously, and the rise and fall of competing political parties has yet to be institutionalized.

Score Change: The score improved from 1 to 2 because the system was generally free of undue obstacles to the organization and participation of political parties during the April National Assembly elections.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 3 / 4 (+2)

The United Democratic Party (UDP) won 31 seats in the 2017 National Assembly elections, taking an absolute majority and displacing Jammeh's APRC, which took 5 seats, down from the 48 it held previously. A number of other opposition groups gained representation in the elections. Previously, under Jammeh, the APRC had dominated the legislature over a period of two decades. Politicized security forces had suppressed the opposition during the 2016 election period.

Separately, Barrow released dozens of political prisoners shortly after taking office.

Score Change: The score improved from 1 to 3 because multiple opposition groups gained power through the National Assembly elections.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 2 / 4 (+1)

While people's political choices are more free from the undue dominance of unelected parties since the end of Jammeh's 22-year rule, military forces and foreign powers remain influential in Gambian politics. At the request of President Barrow, the ECOWAS mission in The Gambia (ECOMIG) will remain in country until May 2018 in order to facilitate security sector reform intended to reduce ethnically and politically skewed staffing dynamics that are a legacy of the Jammeh regime.

Score Change: The score improved from 1 to 2 due to the reduced influence of powerful groups that are not democratically accountable over people's political choices.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 2 / 4

While political rights and electoral opportunities have recently improved, women remain underrepresented in politics. The newly elected National Assembly includes the first-ever woman speaker and a disabled person; both are presidential appointees. The Jola-dominated APRC no longer monopolizes political space to the extent that it did previously.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 4 / 12 (+4)

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 2 / 4 (+2)

In January 2017, President Adama Barrow was duly installed in office, and formed a functioning government. Nonstate actors, armed forces, and foreign governments do not appear to enjoy preponderant influence. However, despite these improvements, representative rule has yet to be consolidated.

Score Change: The score improved from 0 to 2 because Barrow was able to assume office in January and form a functioning government that is not obstructed by excessive partisan polarization or interference from nonstate actors, armed forces, or foreign governments.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4 (+1)

The new government has undertaken limited initiatives to reduce corruption, which remains a serious problem. A Commission of Inquiry is investigating former President Jammeh's use of state funds for private gain, and froze his assets. However, challenges remain. Gambians continue to call for laws establishing an Anti-Corruption Commission and requiring public asset declarations by government officials. There is currently no law to protect whistleblowers, and in June 2017, one in the administration was arrested after making allegations of cronyism at the state intelligence agency.

Score Change: The score improved from 0 to 1 because the Barrow administration launched an inquiry into former president Jammeh's use of state funds for private gain, and froze his assets.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 1 / 4 (+1)

Government operations are generally opaque, but limited steps were taken toward improving transparency in 2017. Government officials are now required to make asset declarations to the Ombudsman, but the declarations are not open to public and media scrutiny; Barrow has defended this withholding of information, citing privacy concerns. There are widespread allegations of corruption in public procurement processes. However, in a positive development, Finance Minister Amadou Sanneh proposed a budget to the National Assembly, which was debated and approved through the appropriate legislative channels. The new budget was some \$24 million less than Jammeh's last budget, with a notable portion of the savings reportedly coming from the elimination of funds budgeted to the first family.

Score Change: The score improved from 0 to 1 due to the fact that all ministers are now required to make asset declarations to an ombudsman, and the National Assembly passed an amended budget that went through proper legislative channels for debate.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 21 / 60 (+9)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 7 / 16 (+4)

D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4 (+2)

Journalists have cited improvements in the media environment under Barrow's administration. These include decreased self-censorship, which journalists attributed to a lifting of the climate of fear most had operated in under Jammeh's severely restrictive administration, when coverage of sensitive topics could result in arrest or abduction. In the newly opened environment, more people are entering the profession, and exiled journalists have returned to the country. While restrictive laws still constrain media, the Gambia Press Union, in cooperation with the government and regional media freedom groups, has begun creating a Comprehensive Strategic Framework for media-sector reform. Additionally, arrest warrants

were issued in May 2017 for those suspected of murdering journalist Deyda Hydara in 2004. In June 2017, the Supreme Court struck down a section of the Information and Communication Act that punished the “spreading of false news” via the internet. The ruling came days after it had similarly struck down a colonial-era sedition law.

However, the new administration faced criticism in connection with the arrest and detention of journalist Baboucarr Nani Sey on a variety of apparently trumped-up charges, including organizing a demonstration without a permit. A journalist was beaten in March by supporters of the ruling coalition, though authorities later apologized for the attack.

Score Change: The score improved from 0 to 2 due to improvements in the media environment, including the Barrow administration’s ongoing discussions with the Gambia Press Union to reform media laws, the return of exiled journalists, and the issuing of arrest warrants for the suspected killers of journalist Deyda Hydara.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 2 / 4

In 2017, President Barrow met with religious leaders, and affirmed his support for religious freedom, which is enshrined in the constitution. Barrow appointed three Christians to his cabinet, and promoted religious tolerance during Senegalese Archbishop Benjamin Ndiaye’s visit to The Gambia. Various Muslim communities are no longer required to celebrate Eid on the same day.

However, in practice, some restrictions remain. Ahmadi Muslims were denied burial rights in Muslim cemeteries via a Supreme Islamic Council fatwa in 2015, and face discrimination.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 1 / 4

Academic freedom was severely limited at the University of The Gambia under Jammeh, and a robust environment featuring the free exchange of ideas has yet to be established following his departure.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 2 / 4 (+2)

Following years of repressive rule under Jammeh, freedom for ordinary people to express views—particularly those of a political nature—without fear of retaliation has increased since Barrow’s administration took power. However, problems remain, including at least one instance in 2017 in which a person was arrested and detained in connection with insulting Barrow on social media.

Score Change: The score improved from 0 to 2 due to a freer environment for private discussion, especially of a political nature, under the Barrow administration.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 5 / 12 (+3)

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 1 / 4 (+1)

The Constitution guarantees freedom of assembly, and while severe limitations to this right remain under the new Barrow administration, the environment improved somewhat in 2017. Freedom of assembly was generally respected during the year’s campaign period, during which candidates were able to convey their platforms to voters.

Permits from the police inspector general are required for protests, but the Public Order Act requiring this has come under increasing public scrutiny after the denial of a permit to opposition leader Mama Kandeh, and the death of one citizen during unregistered protests in Kanilai, who was shot by security forces.

Score Change: The score improved from 0 to 1 due to increased space for peaceful assembly under the new administration, notably during the campaigning period ahead of the National Assembly elections.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 2 / 4 (+1)

There are a number of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in Gambia focused on human rights and governance issues. Under Jammeh, NGO workers faced a serious risk of detention and other reprisals, but there were few reports of such suppression in 2017. Notable NGO campaigns in 2017 included advocacy for improved freedom of information and media regulations during the year.

Score Change: The score improved from 1 to 2 due to the new government's tolerance of NGO advocacy related to human rights and governance strengthening.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4 (+1)

Workers—except for civil servants, household workers, and security forces—may form unions, strike, and bargain for wages, but the labor minister has the discretion to exclude other categories of workers. In August 2017, The Gambia's major trade unions formed a committee tasked with strengthening union activity. Other domestic and international trade union activity took place peacefully during the year.

Score Change: The score improved from 1 to 2 due to an increase in peaceful and free union activity, including collaboration between trade unions to strengthen the movement.

F. RULE OF LAW: 3 / 16 (+2)

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4 (+1)

The judiciary is hampered by corruption and inefficiency. The executive dominates judicial appointment processes. The new administration took steps to include more Gambian citizens in the judiciary, as Jammeh had frequently appointed foreign judges whose terms he could easily cancel if they issued rulings he opposed. In February 2017, Barrow appointed a new Supreme Court justice: Hassan Bubacar Jallow, an internationally respected former UN prosecutor and a Gambian citizen. He began his work by highlighting the shortage of Gambian judges as a critical problem. In November, Barrow appointed eight new Gambian judges to high-level courts, a move the Gambia Bar Association praised.

Score Change: The score improved from 0 to 1 due to the appointment of a new chief justice—an internationally respected former UN prosecutor and a Gambian citizen—in a bid to reverse Jammeh's controversial practice of appointing foreign justices.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 0 / 4

Constitutional guarantees of due process are poorly upheld. There were several reports of detention without clear charges in 2017. Of the detainees, who include at least a dozen Gambia Armed Forces members from the Jammeh era, some have not enjoyed access to lawyers, many await trial, and at least one has alleged torture.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 1 / 4 (+1)

The use of illegitimate physical force by security agents has been less frequent under the new Barrow administration. The ex-head and deputy of the National Intelligence Agency were arrested in February 2017 on charges of torture and other human rights violations allegedly committed during the Jammeh regime.

However, serious challenges persist. There are few safeguards to prevent people accused of committing human rights abuses from holding positions of authority within the criminal justice and prison systems. Prison conditions are harsh and unsanitary.

Score Change: The score improved from 0 to 1 due to the reduced use of illegitimate physical force by the Barrow government, and moves to prosecute past abuses.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

A number of groups encounter serious difficulties in exercising their human rights. Legal protections for disabled people require strengthening and enforcement. LGBT people face severe societal discrimination, and same-sex relations remain criminalized. (In 2017, UDP leader Ousainou Darboe called for decriminalization.) The constitution prohibits discrimination but this “does not apply in respect to adoption, marriage, divorce, burial, and devolution of property upon death.”

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 6 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 2 / 4

Freedom of movement is hampered by poor roads and numerous security checkpoints.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

Gambian law provides formal protection of property rights, although Sharia (Islamic law) provisions on family law and inheritance can facilitate discrimination against women. Corruption hampers legitimate business activity.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 1 / 4

Rape and domestic violence are illegal, but common. There are no laws prohibiting polygamy, or levirate marriage (in which a widow is married off to the younger brother of her spouse). Female genital mutilation was outlawed in 2015, but is still practiced by some. Activists have called on Barrow to clearly indicate that the law prohibiting it will remain on the books.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

Women enjoy less access to higher education, justice, and employment than men. Although child labor and forced labor are illegal, some women and children are subject to

sex trafficking, domestic servitude, and forced begging. The government has recently made an increased effort to address human trafficking, including by training security officials and border guards to identify victims, and by providing better services to those identified.

Georgia

Population: 4,000,000

Capital: Tbilisi

Political Rights Rating: 3

Civil Liberties Rating: 3

Freedom Rating: 3.0

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Note: The numerical rankings and subsequent report do not include South Ossetia or Abkhazia, which are considered in separate reports.

Overview: Georgia holds regular and pluralistic elections, and its democratic trajectory has generally shown significant improvement in recent years. However, oligarchic actors hold outsized influence over policy and political choices, and judicial independence continues to be stymied by executive and legislative interests.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- The parliament approved constitutional amendments that will transform the parliament into a fully proportionally elected body by 2024. The Council of Europe's Venice Commission praised the changes, but noted that delays in their implementation were mandated over the objections of the opposition and civil society groups, which argued that holding the next legislative elections under the current mixed system would benefit the ruling party.
- The ruling Georgian Dream–Democratic Georgia party won a majority of seats in October's municipal elections, including the Tbilisi mayorship. A split in the main opposition party contributed to Georgian Dream's strong performance.
- A legal battle over ownership of the popular opposition television station Rustavi 2 continued. In March, the Supreme Court of Georgia ruled to return control of the station to its previous co-owner, who is aligned with Georgian Dream. The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) suspended the ruling and warned authorities not to interfere with the station's editorial policies.
- An Azerbaijani investigative journalist, Afgan Mukhtarli, was abducted in Georgia and taken to Azerbaijan, where he was subsequently imprisoned. Mukhtarli's legal team alleged that Georgian authorities were complicit in the affair, and two senior officials were fired in connection with it.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 26 / 40 (-1)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 9 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

Georgia has a dual executive, with the prime minister serving as head of government and the president as head of state. The president is selected by direct election for a five-year term. The president formally appoints the prime minister, who is nominated by the parliament. Under constitutional changes approved in 2017, the president will be elected indirectly by a group of national, regional, and local lawmakers, though these changes do not take effect until after the 2018 election.

In the 2013 presidential election, Giorgi Margvelashvili, an independent candidate backed by the Georgian Dream party, won 62 percent of the vote, ahead of United National Movement (UNM) candidate David Bakradze, who won 22 percent. While observers reported some violations, they deemed the poll competitive and credible and praised the Central Election Commission for its professionalism.

Giorgi Kvirikashvili of the Georgian Dream party returned as prime minister following 2016 parliamentary elections; he had served in that position since late 2015.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

In the 2016 parliamentary elections, Georgian Dream won 44 percent of the vote in the proportional contest, and 71 of 73 majoritarian seats. The UNM garnered 27 percent of the proportional vote but did not win any majoritarian seats; smaller parties took the remaining seats. An observer mission from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) found the elections competitive and largely fair, but noted the use of administrative funds for campaign purposes, and changes to rules governing party registration made too close to the elections. A small number of violent incidents were reported during the campaigning period and the first round of polling.

Under constitutional changes approved in 2017, by 2024 the parliament will be elected by proportional representation.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4

Georgia's electoral laws are generally fair and the bodies that implement them generally do so impartially. However, following the 2016 legislative elections, OSCE monitors noted a lack of transparency in the adjudication of election-related complaints by the courts and the electoral commission. And following the 2017 mayoral and municipal polls, an OSCE monitoring mission noted that the parliament's approval of a new head of the State Audit Office two weeks before the election had prompted concerns about the office's impartiality; it is charged with regulating and overseeing campaign financing.

The Venice Commission expressed concern that the 2017 constitutional amendments would not be fully implemented until 2024, a delay mandated over the objections of opposition parties and civil society groups that claimed the slow transition to a proportionally elected legislature would benefit Georgian Dream in the next legislative election, which will be held under the current mixed system.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 10 / 16 (-1)

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 3 / 4

Georgian political life is vibrant, and people are generally able to form political parties and assert their own candidacies with little interference. However, a pattern of single-party

dominance over the past decade has inhibited the development and stability of competing groups.

In the 2017 mayoral elections, independent candidates had significantly less time to collect signatures to register for ballot placement than candidates who belonged to a party.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 3 / 4

The main opposition party, the UNM, splintered in 2017, leaving behind two smaller parties less capable of mounting a credible opposition. The weakened UNM and the new offshoot, European Georgia, failed to secure extensive representation in October 2017 municipal elections. Georgian Dream won most mayoral and gubernatorial seats, including the Tbilisi mayorship. Campaign donations heavily favored the ruling Georgian Dream party. According to the Georgian branch of Transparency International, during the period between June 1 and November 1, 2017, Georgian Dream collected 10 times more in campaign donations than all other parties combined.

Constitutional changes approved in September 2017 prohibited multiple small parties from forming party blocs to overcome a 5 percent voting threshold needed to enter the parliament. The ban on party blocs could further diminish an already fragmented parliamentary opposition. (The next legislative elections will be held under the current mixed system with a 3 percent threshold.)

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 2 / 4 (-1)

Bidzina Ivanishvili, the wealthy Georgian businessman who founded the ruling Georgian Dream party in 2011, does not currently hold elected office, but his ties to ruling party members and large financial holdings in Georgia allow him significant influence within Georgian political life. Ivanishvili served as prime minister from 2012 to 2013; his successors in office have been close confidants and former employees of institutions he controls, suggesting that he plays a large role in determining the leadership of the country. The splintering of the opposition UNM in 2017 leaves few counterweights to Ivanishvili and Georgian Dream.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 due to increasing domination of the political sphere by the Georgian Dream party and its backer Bidzina Ivanishvili, who wields significant political influence but does not hold any elected office.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 2 / 4

No laws prevent women or members of minority groups from participating in the political process, but in practice these groups are underrepresented at all levels of government.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 7 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 2 / 4

The Georgian Dream party dominates Georgian political space. Critical to this is the role of Ivanishvili, the party's creator and financial guarantor, who holds significant influence over political decision-making in Georgia. Ivanishvili's financial and business interests also loom large in Georgian political space, in particular the multibillion-dollar Georgian

Co-Investment Fund (GCF), which was unveiled by Ivanishvili in 2013 and is active in large real estate development projects in the capital. In 2017, there was suspicion that a major development project in Tbilisi opposed by many civil society actors but backed by GCF advanced due in large part to Ivanishvili's political connections.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

While the country has made significant progress in combatting petty corruption, corruption within the government remains a problem. This can take the form of bribes, the exchange of insider information, and intimidation, among other things. Enforcement of anticorruption measures at high levels has been lacking.

In 2017, the Georgian branch of Transparency International published a report detailing suspected corruption in land privatization processes in Teleti.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 3 / 4

The Institute for the Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI), a Georgian advocacy group, reports that access to public information has been uneven since 2010. The group singled out the Justice Ministry and Ministry of Economy and Stable Development as having been particularly reticent in recent years. In May 2017, the Georgian Parliament approved a plan to increase accountability and transparency for parliamentary actions. But in December, lawmakers adopted a constitutional amendment regarding state secrets, which the IDFI said could be interpreted in a way that could lead to a decrease in government transparency.

Civil society activists have expressed concern about a lack of government transparency regarding rezoning and land sales in Tbilisi.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 38 / 60 (+1)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 11 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4

Georgia's media environment is robust and competitive, but frequently partisan. In 2017, court proceedings over the ownership of the opposition-aligned television station Rustavi 2 continued; these could jeopardize the opposition nature of the station, which is among the most watched and trusted in Georgia. In March, the Supreme Court of Georgia ruled to return control of the station to its previous co-owner, who is aligned with Georgian Dream. The ECHR almost immediately ruled that the decision should be suspended, and warned authorities not to interfere with the station's editorial policies. The Georgian branch of Transparency International has expressed serious concerns about procedural shortcomings during the related proceedings at the Georgian court, as well as about the court's independence.

The Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB) has recently made personnel changes that included the hiring of numerous people considered Ivanishvili allies, some of whom were installed in senior positions; civil society groups in a joint statement issued in November 2017 expressed concern about these hires as well as about the station's coverage, which they said had become less critical of the government.

Separately, in May, an investigative journalist from Azerbaijan, Afgan Mukhtarli, was abducted from Tbilisi and transported to Azerbaijan, where he was detained by authorities. While the circumstances of his abduction are unclear, Mukhtarli's attorneys argue that Georgian authorities were complicit with the effort to remove him to Azerbaijan. In July, Prime Minister Kvirikashvili dismissed the chiefs of the Counter Intelligence Service and the Border Police in connection with the matter.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 2 / 4

The Georgian constitution guarantees freedom of religion but grants unique privileges to the Georgian Orthodox Church, including immunity for its patriarch. Georgia's religious minorities—among them Jehovah's Witnesses, Baptists, Pentecostals, and Muslims—have reported discrimination and hostility, including from Georgian Orthodox priests and adherents, and are insufficiently protected by the state. Some minority religions have faced difficulty gaining permits from local administrations to construct houses of worship.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is generally respected in Georgia. However, in 2017 Georgian authorities closed two schools associated with the Islamic preacher Fethullah Gülen, whose movement the Turkish government has declared a terrorist organization. While the Education Ministry blamed the closures on technical regulations, the Turkish ambassador to Georgia made comments indicating that the Turkish government had approached its Georgian counterparts with concerns about the schools.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4

In recent years, watchdogs have expressed concerns that various security-related laws and agencies are empowered to conduct surveillance and data collection without adequate review processes for such operations. The adoption in March 2017 of a law that will establish a new surveillance agency under the mandate of the State Security Service drew concern from privacy advocates, who questioned the new agency's independence and oversight mechanisms.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 8 / 12**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 3 / 4**

Freedom of assembly is generally respected, and several peaceful protests took place during 2017. However, police occasionally respond to demonstrations with excessive force. In March, a protest in Batumi against disproportionately expensive fines for traffic violations became violent; police employed tear gas and rubber bullets, and a number of injuries were reported.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 3 / 4

The civil society sector has grown significantly in recent years, but remains concentrated in the capital. Some groups are included in policy discussions, while others report facing pressure, largely in the form of public criticism by both government officials and opposition figures.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

Workers are allowed to organize, but trade unions remain weak despite the adoption in 2013 of a new labor code with additional protections for workers' rights.

F. RULE OF LAW: 8 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 2 / 4**

Executive and legislative interference in the judiciary remains a substantial problem, as does a lack of transparency and professionalism surrounding proceedings. In 2017, opposition figures and others expressed concern that political interference had been a significant factor in the Supreme Court's decision—later overturned by the ECHR—to return Rustavi 2 to its former co-owner, who is associated with the Georgian Dream party.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 2 / 4

The law guarantees due process, but this protection is not always respected in practice. The office of the country's public defender, or ombudsman, has reported violations including a failure to fully implement Constitutional Court rulings, administrative delays in court proceedings, the violation of the accused's right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty, and the denial of access to a lawyer upon arrest.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 2 / 4

Human rights watchdogs and the ombudsman continued to express concern about the abuse of detainees by police, with the ombudsman reporting a recent increase in the number of arrestees who arrive at detention facilities with injuries that may be attributable to police abuse. Violence in prisons remains a problem.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

A 2014 antidiscrimination law providing protection against discrimination on the basis of various factors, including race, gender, age, sexual orientation, and gender identity is enforced unevenly. LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people face societal discrimination and are occasionally the targets of serious violence. People with disabilities experience discrimination.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 11 / 16 (+1)

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4

Freedom of domestic movement and international travel are generally respected, and individuals have the freedom to choose their place of residence without interference. Poverty can serve as a barrier to free movement.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 3 / 4 (+1)

The Heritage Foundation's Index of Economic Freedom has noted consistent improvements in economic freedom in Georgia over several years, citing reductions in petty corruption, simplified taxation schemes, more open markets, and infrastructural development. Protection for property rights remains weak, and deficiencies in judicial independence and government integrity hamper economic freedom.

Score Change: The score improved from 2 to 3 because of steady improvements in the ease of engaging in commercial activity.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

Constitutional changes approved in 2017 define marriage as “a union between a man and a woman for the purpose of creating a family.” There is no law protecting civil unions for same-sex couples.

Domestic violence remains a problem in Georgia, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs has reported an increase in the number of domestic violence complaints. However, the increase is likely due to changes in attitudes toward domestic violence; according to a recent UN study, most Georgians now identify domestic violence as a crime, rather than an internal family matter, as had been standard before.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Economic inequality is a problem in Georgia, where the International Labor Organization estimates that 22.5 percent of workers live below the poverty line. With the recent real estate boom in Tbilisi, the increase of construction zone deaths and reports of worker exploitation has garnered nationwide attention, leading to protests by trade union activists. The Georgian public defender in December 2017 called workplace injuries and fatalities a “systemic problem” and has commented on the lack of government action in implementing and strengthening labor protections.

Georgia is a source, destination, and transit country for human trafficking linked to sexual exploitation and forced labor. However, according to the U.S. State Department’s 2017 *Trafficking in Persons Report*, the government has made improvements in combatting trafficking, notably by improving mechanisms for identifying victims and by providing identification documents to vulnerable children at no charge.

Germany

Population: 82,600,000

Capital: Berlin

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 1

Freedom Rating: 1.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Germany, a member of the European Union (EU), is a representative democracy with a vibrant political culture and civil society. Political rights and civil liberties are largely assured both in law and practice. The political system is influenced by the country’s totalitarian past, with constitutional safeguards designed to prevent authoritarian rule. Although generally stable since the mid-20th century, politics are experiencing tensions following an influx of asylum seekers into the country and the growing popularity of a right-wing party, among other issues.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Chancellor Angela Merkel’s Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and its Bavarian sister party, the Christian Social Union (CSU), saw heavy losses in September’s federal elections, while the right-wing, populist Alternative for Germany (AfD) entered the Bundestag for the first time. Merkel clinched fourth term as chancellor, though a coalition government had not yet been formed at year’s end.

- The first same-sex marriage in Germany took place in October, after the Bundestag approved such unions in June. Previously, same-sex couples had been limited to civil unions that did not provide all of the same rights as marriage.
- In June, the Bundestag passed a hastily drafted law compelling social media companies to delete language deemed to clearly constitute illegal hate speech within 24 hours of being reported, and content that appeared to be illegal hate speech within seven days.

Executive Summary

Federal elections in September 2017 saw heavy losses for the governing coalition, comprised of the CDU-CSU and Social Democratic Party (SPD). While fewer people sought asylum in Germany in 2017 than in the preceding two years, migration and asylum issues were prominent throughout the election campaign. The AfD, whose leaders during the campaign called for hard-line immigration policies including the deportation of large numbers of refugees, finished third in the election and became the first far-right party to enter the Bundestag in nearly six decades. At times, the AfD campaign also featured Islamophobic rhetoric.

Subsequent coalition talks between the CDU-CSU, pro-free market Free Democratic Party (FDP), and the Greens broke down in November over a failure to reach consensus on issues including refugee and energy policies, and the formation of the new government was uncertain at the end of 2017. Merkel will continue to lead Germany's acting government until a new one is formed.

During the year, lawmakers passed a controversial law compelling social media companies to delete language deemed to clearly constitute illegal hate speech within 24 hours of being reported, and content that appeared to be illegal hate speech within seven days. The law was enacted despite broad opposition by free speech activists, NGOs, and the German tech industry, which cautioned that it could lead to the improper censorship of content posted to social media by private individuals. Meanwhile, a three-year parliamentary inquiry into surveillance of German targets by the U.S. National Security Agency (NSA), in collaboration with Germany's Federal Intelligence Service (BND), ended in 2017 without conclusive results. The government also pushed through a law enabling security services to use spyware to monitor encrypted messaging services under certain circumstances.

In June, the Bundestag approves legislation allowing same-sex marriage, and the first such unions took place in October.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 39 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The German constitution provides for a lower house of parliament, the Bundestag (Federal Parliament), as well as an upper house, the Bundesrat (Federal Council), which represents the country's 16 federal states. Germany's head of state is a largely ceremonial president, chosen by the Federal Convention, a body formed jointly by the Bundestag and state representatives. The president can serve up to two five-year terms. Former foreign minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier of the SPD was elected president in February 2017.

The federal chancellor—the head of government—is elected by the Bundestag and usually serves for the duration of a legislative session. The chancellor's term can be cut short only if the Bundestag chooses a replacement in a so-called constructive vote of no confidence. Angela Merkel has served as chancellor since 2005, and will look to form a new government in 2018.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The Bundestag is elected at least every four years through a mixture of proportional representation and single-member districts, which can lead the number of seats to vary from the minimum 598. The 2017 elections saw a total of 709 representatives elected to the Bundestag. While the elections were conducted peacefully and without disruptions, there were some concerns about the potential for the public release of hacked materials, which could be used to compromise lawmakers or parties, and about the spread of disinformation on social media ahead of the elections. However, some safeguards designed to lessen the impact of a potential release of hacked materials were implemented ahead of the polls. Election monitors from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe deemed the election transparent and free from manipulation.

Merkel's CDU-CSU won 246 seats. The SPD, the CDU-CSU's coalition partner in the last government, took 153 seats. Both parties posted their worst results since 1949. The FDP reentered the Bundestag with 80 seats, and the Greens won 67. The far-left party the Left, which is widely viewed as a successor to the East German communists, took 69 seats. The right-wing populist AfD entered the Bundestag for the first time in its history, taking 94 seats, posting particularly strong results in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR). Following the breakdown of coalition talks between the CDU-CSU, FDP, and the Greens, the formation of the new government was uncertain at the end of 2017.

In Germany's federal system, state governments have considerable authority over matters such as education, policing, taxation, and spending. State governments appoint Bundesrat members, and in this manner can influence national policies. Four state elections took place in 2017.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

Germany's electoral laws and framework are fair and impartial. A failure to reform the problem of so-called overhang seats led to an inflation of numbers of Bundestag members following the 2017 elections. (German voters cast two ballots—one for a candidate in their constituency and another for a party, with the latter vote determining the total of seats a party will hold in the Bundestag. If a party wins more seats in the first vote than are permitted by results of the second, it gets to keep these “overhang” seats. The extra seats are costly, and in the past have been deemed unconstitutional for allowing a party more seats than it is formally allotted.) With 709 members, Germany now has the world's second-largest national parliament, after China.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 15 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4**

The dominant political parties have traditionally been the SPD and the CDU-CSU. Parties do not face undue restrictions on registration or operation, although under electoral laws that, for historical reasons, are intended to restrict the far left and far right, a party must receive either 5 percent of the national vote or win at least three directly elected seats to gain representation in the parliament.

Support for the AfD has risen in recent years, as the party has moved further to the right of the political spectrum. While the increase in popularity has shaken the German political system, most parties oppose the AfD. In 2017, this opposition included a procedural reform

in the Bundestag that prevented an AfD member who had described the Holocaust as an “effective tool to criminalize Germans and their history” from serving in the ceremonial post of chairman by seniority.

An attempt to outlaw the extreme-right National Democratic Party (NPD), an anti-immigration, anti-EU party that has been accused of glorifying Adolf Hitler and the Third Reich, failed in 2017. The Federal Constitutional Court in January found the party to be unconstitutional, but deemed it to be not influential enough to merit a party ban.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

While German government is very much consensus oriented, opposition parties have a realistic opportunity to increase their support and gain power through elections. Merkel, during her time as chancellor, has changed her coalition partners a number of times.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

The German government is democratically accountable to the voters, who are free to throw their support behind their preferred candidates and parties without undue influence on their political choices.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

Germany's constitution gives all citizens age 18 or older the right to vote, and this guarantee applies regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or gender identity. However, some groups are underrepresented in politics. The 2017 federal elections saw a decrease in the representation of women in the Bundestag, down to 30.9 percent, the lowest number since 1998. Eight percent of Bundestag members are from immigrant backgrounds, having at least one parent who was born without German citizenship. About 22.5 percent of people living in Germany have immigrant backgrounds or are immigrants themselves.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 12 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4

Democratically elected representatives decide and implement policy without undue interference.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 4 / 4

While Germany generally has strong and effective safeguards against corruption, a number of corruption scandals have recently been uncovered on a local level. In 2017, questions arose in the media about improper collusion between German politicians and figures in the automobile industry, which is among the most important sectors of the German economy.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 4 / 4

The government is held accountable for its performance through open parliamentary debates, which are covered widely in the media. However, watchdogs continue to express concerns about a controversial 2015 data retention law, which they view as a threat not

just to general privacy but also to whistleblowers, who could be punished under a section detailing illegal data handling. Whistleblowers receive few legal protections in Germany.

Transparency International and other NGOs have criticized Germany for having loose regulations on lobbying, and lacking a centralized lobbying register, as well as for imperfect freedom of information legislation. In late 2016, Germany joined the Open Government Partnership, and in 2017 the government published a National Action Plan that detailed initiatives designed to improve transparency and encourage citizen involvement in government.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 55 / 60 (-1)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 14 / 16 (-1)

D1. Are there free and independent media? 4 / 4

Freedom of expression is enshrined in the constitution, and the media are largely free and independent. Hate speech, such as racist agitation or anti-Semitism, is punishable by law. It is also illegal to advocate Nazism, deny the Holocaust, or glorify the ideology of Hitler. In August 2017, the Interior Ministry banned the online platform Linksunten Indymedia, stating that it publishes material supporting violent leftwing extremism.

At the July 2017 G20 meeting in Hamburg, 32 journalists saw their accreditation withdrawn, with authorities citing security concerns. In August, the Federal Ministry of the Interior admitted that at least in four cases the withdrawal of the accreditation had been a mistake.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4

Freedom of belief is legally protected. However, eight states have passed laws prohibiting schoolteachers from wearing headscarves, while Berlin and the state of Hesse have adopted legislation banning headscarves for civil servants.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is generally respected, though legal prohibitions on extremist speech are enforceable in school and university settings.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4 (-1)

Private discussion and internet access are generally unrestricted, but recent developments have prompted concern about government surveillance of private communications. In 2013, documents leaked by former U.S. National Security Agency (NSA) contractor Edward Snowden revealed that the NSA, in collaboration with Germany's Federal Intelligence Service (BND), had secretly collected extensive data on communications in Germany. A parliamentary inquiry into the nature of cooperation between the NSA and BND closed in 2017. Its results were inconclusive, and opposition lawmakers claimed the inquiry had been obstructed. Additionally, the Bundestag in June passed a law allowing state security services, when conducting criminal investigations, to use spyware to conduct surveillance of encrypted online messaging services like WhatsApp. Opponents of the law have moved to challenge it before the Federal Constitutional Court at year's end.

A debate surrounding online hate speech continued in 2017. In June, the Bundestag passed a hastily drafted law designed to fight hate speech, which came into effect in October. It compels social media companies to delete language deemed to clearly constitute illegal

hate speech within 24 hours of being reported, and content that appears to be illegal hate speech within seven days. The law was enacted despite broad opposition by free speech activists, NGOs, and the German tech industry, which cautioned that it could lead to the improper censorship of content posted to social media by private individuals.

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 due to new laws that threaten free private speech online, and because a special inquiry into the participation of the BND in a U.S. spying program ended without drawing clear conclusions about alleged wrongdoing.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 12 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4

The right to peaceful assembly is enshrined in the German constitution and is generally respected in practice, except in the case of outlawed groups, such as those advocating Nazism or opposing democratic order. However, in July 2017, authorities denied a permit to organizers of a planned protest camp to be erected near the site of the G20 summit in Hamburg. Organizers appealed the decision, but courts ultimately upheld the ban, saying the planned camp was primarily an overnight accommodation, as opposed to a legally protected demonstration.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Germany has a vibrant sphere of NGOs and associations, which operate freely.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

Trade unions, farmers' groups, and business confederations are generally free to organize, and play an important role in shaping Germany's economic model.

F. RULE OF LAW: 14 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 4 / 4

The judiciary is independent, and generally enforces the rights provided by Germany's laws and constitution.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 4 / 4

The rule of law prevails in Germany. Civil and criminal matters are treated according to legal provisions and with due process. However, courts can authorize "preventive detention" practices, by which a person who was convicted of certain violent crimes can be detained after serving their sentence in full if they are deemed to pose a danger to the public.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 3 / 4

Attacks on refugee housing were less prominent in 2017 than in the two preceding years, which each saw around 1,000 such attacks. However, 93 attacks occurred in the first quarter of 2017.

Political crime increased in 2017, with the Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA) recording about 3,660 criminal acts that were related to the 2017 election campaign period, including 50 cases of assault. Anti-Semitic violence and hate crime also increased in the first half of 2017, according to government figures. Anti-Semitic protests took place toward the end of the year, prompting a denunciation by Merkel.

The threat posed by terrorist groups to national and regional security remained a major concern in 2017, and contributed to social and political tensions. However, the deadly terrorist strikes that took place in 2016—including an attack in which a militant extremist drove a truck into a crowd at a Christmas market in Berlin, killing 12 people—were not repeated.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

The constitution and other laws guarantee equality and prohibit discrimination on the basis of origin, gender, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. However, a number of obstacles stand in the way of equal treatment of all segments of the population. Rhetoric against refugees remained prominent in the German public sphere in 2017. The anti-immigration, anti-Islam group known as the Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the Occident (PEGIDA), which developed into a large protest movement in 2014, remained active in 2017 and continued to be one of the most vocal opponents of asylum and migration. The AfD also used strong rhetoric against asylum seekers and migrants throughout its election campaign, and succeeded in making it a central issue of the election.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 15 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4

Freedom of movement is legally protected and generally respected, although the refugee crisis and security concerns related to activity by the Islamic State (IS) militant group have led to some restrictions on travel. In 2015, the government introduced legislation allowing the confiscation of identity documents from German citizens suspected of terrorism as a way to prevent them from traveling abroad, particularly to Iraq and Syria.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 4 / 4

The rights to own property and engage in commercial activity are respected.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 4 / 4

The government generally does not restrict social freedoms. Women's rights are protected under antidiscrimination laws. However, a considerable gender wage gap persists, with women earning approximately 22 percent less in gross wages than men. A law requiring large German companies to reserve at least 30 percent of seats on their non-executive boards for women came into effect in 2016, but affects a limited number of companies. Adoption and tax legislation passed in 2014 gave equal rights to same-sex couples in these areas. Germany introduced same-sex marriage in 2017, following a June vote in parliament that took many observers by surprise.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

According to the U.S. State Department's 2017 Trafficking in Persons report, migrants from Eastern Europe, Africa, and Asia are targeted for sex trafficking and forced labor. Asylum seekers, especially unaccompanied minors, are also particularly vulnerable to exploitation.

Ghana

Population: 28,200,000

Capital: Accra

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 2

Freedom Rating: 1.5

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Since 1992, Ghana has held competitive multiparty elections that have led to peaceful transfers of power between the two main political parties. Although Ghana has a relatively strong record of upholding civil liberties, discrimination against women and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people continues. Some weaknesses in judicial independence and rule of law persist, and political corruption presents challenges to government performance.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- The January inauguration of President Nana Akufo-Addo, the candidate of the New Patriotic Party (NPP), represented the third peaceful transfer of presidential power between the country's two main parties: the NPP, and the National Democratic Congress (NDC).
- In November, the parliament approved legislation to establish the Office of the Special Prosecutor. The office, which at year's end had yet to be established, is a key component of Akufo-Addo's anticorruption program.
- In March, a vigilante group allegedly connected to the NPP responded to President Akufo-Addo's appointment of George Adjei as the Ashanti Region's Security Coordinator by physically attacking Adjei.
- Ghana's Electoral Commission (EC) was plagued by controversy during the year. In July, it was reported that the Economic and Organized Crime Office had begun investigating allegations that senior EC officials had misappropriated funds in 2012 and 2013. In November, the country's chief justice assembled a panel charged with investigating an array of corruption claims against EC chairperson Charlotte Osei.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 37 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

International and domestic observers generally praised the December 2016 presidential election, and all major political parties accepted the results. Akufo-Addo, the NPP candidate, won with 53.9 percent of the vote, while incumbent John Mahama of the NDC took 44.4 percent.

Although the election and its immediate aftermath were peaceful, the campaign period was contentious. There were several reports of clashes between NPP and NDC supporters, as well as attacks on EC officials. Moreover, representatives of civil society raised concerns about what they claimed were alarming levels of hate speech used by politicians, as well as alleged abuse of state resources.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

Ghana has a unicameral, 275-seat parliament to which members are elected directly, and serve four-year terms. International and domestic observers generally praised the December 2016 parliamentary elections, which were held at the same time as the presidential election. The NPP captured 169 seats while the NDC, which had held a majority going into elections, took the 106 remaining seats.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

Despite controversy surrounding the preparation for the December 2016 balloting, domestic and international observers generally commended the EC for the conduct of the elections. The EC had disqualified 13 presidential candidates in October 2016 due to irregularities with their nomination papers or failure to pay the nomination fee. The Supreme Court rescinded the EC's decision in early November 2016, giving the disqualified candidates an opportunity to rectify the problems. In the end, three of the originally disqualified candidates were allowed to stand for election.

However, in 2017, the EC was embroiled in controversy as senior members of the commission accused each other of corruption and mismanagement, including the unlawful awarding of contracts, misappropriation of funds, and political bias. In response to petitions forwarded to her by President Akufo-Addo, Chief Justice Sophia Akuffo in November established a five-member judicial panel to investigate the allegations against Osei, the EC chairperson, and two of her deputies; Osei has launched a legal challenge of one of the petitions, claiming it is defamatory. In July, it was reported that the Economic and Organized Crime Office had begun investigating allegations that senior EC officials had misappropriated funds in 2012 and 2013.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 15 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4**

The constitution guarantees the right to form a political party, and this right is generally respected. However, a significant increase in candidate nomination fees for the 2016 elections, along with the difficulties in nomination procedures highlighted by the presidential candidate disqualifications, presented challenges to participation, especially for candidates from smaller parties. In September 2016, the Progressive People's Party (PPP) mounted an unsuccessful legal challenge against the nomination fees.

In March 2017, members of Delta Force, a pro-NPP vigilante group, attacked the Ashanti Region's new security coordinator, George Adjei; the attack came after the group had indicated its lack of support for Adjei. The following month, other members of Delta Force disrupted proceedings in a circuit court in Kumasi, the capital of the region, to release 13 suspects on trial for the attack against Adjei. Meanwhile, the trial of the Gregory Afoko, brother of former NPP chairman Paul Afoko, for the 2015 murder of the NPP chairperson of the Upper East Region, was ongoing at year's end.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

Ghana's multiparty system provides ample opportunity for opposition parties to meaningfully participate in the political process. The NPP and the NDC dominate the political

system. Mahama's defeat by Akufo-Addo in the 2016 presidential race represented the first time since the reintroduction of the multiparty system in 1992 that an incumbent president had stood for reelection and lost. Akufo-Addo's 2017 inauguration represented the country's third peaceful transfer of presidential power between the NPP and NDC.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

People's political choices are generally free from domination by powerful groups that are not democratically accountable.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

The legal framework provides for equal participation in political life for the country's various cultural, religious, and ethnic minorities. Women took 37 of the 275 parliamentary seats in the 2016 elections, the highest since the reintroduction of multiparty rule in 1992. However, women hold comparatively few leadership positions across the country, and in 2016 women candidates received less media coverage than men.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 10 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4

Elected officials are generally free to set and implement government policy without undue interference.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4

Political corruption remains a problem, despite robust legal and institutional frameworks to combat it, active media coverage, and government anticorruption initiatives. The latter have not quieted criticism from the media, opposition parties, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) who deem the efforts ineffective. In 2017, the new Akufo-Addo administration launched various anticorruption initiatives—including plans to establish the Office of Special Prosecutor, which received parliamentary approval in November—as well as a Fiscal Responsibility Council.

Opposition parties criticized President Akufo-Addo for increasing the size of the cabinet to 110 ministers and deputy ministers in March.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 3 / 4

The government generally operates with transparency. However, despite over a decade of consideration by Parliament and continued efforts by advocates in 2017, the Right to Information Bill remained stalled.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 46 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 14 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4

Freedom of expression is constitutionally guaranteed and generally respected in practice. Ghana has a diverse and vibrant media landscape that includes state and privately owned television and radio stations, and several independent newspapers and magazines. The internet and social media remain unrestricted, despite some moves by the government prior to the 2016 elections to impose restrictions the latter; ultimately, the plans were

abandoned following a public outcry. Government agencies occasionally restrict press freedom through harassment and arrests of journalists, especially those reporting on politically sensitive issues. In March 2017, freelance journalist Kendrick Ofei, said he was assaulted by soldiers as he recorded them attacking a civilian. Separately, in July, a court in Accra ruled that the editor and publishers of the *Daily Post* newspaper were guilty of defaming a former minister of state, Hackman Owusu-Agyemang, and ordered that they pay him GHC800,000 (\$180,000) in damages—an amount the Media Foundation of West Africa (MWFA) called excessive and said threatened the paper's continued existence. The newspaper had repeated unverified claims that Owusu-Agyemang released a secret taping from a meeting of NPP officials, with the intention of embarrassing the party.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4

Religious freedom is constitutionally and legally protected, and the government largely upholds these protections in practice. However, Muslim families have said that compulsory Christian prayer sessions and church services that are widespread in Ghana's public schools seek to promote Christianity, and violate their children's religious freedom.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is legally guaranteed and generally upheld in practice.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

Private discussion is both free and vibrant.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 11 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4

The rights to peaceful assembly and association are constitutionally guaranteed and generally respected. Permits are not required for meetings or demonstrations.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

NGOs are generally able to operate freely, and play an important role in ensuring government accountability and transparency.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

Under the constitution and 2003 labor laws, workers have the right to form and join trade unions. However, the government forbids or restricts labor action in a number of industries, including fuel distribution, public transportation, and the prison system.

F. RULE OF LAW: 11 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 2 / 4

Judicial independence in Ghana is constitutionally and legally enshrined. While the judiciary has demonstrated greater levels of impartiality in recent years, corruption and bribery continue to pose challenges.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 3 / 4

Constitutional protections for due process and defendants' rights are mostly upheld. However, police have been known to accept bribes, make arbitrary arrests, and hold people without charge for longer than the legally permitted limit of 48 hours. The government is not obliged to provide the accused with legal counsel, and many people unable to afford lawyers are forced to represent themselves in court.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 3 / 4

Ghana's prisons are overcrowded, and conditions are often life-threatening, though the prison service has attempted to reduce congestion and improve the treatment of inmates in recent years. Communal and ethnic violence occasionally flare in Ghana. In April 2017, a clash in Agbogbloshie, in Accra, between members of the Dagomba and Konkomba ethnic groups claimed two lives and left many others wounded.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

LGBT people face societal discrimination. In February 2017, parliament speaker Mike Oquaye called for legislation that would explicitly ban all homosexual activities, though no such bill was forthcoming at year's end.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 10 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4

Freedom of movement is guaranteed by the constitution and respected by the government, and Ghanaians are free to choose their place of residence. However, poorly developed road networks and banditry can make travel outside the capital and touristic areas difficult. Police have been known to set up illegal checkpoints to demand bribes from travelers. Bribery is also rife in the education sector.

Despite equal rights under the law, women suffer societal discrimination, especially in rural areas, where opportunities for education and employment are limited. However, women's enrollment in universities is increasing.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 3 / 4

Weak rule of law, corruption, and an underregulated property rights system remain significant impediments to business confidence. Bribery is a common practice in starting a business and registering property.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Domestic violence and rape are serious problems, and the practice of female genital mutilation continues in the north. The government has worked to combat gender-based violence, including by expanding the police's domestic violence and victim support unit and creating gender-based violence courts.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

The exploitation of children in the agricultural and mining sectors remains a problem. The exploitation of children in the fishing industry too remains a problem, especially in the region surrounding Lake Volta. While the government has taken some steps in recent

years, it has not implemented antitrafficking legislation or adequately funded antitrafficking agencies.

Greece

Population: 10,800,000

Capital: Athens

Political Rights Rating: 2

Civil Liberties Rating: 2

Freedom Rating: 2.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Greece's parliamentary democracy features vigorous competition between political parties and a strong if imperfect record of upholding civil liberties. Entrenched corruption has undermined state finances, leading external creditors to impose constraints on the country's fiscal policies. Other concerns include discrimination against immigrants and minorities as well as poor conditions for irregular migrants and refugees.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In keeping with a pattern of small-scale political violence in the country, a mail bomb in May seriously injured Lucas Papademos, who served as a technocratic prime minister from late 2011 to early 2012.
- Although the flow of migrants and refugees remained lower than before the European Union's 2016 agreement with Turkey checked the crisis, those already in Greece continued to be housed in substandard conditions as officials struggled with a backlog of asylum applications.
- Legislation passed in October enabled transgender people to change their gender on official documents through a simple court declaration.
- Long-delayed construction on an official mosque for Athens proceeded during the year, but it had yet to open at year's end.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 35 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The largely ceremonial president is elected by a parliamentary supermajority for a five-year term. The prime minister is chosen by the president and is usually the leader of the largest party in the parliament. Current president Prokopis Pavlopoulos, a conservative former cabinet minister, was elected in February 2015. Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras of the Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA) took office after January 2015 elections and won reelection in a snap vote in September of that year.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The 300 members of the unicameral Hellenic Parliament are elected to serve four-year terms through a mixture of 8 single-member constituencies, 48 multimember constituencies,

and a national constituency with 12 seats. Under current electoral law, the party with the most votes receives a 50-seat bonus, which is designed to make it easier to form a governing majority.

In the September 2015 elections, which were considered free and fair, SYRIZA took 145 seats and renewed its ruling coalition with the right-wing populist Independent Greeks (ANEL) party, which won 10. The center-right opposition New Democracy (ND) party took 75 seats; the ultranationalist Golden Dawn won 18; the center-left Democratic Coalition, composed of the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) and the Democratic Left (DIMAR), took 17; the Communist Party of Greece (KKE), 15; the new center-left To Potami (the River), 11; and the Union of Centrists (EK), 9.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

The country has generally fair electoral laws, equal campaigning opportunities, and a weakly enforced system of compulsory voting. If passed with a two-thirds supermajority, changes to the electoral laws are implemented for the next elections. If passed with a simple majority, they go into effect in the following elections. An amendment that was passed in 2016 without a supermajority will abolish the 50-seat bonus that is awarded to the winning party. It will also lower the voting age from 18 to 17.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 15 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4

The political system features vigorous competition among a variety of parties. Eight were represented in the parliament as of 2017. Many other parties participated in the last elections but did not reach the 3 percent vote threshold to secure representation.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

Greece has established a strong pattern of democratic transfers of power between rival parties, with PASOK and ND alternating in government for most of the past four decades. SYRIZA entered government for the first time in 2015.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

No group or institution from outside the political system exerts undue influence over the choices of voters and candidates.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

Greece's largest recognized minority population, the Muslim community of Thrace, has full political rights, and four members of the community won seats in the last parliamentary elections. The authorities have rejected some ethnic minorities' attempts to secure official recognition or to register associations with names referring to their ethnic identity, affecting their ability to organize and advocate for their political interests, though such associations are generally able to operate without legal recognition. Since 2010, documented immigrants have been allowed to vote in municipal elections.

There are no significant legal or practical barriers to women's political participation. Women won about 20 percent of the seats in the 2015 parliamentary elections.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 8 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 3 / 4**

Greek elected officials generally set and implement government policies. However, their fiscal policy choices in particular have been limited in recent years by the main creditor institutions that have guided the country through its public debt crisis—the European Commission, the European Central Bank, and the International Monetary Fund. Greece was expected to exit its last bailout agreement with the institutions in 2018.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

Official corruption remains a problem in Greece, and institutions tasked with combating it lack the resources to operate effectively. Tax officials have been implicated in tax evasion schemes, which seriously complicate the government's fiscal reform efforts.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 3 / 4

A number of laws and government programs are designed to ensure the transparency of official decisions and provide public access to information. Officials are required to make public declarations of their assets and income. Corruption related to state contracts remains a concern; a number of former officials, including former cabinet ministers, were charged or found guilty during 2017 for contract-related bribery schemes.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 50 / 60 (+1)**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 14 / 16****D1. Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4**

The constitution includes provisions for freedoms of speech and the press, and these rights are generally protected. Citizens enjoy access to a broad array of privately owned print, broadcast and online news outlets. There are some limits on hate speech and related content. Defamation remains a criminal offense, and journalists face defamation suits by political figures in practice. They are also sometimes subject to physical assaults, particularly while covering protests.

At the end of 2017, the government was preparing to hold new auctions for television licenses under the auspices of the independent National Council for Radio and Television. An earlier auction held without the regulator in 2016 had been nullified after the Council of State found that it was unconstitutional. Critics had accused the government of using the procedure to alter the media landscape in its favor.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4

The constitution guarantees freedom of religion, though the Greek Orthodox Church receives government subsidies and is considered the "prevailing" faith of the country. The constitution prohibits proselytizing, but this restriction is rarely enforced. Members of some minority religions face discrimination and legal barriers, such as permit requirements to open houses of worship. Opposition to the construction of an official mosque in Athens remains substantial; the project proceeded during 2017, but it was not yet complete at year's end. To date, the city's nearly 200,000 Muslim inhabitants worship in improvised mosques.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

There are no significant constraints on academic freedom in Greece, and the educational system is free of political indoctrination.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

The government does not engage in improper monitoring of personal expression, and individuals are generally free to discuss their views in practice.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 12 / 12 (+1)**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4 (+1)**

Freedom of assembly is guaranteed by the constitution, and the government generally protects this right. Austerity-related protests over the past decade have sometimes grown violent, and extremist groups like Golden Dawn have attempted to attack and intimidate assemblies in support of migrants' rights or other causes they oppose. However, such instances have become less frequent since a crackdown on Golden Dawn's leadership began in 2013, and police have improved their handling of security surrounding demonstrations.

Score Change: The score improved from 3 to 4 due to a gradual improvement in people's ability to participate in peaceful assemblies without the threat of violence from extremist groups like Golden Dawn.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) generally operate without interference from the authorities.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

Workers have the right to form and join unions, bargain collectively, and strike. The law provides protections against antiunion discrimination, and the government generally upholds union rights.

F. RULE OF LAW: 11 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 3 / 4**

The judiciary is largely independent, though its autonomy is undermined somewhat by corruption. Judges are appointed by the president on the advice of the Supreme Judicial Council, which is mostly composed of other judges. They serve until retirement age and cannot be removed arbitrarily.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 3 / 4

The law provides safeguards against arbitrary arrest and detention, ensures access to defense counsel, and provides for fair trial conditions. Persistent problems include court backlogs that lead to prolonged pretrial detention as well as improper detention of asylum seekers.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 3 / 4

While overall rates of violent crime are low, there are occasional acts of political violence. In May 2017, a mail bomb seriously injured former prime minister Lucas Papademos, whose tenure was associated with the harsh austerity policies imposed by Greece's creditors.

Some prisons and detention centers suffer from substandard conditions, and law enforcement personnel have at times been accused of physical abuse, particularly against vulnerable groups such as migrants and asylum seekers.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

Women generally enjoy equality before the law, though they continue to face workplace discrimination in practice.

Violence targeting immigrants, refugees, and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people remains a problem. According to the Racist Violence Recording Network (RVRN), the number of attacks has declined overall in recent years. This is due in large part to a law enforcement crackdown on Golden Dawn; a trial against dozens of the group's members and leaders was ongoing during 2017. The RVRN documented 102 cases of violence in 2017, including 34 attacks against migrants and refugees and 47 attacks against LGBT people. The Romany minority is also subject to discrimination despite legal protections.

Since 2016, when the EU reached an agreement with Turkey to curb the westward flow of migrants and refugees, the number entering Greece has been significantly reduced. However, over 60,000 remained stranded in Greece as of 2017, with many living in Reception and Identification Centers on the Aegean islands or in camps across Greece as Greek officials struggled to process asylum claims in a timely manner. Some of these sites feature harsh living conditions, violence, the harassment of women, and endangerment of children; under pressure from NGOs, officials have attempted to close the worst facilities and increase the use of urban accommodation. International observers have also questioned whether individuals who are deported to Turkey under the EU agreement are being returned to a safe third country.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 13 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4

Freedom of movement is generally unrestricted.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 3 / 4

The government and legal framework are generally supportive of property rights and entrepreneurship, but bureaucratic obstacles can inhibit business activity. Those who have political connections or are willing to pay bribes can sometimes expedite official procedures.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

There are no major constraints on personal social freedoms, though domestic violence remains a problem. Members of the Muslim minority in Thrace can have their personal status matters adjudicated by muftis according to Sharia (Islamic law), which may put women at a disadvantage, but this community also has access to civil marriage and the courts.

In October 2017, the parliament passed legislation allowing unmarried transgender people over age 15 to change their gender on identity documents without undergoing gender reassignment surgery or other such procedures, subject to validation by a judge.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

Most residents enjoy legal protections against exploitative working conditions, but labor laws are not always adequately enforced. Migrants and asylum seekers are especially vulnerable to trafficking for forced labor or sexual exploitation, and government efforts to combat the problem, while increasing, remain insufficient, according to the U.S. State Department.

Grenada

Population: 111,000

Capital: St. George's

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 2

Freedom Rating: 1.5

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Grenada is a parliamentary democracy that regularly holds credible elections. Ongoing concerns include corruption, discrimination against the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) community, and violence against women and children.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Grenada's Citizenship by Investment (CBI) program came under scrutiny following fraud allegations and other claims of impropriety. The rules governing it were tightened in September.
- In September 2017, the cabinet appointed a committee to address child sexual abuse, and in November the prime minister announced that a special victims unit would be established to help victims.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 37 / 40 (-1)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 11 / 12 (-1)

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The prime minister, usually the leader of the largest party in parliament, is head of government. They are appointed by the governor general, who represents the British monarch as head of state.

Following the 2013 elections, New National Party (NNP) leader Keith Mitchell, who had previously served as prime minister from 1995 to 2008, was sworn in as prime minister.

Cécile La Grenade was sworn in as Grenada's first female governor general in 2013.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The bicameral Parliament consists of the directly elected, 15-seat House of Representatives, whose members serve five-year terms, and the 13-seat Senate, which is appointed by the governor general. Ten Senate seats are appointed on the advice of the prime minister, and the remaining three on the advice of the opposition leader; senators also serve five-year terms.

The NNP won early elections held in 2013, capturing all 15 seats in the House of Representatives with 59 percent of the vote. The National Democratic Congress (NDC) received 41 percent of the vote, and the newly formed National United Front (NUF) received less than 1 percent. Due to the lack of parliamentary opposition after the elections, the governor-general appointed three former NDC ministers to the Senate. Voter turnout was high, at nearly 88 percent.

The electoral observation mission of the Organization of American States (OAS) expressed concern over a lack of campaign finance regulations and other issues, but deemed the polls credible.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4 (-1)

Electoral laws are generally fair, and are they usually implemented impartially by the supervisor of elections, who heads the Parliamentary Elections Office.

Grenada held a constitutional referendum in 2016. All of the proposals—including setting a three-term limit for the prime minister, established fixed dates for elections, and reforming the electoral authority and the body that sets constituent boundaries—failed. Turnout was low, at just 32 percent.

The unbalanced size of constituencies has resulted in unequal voting power among citizens. For example, in a country of just over 100,000 people, the largest of Grenada’s 15 constituencies has around 5,000 more registered voters than the smallest. This discrepancy has not been successfully addressed, even as planned 2018 polls draw closer.

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 due to a failure to address the unbalanced size of Grenada’s electoral districts, which allow unequal voting power among citizens.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 16 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4

Political parties can organize freely. While a number of small political parties have competed in elections, the first-past-the-post system encourages two-party politics, and since 1999 only the NNP and NDC have won seats in parliament. Additionally, weak campaign finance laws potentially create an unfair advantage for certain parties.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

There are realistic opportunities for opposition parties to increase their support or gain power through elections, and power has rotated on several occasions since the first election in 1984, after democracy was restored to Grenada. However, the NNP has won a majority of the elections since then.

B3. Are the people’s political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

People are generally able to express their political choices without encountering pressure from outside actors. However, the OAS has expressed concern about a lack of transparency and general regulation of campaign finance procedures, which could create avenues for undue influence over candidates and voters by business or other special interest groups.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 4 / 4

Grenada's constitution guarantees universal suffrage for adult citizens. Women remain underrepresented in politics, but saw greater representation following the 2013 elections, and women's advocacy groups have some influence in the general political sphere. The marginalization of the LGBT community impacts its ability to engage fully in political and electoral processes.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 10 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4**

The appointed prime minister, cabinet, and freely elected parliament representatives are able to determine the policies of the government. However, because of concerns over the lack of an opposition in the House of Representatives, three former NDC ministers were appointed to the Senate after the 2013 election.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4

Corruption remains a prominent issue in Grenada, despite safeguards enshrined in the Prevention of Corruption Act and the Integrity in Public Life Act. A number of suggested amendments in a 2016 constitutional reform package would have strengthened anticorruption safeguards, but all were voted down by significant margins.

In 2017, concerns were raised over Grenada's CBI program, which allows foreigners to gain citizenship through an economic investment in the country. Multiple allegations of fraud were made against a passport agent and property developer who had himself become a citizen through the CBI program; it further emerged during the year that he had been granted citizenship despite having been convicted of domestic violence offenses in the US that should have disqualified him. In response to this and other concerns about the CBI program, the rules governing it were tightened in September.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 3 / 4

The government of Grenada generally operates with transparency. A decree passed in 2013 under the authority of the Integrity in Public Life Act requires all public officials to declare their personal assets. In June 2017, parliament passed an amendment to the Mutual Exchange of Information on Tax Matters Bill, which allows Grenadian authorities to request financial information about its citizens residing abroad in an effort to prevent tax avoidance.

However, there is no law to ensure public access to information, even though the government pledged to introduce one Act in 2008.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 51 / 60**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 15 / 16****D1. Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4**

In 2012, Grenada became the first Caribbean country to decriminalize defamation, but seditious libel remains a criminal offense. Politicians have initiated defamation lawsuits against the media, contributing to self-censorship among journalists who may not be able to afford legal costs or resulting fines. The long-running case between Prime Minister Keith Mitchell and the *Grenada Today* newspaper led to the liquidation of the newspaper in 2009, and the editor and author of the disputed article were assigned fines in 2016.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Freedom of religion is protected under the constitution and this right is generally respected in practice.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

The government generally respects academic freedom.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

Individuals are free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 11 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4

Freedom of assembly is constitutionally guaranteed, and that right is generally respected in practice.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights-and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are generally free to operate.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

The right of workers to form and join labor unions is constitutionally protected, though unions and labor activists face some obstacles. Workers have the right to strike, organize, and bargain collectively, though employers are not legally bound to recognize a union if a majority of workers do not join. Essential services workers may strike, but compulsory arbitration can be used to resolve disputes. The list of essential services is extensive, and includes services that should not be considered as such according to International Labor Organization (ILO) standards.

F. RULE OF LAW: 12 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 3 / 4

An independent judiciary is constitutionally guaranteed, and judicial independence is generally respected in practice. Grenada is a member of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States court system, and is a charter member of the Caribbean Court of Justice, but still relies on the Privy Council in London as its final court of appeal. In 2016, parliament approved legislation to eliminate the Privy Council as the final court, but the measure was defeated in the year's constitutional referendum.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 3 / 4

Detainees and defendants are guaranteed a range of legal rights, including the presumption of innocence and the right to trial without delay, which are mostly respected in practice. However, due to case backlogs, in practice trial delays are common. Additionally, due to staffing shortages, not all indigent defendants could be provided legal counsel.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 3 / 4

Flogging remains a punishment for petty crimes, and the prison system is overcrowded. Although considered one of the safer Caribbean islands, there has been a rise in reports of sexual assault in recent years.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

Same-sex sexual activity is a criminal offense in Grenada, and LGBT people face significant societal discrimination. The 2016 constitutional referendum included an amendment to protect the equal treatment of people in Grenada, but that amendment was overwhelmingly rejected due to concerns that language in the amendment might lead to the legalization of same-sex marriage.

The constitution prohibits gender discrimination, as do the 1999 Employment Act and Education Act. However, cultural norms perpetuate discrimination in practice, and sexual harassment is common.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 13 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4

Freedom of movement is constitutionally guaranteed, and this right is generally respected in practice.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or non-state actors? 3 / 4

The government of Grenada has actively encouraged both national and foreign investors to operate businesses in the country, but procedures involved in establishing a new business can be excessive.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

Violence against women and children is a widespread issue in Grenada. Domestic violence legislation came into effect in 2011, but enforcement has been limited. In September 2017, the cabinet appointed a committee to address child sexual abuse, and in November the prime minister announced that a special victims unit would be established to help victims.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

Poverty and unemployment are pervasive, and hamper the social mobility of many Grenadians.

A 2015 law punishes human trafficking with up to 25 years in jail and large fines. However, reports of human trafficking are rare.

Guinea

Population: 11,200,000

Capital: Conakry

Political Rights Rating: 5

Civil Liberties Rating: 5

Freedom Rating: 5.0

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: Since Guinea returned to civilian rule in 2010 following a 2008 military coup and decades of authoritarian governance, elections have been plagued by violence, delays, and other flaws. The government uses restrictive criminal laws to discourage dissent, and ethnic divisions and pervasive corruption often exacerbate political disputes. Regular abuse of civilians by military and police forces reflects a deep-seated culture of impunity.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- The year featured a series of violent demonstrations against the perceived governance failures of President Alpha Condé. Journalists and opposition protesters often faced assaults and harassment by security forces.
- In February, teachers' unions went on strike to protest salary cuts and other grievances. Schools were closed for almost two weeks throughout the country, and at least seven people were killed as police attempted to disperse related demonstrations.
- Overdue local elections, which were tentatively scheduled for early 2017 under a political accord reached in 2016, did not take place during the year. In December, the balloting was rescheduled for February 2018. The country has not held local elections since 2005.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 17 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 6 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

Guinea's president is elected by popular vote for up to two five-year terms. In the 2015 election, incumbent Alpha Condé of the Rally of the Guinean People (RPG) defeated former prime minister Cellou Dalein Diallo of the Union of Democratic Forces of Guinea (UFDG), taking 57.8 percent of the vote to secure a second and final term. The months preceding the election were characterized by ethnic tensions, violence between RPG and UFDG members, and clashes between opposition supporters and security forces that left several people dead. Election day itself was peaceful, but opposition candidates filed unsuccessful legal challenges of the results, claiming fraud and vote rigging. Despite a number of logistical problems, international observers deemed the vote valid.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4

Of the unicameral National Assembly's 114 seats, 38 are awarded through single-member constituency races and 76 are filled through nationwide proportional representation, all for five-year terms. Political and protest-related violence in the period before the 2013

parliamentary elections was severe, with dozens of people killed and hundreds injured. Ethnic tensions and disputes over the rules governing the polls contributed to the unrest. The RPG won 53 seats, the UFDG won 37 seats, and a dozen smaller parties divided the remainder.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 2 / 4

While the electoral framework has allowed credible elections to proceed in some cases, it has consistently been subject to political dispute, with rival factions claiming a lack of fair representation on electoral commissions. Partly as a result of such disagreements, elections at the local level have not been held since 2005. The next balloting was originally due in 2010, but was postponed during the transition to civilian rule after the 2008 military coup. The local elections were then scheduled for early 2014, between the parliamentary and presidential elections, only to be repeatedly delayed, with the government at times citing an outbreak of the Ebola virus, which lasted from 2013 to 2016. Negotiations between the major parties in 2016 resulted in a tentative plan to hold the elections in February 2017, but implementation stalled, and in December President Condé signed a decree changing the date to February 2018.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 8 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 2 / 4

The main political parties are the ruling RPG and the opposition UFDG. More than 130 parties are registered, most of which have clear ethnic or regional bases. Relations between the RPG and opposition parties are strained, and violent election-related clashes between RPG supporters, who are predominantly drawn from the Malinké ethnic group, and UFDG supporters, who are largely from the Fulani ethnic group, have inflamed tensions.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 2 / 4

Although multiparty elections have been held since the 1990s, Guinea has not established a pattern of peaceful democratic power transfers between rival parties. Before becoming president in 2010, Condé was an opposition leader under longtime president Lansana Conté. However, rather than defeating an incumbent leader, Condé won the first election after a period of military rule that followed Conté's death in 2008.

During 2017, political disputes over the overdue local elections led to further confrontations between the government and opposition. Several thousand government opponents participated in demonstrations in Conakry in August to protest election delays and lack of security. Weeks later, a man was shot and killed by police in the capital during a rally against government corruption; at least a dozen others were injured. The opposition stated that 700,000 people participated in the latter demonstration; security forces put the figure at 500,000.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 2 / 4

While the military's role in politics has waned since the return to civilian rule, ethnic loyalty continues to play an outsized role in the political choices of voters and party leaders.

Rather than organizing around policy platforms or political ideologies and trying to attract new supporters, each party tacitly pledges allegiance to its respective ethnic group, contributing to the threat of mutual hostility and violence.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 2 / 4

Women and minority groups have full political rights, but ethnic divisions and gender bias limit their participation in practice. Parties do not always observe a legal obligation to grant women at least 30 percent of the places on their proportional representation lists for the National Assembly. Women hold nearly 22 percent of the seats in the assembly.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 3 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 1 / 4

The flawed electoral process undermines the legitimacy of executive and legislative officials. In addition, their ability to determine and implement laws and policies without undue interference is impeded by factors including impunity among security forces and rampant corruption.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

The National Anti-Corruption Agency (ANLC) reports directly to the presidency, and is considered to be underfunded and understaffed. A government audit whose findings were released in 2016 uncovered thousands of civil service positions held by absent or deceased workers. Some lower-level officials have been prosecuted on corruption charges in recent years, but major cases involving senior politicians and the lucrative mining industry have mainly been pursued in foreign courts.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 1 / 4

While Guinea was declared in full compliance with the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative in 2014, allegations of high-level corruption in the mining sector have continued. An access to information law adopted in 2010 has never been effectively implemented.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 24 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 10 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4

The 2010 constitution guarantees media freedom, but Guinea has struggled to uphold freedom of expression in practice. A new criminal code adopted in 2016 retained penalties of up to five years in prison for defamation or insult of public figures. A cybersecurity law passed the same year criminalized similar offenses online, as well as the dissemination of information that is false, protected on national security grounds, or “likely to disturb law and order or public security or jeopardize human dignity.”

Several dozen newspapers publish regularly in Guinea, though most have small circulations. More than 30 private radio stations and a few private television stations compete with the public broadcaster, Radio Télévision Guinéenne (RTG). Due to the high illiteracy rate, most of the population accesses information through radio; internet access remains limited to urban areas.

Journalists who reported critically on the authorities or other sensitive topics during 2017 often faced beatings or short-term arrests by police, suspensions by media regulators, or intimidation by party activists.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4

Religious rights are generally respected in practice. Some non-Muslim government workers have reported occasional discrimination. People who convert from Islam to Christianity sometimes encounter pressure from members of their community.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 3 / 4

Academic freedom has historically faced political restrictions under authoritarian regimes. The problem has eased in recent years, particularly since the return to civilian rule in 2010, though self-censorship still tends to reduce the vibrancy of academic discourse.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4

There are few practical limits on private discussion, though ethnic tensions and laws restricting freedom of expression may deter open debate in some circumstances.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 5 / 12**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 1 / 4**

Freedom of assembly is enshrined in the constitution, but this right is often restricted. Assemblies held without notification, a requirement under Guinean law, are considered unauthorized and are often violently dispersed, leading to deaths, injuries, and arrests. Several such incidents occurred during 2017.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 2 / 4

Freedom of association is constitutionally protected, and regulatory restrictions on nongovernmental organizations are not severe. However, Guinean civil society remains weak, ethnically divided, and subject to periodic harassment and intimidation.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

Although workers are allowed to form trade unions, strike, and bargain collectively, they must provide 10 days' notice before striking, and strikes are banned in broadly defined essential services. In February 2017, teachers' unions mounted a strike over wage cuts and other grievances, drawing the support of many students. Related protests led to clashes with police, and at least seven people were killed.

F. RULE OF LAW: 4 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4**

The judicial system has demonstrated some degree of independence since 2010, though it remains subject to political influence and corruption. The courts are understaffed and underfunded, and have been slow to adjudicate past atrocities associated with military rule.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

Security forces engage in arbitrary arrests, often disregarding legal safeguards. Most prison inmates are being held in prolonged pretrial detention, though justice reforms in recent years have reduced the number of such detainees. Due process rights pertaining to trials are frequently denied, and many disputes are settled informally through traditional justice systems.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 1 / 4

The new criminal code adopted in 2016 eliminated the death penalty and explicitly outlawed torture for the first time. The National Assembly passed a new military code of justice in June 2017, completing Guinea's abolition of the death penalty. However, human rights watchdogs noted that the criminal code categorized a number of acts that fall within the international definition of torture as merely "inhuman and cruel," a category that does not carry any explicit penalties in the code. In practice, security forces continued to engage in torture and other forms of physical violence with apparent impunity.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

Women face pervasive societal discrimination and disadvantages in both the formal and traditional justice systems. Various ethnic groups engage in mutual discrimination with respect to hiring and other matters. Antidiscrimination laws do not protect LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people. Same-sex sexual activity is a criminal offense that can be punished with up to three years in prison; although this law is rarely enforced, LGBT people have been arrested on lesser charges.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 5 / 16**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 1 / 4**

Freedom of movement has long been hindered by rampant crime and ubiquitous security checkpoints, though restrictions related to the Ebola epidemic have been removed. De facto ethnic segregation can impede individuals' ability to change their place of residence.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

Private business activity is hampered by corruption and political instability, among other factors. A centralized Agency for the Promotion of Private Investments aims to ease the business registration process. Following recent reforms, property registration processes have become faster and less expensive.

Women face gender-based disadvantages in laws and practices governing inheritance and property rights.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 1 / 4

Rape and domestic violence are common but underreported due to fears of stigmatization, and there is no specific legislation meant to address domestic abuse. Female genital mutilation is nearly ubiquitous despite a legal ban, affecting up to 97 percent of girls and women in the country, the second-highest rate in the world. The new criminal code adopted in 2016 set the legal age for marriage at 18, but early and forced marriages remained extremely common. Laws governing marriage and divorce generally favor men.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

The 2016 criminal code specifically criminalized trafficking in persons and debt bondage, but reduced the minimum penalties for such crimes, and enforcement has been weak. Guinean boys have been forced to work in mines in Guinea and in neighboring countries,

while women and children have been trafficked for sexual exploitation to other parts of West Africa as well as Europe and the Middle East.

Guinea-Bissau

Population: 1,900,000

Capital: Bissau

Political Rights Rating: 5

Civil Liberties Rating: 5

Freedom Rating: 5.0

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: Guinea-Bissau's 2014 elections moved the country back toward democratic governance after a 2012 military coup. Since then, however, the political system has been paralyzed by divisions between the president and the parliament, and within the ruling party. The crisis has contributed to restrictions on the media and freedom of assembly. Corruption is a major problem that has been exacerbated by the criminal activities of international drug traffickers.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Umaro Sissoco Embaló, the prime minister appointed by President José Mário Vaz in November 2016, remained in office throughout the year, but he lacked the support of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde (PAIGC), which won a majority in the parliament in 2014. The ongoing rift prevented the legislature from convening and approving a budget.
- Demonstrators protesting against the political crisis assembled several times during the year, in some cases triggering clashes with police or government attempts to prohibit such gatherings.
- In June, the authorities suspended two Portuguese state broadcasters, citing non-compliance with a bilateral media cooperation agreement; observers raised suspicions that the government objected to the outlets' coverage of the political crisis. In September, employees at Guinea-Bissau's state-run television station complained of censorship.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 16 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 7 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4

The president is elected through a two-round voting system for a term of five years. The prime minister is appointed by the president "in accordance with the election results" after consulting with the parliamentary parties, and the government must be dissolved if the parliament rejects its proposed budget.

In the 2014 presidential election, José Mário Vaz of the PAIGC took 61.9 percent of the second-round vote, defeating independent Nuno Gomes Nabiam, who took 38.08 percent. The election was considered largely free and fair. However, Vaz's 2015 dismissal of PAIGC leader Domingos Simões Pereira as prime minister touched off a political crisis. A series of

subsequent governments appointed by Vaz failed to secure parliamentary approval. Prime Minister Sissoco, appointed in November 2016, remained in office throughout 2017, but he had the support only of the minority Party for Social Renovation (PRS) and a group of 15 PAIGC dissidents. In September 2017, the UN Security Council urged Vaz and other leaders to implement the 2016 Conakry Agreement, which called for an inclusive government led by a consensus prime minister.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

Members of the 102-seat National People's Assembly are elected by popular vote for four-year terms. In the 2014 elections, the PAIGC took 55 seats and was allocated two additional seats for diaspora representation, bringing its total to 57. The PRS secured 41 seats, the Party for Democratic Convergence (PDC) took two seats, and the Party for a New Democracy (PND) and the Union for Change (UM) won one seat each.

Monitoring groups and local human rights organizations reported some instances of intimidation or beatings of election officials and candidates during the election period. One PRS candidate for the legislature was reportedly kidnapped by unknown armed assailants. Voting was otherwise relatively peaceful and transparent, and the legislative elections were considered largely free and fair by international observers.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 2 / 4

There are some problems with the country's electoral laws and framework, including weak controls on campaign spending and vote buying and a lack of legal provisions for domestic poll observers. The 2014 elections were delayed in part due to a lack of funding.

As a result of the continued political impasse in 2017, the parliament was unable to appoint new members of the National Electoral Commission, whose incumbents' mandates expired in June. Moreover, the president had yet to set a date for parliamentary elections due in 2018, and in December 2017 he suggested holding them in 2019 to coincide with the presidential vote.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 8 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 3 / 4

Dozens of political parties are active in Guinea-Bissau, and 15 of them competed in the 2014 legislative elections. The political crisis has led to some instances of violence and intimidation among partisan groups. In October 2017, clashes between supporters of the rival PAIGC factions broke out when the dissidents' group tried to submit a petition at the party's headquarters, resulting in a small number of injuries.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 2 / 4

Guinea-Bissau has a limited record of democratic power transfers between rival political parties, as the PAIGC or military rulers have governed for most of the period since independence. In 2014, Vaz succeeded an independent serving as acting president in the wake of the 2012 coup. Opposition forces had a realistic chance of increasing their representation in the 2018 legislative elections if the current political impasse could be resolved in time to allow them to go forward.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 1 / 4

The military has apparently refrained from interfering in politics under its current commander, Biaguê Nan Tan, but the threat of an intervention has not entirely receded. The choices of voters and politicians continue to be influenced by corruption and patronage networks. Organized crime linked to drug trafficking has contributed to the country's political instability in recent decades.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 2 / 4

Women enjoy equal political rights, but their participation is limited in practice by cultural obstacles, and they are underrepresented in leadership positions. Just 14 women won seats in the last parliamentary elections. Ethnicity plays a role in politics, with one of the larger groups, the Balanta, traditionally dominating the military and casting votes for the PRS.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 1 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 1 / 4

Governance has been impaired by the political crisis that began in 2015. The constitutional legitimacy of the current prime minister and cabinet remained in doubt during 2017, and the legislature had not convened since January 2016. While the Permanent Commission of the National Assembly continued to meet, full sessions to vote on government proposals, including the budget, had not been held.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 0 / 4

Corruption is pervasive, including among senior government figures. Both military and civilian officials have been accused of involvement in the illegal drug trade. Critics of past corruption investigations targeting former high-ranking officials have argued that they were politically motivated.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 0 / 4

There are no effective legal provisions to facilitate public access to government information, and government officials do not disclose their personal financial information as required by law. The political impasse and related parliamentary dysfunction have further obstructed oversight of government spending in recent years.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 25 / 60 (+1)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 10 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4

The constitution provides for freedom of the press, but it is often restricted in practice, with journalists regularly facing harassment and intimidation. In June 2017, Vaz asked journalists to avoid writing negative stories about the country. In the same month, Portugal's state radio and television outlets (RDP and RTP) were suspended from broadcasting in Guinea-Bissau; the government claimed that a bilateral agreement on media cooperation had not been followed, but critics of the move argued that it was motivated by the government's perception that the outlets had provided biased coverage of the political situation.

In September, employees of Guinea-Bissau's state-run television station issued a letter denouncing censorship at the broadcaster.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4

Religious freedom is legally protected and usually respected in practice. Government licensing requirements are not onerous and often disregarded. Some Muslims have reportedly raised concerns about the influence of foreign imams who preach a more rigorous or austere form of Islam.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 3 / 4

Academic freedom is guaranteed and generally upheld, though the education system is poor in terms of access, quality, and basic resources.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4

Individuals are relatively free to express their views on political topics in the private and social sphere, though some more public figures have faced arrest or charges in retaliation for their remarks in recent years. In June 2017, prominent PAIGC member Manuel "Manecas" dos Santos was arrested and held for 24 hours without charges after stating in an interview in April that the political crisis might lead to a coup. In September, Prime Minister Sissoco declared that anyone who insults the president, prime minister, or leader of the parliament would be arrested.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 6 / 12 (+1)

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 1 / 4

Freedom of assembly is frequently restricted. The authorities repeatedly interfered with demonstrations by groups opposed to the political crisis or the president during 2017, either by attempting to ban planned events or by forcibly dispersing assemblies. In April 2017, for example, police used tear gas against peaceful protesters and detained several activists. In June, the government prohibited two civil society organizations from holding planned protests. Clashes between protesters and police in May and November led to a number of injuries and arrests.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 2 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are generally able to operate, but they sometimes face intimidation and other obstacles. In July 2017, the offices of a human rights dialogue group (Casa dos Direitos) was surrounded by 100 police officers as it prepared to hold a press conference, drawing criticism from other human rights groups.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4 (+1)

Workers are allowed to form and join independent trade unions, but few work in the wage-earning formal sector. Private employers sometimes engage in improper interference with union organizing and other activities. The right to strike is protected, and government workers frequently exercise this right. Among other such actions during 2017, teachers' unions went on strike over pay and working conditions in May, and although an agreement

with the government was reached in June, the unions mounted further strikes in the fall to ensure compliance with the June agreement and pressure the government to resolve outstanding issues.

Score Change: The score improved from 2 to 3 due to public-sector unions' ability to engage in vigorous negotiations and strike activity without major state interference.

F. RULE OF LAW: 4 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4

Judges are highly susceptible to corruption and political pressure, and the court system as a whole lacks the resources and capacity to function effectively. In September 2017, the public prosecutor's office said it would not recognize a Supreme Court ruling on the office's power to impose restrictions on suspects under investigation, in this case a former cabinet official.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 0 / 4

Corruption is common among police, and officers often fail to observe legal safeguards against arbitrary arrest and detention. Very few criminal cases are brought to trial or successfully prosecuted, partly due to the limited material and human resources available to investigators. Most of the population lacks access to the justice system in practice.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 1 / 4

Conditions in prisons and detention centers are often extremely poor, and law enforcement personnel generally enjoy impunity for abuses. A number of cases of torture and beatings by police have been reported in recent years. In January 2017, a man accused of theft died after police allegedly tortured him in custody.

Because of its weak institutions and porous borders, Guinea-Bissau has become a major transit point for cartels trafficking illegal narcotics to Europe. The armed forces and some other state entities have been linked to drug trafficking. Criminal violence and homicides continue to pose serious problems.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

Women face significant traditional and societal discrimination, despite some legal protections. They generally do not receive equal pay for equal work and have fewer opportunities in education and employment.

There are virtually no effective legal protections against discrimination on other grounds, including ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender identity, though same-sex sexual activity is not specifically criminalized.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 5 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 2 / 4

There are few formal restrictions on freedom of movement, but widespread corruption among police and other public officials can limit this right in practice, as can criminal activity.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 1 / 4

Illegal economic activity, including logging, by organized groups remains a problem. The quality of enforcement of property rights is generally poor, and the formal procedures for establishing a business are relatively onerous. In October 2017, police and merchants reportedly clashed in Bissau after city officials ordered the expulsion of street vendors from a main avenue. Police were then accused of stealing goods from the merchants.

Women, particularly those from certain ethnic groups in rural areas, face restrictions on their ability to own and inherit property.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 1 / 4

Domestic violence is not specifically addressed by law, and it is reportedly common. Victims of rape and domestic abuse rarely report the crimes to authorities. The government, international organizations, and community leaders have worked to eliminate female genital mutilation, though nearly half of the country's women have undergone such traditional practices. Early and forced marriages remain common.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

Guinea-Bissau is one of the world's poorest countries, with most families relying on unstable employment in the informal economy or remittances from migrant workers abroad. Public services have deteriorated in recent years amid irregular payment of public-sector workers.

Boys are vulnerable to organized exploitation as beggars or forced labor in sectors including mining and agriculture. Girls are trafficked for sexual exploitation or domestic servitude. Government officials have been accused of complicity in trafficking activity, including sex tourism schemes in the Bijagós islands.

Guyana

Population: 800,000

Capital: Georgetown

Political Rights Rating: 2

Civil Liberties Rating: 3

Freedom Rating: 2.5

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Guyana is a democracy that features regular elections, a lively press, and a robust civil society sector. However, violent crime, as well as discrimination against indigenous and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people remain significant problems. The recent discovery of rich oil and natural gas reserves in Guyana's coastal waters requires the government to continue pressing forward with anticorruption reforms.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- The government initiated public consultations on planned constitutional reforms, which included meetings with representatives of religious minorities and indigenous communities.
- In September, opposition supporters engaged in sustained protests against the privatization of a sugar factory, without interference from authorities or others.
- Police training on the handling of domestic violence cases and on general human rights issues were held.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 32 / 40**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 11 / 12****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4**

The president is chief of state and head of government, and appoints the cabinet. Parties designate a presidential candidate ahead of National Assembly elections, with the winning party's candidate securing the presidency. Thus, the legitimacy of the president rests on the conduct of the National Assembly elections. The president may serve an unlimited number of five-year terms.

David Granger, head of the coalition comprised of A Partnership for National Unity (APNU) and the Alliance for Change (AFC), became president after the coalition narrowly won the 2015 National Assembly elections.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

Members of the unicameral, 65-seat National Assembly are elected to five-year terms; 64 representatives are elected directly, while 1 lawmaker representing a nationwide constituency is elected by proportional representation vote.

In the 2015 elections, the APNU-AFC coalition won 50.3 percent of the vote and 33 seats, ending 23 years of rule by the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C), which won 32 seats. While the APNU-AFC won the election by a very tight margin of about 4,000 votes, the handover of power was smooth and peaceful. Observers reported a tense atmosphere on election day and recommended numerous electoral reforms, but generally praised the vote's conduct.

In 2016, local elections were held for the first time since 1994. Turnout was low, at less than 50 percent. However, the polls reflected continued democratic consolidation.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4

The Carter Center, after monitoring the 2015 polls, noted that provisions affecting electoral processes were scattered across various pieces of legislation, and recommended consolidating them to reduce confusion and inefficiency. It also recommended allowing individuals to stand for the presidency, as opposed to the current system under which presidential candidates must belong to a party. The group also expressed some concern over the operations of the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM), and called for measures to strengthen its independence and overall capacity.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 13 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4**

Political parties may form freely, and generally operate without interference. A traditional deadlock between parties organized on ethnic lines has softened somewhat in recent years, as new political forces have emerged.

The 2015 Carter Center election monitoring mission noted that Guyana lacks legislation on the formation of political parties, and recommended a new law whose requirements would promote the formation of multiethnic parties and their free operation in the political sphere.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

The APNU-AFC victory in 2015 was only the second rotation of power in the country's modern history. Nevertheless, this historic handover of power reflected the ability of opposition parties to win power through elections.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 3 / 4

Voters are largely free to make their own political choices. However, there is concern that the enduring political power of the Indo-Guyanese elite has resulted in the marginalization of some political positions.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 2 / 4

While a small number of parliament seats and cabinet positions are held by indigenous people, the indigenous minority remains politically marginalized. The interests of women are also not well represented in the political sphere. A five-point plan on improving opportunities for women, initiated by Granger, includes measures aimed at boosting women's political participation.

In 2017, the government initiated public consultations on planned constitutional reforms, which included meetings with representatives of religious minorities and indigenous communities.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 8 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4**

The president and ruling party are generally able to create and implement policy without interference. The 2015 elections left the ruling the APNU-AFC alliance with just one more seat in the legislature than the PPP/C; as a result, policymaking in the current term has to be more collaborative than it has been historically.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

In recent years, the government has made strides in introducing durable safeguards against corruption, notably by strengthening controls on money laundering and empowering a new agency to audit state-owned companies. However, official corruption remains

a pressing concern, particularly in light of the recent discovery of rich oil and natural gas reserves in the country's coastal waters.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

Laws designed to ensure government transparency are inconsistently upheld. A planned integrity commission intended to review officials' asset disclosures has not been established. Guyana's Access to Information Act came into force in 2013, but its provisions allow authorities to deny information requests with little or no explanation. The Guyana Information Commissioner, who is responsible for serving as an intermediary between information requesters and the agency they are requesting information from or about, has yet to deliver an annual report.

Separately, in August, Guyana applied for membership of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), which asks countries to submit reports detailing the proceeds they have gained from the extraction of their natural resources.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 42 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 15 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4

Although freedom of the press is generally respected, government officials have initiated libel lawsuits and have occasionally made outright threats against journalists in response to negative coverage.

In September 2017, the president signed into law controversial amendments to Guyana's Broadcasting Act which required all broadcasters to apply for new licenses within 30 days. International and domestic media freedom groups criticized the administration for failing to consult with broadcasters before introducing the amendments, and opposition figures expressed concern that the amendments might be designed to take opposition stations off the air. The government maintained that the new legislation was partly designed to ensure equitable allocation of frequencies, and several critical outlets had received licenses by the end of 2017.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Religious freedom is generally respected.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is generally respected.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

People are generally free to express their views without fear of retaliation or other consequences.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 10 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 3 / 4

While police violence towards protesters has been an issue in the past, the government in 2017 generally upheld the right to peaceful assembly. For example, predominantly PPP/C supporters engaged in sustained protests against the privatization of a sugar factory in September.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operate freely. The government has consulted with NGOs on various policy initiatives, including measures designed to combat human trafficking. A planned constitutional commission is due to draw most of its members from civil society groups.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

The right to form labor unions is generally upheld, and unions are well organized. However, laws against anti-union discrimination are poorly enforced

F. RULE OF LAW: 8 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 2 / 4

The Granger government has publicly emphasized the importance of an independent judiciary, but has struggled to appoint senior judges due to disagreements with the opposition. Staff shortages and lack of resources also hamper the judiciary's effectiveness.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 2 / 4

The police do not always operate with professionalism, and there have been reports that officers have prepared poorly for court cases in which they are involved or have accepted bribes. Recent years have seen efforts to prosecute police officers engaged in a variety of crimes, and in 2017 the police underwent human rights training provided by the United Kingdom.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 2 / 4

Police violence, abuse of detainees, and harsh, overcrowded prison conditions persist in Guyana.

The rate of violent crime remains high, but has fallen somewhat since 2013, when the murder rate was the third-highest in South America.

The limited threat of territorial conflict with Venezuela receded in 2017, with the beginning of a UN-sponsored process of mediation.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

Despite some recent advances, Guyana's nine principal indigenous groups continue to face disparities in the provision of healthcare, education, and justice. Same-sex sexual activity is punishable with harsh jail terms, and the LGBT community continues to face violence and discrimination.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 9 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4

There are no legal restrictions on freedom of movement, residency, employment or education, although economic disparities, racial polarization, and limited geographic connectivity limits these rights in practice.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

The right to own property and maintain businesses is protected, but corruption and organized crime sometimes deter private-sector business activity.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Same-sex marriage and civil unions are prohibited. The government otherwise generally does not explicitly restrict social freedoms.

Abortion is permitted. Violence against women, including domestic abuse, is widespread, and conviction rates for sexual offences are low. In 2017, the UN Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), in conjunction with the Ministry of Social Protection, held trainings for police on handling domestic abuses cases.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Despite significant progress in recent years, disparities in opportunity continue to exist along geographical, racial, and gender lines.

The US State Department has praised improved government efforts to tackle human trafficking, citing increased prosecutions and convictions, although services and shelters outside the capital, and for children and male victims, are limited.

Haiti

Population: 11,100,000

Capital: Port-au-Prince

Political Rights Rating: 5

Civil Liberties Rating: 5

Freedom Rating: 5.0

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: Weak institutions, foreign influence, and corruption continue to hinder the capacities of the Haitian government. As a result of its weak governance, Haiti still struggles to recover from recent natural disasters that damaged infrastructure, displaced thousands, and caused acute food insecurity.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- For the first time since 2012, Haiti had an elected president, full parliament, and local government posts filled in 2017, although observers asserted that there were flaws and procedural errors in the 2016 elections that put the president and legislators in office.
 - Executive and parliamentary actions threatened to further erode human rights in Haiti—in November, newly elected President Jovenel Moïse reinstated the Haitian army, which was disbanded in 1995 due to human rights abuses, while the Senate passed two anti-LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) bills and a bill that would increase criminal penalties for defamation.
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- Protests and strikes were frequent; the judicial system was paralyzed by striking court workers, and antigovernment protestors denouncing government corruption and an unpopular budget that increased taxes were met with strong police resistance.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 17 / 40 (+2)**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 5 / 12 (+2)****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4 (+1)**

Haiti is a semipresidential republic and the president is directly elected for a five-year term by a majority vote. The prime minister is appointed by the president and approved by the parliament. The presidential election held in 2015, which was won by Jovenel Moïse of the Haitian Tet Kale Party (PHTK), was nullified due to extensive fraud. A new election was scheduled for 2016. The European Union (EU) objected to the nullification of the 2015 results and withdrew its election observation mission, and the United States withdrew its electoral funding. The repeat presidential election was held in November 2016, and Jovenel Moïse again won, with 55.6 percent of the vote. (Moïse was handpicked by the previous president Michel Martelly, whose administration was plagued by political violence and corruption allegations.)

Although the election was seen as an improvement over the previous year's election, there were allegations of fraud, logistical issues, inconsistent electoral lists, and inaccessible polling stations, which contributed to 21 percent voter turnout. President Moïse was inaugurated in February 2017 after an electoral tribunal verified the election result, stating that there were irregularities, but no evidence of widespread fraud. The elections results were considered credible by election observers, although civil society groups asserted that the low voter turnout undermined the mandate of the new president.

Score Change: The score improved from 1 to 2 due to the improved conduct of the 2016 elections that were held after the annulment of the 2015 polls. The 2016 elections were generally considered credible by the international community, despite significant flaws and low turnout.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4

The directly elected, bicameral Haitian Parliament is composed of a Senate, with 30 members who serve six-year terms, and a Chamber of Deputies, with 118 members who serve four-year terms. The 2015 legislative elections were wrought with disorder, fraud, and violence. There was very low voter turnout and no party won a parliamentary majority. Despite concerns about the election's credibility, 92 parliamentarians took office in January 2016. Elections for the Senate and the runoff elections for the remaining 24 seats on the Chamber of Deputies were held concurrently with the 2016 presidential election. Although improvements were made over the 2015 elections, polling was marred by low voter turnout and instances of fraud.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 2 / 4 (+1)

The Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) was established in the late 1980s as a temporary body, but continues to be responsible for managing the electoral process. Although the constitution has provisions to prevent executive dominance of the CEP, the executive

branch asserts significant control over it in practice. Legislative elections were not held from 2011 until 2015 because a number of electoral councils appointed by former president Martelly did not meet constitutional requirements or receive parliamentary approval—critics claimed that CEP members would have been beholden to Martelly. A new electoral decree was adopted in 2015, and new council members were appointed in a manner closer to the constitutional provisions, which has improved the CEP’s functioning and increased its independence from the executive. In September 2017, the legislature and the judiciary began the process of establishing the Permanent Electoral Council.

Score Change: The score improved from 1 to 2 due to the improved quality and functioning of the electoral council.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 7 / 16 (-1)

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 2 / 4

Political parties generally do not face legal or administrative barriers to registering or running in elections.

The number of members required to form a political party was decreased from 500 to 20 in 2014, leading to a proliferation of new groups. However, protests and rallies organized by opposition parties are sometimes repressed by the government. In September and October 2017, several protests against President Moïse’s budget, organized by the leftist Fanmi Lavalas party, were violently broken up by the police. Although some protesters acted violently, the police fired tear gas into crowds and blocked a march into the city center in Port-au-Prince.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 1 / 4

It is difficult for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections, which are controlled by the ruling class of elites and political supporters. The 2015 elections were violent, and a Haitian observer mission concluded that the ruling PHTK had been the most aggressive in committing election-related violence, which served to depress turnout for opposition parties.

B3. Are the people’s political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 2 / 4

Haitians’ political choices are free from domination by domestic military powers and religious hierarchies. However, many politicians rely on drug-related money and other illegal sources of funding to finance their campaigns, which has a considerable influence over political outcomes in Haiti.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 2 / 4 (-1)

Haitian women are underrepresented in political life, and in 2017 only four out of 149 parliamentary seats were held by women. The constitution mandates that 30 percent of public officials should be women, but that mandate was only adhered to in local elections, and the government lacks penalties for noncompliance. Election-related violence against women was a problem in 2017, and, along with social and cultural constraints, discourages women

from participating more robustly in politics. Due to discrimination, LGBT people have little political representation.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 because social, cultural and economic barriers, as well as election-related violence, make it difficult for women to run for office. Additionally, intolerance towards LGBT people make it impossible for someone who openly identifies as LGBT to run for office.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 5 / 12 (+1)

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 2 / 4 (+1)

For the first time since 2012, Haiti had an elected president, a full parliament, and local government seats filled in 2017. However, given credible challenges to election results, especially the parliamentary results, questions of legitimacy loom for many of these elected officials. Due to state failure, the government struggles to carry out its own policies, and has been dependent on the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) to help carry out many basic government functions. But the successful seating of all elected officials increases the prospects for stability, improved governance, and continued democratic consolidation.

Score Change: The score improved from 1 to 2 due to improvements in the functioning of government and the fact that 2017 marks the first time that all levels of government have seated representatives.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

Corruption is widespread in Haiti, as are allegations of impunity for government officials. Haiti has two main anticorruption units, the Anticorruption Unit (ULCC) and the Central Financial Intelligence Unit (UCREF). In May 2017, parliament approved a law that reduced the independence and powers of UCREF to investigate money laundering cases. In July, Moïse replaced both the head of the ULCC and the UCREF with political allies and former members of the Martelly administration; both units had been investigating Moïse for potential money laundering. In August and November, two Senate commissions recommended criminal charges against former government officials for misappropriating and embezzling \$2 billion in loans from Venezuela intended for post-2010 earthquake reconstruction.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

There is a general distrust of the government among Haitians, and many do not believe the current administration will be able to implement transparency and accountability measures needed to reduce corruption. There are no laws providing the public with access to information and it is reportedly very difficult to obtain government documents and data in practice. All government officials must file financial disclosure forms within 90 days of taking office and within 90 days of leaving office.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 24 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 10 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4

The constitution guarantees freedom of expression, but press freedom is constrained by threats and violence against journalists, as well as government interference. The Senate

approved a bill without public consultation in March 2017 that broadens the definition of defamation and increases jail time to three years. In October, journalists denounced the Port-au-Prince district attorney's demand that journalists turn over images and recordings of violence committed during demonstrations. In August 2017, the mayor of Les Cayes threatened the life of a journalist for negative reporting on a local music festival.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4

Freedom of religion is constitutionally guaranteed and religious groups generally practice freely, although practitioners of traditional Vodou face social stigma and the Muslim community experiences discrimination, particularly against women who wear hijabs.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 2 / 4

Educational institutions and academics choose their curriculum freely, but university students who protest government actions are often met with police violence. The state-run University of Ethnology closed in June 2017 after allegations that the dean hit a student with his car during a protest— in response students set fire to several vehicles.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4

The government does not engage in widespread surveillance, nor is it known to block websites or illegally monitor private online communications. However, due to its lack of infrastructure, only 12 percent of the population has internet access. Haitians often feel uncomfortable discussing sensitive issues such as organized crime and drug cartels out of fear of reprisals.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 4 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 2 / 4

The constitution guarantees freedom of assembly, though this right is often violated in practice. Security forces often violently crack down on street protests. Antigovernment protestors who took to the streets regularly starting in September 2017 to denounce an unpopular budget were met with strong police resistance. Police-related injuries, fatalities and unlawful arrests were reported.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 1 / 4

Human rights defenders and activists with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that address sensitive topics risk threats and violence, which are rarely investigated or prosecuted. In December 2017, human rights activist Sanièce Petit Phat reported receiving death threats for her work combating gender-based violence. In April, two human rights defenders feared retaliation after their colleague died suddenly, the day after they filed a lawsuit for human rights violations against the former mayor of their hometown. The mayor had threatened the group for years prior to the death.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 1 / 4

The ability to unionize is protected under the law, though the union movement in Haiti is weak and lacks collective bargaining power. Workers frequently face harassment, suspension, termination, and other repercussions from employers for organizing.

Court clerks around the country walked off the job from July through October 2017 in protest of poor wages and working conditions, shutting down the court system. Transportation workers also went on strike in September to protest the new budget's effects on transportation taxes.

F. RULE OF LAW: 4 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4**

Despite constitutional guarantees of independence, the judiciary is susceptible to pressure from the executive and legislative branches. Corruption is common, and weak oversight means that most corrupt judges are not held accountable. When President Moïse's government took power, all 18 chief prosecutors in the judicial jurisdictions were replaced, which opened new avenues for executive interference in the judiciary since prosecutors can determine which cases end up before a judge.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

Due process rights are provided for in the constitution, but those rights are regularly violated. Due to a lack of resources and poor pay for judges and other public officials, bribery is common throughout the judicial system. Haitian law guarantees a hearing within 48 hours after arrest, yet the majority of the prison population is in prolonged pretrial detention due to a large backlog of cases and resource constraints.

Arbitrary arrest is common, as well as extortion attempts by police. The right to a fair trial is guaranteed by the constitution, but in practice judges often deny defendants the opportunity to call witnesses and present evidence.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 1 / 4

A culture of violence and impunity in law enforcement, in addition to widespread crime and violence, leave people in Haiti with little protection from the illegitimate use of force. The national police reported almost 900 homicides in 2017, but crime statistics are difficult to authenticate and crimes are underreported by the government.

MINUSTAH, which brought thousands of foreign military and police to Haiti beginning in 2004, ended its mandate in October 2017. The UN installed a smaller mission focused on justice and police, the UN Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH).

In November, a six-hour antigang police raid supported by MINUJUSTH ended in the killing of at least nine civilians and two police officers on a school campus in Port-au-Prince. None of the police officers involved were disciplined or arrested. Police are regularly accused of abusing suspects and detainees. Prisons are overcrowded and lack adequate health and sanitation.

In November 2017, the President Moïse reintroduced the national army, which was disbanded in 1995 following a series of human rights abuses. The defense minister says the army will eventually expand to 5,000 soldiers. The violent legacy of the previous army has led to fears about potential future abuses if safeguards and checks on the military are inadequate.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

Discrimination against women, the LGBT community, and persons with disabilities is pervasive. Women often lack access to credit and other financial services, and experience employment discrimination.

Sexual harassment and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation occur regularly, and neither are criminalized. In June 2017, a bill limiting LGBT individuals' access to employment and education was passed by the Senate. It still awaited passage by the Chamber of Deputies at year's end.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 6 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 2 / 4

The government generally does not restrict travel, place of employment or advancement in school. As of October 2017, approximately 38,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) resided in IDP camps, which were initially built in response to the 2010 earthquake. The country's slow recovery from natural disasters hinders the ability of many people to return to their homes.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

Difficulty registering property, enforcing contracts, and getting credit makes it difficult to start and operate a business in Haiti. Poor record keeping and corruption result in inconsistent property rights enforcement.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Domestic violence is not a criminal offense and according to the Copenhagen Consensus Center, approximately 273,000 women suffer from intimate partner abuse every year. A draft penal code that offered protection against sexual violence was submitted to parliament and tabled in April 2017.

In August, a bill banning gay marriage and public support for LGBT rights was passed by the Senate. Child abuse, particularly sexual abuse, is a widespread problem.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 0 / 4

Poverty is a persistent problem in Haiti—nearly 60 percent of Haitians live on two dollars a day or less, primary school enrollment is approximately 85 percent, and literacy rates are low, all of which deter socioeconomic mobility.

Child labor persisted in 2017, with the majority working as domestic help; approximately 286,000 children work in domestic servitude.

Human trafficking remained a serious issue, but the 2017 *U.S. Trafficking in Persons Report* for Haiti asserts that the government made some improvements in their anti-trafficking efforts, including the first three convictions under the 2014 anti-trafficking law. However, combatting human trafficking was not made a priority at the upper levels of government, and weak and inefficient institutions impeded the prosecution and prevention of trafficking crimes and the protection of victims.

Honduras

Population: 8,200,000

Capital: Tegucigalpa

Political Rights Rating: 4

Civil Liberties Rating: 4

Freedom Rating: 4.0

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: Institutional weakness, corruption, violence, and impunity undermine the overall stability of Honduras. Journalists, political activists, and women are often the victims of violence, and perpetrators are rarely brought to justice. While Honduras holds regular elections, irregularities surrounding the 2017 presidential poll prompted election monitors to call the result into question.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- President Juan Orlando Hernández was reelected in a contest tarnished by numerous irregularities and postelection protests that saw more than 20 people killed in clashes between demonstrators and police. A temporary curfew was enacted in response to the unrest.
- Election monitors supported opposition calls for a recount of votes in the presidential poll, and the Organization of American States (OAS) eventually called for a rerun. Authorities dismissed their petitions.
- The Special Commission for Purging and Transformation of the National Police saw its mandate extended through January 2018, following its success in removing thousands of corrupt police officials.
- While violent crime remains a problem, the homicide rate declined to roughly 46.5 people per 100,000, compared to 60 per 100,000 in 2016.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 20 / 40 (+1)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 7 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4

The president is both chief of state and head of government, and is elected by popular vote to a four-year term. The leading candidate is only required to win a plurality; there is no runoff system.

In a controversial 2015 decision, the Honduran Supreme Court voided Article 239 of the constitution, which had limited presidents to one term. President Juan Orlando Hernández was subsequently reelected in 2017, with the Supreme Electoral Council (TSE) announcing in December—three weeks after the actual poll—that he had taken 42.95 percent of the vote, to opposition candidate Salvador Nasralla’s 41.42 percent. The Organization of American States (OAS) noted numerous issues with the electoral process, which it said “was characterized by irregularities and deficiencies, with very low technical quality and lacking integrity,” and appealed for new elections to be held. The government dismissed the OAS petition, and by year’s end the United States, the European Union (EU), and Canada had recognized Hernández as the winner of the election.

Post-election protests led to clashes between civilians and security forces, resulting in the deaths of more than 20 protesters.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

Members of the 128-seat, unicameral National Congress are elected for four-year terms using proportional representation by department. In the November 2017 polls, the governing National Party (PN) acquired an additional 13 seats, but still fell short of holding a legislative majority. The opposition Liberty and Refoundation (LIBRE) party and Liberal Party (PL) lost seven seats, and one seat, respectively. While the 2017 presidential and parliamentary votes were held concurrently, stakeholders accepted the results of the legislative elections; only the presidential poll was disputed.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 2 / 4

The TSE came under heavy criticism for its administration of the 2017 presidential poll, notably after a preliminary vote count had showed Nasralla with a significant lead, but later announcements and ultimately the final result—which was released three weeks after the elections—showed a victory by Hernández. The delay prompted protests and widespread allegations of TSE incompetence and bias toward the ruling party. As the vote-counting process dragged on, OAS and EU election monitors expressed concerns regarding the lack of transparency and irregularities surrounding the presidential vote, and voiced support for Nasralla's demand for a recount. The OAS eventually called for the poll to be rerun, but authorities dismissed the recommendation.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 8 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 3 / 4

Political parties are largely free to operate, though power has mostly been concentrated in the hands of the PL and the PN since the early 1980s. In 2013, LIBRE and the Anti-Corruption Party (PAC) participated in elections for the first time, winning a significant share of the vote and disrupting the dominance of the PL and the PN. PAC lost all but one of its seats in 2017, but LIBRE maintained its position as the second-largest party in the parliament.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 2 / 4

Opposition parties are competitive, and in 2017 opposition candidates took a significant portion of the vote in both the legislative and presidential elections. However, the many serious irregularities surrounding the TSE's administration of the 2017 presidential election prompted EU and OAS election monitors to question the validity of the vote count, and at year's end the opposition continued to insist that a PN-aligned TSE had denied the opposition candidate victory in the presidential race.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 1 / 4

The military, after decades of ruling Honduras, remains politically powerful. President Hernández's appointments of military officials to civilian posts, many related to security,

have underscored that influence. There were numerous reports of vote buying during the 2017 polling period.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 2 / 4

All adult citizens may vote, and voting is compulsory. Ethnic minorities remain underrepresented in Honduras' political system and in the political sphere generally, though there have been modest efforts by the government to encourage their participation and representation. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have also worked to improve minority representation in government. After being criticized for failing to do so in past elections, the TSE in 2017 printed voter information materials in indigenous and Afro-Honduran languages. However, no representatives of the Afro-Honduran (Garifuna) population were elected to Congress in 2017.

Women are also underrepresented in politics. The TSE has struggled to implement parity laws. However, women's rights groups are becoming more visible in the political sphere.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 5 / 12 (+1)

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 2 / 4 (+1)

In 2014, the Hernández administration eliminated five cabinet-level ministries and created seven umbrella ministries in an effort to cut costs. Critics have argued that the restructuring concentrated power in too few hands.

The opposition's ability to prevent the ruling party from achieving a legislative majority has forced political parties to form coalitions to pass legislation. Recently, a divided legislature successfully proposed and approved a 2017 budget, proposed a 2018 budget, and approved a penal reform package submitted by the government.

While the results of the 2017 presidential election were hotly disputed, stakeholders accepted the results of the year's legislative elections. The new government will be inaugurated in 2018.

Score Change: The score improved from 1 to 2 due to the ability of the executive and legislative branches to work together to implement policy, and create and approve budgets.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

Corruption remains rampant in Honduras, but some safeguards have been implemented to address the issue. The mandate of the Special Commission for Purging and Transformation of the National Police was extended through January 2018, following its success in removing corrupt police officials. However, while thousands of police officers have been removed in connection with the commission's investigations, none of those expelled have been convicted of corruption-related or other crimes.

The Mission to Support the Fight against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras (MACCIH), which was established in 2016, has since helped facilitate the approval of new anticorruption legislation aimed at preventing illicit campaign donations. However, there are also reports that political elites have taken efforts to undermine or interfere with its work.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 1 / 4

Government operations are generally opaque. Journalists and interest groups have difficulty obtaining information from the government. Secrecy laws passed in 2014 allow authorities to withhold information on security and national defense for up to 25 years. The

laws cover information regarding the military police budget, which is funded by a security tax, as well as information related to the Supreme Court and the Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Directorate.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 26 / 60 (-1)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 9 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4

Authorities systematically violate the constitution's press freedom guarantees. Reporters and outlets covering sensitive topics or who are perceived as critical of authorities risk assaults, threats, blocked transmissions, and harassment. A February 2017 reform to antiterrorism provisions in the Penal Code justified the jailing of journalists for inciting terrorism or hate. The Public Ministry, in a nonbinding opinion issued in June, called the measure unconstitutional.

In January 2017, television reporter Igor Abisaí Padilla Chávez, who typically covered general news and crime in his work, was shot and killed by unidentified attackers. While authorities made numerous arrests in connection with the murder, it was unclear whether any convictions had followed or what the motive might have been. In September, journalist Carlos Williams Flores, known for his critical assessment of agricultural companies in the Northern Triangle border region, was shot and killed by hit men on motorcycles in Tegucigalpa.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Religious freedom is generally respected in Honduras.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 2 / 4

Academic freedom is undermined by criminal groups, who control all or parts of schools in some areas and subject staff to extortion schemes. Authorities sometimes move to suppress student demonstrations by arresting participants and dispersing the events, and violent clashes between police and student protesters sometimes occur. Several such clashes took place in May and June 2017 at the National Autonomous University of Honduras (HNAH), leading to a number of arrests and injuries.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 2 / 4

Under the Special Law on Interception of Private Communications, passed in 2011, the government can intercept online and telephone messages. Violence, threats, and intimidation by state and nonstate actors curtails open and free private discussion among the general population.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 4 / 12 (-1)

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 1 / 4 (-1)

Freedom of assembly is constitutionally protected, but demonstrations are often met with a violent police response. In late December, following the elections, mass demonstrations erupted at which participants called for greater transparency in the presidential vote count by the TSE. More than 20 protesters were killed in the ensuing police crackdown, and hundreds were arrested. In December, authorities instituted a 10-day curfew in response to the unrest.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 due to a deadly police crackdown on demonstrators protesting opaque vote-counting procedures following the presidential election, and the subsequent enforcement of a 10-day curfew.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 1 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations and their staff face significant threats, including harassment, surveillance, smear campaigns aimed at undermining their work, detention, and serious violence. Reforms to the Penal Code enacted in 2017 raise the possibility of NGO workers being charged under broadly worded antiterrorism provisions.

In 2016, prominent indigenous rights leader Berta Cáceres was shot to death in her home, after receiving more than 30 death threats connected to her opposition of a dam project on indigenous lands. The investigation into her killing continues, but has been criticized by independent investigators as inadequate.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

Labor unions are well organized and can strike, though labor actions have resulted in clashes with security forces. The government does not always honor formal agreements entered with public-sector unions. Union leaders and labor activists in both the public and private sector face harassment and dismissal for their activities. Operators of factories that employ unionized workers have threatened to shutter operations in response to union activities.

Threats and attacks against union leaders continued in 2017. In April, union leader Moises Sanchez Gomez and his brother Hermes Misael Sanchez Gomez said they were attacked by men wielding machetes in connection with their labor activism.

F. RULE OF LAW: 5 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4

Political and business elites exert excessive influence over the Honduran judiciary, including the Supreme Court. Judicial appointments are made with little transparency. Judges have been removed from their posts for political reasons, and a number of legal professionals have been killed in recent years. Prosecutors and whistleblowers handling corruption cases are often subject to threats of violence.

In a controversial move in 2012, Congress voted to remove four of the five justices in the Supreme Court's constitutional chamber after they ruled a police reform law unconstitutional. In 2013, the legislature granted itself the power to remove from office the president, Supreme Court justices, legislators, and other officials. It also curtailed the power of the Supreme Court's constitutional chamber and revoked the right of citizens to challenge the constitutionality of laws. These moves laid the groundwork for the controversial 2015 constitutional change that allowed for the reelection of Juan Orlando Hernández in 2017.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 2 / 4

Due process is limited due to a compromised judiciary and a corrupt and often inept police force, in which many officers have engaged in criminal activities including drug trafficking and extortion. The government has increasingly utilized the armed forces to combat crime and violence. Arbitrary arrests and detentions are common, as is lengthy pretrial detention. Authorities in the armed forces have dishonorably discharged members accused of rights violations before their trials have taken place.

An investigation into the murder of indigenous rights leader Berta Cáceres continued in 2017, and by October, eight people had been arrested in connection with it, including an active-duty member of the military and two officials with a company constructing the hydroelectric dam Cáceres had opposed. However, independent investigators have called the government's investigation inadequate, and claimed that the government has further evidence implicating both state officials and the construction company, Desarrollos Energeticos, but has not acted on it.

In 2017, authorities established several new courts in an attempt to address lengthy trial delays. Attorney General Oscar Chinchilla has won praise since taking office in 2013 for prosecuting organized crime figures and corrupt politicians.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 1 / 4

While the homicide rate declined in 2017—standing at roughly 46.5 people per 100,000, compared to 60 per 100,000 in 2016—violent crime and gang violence remain serious problems, and have prompted large-scale migration out of Honduras. Many parents opt to send their children towards the United States to avoid gang recruitment, and those who return to their neighborhoods are often targeted by gangs, and in some cases, killed for fleeing the community.

In response to widespread violence, the government has empowered the Military Police of Public Order (PMOP) and other security forces to combat security threats, and these units often employ excessive force when conducting security operations.

Prisons are overcrowded and underequipped, and many inmates are pretrial detainees. Prison violence remains rampant due in large part to the presence of gangs.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

Violence and discrimination against LGBT people and indigenous and Garifuna populations persist, and while antidiscrimination laws are on the books, in practice victims of such abuses have little recourse. Rights groups have reported more than 200 murders of LGBT people since 2009.

Honduras has among the highest femicide rates in the world, and few such murders are investigated. The Center for Women's Rights, a Honduras-based NGO, reported that 236 women were murdered between January and October 2017, categorizing the victims as having been killed in connection with commercial sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, or domestic violence.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 8 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 2 / 4

While authorities generally do not restrict free movement, Honduras's ongoing violence and impunity have reduced personal autonomy for the country's residents. Those living in gang-controlled territories face extortion, and dangerous conditions limit free movement and options for education and employment.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

Corruption, crime, and gang activity inhibits the ability to conduct business activities freely, and dissuades entrepreneurs from establishing new businesses. Those who work in

the transportation sector (taxi and bus drivers) are notable targets of gangs, but many are unable to flee for fear of retaliatory violence against themselves and their families.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Same-sex marriage remains illegal in Honduras. Domestic violence remains widespread, and most such attacks go unpunished.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Lack of socioeconomic opportunities combined with high levels of crime and violence limit social mobility for most Hondurans. High levels of youth unemployment combined with lack of proper education help to perpetuate the cycle of crime and violence.

Human trafficking is a significant issue in Nicaragua, which serves as a source country for women and children forced into prostitution; adults and children are also vulnerable to forced labor in the agriculture, mining, and other sectors, and as domestic servants.

↓ Hungary

Population: 9,800,000

Capital: Budapest

Political Rights Rating: 3

Civil Liberties Rating: 2

Freedom Rating: 2.5

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Trend Arrow: Hungary received a downward trend arrow due to increasing intimidation of civil society groups and the opposition, which has left citizens more reluctant to speak out on political topics.

Overview: After taking power in 2010 elections, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's Alliance of Young Democrats–Hungarian Civic Union (Fidesz) pushed through constitutional and legal changes that have allowed it to consolidate control over the country's independent institutions. More recently, the Fidesz-led government has moved to institute policies that hamper the operations of opposition groupings and organizations whose perspectives it finds unfavorable.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In June, lawmakers approved a measure that banned the owners of billboards from offering discounts to political parties. The measure was widely seen as an attempt to rein in political advertising by the largest opposition party in the run-up to 2018 elections.
 - Also in June, the parliament approved a law requiring nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that receive more than \$26,000 in foreign funding annually to identify themselves as "foreign-supported" organizations and disclose the identities of foreign donors, or face sanctions.
 - In April, the parliament approved amendments to the higher education law that effectively made the operation of Central European University (CEU), a higher education institution with American-Hungarian accreditation, illegal. In October,
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the government extended the deadline for compliance with the burdensome new regulations by one year.

- The NGO law and amendments affecting CEU were met with sharp criticism from domestic observers, as well as from the Council of Europe and the European Union (EU). The latter opened separate infringement procedures against Hungary in connection with the two pieces of legislation.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 28 / 40 (-1)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 9 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

The National Assembly elects both the president and the prime minister; thus the legitimacy of these votes rests largely on the fairness of parliamentary elections. The president's duties are mainly ceremonial, but he or she may influence appointments and return legislation for further consideration before signing it into law.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

Voters elect representatives every four years to a 199-seat, unicameral National Assembly under a mixed system of proportional and direct representation (106 from districts and 93 from compensatory party lists). The coalition of Fidesz and its junior partner, the Christian Democratic People's Party (KDNP), won 2014 parliamentary elections with 45 percent of the vote, capturing exactly two-thirds (133) of the seats. Throughout the rancorous campaign, opposition parties criticized recent changes to electoral legislation, including rules that facilitated the creation of instant parties, splitting the antigovernment vote; alleged gerrymandering in the ruling coalition's favor; and the government's heavy influence over state television and radio. Most of these grievances were echoed in critical assessments from international transparency watchdogs and an Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) monitoring delegation, which also pointed to strong government influence over media and advertising outlets and grossly unequal financial resources among parties. Election monitors also suggested that the dual system for foreign voters, under which ethnic Hungarians who have been awarded citizenship but have never lived in the country can register and vote more easily than native Hungarian citizens living abroad, "undermine[s] the principle of equal suffrage."

In 2015, an independent candidate who drew support from left-wing parties won a parliamentary by-election in Veszprém, and the Fidesz-KDNP coalition consequently lost the two-thirds parliamentary supermajority it had held since 2010.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4

Members of the National Election Commission (NVB) are nominated by the president and confirmed to 9-year terms by the parliament. Many observers have raised concerns over the impartiality of the body. The 2014 OSCE election-monitoring delegation praised the NVB for operating efficiently, but also noted that it made some decisions "according to party interests rather than the legal merits of the case" and had sometimes failed to make important announcements affecting campaigning in a timely manner.

Electoral bodies frequently reject referenda proposed by the opposition. The independent *Hungarian Free Press* news outlet reported in July 2017 that 96 referendum proposals had been submitted, most by the opposition, but only 2 had been approved by the NVB.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 12 / 16 (-1)**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 3 / 4 (-1)**

Political parties are able to organize without interference, but face some practical impediments to their operations and individual politicians face smear campaigns in pro-government media. In 2017, the far-right wing Jobbik, now the main opposition party, saw politically motivated restrictions imposed on its advertising. In June, lawmakers approved a Fidesz-backed measure that banned the owners of the country's many billboards from offering discounts to political parties. The measure primarily affected Jobbik, which had received favorable terms on billboard advertising from Lajos Simicska, a wealthy businessman who has fallen out of favor with Fidesz. Jobbik was fined in December by the State Audit Office, which ruled that it had violated the new rules on billboards. Many see the process as a state-sponsored attempt to weaken the strongest opposition party ahead of 2018 elections.

Meanwhile, politically motivated smear campaigns against opposition figures have appeared frequently in the country's expanding number of Fidesz-aligned media outlets.

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 due to new restrictions on advertising that disproportionately affect the opposition, and frequent smears of opposition politicians in progovernment media outlets.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 3 / 4

Hungary's opposition remains fragmented, though support for the far-right Jobbik party has increased as the party moves to broaden its appeal. The ruling, Fidesz-led coalition dominates the political landscape, and opposition parties and supporters have encountered restrictions that reduce their efficacy. In 2016, an opposition lawmaker was physically prevented from submitting a referendum initiative against an unpopular, Fidesz-backed law requiring most stores to close on Sundays. The Supreme Court weeks later confirmed the opposition's referendum initiative, declaring that the use of physical force to block its filing had been illegal. The government then repealed the Sunday closure law before the opposition's referendum on the issue could take place.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 3 / 4

People are largely free to participate in politics without encountering undue influence over their political choices. However, Fidesz has increasingly harnessed members' political and economic power to sideline opposition groupings and prevent them from influencing policy.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

Women are underrepresented in political life, holding no cabinet posts and only 20 of 199 seats in the National Assembly. This 10 percent ratio represents the lowest percentage in the EU, with even lower representation, 7 percent, among ruling party lawmakers.

Hungary's constitution guarantees the right of ethnic minorities to form self-governing bodies, and all 13 recognized minorities have done so. Minorities can also register to vote for special minority lists—with a preferential vote threshold—in parliamentary elections,

but they are then excluded from general party-list voting. None of the 13 minority lists won enough votes to secure a seat in 2014, meaning each is represented only by a nonvoting spokesperson. The Roma population in particular has long been underrepresented in political office.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 7 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 3 / 4

Irregularities in the 2014 legislative election, including abuse of administrative resources and heavy state control of the media, advantaged the ruling party, which dominates the legislature. However, after 2015 by-elections, the Fidesz-KDNP coalition no longer holds a parliamentary supermajority, and must garner some support from at least one lawmaker from another party to pass legislation.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

Corruption remains a problem in Hungary, and instances of high-level government corruption have not been properly investigated; for example, the prosecutor's office has been reluctant to investigate longstanding allegations that the government misused development funds provided by the EU. Influential business figures who fall out of favor with the government, such as Simicska, have experienced financial and legal pressure. Transparency International's Hungary chapter has reported that a number of companies with close ties to the government are supported primarily by public funds.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

Hungary's Freedom of Information Act contains numerous exemptions, permits agencies to charge for the release of information, and is enforced inconsistently. In many cases, information is only made available as a result of litigation. Major legislation is frequently rushed through the parliament, leaving citizens, interest groups, and others little time to comment on it.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 44 / 60 (-3)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 11 / 16 (-2)

D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4

Hungary's constitution protects freedoms of speech and the press, but complex and extensive media legislation enacted by Fidesz created avenues for politicized media regulation, undermining these guarantees. While private, opposition-aligned media outlets exist, national, regional, and local media are increasingly dominated by progovernment outlets, which are frequently used to smear political opponents. The closure in 2016 of Hungary's largest independent daily, *Népszabadság*, represented a particularly serious blow to media diversity. State media heavily favors the government and government initiatives. Journalists have been banned from the parliament building at times.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

The constitution guarantees religious freedom and provides for the separation of church and state, although these guarantees were weakened in the 2011 constitution, whose preamble makes direct references to Christianity, including the recognition of "the role of Christianity in preserving nationhood." Nevertheless, adherents of all religions are generally free to worship.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 2 / 4 (-1)

A gradual overhaul of the public education system has raised concerns about excessive government influence on school curriculums, and legislation adopted in 2014 allows for government-appointed chancellors empowered to make financial decisions at public universities. Selective support by the government of certain academic institutions also threatens academic autonomy.

In April 2017, lawmakers adopted amendments to the higher education law that targeted Central European University (CEU), a postgraduate institution with dual American-Hungarian accreditation founded by the Hungarian-born international financier and philanthropist George Soros. The amendments, which codified burdensome new requirements that effectively made CEU unlawful, was widely denounced, including by the Council of Europe's Venice Commission, which recommended their repeal, and by the European Commission, which opened an infringement procedure over the issue. In October, the government extended the deadline for compliance with the amendments by one year, a move CEU claimed prolongs the time of uncertainty.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 due to the adoption of amendments that targeted Central European University, which could be expelled from the country if it does not comply with burdensome new regulations.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4 (-1)

While freedom of expression is constitutionally protected, the government's efforts to sideline voices and perspectives it finds unfavorable, including many found at CEU, at various NGOs, and in the media, have left a chilling effect on private speech, and particularly online speech. The threat of defamation suits or other retribution for criticism of authorities also contributes to this environment, though courts mostly refuse to apply sanctions for what they see as protected speech.

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 due to fears of reprisal or retribution for speaking out against the government, which limits individuals' freedom to have open discussions on political topics.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 10 / 12 (-1)**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4**

The constitution provides for freedoms of assembly and association, and the government generally respects these rights in practice. A number of large, peaceful antigovernment demonstrations were held in 2017, including against the laws affecting CEU and NGOs that draw foreign funding.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 2 / 4 (-1)

NGOs pursuing activities counter to government priorities have come under pressure in recent years. Since taking power, the Fidesz government has instituted burdensome registration and reporting requirements for NGOs, and some groups have seen their offices illegally raided by police.

In June 2017, the parliament adopted a law mandating that NGOs that receive more than 7.2 million forints' (\$26,000) worth of foreign funding annually must identify their public

communications as “foreign supported” and disclose the identifies of foreign donors. Failure to comply with the new requirements can result in sanctions, including closure. The law has drawn heavy criticism, including from the Venice Commission, and the European Commission, which opened an infringement procedure over provisions that “indirectly discriminate and disproportionately restrict donations from abroad,” and argued that the law “violates the right to freedom of association and the right to protection of private life and personal data.” The law is widely viewed as an attempt to curtail voices critical of the government.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 due to the adoption of a restrictive law on NGOs that receive foreign funding, combined with a sustained government campaign to discredit critical voices in civil society.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

The government recognizes workers’ rights to form associations and petition public authorities. However, there are some limitations on what can be considered a lawful strike, and union membership is low. Trade unions are present in less than 30 percent of workplaces, and only 9 percent of workers belong to one.

F. RULE OF LAW: 10 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 2 / 4

Judicial independence remains a matter of concern. All of the 11 judges put on the Constitutional Court between 2010 and 2014 were appointed by the Fidesz government, and it was only well after the government lost its two-thirds majority that one opposition party was included in discussions over the election of four new judges, in November 2016. Rulings in recent years have favored government interests.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 3 / 4

Due process rights are enshrined in the constitution, and are generally respected. However, there have been concerns about the quality of lawyers appointed for defendants unable or unwilling to retain legal counsel on their own. There have also been reports that police frequently interrogate or attempt to interrogate suspects without the presence of a lawyer.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 3 / 4

Overcrowding, inadequate medical care, and poor sanitation in the country’s prisons and detention centers remain problems. In October 2017, the government revoked its cooperation agreement with the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, a human rights organization, effectively terminating the group’s access to detention facilities.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

The rights of refugees and asylum seekers are routinely violated in Hungary, where recent changes to the asylum policy and the construction of barriers along the country’s southern border make it extremely difficult if not impossible for people to apply for asylum and receive international protection. Only 10 asylum seekers are formally permitted to enter the country per work day. Once allowed in, asylum seekers are frequently detained in poorly equipped “transit zones,” and few are ever recognized by Hungarian authorities as refugees. The government continues to train special police units with wide powers to remove migrants from the country.

Roma, Hungary's largest ethnic minority, continue to face widespread discrimination, societal exclusion, and poverty. Roma students continue to be segregated and improperly placed in schools for children with mental disabilities, a practice that led the European Commission to begin an infringement procedure in 2016.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 13 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4

Hungarians generally enjoy freedom of travel and choice of residence, employment, and institution of higher education.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 3 / 4

Citizens have the right to own property and establish private businesses. However, recent difficulties of business owners who have fallen out of favor with the government illustrate the extent to which business success depends on government connections.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

The government generally does not restrict social freedoms, though the constitution enshrines the concept of marriage as a union between a man and a woman. Women face employment discrimination and tend to be underrepresented in high-level business positions. Domestic violence and spousal rape are illegal, but the definition of rape hinges on the use of force or coercion, and not a lack of consent. NGOs describe government responses to violence against women as inadequate. The right to life from conception is constitutionally protected, but access to abortions remained largely unrestricted in 2017.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

Hungary is a transit point, source, and destination for trafficked persons, including women trafficked for prostitution. Victim identification efforts and services for victims remain inadequate, and the rate of trafficking investigations and prosecutions has decreased, according to the U.S. State Department's 2017 *Trafficking in Persons Report*. However, the government has taken some recent steps to address human trafficking; these include amendments to the criminal code that allow the seizure of assets from traffickers, as well as more funding for public awareness campaigns.

Iceland

Population: 300,000

Capital: Reykjavik

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 1

Freedom Rating: 1.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Iceland is a parliamentary democracy with a long history of upholding political rights and civil liberties. However, links between elected representatives and business interests remain a concern, as does the concentration of private media ownership.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Snap elections were called after the government collapsed in September. The collapse was precipitated by revelations that Prime Minister Bjarni Benediktsson's father had signed a letter calling for the legal rehabilitation of a man convicted of raping a child, and allegations that Benediktsson and members of his Independence Party (IP) had attempted to cover up the letter.
- The IP won a plurality of seats in October's snap polls. A coalition government comprised of the IP, the Left-Green Movement (LGM), and the Progressive Party (PP) was seated in November, and Katrín Jakobsdóttir of LGM became prime minister.
- In October 2017, just prior to the elections, media broke the story that Benediktsson had sold his shares in Glitnir Bank just hours before the financial crash of 2008. Soon afterward, in response to a request from Glitnir's bankruptcy estate, the Reykjavík District Commissioner issued an injunction that prevented some media outlets from using documents from Glitnir's estate to inform their coverage.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 37 / 40 (-1)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The president serves as a largely ceremonial chief of state, is directly elected to a four-year term, and is not subject to term limits. President Guðni Thorlacius Jóhannesson was elected in 2016, taking 39.1 percent of the vote in a field of nine candidates. The Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE) deployed an assessment mission ahead of the polls, and concluded that stakeholders had a high degree of confidence in Icelandic electoral processes. However, the OSCE reaffirmed past concerns about the possibility for early voting to begin before the candidate confirmation procedures closed. The OSCE declined to monitor the poll itself, and stakeholders accepted its results when it was held weeks later.

The prime minister is head of government. The leader of the ruling party or coalition usually becomes prime minister; thus the legitimacy of the prime minister rests primarily on the conduct of the parliamentary polls.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The legislature is elected for four-year terms. The October 2017 election was the third parliamentary election in four years, having been called after the ruling coalition was dissolved that August; the dissolution came after the Bright Future party left the government in light of revelations that Prime Minister Benediktsson had failed to disclose the fact that his father had provided a letter of recommendation supporting the legal rehabilitation of a man who had been convicted of raping his daughter over a period of more than a decade.

An OSCE monitoring mission found the elections well administered and in line with international standards for democratic elections. The IP took a plurality of seats, with 16, the second-place LGM took 11, and the PP finished third, taking 8 seats. A new coalition

government comprised of those three parties was seated in November, following several weeks of multiparty coalition talks. Katrín Jakobsdóttir of LGM became prime minister.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

The constitution, the election law of 2000, and related legislation establish a clear and detailed framework for conducting elections. Electoral laws are implemented impartially by a variety of national- and regional-level authorities. However, the division of responsibilities between the relevant bodies is not always well defined.

An extensive constitutional reform process, launched by popular initiative in 2009, led to the drafting of a new constitution that, among other things, would harmonize the number of votes per seat in all constituencies. The draft was approved by referendum in 2012, but the initiative has since stalled in the legislature.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 15 / 16 (-1)

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4

Political parties form and operate freely, and rise and fall according to political developments and the will of the public. In 2017, two new parties gained representation in the legislature: the Center Party and the People's Party.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

Opposition parties have the ability to gain power through free elections. However, the IP has only rarely lost its status as the largest party in the parliament, and is usually part of the ruling coalition.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 3 / 4 (-1)

No military, foreign, or religious entities exert undemocratic influence over voters' choices. However, some politicians and parties are closely linked with various business sectors, resulting in avenues for well-coordinated business interests to exert influence over politics.

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 because close links between politicians and various business sectors allow well-coordinated business interests to exert influence over politics.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 4 / 4

All Icelandic citizens of adult age may vote in local and national elections. Foreigners can vote in municipal elections if they have been residents for at least five years, or three years if they are citizens of Nordic countries. The interests of women and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people are well represented in politics.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 10 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4**

The freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4

Corrupt behavior by public officials is often exposed by the media, and Iceland has robust anticorruption laws. However, officials implicated in corrupt or unsavory behavior often continue to serve in government. For example, while former prime minister Sigmundur David Gunnlaugsson resigned after being implicated in the Panama Papers—a trove of leaked legal documents that revealed potentially corrupt business activities by powerful individuals around the world—he was eventually replaced by Benediktsson, who was also named in the Panama Papers. According to reporting on the Panama Papers, Benediktsson used legal maneuvers to establish extra layers of secrecy surrounding his holdings in an offshore shell company; while not apparently illegal, the revelations prompted criticism. Additionally, in October 2017, media reported that Benediktsson in 2008, when he was a member of parliament, had sold his shares in Iceland's Glitnir Bank just hours before the financial crash of 2008—but just a few days after attending a meeting at which the bank's grave financial position was discussed.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 3 / 4

Iceland's Information Act, passed in 2013 to strengthen existing legislation on transparency and freedom of information, has been criticized by press freedom advocates as having weak provisions.

Public officials have sought to conceal information that may be embarrassing or implicate them in wrongdoing. In August 2017, the media reported that Benedikt Sveinsson, father of Prime Minister Benediktsson, had signed a letter endorsing a friend's petition for "restoration of honor" following a conviction and prison sentence for child sexual assault; it later emerged that Benediktsson had known about the letter, which was not made public until a parliamentary committee compelled the Justice Ministry to publicize the information. There were widespread allegations that members of the Independence Party had also known about the letter and had tried to cover it up. Citing a "breach of trust" by the prime minister, the Bright Future party left the governing coalition, precipitating the year's snap elections in October.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 58 / 60 (-1)**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 15 / 16 (-1)****D1. Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4 (-1)**

The constitution guarantees freedom of speech and of the press. In 2010, the parliament unanimously passed the Icelandic Modern Media Initiative, which mandates the establishment of robust free speech and press freedom laws, particularly for the protection of investigative journalists and outlets. Iceland's print publications are diverse and include both independent and party-affiliated newspapers. The autonomous Icelandic National Broadcasting Service (RÚV) competes with private radio and television stations. Private media ownership is concentrated, with the media company 365 controlling most of the major private television and radio outlets, as well as the free newspaper *Frettabladid*, which enjoys the highest circulation in the print market.

In October 2017, just prior to the elections, media broke the story that Benediktsson had sold his shares in Glitnir Bank just hours before the financial crash of 2008. Soon afterward, in response to a request from Glitnir's bankruptcy estate, the Reykjavik district commissioner issued an injunction against the paper *Stundin* and the company Reykjavik Media barring use of documents from Glitnir's estate in media coverage. Press freedom advocates blasted the ruling, characterizing it as a move to put the interests of banks above journalists' duty to inform the public.

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 because the Reykjavik district commissioner issued an injunction that hampered some media organizations' ability to cover suspicious financial transactions by the prime minister.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

The constitution provides for freedom of religion, which is generally upheld in practice. About three-quarters of Icelanders belong to the Evangelical Lutheran Church. The state supports the church through a special tax, which citizens can choose to direct to the University of Iceland instead.

There have been a handful of reports of religiously motivated hate speech, primarily against Muslims. Authorities actively prosecute hate speech, and in 2017 two people convicted of engaging in it paid fines of \$290 and \$960, respectively.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is respected, and the education system is free of excessive political involvement.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

People in Iceland may freely discuss personal views on sensitive topics without fear or surveillance or retribution.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 12 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4

Freedoms of assembly is generally upheld.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) may form, operate, and fundraise freely, and frequently inform policy discussions.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

The labor movement is robust, with more than 80 percent of all eligible workers belonging to unions. All unions have the right to strike, with the exception of the National Police Federation.

F. RULE OF LAW: 15 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 4 / 4

The judiciary is generally independent. Judges are proposed by an Interior Ministry selection committee and formally appointed by the president, and are not subject to term limits.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 4 / 4

The law does not provide for trial by jury, but many trials and appeals use panels of several judges. Prison conditions generally meet international standards.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 4 / 4

Police are generally responsive to illegal violence. War and insurgencies are generally not a concern.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

The constitution states that all people shall be treated equally before the law, regardless of sex, religion, ethnic origin, race, or other status. However, in 2017, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), noted an apparent rise in racist discourse in Iceland in recent years.

While relatively few refugees are resettled in Iceland, the country increased the number of refugees it would accept in response to the 2015–16 refugee crisis; in 2017, 70 asylum seekers were granted protection in Iceland. However, the rate of refugee recognition in Iceland is very low compared to its Northern European neighbors, with just 18 percent of asylum seekers receiving protected status in 2017. In September, a public demonstration against separate, controversial decisions to deport asylum seekers to Nigeria and Afghanistan, respectively, took place in front of the parliament.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 16 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4

Freedom of movement is constitutionally protected and respected in practice.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 4 / 4

There is generally no undue government interference in business or private property ownership.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 4 / 4

The parliament unanimously passed a law legalizing same-sex marriage in 2010, and a 2006 law established full and equal rights for same-sex couples in matters of adoption and assisted pregnancy. A comprehensive law on transgender issues adopted in 2012 aimed to simplify legal issues pertaining to gender reassignment surgery, to ensure full and equal rights for transgender people, and to guarantee relevant health care.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 4 / 4

Citizens generally enjoy fair access to economic opportunity and protections from labor exploitation. However, there are reports of forced labor, primarily involving migrants, in the construction and service industries, and of forced sex work in nightclubs. While human

trafficking was criminalized in 2009, the US State Department reported in 2017 that no one has been prosecuted or convicted of human trafficking in Iceland over the last six years. The government has additionally reduced efforts to investigate trafficking cases.

India

Population: 1,328,900,000

Capital: New Delhi

Political Rights Rating: 2

Civil Liberties Rating: 3

Freedom Rating: 2.5

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Note: The numerical ratings and status listed above do not reflect conditions in Indian-controlled Kashmir, which is examined in a separate report.

Overview: India maintains a robust electoral democracy with a competitive multiparty system at federal and state levels. However, politics (and business) are beset by corruption. The constitution guarantees freedom of expression and the news media are vibrant, even as speech and reportage deemed seditious is routinely censored and punished. India's minority groups—notably Muslims, scheduled castes (Dalits), and scheduled tribes (Adivasis)—enjoy legal equality and sometimes benefit from affirmative action programs. However, they remain economically and socially marginalized and have been the victims of attacks.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In August, the Supreme Court declared privacy to be a constitutional right. The ruling disrupted government plans for an extensive national identification system that rights and privacy advocates had expressed unease about.
- The Supreme Court the same month suspended the practice of “triple talaq,” a form of instant divorce that had been permitted under Muslim personal law.
- Assaults on minorities alleged to have engaged in cow slaughter continued. Modi issued a condemnation of the violence in June, after a teenage boy was stabbed to death over suspicions that he was carrying beef. However, many consider the government's response to the violence inadequate.
- The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won a string of victories in state elections, further consolidating its position as India's foremost political party.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 35 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

Executive elections and selection procedures are generally regarded as free and fair. Executive power is vested in a prime minister, who is elected by Lok Sabha (House of the People) members of the majority party, and a cabinet. The president, who plays a largely symbolic role, is chosen for a five-year term by state and national lawmakers. Current

president Ram Nath Kovind, a member of the lowest-caste Dalit community and a veteran BJP politician, was elected in July 2017.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

Members of the lower house of Parliament, the 545-seat Lok Sabha, are directly elected in single-member constituencies for five-year terms, except for two appointed members representing Indians of European descent. The Lok Sabha determines the leadership and composition of the government.

The most recent Lok Sabha elections were held in 2014. The BJP won 282 seats and its National Democratic Alliance (NDA) coalition won 336 seats, ensuring a stable majority for the new government; turnout was 66 percent. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a three-term chief minister from the western state of Gujarat, was sworn in as prime minister. The elections were broadly free and fair.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

Elections for the central and state governments are overseen by the independent Election Commission of India. The head of the commission is appointed by the president of India and serves a fixed six-year term. The commission is widely respected and generally functions without undue political interference. In 2017, it faced mounting calls to take action to stem the tide of criminal politicians standing in elections.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 14 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4

Political life is vibrant and people are generally able to form political parties and assert party membership or their own candidacies without interference. However, the opaque financing of political parties—notably through electoral bonds that allow donors to obscure their identities—remains a source of concern.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

India hosts a dynamic multiparty system, and the alternation of power between parties is common at the central and state levels. In the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, the two main national parties won only about 50 percent of the vote combined. However, the disproportionate translation of votes to seats put the BJP in the clear majority in the lower house, marking the first time a single party won a majority of seats in the Lok Sabha since 1984. Support for main opposition party—the Indian National Congress (INC, or simply Congress)—eroded further in 2017, as the BJP racked up victories in six out of seven state elections.

Separately, India's colonial-era sedition law has been invoked by authorities to intimidate or silence political opponents. In 2017, sedition charges were filed in Tamil Nadu against T.T.V. Dhinakaran, the sidelined leader of the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) party, and a number of his supporters, in connection with their distribution of pamphlets that criticized Modi and the Tamil Nadu chief minister.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 3 / 4

Political participation, while generally free, is hampered by insurgent violence in some areas. Indian society is heavily hierarchical, and conservative religious, caste, and gender norms likely influence voting. Separately, in some areas political actors have harnessed polarizing topics, frequently involving religion, in order to inflame communal tensions with the goal of driving voters to support one party or another without giving full consideration to that party's positions.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

Women, religious and ethnic minorities, and the poor vote in large numbers and have opportunities to gain political representation. Twenty-two Muslims were elected to the Lok Sabha in 2014. Quotas for the chamber ensure that 84 and 47 seats are reserved for the so-called scheduled castes (Dalits) and scheduled tribes (Adivasis), respectively. There are similar quotas for these historically disadvantaged groups in state assemblies and in local bodies, as well as quotas for women representatives. However, marginalized segments of the population face practical disadvantages in achieving political representation.

In a controversial decision in January 2017, the Supreme Court banned the use of identity-based appeals, including those involving religion and caste, in political campaigns on grounds that elections are "secular activity."

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 9 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4

Elected leaders have the authority to govern in practice, and civilian control of the military is codified in the constitution. However, political corruption has a negative effect on government efficiency.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

Politicians and civil servants at all levels are regularly caught accepting bribes or engaging in other corrupt behavior. While large-scale scams often come to light, a great deal of corruption is thought to go unnoticed and unpunished.

The Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, which the president signed in 2014, creates independent government bodies tasked with receiving complaints of corruption against public servants or politicians, investigating claims, and pursuing convictions through the courts. Modi and members of his government have signaled support for the law, but there is little sign that it is being implemented.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 3 / 4

The landmark 2005 Right to Information (RTI) Act is widely used to improve transparency and expose corrupt activities. Between 4 and 6 million requests are made under the act each year. Since the passage of the RTI Act, however, at least 65 right-to-information users and activists have been murdered, and more than 400 have been assaulted or harassed, according to the National Campaign for People's Right to Information. Police stand accused of turning a blind eye to these attacks.

In 2015, the Lok Sabha adopted amendments to the 2014 Whistleblowers Protection Act. Opposition members criticized those changes, and subsequent ones, for diluting the effectiveness of the act, which was already regarded as limited in scope.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 42 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 13 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4

The private media are vigorous and diverse, and investigations and scrutiny of politicians are common. Nevertheless, revelations of close relationships between politicians, business executives, and lobbyists and some leading media personalities and owners of media outlets have dented public confidence in the press. Journalists risk harassment, death threats, and sometimes, physical violence, and such attacks are rarely punished. In September 2017, Gauri Lankesh, a journalist and outspoken critic of the current government, was shot and killed in Bangalore by unknown assailants.

In April, the state of Maharashtra passed a law mandating firmer protections for journalists and harsher punishments for those who commit violence against them.

Internet access is largely unrestricted, though officials periodically implement overly broad blocks on supposedly offensive content to prevent communal or political unrest. Authorities have also used security, defamation, and hate-speech laws, as well as contempt-of-court charges, to curb critical voices in the media.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4

While Hindus make up about 80 percent of the population, the Indian state is formally secular, and freedom of religion is constitutionally guaranteed and generally respected in practice. However, legislation in several Hindu-majority states criminalizes religious conversions that take place as a result of “force” or “allurement,” which can be broadly interpreted to prosecute proselytizers. Some states require government permission for conversion.

A number of Hindu nationalist organizations and some local media outlets promote antiminority views, a practice that critics charge has been tolerated by the Hindu nationalist government of Prime Minister Modi. Like the year before it, 2017 saw a series of attacks against minorities that were linked to the alleged slaughter or mishandling of cows, which are held to be sacred by Hindus. At least 61 attacks, including lynchings, have been reported since Modi came to power, and the media nonprofit IndiaSpend documented 37 cow-related violent incidents in 2017. Modi issued a condemnation of the violence in June, after a teenage boy was stabbed to death over suspicions that he was carrying beef. Many observers considered the response inadequate.

In May, the central government decreed that cows could only be sold for arable agriculture, effectively banning their sale for slaughter. This move was seen in many quarters as an affront to the Muslim community and further entrenchment of conservative Hindu nationalism. The Supreme Court suspended the ban in July.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 3 / 4

Academic freedom is generally robust, though intimidation of professors, students, and institutions over political and religious issues has been increasing. The student wing of the Hindu nationalist organization Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), from which the ruling

BJP is widely regarded to have grown from, has engaged in violent tactics on campuses across the country, including attacks on students and professors.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

Private discussion in India is generally open and free. However, a nationwide Central Monitoring System launched in 2013 is meant to enable authorities to intercept any digital communication in real time without judicial oversight. Colonial-era laws continue to be used to curb expression. In 2017, 15 men were arrested for sedition after allegedly celebrating India's loss to Pakistan in an international cricket match, though charges against them were later dropped.

In a landmark judgment in August, the Supreme Court declared privacy to be a fundamental right protected by the Constitution. While the decision appeared to disrupt government plans for an extensive national identification system rights and privacy advocates had expressed unease about, other practical consequences of the decision were unclear at year's end.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 10 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4

While there are some restrictions on freedoms of assembly and association—such as a provision of the criminal procedure code empowering authorities to restrict free assembly and impose curfews whenever “immediate prevention or speedy remedy” is required—peaceful protest events take place regularly.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 3 / 4

A wide variety of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operate, but they continue to face threats, legal harassment, excessive police force, and occasionally lethal violence. Under certain circumstances, the Foreign Contributions Regulation Act (FCRA) permits the federal government to deny NGOs access to foreign funding, and authorities have been accused of abusing this power to target political opponents. Modi's government has blocked more than 11,000 NGOs from receiving foreign financing since 2014. In 2017, two prominent charitable groups were barred from receiving external funds: Compassion International, for allegedly engaging in religious conversions, and the Public Health Foundation of India, for reasons not immediately clear.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

Although workers in the formal economy regularly exercise their rights to bargain collectively and strike, the Essential Services Maintenance Act has enabled the government to ban certain strikes.

F. RULE OF LAW: 9 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 3 / 4

The judiciary is independent of the executive branch. However, the lower levels of the judiciary in particular have been rife with corruption, and most citizens have great difficulty securing justice through the courts. The system is severely backlogged and understaffed, leading to lengthy pretrial detention for a large number of suspects, many of whom remain in jail longer than the duration of any sentence they might receive if convicted.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 2 / 4

Due process rights are not guaranteed. Notably, citizens often face substantial obstacles, including demands for bribes, and in getting the police to file a First Information Report, which is necessary to trigger an investigation of an alleged crime. Corruption within the police force remains a problem.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 2 / 4

Reports of torture, abuse, and rape by law enforcement and security officials persisted in 2017. Abuses against prisoners, particularly minorities and members of the lower castes, by prison staff are common. Official data released via a right-to-information request showed that 968 deaths had occurred in judicial or police custody from January 1, 2017, through the beginning of August.

Security forces battling regional insurgencies continue to be implicated in extrajudicial killings, rape, torture, arbitrary detention, kidnappings, and destruction of homes. While the criminal procedure code requires that the government approve the prosecution of security forces members, approval is rarely granted, leading to impunity. A number of security laws allow detention without charge or based on vaguely worded offenses.

The Maoist insurgency in the east-central hills region of India continues, although the annual number of casualties linked with it has decreased since its peak in 2010. Among other abuses, the rebels have allegedly imposed illegal taxes, seized food and shelter, and engaged in abduction and forced recruitment of children and adults. Local civilians and journalists who are perceived to be progovernment have been targeted. Tens of thousands of civilians have been displaced by the violence and live in government-run camps.

Separately, in India's seven northeastern states, more than 40 insurgent factions—seeking either greater autonomy or complete independence for their ethnic or tribal groups—continue to attack security forces and engage in intertribal violence. Such fighters have been implicated in bombings, killings, abductions, and rapes of civilians, and they operate extensive extortion networks.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

The criminal justice system fails to provide equal protection to marginalized groups. Muslims, who make up about 14 percent of the population, are underrepresented in the security forces as well as in the foreign and intelligence services. In parts of the country, particularly in rural areas, informal community councils issue edicts concerning social customs. Their decisions sometimes result in violence or persecution aimed at those perceived to have transgressed social norms, especially women and members of the lower castes.

The constitution bars discrimination based on caste, and laws set aside quotas in education and government jobs for historically underprivileged scheduled tribes, Dalits, and groups categorized by the government as “other backward classes.” However, members of the lower castes and minorities face routine discrimination and violence. Many Dalits are denied access to land, are abused by landlords and police, and work in miserable conditions.

The penal code forbids “intercourse against the order of nature.” Discrimination against LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people continues, including violence and harassment in some cases.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 10 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4

Article 19 of the constitution grants citizens the right to reside and settle in any part of the territory of India. However, freedom of movement is hampered in some parts of the country by insurgent violence or communal tensions.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 3 / 4

Property rights are somewhat tenuous for tribal groups and other marginalized communities, and members of these groups are often denied adequate resettlement opportunities and compensation when their lands are seized for development projects. While many states have laws to prevent transfers of tribal land to nontribal groups, the practice is reportedly widespread, particularly with respect to the mining and timber industries.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Rape, harassment, and other transgressions against women are serious problems, and lower-caste and tribal women are especially vulnerable. Mass demonstrations after the fatal gang rape of a woman on a Delhi bus in 2012 prompted the government to enact significant legal reforms. However, egregious new rape cases have continued to prompt outrage; these include a 2017 daytime attack in Vishakhapatnam in which a rape was filmed by a bystander but otherwise ignored by passers-by. Despite criminalization and hundreds of convictions each year, dowry demands persist. A 2006 law banned dowry-related harassment, widened the definition of domestic violence to include emotional or verbal abuse, and criminalized spousal rape. However, reports indicate that enforcement is poor.

Muslim personal laws and traditional Hindu practices discriminate against women in terms of inheritance, adoption, and property rights. The Muslim divorce custom of “triple talaq,” by which a Muslim man can unilaterally divorce his wife by saying “talaq” three times, was ruled to be unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in August 2017 and suspended for six months pending new divorce legislation. The malign neglect of female children after birth remains a concern, as does the banned use of prenatal sex-determination tests to selectively abort female fetuses.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

India’s growing economy has created new avenues for economic opportunity, though serious inequalities also persist. Long-anticipated economic reforms promised by Modi’s government have been criticized for failing to significantly raise economic growth.

Article 23 of the constitution bans human trafficking; bonded labor is illegal, but the practice is fairly common. Estimates of the number of affected workers range from 20 to 50 million. The government passed a controversial law in 2016 allowing children below the age of 14 to engage in “home-based work,” as well as other occupations between the ages of 14 and 18. Children are banned from working in potentially hazardous industries, though in practice the law is routinely flouted. There have been persistent reports of complicity by law enforcement officials in human trafficking.

Indonesia

Population: 259,400,000

Capital: Jakarta

Political Rights Rating: 2

Civil Liberties Rating: 4

Freedom Rating: 3.0

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Indonesia has made impressive democratic gains since the fall of an authoritarian regime in 1998, establishing significant pluralism in politics and the media and undergoing multiple, peaceful transfers of power between parties. However, the country continues to struggle with challenges including systemic corruption, discrimination and violence against some minority groups, separatist tensions in the Papua region, and the politicized use of defamation and blasphemy laws.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Jakarta's incumbent governor, an ethnic Chinese Christian, lost his campaign for reelection in an April runoff vote amid blasphemy allegations, for which he was then sentenced to two years in prison.
- In July, President Joko Widodo ("Jokowi") issued a decree enabling the executive branch to unilaterally ban organizations, taking judicial oversight out of the process. The radical Islamist group Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia was the first to be disbanded under the decree, but critics of the measure warned that human rights groups could also be summarily dissolved.
- Setya Novanto, the speaker of the House of Representatives and chairman of the Golkar party, was arrested in November and resigned the following month as he went on trial for alleged involvement in a \$170 million corruption scandal surrounding procurements for a new identity card system.
- In December, the Constitutional Court rejected a petition that would have criminalized both extramarital and same-sex sexual activity. However, LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people continued to face harassment and infringements on their civil rights, including under local and regional Sharia (Islamic law) ordinances.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 30 / 40 (-1)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 11 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The president is directly elected and serves as both head of state and head of government. Presidents and vice presidents can serve up to two five-year terms. Jokowi, the candidate of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P), won the July 2014 presidential election with 53 percent of the vote, defeating former general Prabowo Subianto. Limited voting irregularities and sporadic election-related violence were reported, but the contest was largely considered free and fair.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The House of Representatives (DPR), the main parliamentary chamber, consists of 560 members elected in 33 multimember districts. The 132-member House of Regional Representatives (DPD) is responsible for monitoring laws related to regional autonomy, and may also propose bills on the topic. All legislators serve five-year terms with no term limit.

The PDI-P, the party of former president Megawati Sukarnoputri, led the DPR elections in April 2014 with 19 percent of the vote and 109 seats. Golkar, the party of former authoritarian president Suharto, won 91 seats, followed by Prabowo's Great Indonesia Movement Party (Gerindra) with 73 seats. The Democratic Party (PD) of outgoing president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono received 61 seats. Three Islamic parties—the National Mandate Party (PAN), the National Awakening Party (PKB), and the United Development Party (PPP)—increased their total vote share, taking 49, 47, and 39 seats, respectively. A fourth, the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS), fell to 40 seats. NasDem and the People's Conscience Party (Hanura) won the remainder, with 35 and 16 seats, respectively.

As with that year's presidential election, the balloting was largely considered free and fair, though there were reports of irregularities in some regions, including political violence during the preelection period in Aceh and voter-list inflation, ballot stuffing, and community bloc voting in Papua.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4

The legal framework for elections is largely democratic, and electoral authorities are mostly seen as impartial. However, some legal provisions are problematic. Under a 2012 law, the hereditary sultan of Yogyakarta is that region's unelected governor. The position is nonpartisan, and the sultan is subject to a verification process with minimum requirements—such as education—every five years. The prince of Paku Alaman serves as deputy governor of the region. Separately, a 2016 revision to the law governing local elections requires that the Election Oversight Agency (Bawaslu) and the General Elections Commission (KPU) consult with the parliament and the government before issuing any new regulations or decisions, and states that the consultation results are binding. Activists expressed concern that the rules would reduce electoral authorities' independence.

In July 2017, the DPR approved a new General Elections Law that requires 2019 presidential candidates to have the support of a party or coalition that received at least 20 percent of the parliament's seats or 25 percent of the national vote in 2014. The provision effectively bars new or smaller parties from fielding candidates in the presidential race. Rules in place for the 2014 presidential election had set the same thresholds, but they pertained to the parliament elected just a few months earlier; the 2019 parliamentary and presidential votes will be held simultaneously. Although the new elections law was challenged with a petition to the Constitutional Court, Jokowi signed it in August. The court review was still pending at year's end.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 13 / 16 (-1)**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4**

The right to organize political parties is respected, and the system features competition among several major parties. However, in recent years the election laws have been amended to favor large parties by increasing eligibility requirements for parliamentary and

presidential candidacy. Only 12 parties passed verification processes for the 2014 national elections, down from 48 in 1999. The 2017 General Elections Law requires new parties to undergo a “factual verification” process to compete in the 2019 elections. Parties that competed in 2014 do not have to undergo the same process, which involves confirming the accuracy of submitted documents on parties’ management, membership, and operations.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

Indonesia has established a pattern of democratic power transfers between rival parties since 1999. The most recent such handover occurred in 2014, when Jokowi’s PDI-P returned to power after losing the previous two presidential elections. The new General Elections Law may make it more difficult for opposition forces to enter government by tying presidential candidates’ eligibility to their parties’ past electoral success.

B3. Are the people’s political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 3 / 4

Voters and candidates are generally free from undue interference by groups outside the political system. However, the military remains influential, with former commanders playing prominent roles in politics, and intimidation by nonstate actors—including Islamist radical groups—is a problem.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 2 / 4 (-1)

Women enjoy equal political rights, though they remain underrepresented in elected offices. Parties are subject to 30 percent gender quotas for founding members and candidate lists. Women won about 17 percent of the seats in the 2014 DPR elections. In August 2017, the Constitutional Court ruled that a woman could become governor of Yogyakarta, paving the way for the current sultan’s daughter to succeed him.

Some local governments have discriminated against religious minorities by restricting access to identification cards, birth certificates, marriage licenses, and other bureaucratic necessities, limiting their political rights and electoral opportunities. In November 2017, the Constitutional Court ruled in favor of adherents of unrecognized indigenous religions who challenged laws requiring them to either identify with one of the country’s six recognized faiths or leave the relevant section blank on their ID cards, exposing them to accusations of atheism. The ruling was expected to lead to some form of accommodation for native religions, but it was unlikely to aid members of Shiite and Admadiyya Muslim communities, who face officials and local rules that do not recognize their faiths as Islamic.

Even recognized religious minorities have encountered major obstacles when running for office. Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (“Ahok”), the ethnic Chinese Christian governor of Jakarta, rose from deputy governor when Jokowi, then the governor, was elected president in 2014. Ahok sought election in his own right, but hard-line Islamist groups accused him of making blasphemous comments during a campaign appearance in September 2016, triggering a series of protests and criticism in addition to criminal charges. Ahok led the first-round voting in February 2017, but lost the April runoff, and in May he was sentenced to two years in prison for blasphemy against Islam.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 due to the blasphemy case against a Christian candidate for governor of Jakarta and ongoing restrictions on unrecognized religious minorities' access to identification documents.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 6 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 3 / 4**

Elected officials generally determine the policies of the government, though national authorities have faced difficulties in implementing their decisions due to resistance at the local and regional level. Separately, observers have warned that the military is regaining influence over civilian governance and economic affairs.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

Corruption remains endemic, including in the parliament, civil service, judiciary, and police. Acrimony between rival agencies—particularly the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) and the national police—has hindered anticorruption efforts, and civilian investigators have no jurisdiction over the military. High-profile corruption suspects and defendants have often enjoyed impunity. However, DPR speaker and Golkar party chairman Setya Novanto was arrested in November 2017 and resigned in December as he went on trial for alleged involvement in a \$170 million corruption scandal surrounding procurements for a new identity card system. He had previously resigned amid separate corruption allegations in 2015 but returned to office the following year.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

Although civil society groups are able to comment on and influence pending policies or legislation, government transparency is limited by broad exemptions in the freedom of information law and obstacles such as a 2011 law that criminalizes the leaking of vaguely defined state secrets to the public.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 34 / 60**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 12 / 16****D1. Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4**

Indonesia hosts a vibrant and diverse media environment, though press freedom is hampered by a number of legal and regulatory restrictions. Licensing rules are stringent but unevenly enforced, meaning thousands of broadcast stations operate illegally. Although Jokowi lifted rules requiring special permission for foreign journalists to travel to the provinces of Papua and West Papua in 2015, journalists seeking to visit the region have continued to report bureaucratic obstacles and deportations.

Indonesia's Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI) documented dozens of assaults, threats, and other forms of obstruction directed against journalists during 2017, and police were responsible for many of the incidents. Journalists often practice self-censorship to avoid running afoul of civil and criminal defamation laws. The 2008 Law on Electronic Information and Transactions (ITE Law) extended libel and other restrictions to online media, criminalizing the distribution or accessibility of information or documents that are "contrary to the moral norms of Indonesia" or related to gambling, blackmail, or defamation.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 1 / 4

Indonesia officially recognizes only Islam, Protestantism, Roman Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. Individuals who do not identify with one of these religions may leave the relevant section on their identity cards blank, but those who do—including adherents of unrecognized faiths—often face discrimination. The November 2017 Constitutional Court ruling on behalf of indigenous religions found that the existing options were unconstitutionally restrictive, suggesting that another, more general religious category be added to accommodate the affected believers. Atheism is not accepted, and the criminal code contains provisions against blasphemy, penalizing those who “distort” or “misrepresent” recognized faiths.

National and local governments have repeatedly failed to protect religious minorities from violence and discrimination, and exhibited bias in investigations and prosecutions. To obtain a permit to build a new house of worship, a religious group must gather the signatures of 90 congregation members and 60 local residents of different faiths; the rule has been used to block or target minority religious sites.

Violence and intimidation against Ahmadiyya and Shiite communities persists, and the central government continues to tolerate persecution of these groups by local governments. In March 2017, three leaders of Gafatar, a heterodox Muslim group that faced attacks and expulsions in Kalimantan during 2016, received prison sentences ranging from three to five years for blasphemy.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is generally respected, though there are sporadic reports of pressure from hard-line groups such as the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) to cancel lectures that feature minority faiths or related issues. The military and police have also been active in monitoring and quelling academic discussions of a period in 1965–66 when the military and allied groups carried out mass purges and killings of alleged members of the Indonesia Communist Party (PKI).

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

There are no major obstacles to open and free private discussion, though laws against blasphemy, defamation, and certain other forms of speech may sometimes inhibit the expression of personal views on sensitive topics, including on social media.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 8 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 2 / 4

Freedom of assembly is usually upheld, and peaceful protests are common. However, assemblies in support of minority groups or to address sensitive political topics—such as the 1965–66 massacres or regional separatism—are regularly dispersed, with participants facing intimidation or violence from hard-line vigilantes or police. Amnesty International reported in August 2017 that since 2015 there had been 39 cases throughout the archipelago of authorities canceling events and intimidating participants in discussions related to 1965–66. In September police arbitrarily disbanded one such event held at the Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation (YLBHI) in Jakarta.

Also during 2017, police continued to carry out arrests and detentions of Papuan students and activists who joined, organized, or planned to participate in protests and other gatherings. In August police shot into a crowd at a protest in Deiyai, West Papua, killing one

person and injuring over a dozen others. A 2010 regulation allows national police to use live ammunition to quell situations of “anarchic violence.”

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 3 / 4

While civil society organizations are strong and active in Indonesia, some human rights groups are subject to government monitoring and interference. A 2013 law requires all non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to register with the government and submit to regular reviews of their activities. It limits the types of activities NGOs can undertake and bars them from committing blasphemy or espousing ideas that conflict with the official Pancasila ideology, such as atheism and communism. The government is empowered to dissolve noncompliant organizations. A July 2017 presidential decree—later approved by the DPR in October—amended the law governing NGOs to remove judicial oversight from the process by which the executive dissolves “anti-Pancasila” organizations. The radical Islamist group Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia was the first to be disbanded under the decree, though critics warned that the new rules could be turned on any organization that angered the government.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

Workers can join independent unions, bargain collectively, and with the exception of civil servants, stage strikes. Legal strikes can be unduly delayed by obligatory arbitration processes, and laws against antiunion discrimination are not well enforced. Some unions have resorted to violence in their negotiations with employers, and labor-related demonstrations are common.

F. RULE OF LAW: 5 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 2 / 4

The judiciary has demonstrated its independence in some cases, but the court system remains plagued by corruption and other weaknesses. In September 2017, a former Constitutional Court judge was sentenced to eight years in prison for taking bribes to influence the judicial review of an animal husbandry law.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

Police reportedly engage in arbitrary arrests and short-term detentions, particularly of protesters or activists suspected of separatism. Existing safeguards against the use of coerced confessions in court are not effective, and defendants are sometimes denied proper access to legal counsel, including in death penalty cases.

A number of districts and provinces have issued ordinances based on Sharia that in many cases are unconstitutional, contradict Indonesia’s international human rights commitments, or are difficult to enforce due to lack of clarity.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 1 / 4

Security forces regularly go unpunished or receive lenient sentences for human rights violations. Military service members accused of crimes against civilians are tried in military courts, which lack impartiality and often impose light punishments. Torture by law enforcement agencies is not specifically criminalized. Poor prison governance is compounded by endemic overcrowding and corruption, leading to riots, protests over lack of services, and jailbreaks.

Urged on by comments from the president and other senior officials, police increased the use of deadly force against suspected drug traffickers during 2017. According to Amnesty International, police reportedly shot and killed at least 98 people in drug-related cases, compared with 18 in 2016.

Deadly confrontations between security forces and protesters are common in Papua and West Papua, as are extrajudicial killings, tribal conflict, and violence related to labor disputes at foreign-operated mines and other resource-extraction enterprises.

In Aceh, provincial authorities are permitted to impose corporal punishment in the form of caning under regulations based on Sharia. Caning is regularly administered for offenses related to gambling, alcohol consumption, and illicit sexual activity.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

Women enjoy equality before the law on many issues, but some national laws and numerous local ordinances discriminate against women either explicitly or in effect. Women also face de facto discrimination in employment. Working men receive tax benefits that are unavailable to their wives, as husbands are deemed the heads of households.

LGBT people suffer from widespread discrimination, harassment by local officials, and attacks by hard-line Islamist groups, sometimes with support from local authorities. In addition to the many local bylaws that effectively criminalize LGBT people, a 2008 anti-pornography law labels same-sex sexual acts as “deviant.” Transgender people are routinely arrested and have difficulty obtaining official documents. Among other incidents during 2017, the authorities carried out a caning sentence on two suspected gay men in Aceh in May, forcibly evicted suspected lesbians from housing in West Java in September, and used the anti-pornography law in October to arrest 51 men at a sauna in Jakarta. However, in December the Constitutional Court rejected a petition that would have changed the national criminal code to penalize all sex outside heterosexual marriage.

Ethnic Chinese, who make up as little as 1 percent of the population but are resented by some for reputedly holding much of the country’s wealth, continue to face harassment.

Indonesia grants temporary protection to refugees and migrants, including those stranded at sea, but the country is not a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and does not accept refugees for asylum and resettlement.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 9 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4

The freedoms to travel and change one’s place of residence, employment, or higher education are generally respected. However, the ability to make such changes, particularly when obtaining public employment, can be limited by the need for bribes or other inducements.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

Private business activity is hampered by corruption. Property rights are threatened by mining and logging activity on communal land and state appropriation of land claimed by indigenous groups. Ethnic Chinese in Yogyakarta face restrictions on the right to own private property under a 1975 decree that contradicts national laws.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Abortion is illegal except to save a woman's life or in instances of rape. Adults over 15 years of age must have corroboration and witnesses to bring rape charges.

Sharia-based ordinances in a number of districts impose restrictions on dress, public conduct, and sexual activity that are disproportionately enforced against women and LGBT people. Women applying to work for the police and military must undergo "virginity tests" in some areas.

Marriages must be conducted under the supervision of a recognized religion, which can sometimes obstruct interfaith marriages; civil marriage is not possible. Divorce is legal, but civil servants seeking divorce must first undergo a mediation and approval process through a government personnel agency. The minimum age for marriage is 16 for women and 19 for men, and child marriage is relatively common for girls.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

National, provincial, and local authorities set legal standards for working conditions and compensation, but these are not consistently enforced. Many Indonesian workers are trafficked abroad for forced labor, including women in domestic service and men in the fishing industry. Traffickers are often able to avoid punishment due to corruption among law enforcement officials. Forced labor and sexual exploitation have also been reported within Indonesia, though to a lesser extent.

Iran

Population: 79,500,000

Capital: Tehran

Political Rights Rating: 6

Civil Liberties Rating: 6

Freedom Rating: 6.0

Freedom Status: Not Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: The Islamic Republic of Iran holds elections regularly, but they fall short of democratic standards due in part to the influence of the hard-line Guardian Council, an unelected body that disqualifies all candidates it deems insufficiently loyal to the clerical establishment. Ultimate power rests in the hands of the country's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and the unelected institutions under his control. These institutions, including the security forces and the judiciary, play a major role in the suppression of dissent and other restrictions on civil liberties.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- President Hassan Rouhani, a self-proclaimed moderate, won a second four-year term in May, easily defeating a hard-line opponent.
- In August, the parliament passed an amendment to the country's drug-trafficking law that could significantly reduce the high number of executions for drug offenses. The Guardian Council approved the bill in October. Iran carries out hundreds of executions each year, including of convicts who were juveniles at the time of their alleged crimes.

- In December, Tehran's police chief said city authorities would no longer arrest people—usually women—for breaching rules on personal appearance, instead mandating education sessions by police officials. However, the change apparently applied only to the capital, and repeat offenders could reportedly still face detention.
- Near the end of December, angry protests sparked by worsening economic conditions spread to several cities across Iran and included calls for an end to the Islamic Republic from some participants. Several people had been killed in clashes between protesters and security forces as of December 31, and hundreds were arrested. Authorities restricted access to popular communication applications in a bid to suppress the demonstrations.

Executive Summary

President Rouhani won reelection in May 2017 with about 57 percent of the vote. His strongest challenger, hard-line cleric Ebrahim Raisi, took some 38 percent. However, during the year Rouhani failed to effectively challenge repressive elements in the regime and deliver the greater freedoms he had promised since his 2013 election campaign. Among other controversial appointments to Rouhani's new cabinet was Information and Communications Technology Minister Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi, a former intelligence official who had helped to develop Iran's surveillance infrastructure and was accused of involvement in interrogations of detained dissidents.

Although there have been modest improvements on some human rights issues under Rouhani, including a gradual reduction in the number of imprisoned journalists, the regime maintained restrictions on freedom of expression, both offline and online, during 2017. For example, authorities continued to arrest and coerce administrators of reformist channels on the popular messaging application Telegram. In late December, when protests prompted by deteriorating economic conditions spread to cities across the country and aired bold demands for political change, officials responded in part by restricting access to Telegram and another popular app, the photo-sharing platform Instagram.

The late-year protests led to violent clashes with security forces in some locations, leaving several people dead and about 400 in detention. Rouhani urged protesters not to engage in violence, but argued that their legitimate grievances must be addressed. In contrast, hard-liners and security officials blamed foreign powers for instigating the unrest and warned of severe punishments for participants.

Also during 2017, U.S. president Donald Trump repeatedly threatened to withdraw from the 2015 international agreement on Iran's nuclear program, which the Rouhani government supported partly as a means of reducing sanctions, increasing foreign investment, and improving the economy. Rouhani's hard-line opponents have criticized the deal and warned that greater openness and closer ties with the West could enable "infiltration" by hostile powers. The regime's ongoing practice of detaining and prosecuting foreigners and dual nationals, including U.S. citizens, on spying charges is seen as an effort by the security and intelligence establishment to thwart closer international ties.

Terrorism remained a concern during the year. In June, at least 18 people were killed in two coordinated attacks on Iran's parliament and the mausoleum of the founder of the Islamic Republic. The Islamic State (IS) militant group claimed responsibility for the attacks.

Reformist opposition leaders Mir Hossein Mousavi, his wife Zahra Rahnavard, and Mehdi Karroubi remained under house arrest for a seventh year without being formally charged or put on trial. According to their relatives, their health had seriously deteriorated as a result of their confinement, and they were denied adequate medical care.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 7 / 40**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 3 / 12****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4**

The supreme leader, who has no fixed term, is the highest authority in the country. He is the commander in chief of the armed forces and appoints the head of the judiciary, the heads of state broadcast media, and the Expediency Council—a body tasked with mediating disputes between the Guardian Council and the parliament. He also appoints six of the members of the Guardian Council; the other six are jurists nominated by the head of the judiciary and confirmed by the parliament, all for six-year terms. The supreme leader is appointed by the Assembly of Experts, which also monitors his work. However, in practice his decisions appear to go unchallenged by the assembly, whose proceedings are kept confidential. The current supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, succeeded Islamic Republic founder Ruhollah Khomeini in 1989.

The president, the second-highest-ranking official in the Islamic Republic, appoints a cabinet that must be confirmed by the parliament. He is elected by popular vote for up to two consecutive four-year terms. In the May 2017 presidential election, only six men were allowed to run out of some 1,600 candidates who had applied. All 137 women candidates were disqualified by the Guardian Council. President Rouhani's main challenger, hard-line cleric Ebrahim Raisi, was known for his role as a judge involved in Iran's mass executions of political opponents in the 1980s. In the run-up to the election, the authorities intensified its crackdown on the media, arresting several journalists and administrators of reformist channels on Telegram, the popular messaging app. However, Rouhani's victory, with 57 percent of the vote amid roughly 70 percent turnout, appeared to reflect the choice of the electorate among the available candidates.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4

In February 2016, elections were held for the both the parliament and the Assembly of Experts, a body of 86 clerics who are elected to eight-year terms by popular vote. Only 51 percent of candidates who had applied to run for parliament were approved by the Guardian Council, the lowest figure to date. Only 20 percent of candidates were approved to run for the assembly, also a record low.

At the end of the process, relatively moderate Rouhani supporters held more than 40 percent of seats in the parliament, while independents—who included a number of reformists—and hard-liners each took about a third. The result was perceived as a victory for moderates and reformists, though the exact orientations and allegiances of individual lawmakers are often unclear. Moderates and reformists similarly made symbolic gains in the Assembly of Experts, but because so many had been disqualified, the supposedly moderate lists included conservative candidates. A majority of the new assembly ultimately chose hard-line cleric Ahmad Jannati, head of the Guardian Council, as the body's chairman.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 1 / 4

The electoral system in Iran does not meet international democratic standards. The Guardian Council, controlled by hard-line conservatives and ultimately by the supreme leader, vets all candidates for the parliament, the presidency, and the Assembly of Experts. The council typically rejects candidates who are not considered insiders or deemed fully

loyal to the clerical establishment, as well as women seeking to run in the presidential election. As a result, Iranian voters are given a limited choice of candidates.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 2 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 0 / 4

Only political parties and factions loyal to the establishment and to the state ideology are permitted to operate. Reformist parties and politicians have come under increased state repression, especially since 2009.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 1 / 4

In 2015, two new reformist parties—Nedaye Iranian (Voice of Iranians) and Ettehad Mellat Iran (Iranian National Unity)—were established ahead of the 2016 parliamentary elections. However, most candidates from these and other reformist groups were disqualified by the Guardian Council ahead of the voting.

In September 2017, seven reformist politicians were sentenced to one-year prison terms and barred from political and media activity for two years, having been convicted in a closed trial of spreading “propaganda” against the regime.

Top opposition leaders remain subject to restrictions on their movement and access to the media. Mousavi, Rahnavard, and Karroubi—leaders of the reformist Green Movement, whose protests were violently suppressed following the disputed 2009 presidential election—have been under house arrest since February 2011. Ahead of the 2017 presidential election, reformist former president Mohammad Khatami defied a media ban by releasing an online video to endorse Rouhani’s reelection; the message was spread by supporters on social media.

B3. Are the people’s political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 0 / 4

The choices of both voters and politicians are heavily influenced and ultimately circumscribed by Iran’s unelected state institutions and ruling clerical establishment.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 1 / 4

Women remain significantly underrepresented in politics and government. In 2017, Rouhani appointed two women among his several vice presidents but failed to name any women as cabinet ministers. No women candidates were allowed to run for president.

The parliament grants five seats to recognized non-Muslim minorities: Jews, Armenian Christians, Assyrian and Chaldean Christians, and Zoroastrians. However, ethnic and especially religious minorities are rarely awarded senior government posts, and their political representation remains weak.

In September 2017, the Guardian Council ordered the suspension of a Zoroastrian member of the Yazd city council; Jannati, the head of the Guardian Council, had said in April that religious minorities should not have a representative in towns where the majority of the population was Muslim. The parliament passed legislation in December to affirm minorities’ right to run for municipal councils, but the Guardian Council blocked the bill later that month, meaning the dispute would have to be settled by the Expediency Council.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 2 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 1 / 4**

The elected president's powers are limited by the supreme leader and other unelected authorities. The powers of the elected parliament are similarly restricted by the supreme leader and the unelected Guardian Council, which must approve all bills before they can become law. The council often rejects bills it deems un-Islamic. Nevertheless, the parliament has been a platform for heated political debate and criticism of the government, and legislators have frequently challenged presidents and their policies.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 0 / 4

Corruption remains endemic at all levels of the bureaucracy, despite regular calls by authorities to tackle the problem. Powerful actors involved in the economy, including the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and bonyads (endowed foundations), are above scrutiny, and restrictions on the media and civil society activists prevent them from serving as independent watchdogs to ensure transparency and accountability.

Recent reports suggest that the government is attempting to curb the economic dominance of the IRGC, which has enabled corruption. The *Financial Times* reported in September that at least a dozen IRGC members and affiliated businessmen had been detained in recent months, while others were forced to pay back proceeds from suspect business deals.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 1 / 4

An access to information law was passed in 2009, and implementing regulations were finally adopted in 2015. In July 2017, the Information and Communications Technology Ministry unveiled an online portal to facilitate information requests. However, the law grants broadly worded exemptions allowing the protection of information whose disclosure would conflict with state interests, cause financial loss, or harm public security, among other stipulations. In practice, the transparency of Iran's political system remains extremely limited, and powerful elements of the state and society remain unaccountable to the public.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 11 / 60 (+1)**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 3 / 16 (+1)****D1. Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4 (+1)**

Freedom of expression and media independence are severely limited both online and offline. The state broadcasting company is tightly controlled by hard-liners and influenced by the security apparatus. News and analysis are heavily censored, while critics and opposition members are rarely, if ever, given a platform on state-controlled television, which remains a major source of information for many Iranians. State television has a record of airing confessions extracted from political prisoners under duress, and it routinely carries reports aimed at discrediting dissidents and opposition activists.

Newspapers and magazines face censorship and warnings from authorities about which topics to cover and how. Tens of thousands of foreign-based websites are filtered, including news sites and major social media services. Satellite dishes are banned, and Persian-language broadcasts from outside the country are regularly jammed. Authorities periodically raid private homes and confiscate satellite dishes. Iranian authorities have pressured journalists working for Persian-language media outside the country by summoning and threatening their families in Iran. In August 2017, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) reported that Iran's judiciary had frozen the assets of its Persian-service staff.

While the authorities continued to arrest and detain journalists during 2017, the number of journalists behind bars has steadily decreased from 45 in December 2012 to 5 in December 2017, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists.

Score Change: The score improved from 0 to 1 to reflect modest shifts in some aspects of the media environment under President Rouhani, including a reduction in the number of jailed journalists.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 0 / 4

Iran is home to a majority Shiite Muslim population and Sunni, Baha'i, Christian, and Zoroastrian minorities. The constitution recognizes only Zoroastrians, Jews, and certain Christian communities as religious minorities, and these small groups are relatively free to worship. The regime cracks down on Muslims who are deemed to be at variance with the state ideology and interpretation of Islam. Spiritual leader Mohammad Ali Taheri, in jail since 2011 for founding a group centered on mysticism whose beliefs and practices are allegedly un-Islamic, was sentenced to death for a second time in August 2017 for "spreading corruption on earth" after his initial death sentence was overturned on appeal in 2015. However, the Supreme Court rejected the verdict in December and ordered Taheri to be retried by a lower court.

Sunni Muslims complain that they have been prevented from building mosques in major cities and face difficulty obtaining government jobs. In recent years, there has been increased pressure on the Sufi Muslim order Nematollahi Gonabadi, including destruction of their places of worship and the jailing of some of their members.

The government also subjects some non-Muslim minorities to repressive policies and discrimination. Baha'is are systematically persecuted, sentenced to prison, and banned from access to higher education. There is an ongoing crackdown on Christian converts; in the past several years, a number of informal house churches have been raided and their pastors or congregants detained.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 1 / 4

Academic freedom remains limited in Iran, despite attempts by Rouhani's government to ease the harsh repression universities have experienced since 2009. Khamenei has warned that universities should not be turned into centers for political activities. Students have been prevented from continuing their studies for political reasons or because they belong to the Baha'i community. Foreign scholars visiting Iran are vulnerable to detention on trumped-up charges. Xiyue Wang, a U.S. citizen pursuing a doctorate in history, was arrested in 2016 while conducting archival research in Iran, and the judiciary reported in July 2017 that he had been sentenced to 10 years in prison for espionage.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 1 / 4

Iran's vaguely defined restrictions on speech, harsh criminal penalties, and state monitoring of online communications are among several factors that deter citizens from engaging in open and free private discussion. Despite the risks and limitations, many do express dissent on social media, in some cases circumventing official blocks on certain platforms.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 1 / 12**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 0 / 4**

The constitution states that public demonstrations may be held if they are not “detrimental to the fundamental principles of Islam.” In practice, only state-sanctioned demonstrations are typically permitted, while other gatherings have in recent years been forcibly dispersed by security personnel, who detain participants. In addition to hundreds of detentions, several people were killed by year’s end in the protests that erupted in late December 2017, and the authorities restricted access to social media platforms that were being used to spread information about the unrest. Rallies organized in support of the regime on December 30 received live coverage from state media.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 0 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations that work on nonpolitical issues such as poverty and the environment are allowed to operate relatively freely. Other groups, especially those that have highlighted human rights violations, have been suppressed. They include the Center for Human Rights Defenders, which remains closed with several of its members in jail, and the Mourning Mothers of Iran (Mothers of Laleh Park), which had been gathering in a Tehran park to bring attention to human rights abuses.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 1 / 4

Iran does not permit the creation of labor unions; only state-sponsored labor councils are allowed. Labor rights groups have come under pressure in recent years, with key leaders and activists sentenced to prison on national security charges. Workers who engage in strikes are vulnerable to dismissal and arrest.

F. RULE OF LAW: 3 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4**

The judicial system is used as a tool to silence regime critics and opposition members. The head of the judiciary is appointed by the supreme leader for renewable five-year terms. Under the current head, Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani, human rights advocates and political activists have been subjected to unfair trials, and the security apparatus’s influence over judges has reportedly grown.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

Activists are routinely arrested without warrants, held indefinitely without formal charges, and denied access to legal counsel or any contact with the outside world. Many are later convicted on vague security charges in trials that sometimes last only a few minutes.

Lawyers taking up sensitive political cases have been jailed and banned from practicing, including prominent human rights lawyer Abdolfatah Soltani. A number of lawyers have been forced to leave the country to escape prosecution.

Dual nationals and those with connections abroad have also faced arbitrary detention, trumped-up charges, and denial of due process rights in recent years. Physician Ahmadreza Djalali, an Iranian-born resident of Sweden, was detained while visiting Iran in April 2016 and sentenced to death in October 2017 for allegedly collaborating with Israel, after a trial that Amnesty International called “grossly unfair.” The Supreme Court upheld the sentence in December, and an apparently forced confession was aired on state television. Djalali’s wife said he was punished for refusing to spy for Iran, and that interrogators threatened his family to obtain the recorded confession.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 0 / 4

Former detainees have reported being beaten during arrest and subjected to torture until they confess to crimes dictated by their interrogators.

Prisons are overcrowded, and prisoners often complain of poor detention conditions, including denial of medical care. Organized hunger strikes by political prisoners continued to be reported in 2017. Former political prisoner Alireza Rajayi, a prominent journalist, lost an eye and part of his face during the year due to cancer that was reportedly left untreated while he was in prison from 2011 to 2015.

Iran has generally been second only to China in the number of executions it carries out each year. Convicts can be executed for offenses other than murder, such as drug trafficking, and for crimes they committed when they were less than 18 years old. At least 476 people had been executed in 2017 as of late November, according to human rights groups, including several juvenile offenders. Legislation adopted in August 2017 and approved by the Guardian Council in October significantly increased the quantity of illegal drugs required for a drug-related crime to incur the death penalty, prompting sentence reviews for thousands of death-row inmates.

The country faces a long-term threat from terrorist and insurgent groups that recruit from disadvantaged Kurdish and Sunni Muslim minority populations. The perpetrators of the June 2017 terrorist attacks in Tehran reportedly included ethnic Kurds who had been radicalized by IS.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

Women do not receive equal treatment under the law and face widespread discrimination in practice. For example, a woman's testimony in court is given only half the weight of a man's, and the monetary compensation awarded to a female victim's family upon her death is half that owed to the family of a male victim.

Ethnic minorities complain of various forms of discrimination, including restrictions on the use of their languages. Some provinces with large minority populations remain underdeveloped. Activists campaigning for the rights of ethnic minorities and greater autonomy for minority regions have come under pressure from the authorities, and some have been jailed.

The penal code criminalizes all sexual relations outside of traditional marriage, and Iran is among the few countries where individuals can be put to death for consensual same-sex conduct. Members of the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) community face harassment and discrimination, though the problem is underreported due to the criminalized and hidden nature of these groups in Iran.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 4 / 16**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 1 / 4**

Freedom of movement is restricted, particularly for women and perceived opponents of the regime. Women are banned from certain public places, such as sports stadiums, and can obtain a passport to travel abroad only with the permission of their fathers or husbands. Many journalists and activists have been prevented from leaving the country. In October 2017, it was reported that authorities had tightened movement restrictions on former president Khatami, banning him from attending public events and meeting with officials and students in Iran. Four members of the family of former president Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani,

including his daughter, were reportedly banned from traveling outside the country during the year.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 1 / 4

Iranians have the legal right to own property and establish private businesses. However, powerful institutions like the IRGC play a dominant role in the economy, and bribery is said to be widespread in the business environment, including for registration and obtaining business licenses. Women are denied equal rights in inheritance matters.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 1 / 4

Social freedoms are restricted in Iran. Women are subject to obligatory rules on dress and personal appearance, and those who are deemed to have inadequately covered their hair and body face state harassment, fines, and arrest. Men are subject to less strict controls on personal appearance. Although Tehran's police chief announced in December 2017 that city authorities would no longer make arrests for breaching rules on personal appearance, instead mandating education sessions by police officials, the change apparently applied only to the capital, and repeat offenders could reportedly still face detention.

Police conduct raids on private gatherings that breach rules against drinking alcohol and mixing with unrelated members of the opposite sex. Those attending can be detained and fined or sentenced to corporal punishment in the form of lashes.

Women do not enjoy equal rights in divorce and child custody disputes.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

The government provides no protection to women and children forced into sex trafficking, and both Iranians and migrant workers from countries like Afghanistan are subject to forced labor and debt bondage. The IRGC has allegedly used coercive tactics to recruit thousands of Afghan migrants living in Iran to fight in Syria. In October 2017, Human Rights Watch reported that children as young as 14 are among those recruited.

Iraq

Population: 38,100,000

Capital: Baghdad

Political Rights Rating: 5

Civil Liberties Rating: 6

Freedom Rating: 5.5

Freedom Status: Not Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: Iraq holds regular, competitive elections, and the country's various partisan, religious, and ethnic groups enjoy some representation in the political system. However, democratic governance is impeded in practice by corruption and security threats, including militant groups such as the Islamic State (IS). In the Kurdistan region, democratic institutions lack the strength to contain the influence of long-standing power brokers. Civil

liberties are generally respected in Iraqi law but suffer from the state's limited capacity to prevent and punish violations.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- By the end of the year, the Iraqi security forces (ISF) and their allies had liberated all Iraqi territory from IS control, recapturing Mosul and a series of other cities and towns during the summer and fall.
- While terrorist attacks reportedly declined, IS maintained enough of a presence to carry out several large-scale bombings in Iraqi cities outside the main conflict zones.
- The Kurdish regional government held an unauthorized referendum that showed support for independence from Iraq in September, prompting the ISF and their allies to reassert control over the region's borders and recapture all territories occupied by Kurdish forces since 2014, including the disputed city of Kirkuk. The reversal led to the resignation of Kurdish regional president Masoud Barzani.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 16 / 40 (+4)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 8 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4

After national elections, the Iraqi parliament, the Council of Representatives (CoR), chooses the largely ceremonial president, who in turn appoints a prime minister nominated by the largest bloc in the parliament. The prime minister forms a government that assumes most executive power.

The CoR elected in 2014 approved a government headed by Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi after tense and protracted negotiations that took place amid a major IS offensive and other security threats. The new leadership generally maintained the unwritten power-sharing agreements that apportion Iraq's top political jobs among the country's religious and ethnic communities. Al-Abadi belonged to the dominant Shiite party; Kurdish politician Fouad Massoum was chosen to serve as Iraqi president, and Selim al-Jabouri, a Sunni Arab, was named speaker of parliament.

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), composed of Iraq's northernmost provinces, is led by a president with extensive executive powers. The draft Kurdish constitution requires presidential elections every four years and limits presidents to two terms. However, after holding the office for eight years, Barzani of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) had his term extended by two years in a 2013 political agreement with the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), and in 2015 he extended his term by another two years unilaterally, citing a legal opinion from a KRG advisory council. That move was endorsed by the KDP but strongly rejected by the opposition party Gorran and the PUK, which called for an overhaul of KRG political institutions. Barzani remained in office until November 2017, finally resigning after he organized an unauthorized September referendum on Kurdish independence that prompted the central government to reassert control over the region's international borders and all territory occupied by Kurdish forces since the IS offensive in 2014. Barzani left the KRG executive in the hands of his nephew, Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani, and the presidency remained vacant at year's end.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

The 328-member CoR is elected every four years from multimember open lists in each province. The balloting is generally considered to be competitive and relatively well administered given the challenge of chronic political violence. In the 2014 parliamentary elections, then prime minister Nouri al-Maliki's Shiite-led State of Law coalition won 95 seats, making it the largest grouping. A Shiite bloc associated with Moqtada al-Sadr placed second with 34 seats, followed by a third Shiite coalition, Al-Muwatin, with 31 seats. A Sunni-led bloc, Muttahidoon, took 28 seats; a secular nationalist coalition led by Ayad Allawi, Al-Wataniya, received 21; and two Kurdish parties, the KDP and the PUK, took 25 and 21 seats, respectively. The remainder was divided among several smaller parties.

In 2017, provincial council elections originally due that year were postponed until May 2018, coinciding with the next CoR elections. One province, Kirkuk, is disputed between the KRG and the central government and has not held provincial council elections since 2005.

The Kurdish region elects a 111-seat Kurdistan Parliament through closed party-list proportional representation in a single district. The 2013 elections resulted in the new opposition Gorran (Change) movement (24 seats) displacing the PUK (18) as the second-largest party after the KDP (38). Smaller factions and minority representatives made up the remainder. The Kurdistan Parliament, led by a speaker from Gorran, was effectively suspended as a result of the 2015 dispute over Barzani's presidential mandate; although it reconvened in September 2017 to endorse the planned independence referendum, only 68 members participated, with lawmakers from Gorran and some other factions boycotting that and subsequent sessions. The next legislative elections, which should be held at least every four years, were scheduled for November 2017 but delayed amid the crisis following the independence referendum.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4

Voting is monitored by the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC), political parties, foreign and domestic media outlets, Iraqi nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and international observers. In 2017, critics associated with Sadr charged, without clear evidence, that the IHEC board's balanced party representation leads to bias. However, the commission generally enjoys the confidence of the international community and, according to some polls, the Iraqi public. Other factors that have historically affected the electoral process include political, sectarian, and terrorist violence and skewed seat allocations stemming from the fact that a national census has not been conducted since 1987.

The Kurdish independence referendum was administered by the Kurdistan Independent High Electoral and Referendum Commission (IHERC), which was composed of party representatives and lacked the ability to investigate fraud. Kurdish authorities proceeded with the referendum despite a suspension order from the Federal Supreme Court, which formally ruled the vote unconstitutional in November. The controversial balloting included areas occupied by Kurdish forces since 2014 and claimed by the central government. Some 93 percent of those participating reportedly voted in favor of independence, though the exercise—which was not monitored by international organizations—was allegedly marred by cases of intimidation, ballot-stuffing, and exclusion or boycotts among non-Kurdish ethnic communities.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 7 / 16 (+2)**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 3 / 4 (+1)**

The constitution guarantees the freedom to form and join political parties, apart from the Baath Party. A 2016 law strengthened the constitutional ban on the Baath Party, criminalizing Baathist protests and the promotion of Baathist ideas. The measure applies to any group that supports racism, terrorism, sectarianism, sectarian cleansing, and other ideas contrary to democracy or the peaceful transfer of power. Individual Iraqis' freedom to run for office is also limited by a vague "good conduct" requirement in the electoral law.

In practice, Iraqis run for office, form parties, and take part in politics in large numbers. Party membership and multiparty alliances shift frequently. By the end of 2017, the IHEC had registered roughly 140 parties with a variety of orientations and backgrounds for the 2018 elections, with more still finalizing their registration paperwork. The commission had also registered some 2 million new voters since 2015.

The threat of violence continued to obstruct Iraqi political participation during the year. IS permitted no political mobilization where it controlled territory, and the weak rule of law elsewhere in Iraq means that political activity carries risks. Prominent politicians are heavily guarded.

Score Change: The score improved from 2 to 3 due to the relatively open and active preparations for the 2018 elections, including the successful registration of large numbers of parties and candidates.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 2 / 4

Iraqi elections are competitive, but most parties are dominated by one sectarian or ethnic group, meaning large and established parties representing the Shiite majority tend to govern and minority groups can only take power as part of a cross-sectarian party or bloc. In a positive sign, a number of new parties presenting themselves as secular and national in orientation applied for registration in 2017 ahead of the 2018 elections, though it remained unclear whether they would be able to compete effectively.

In the Kurdish region, the traditional dominance of the KDP and the PUK has been challenged by the rise of Gorran, but the postponement of presidential and legislative elections has allowed entrenched interests to remain in power. The damaging crisis that followed the 2017 independence referendum appeared to threaten the KDP's electoral prospects in 2018.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 1 / 4 (+1)

The ability of IS to suppress normal political activity waned significantly during 2017 as its last strongholds in Iraqi population centers—particularly Mosul, Hawija, Tal Afar, and Al-Qaim—fell to the ISF and their allies between July and November.

However, Iraq's political system remains distorted by interference from foreign powers, most notably Iran, which physically and politically threatens Iraqi policymakers who challenge its interests. Iranian influence has been bolstered since 2014 by the formation of Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) to fight IS. Many of these largely Shiite militias are closely supported by Iran, and a number of Iranian commanders remained in the country

during 2017, influencing the aftermath of the conflict with IS. Meanwhile, dozens of figures associated with the PMF were reportedly planning to run in the 2018 elections.

Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, the paramount Shiite religious authority in Iraq, generally promotes the rule of law and deference to elected officials, but his statements set parameters that politicians are rarely willing to defy.

Score Change: The score improved from 0 to 1 because the military defeats suffered by IS sharply reduced its ability to suppress normal political activity.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 1 / 4

Members of various religious and ethnic groups generally enjoy basic political rights, but the dominant role of ethno-sectarian parties and the allocation of key offices according to informal ethno-sectarian criteria reduce the likelihood that politicians will act in the interests of the whole population.

Sunni Arabs, Iraq's largest ethno-sectarian minority, are represented in the parliament but often argue that the Shiite majority keeps them out of positions of real influence. A system of reserved seats ensures a minimum representation in the CoR for some of Iraq's smaller religious and ethnic minorities. There are five seats for Christians and one each for Yazidis, Sabean Mandaeans, and Shabaks. The Kurdish parliament reserves five seats for Turkomans, five for Christians, and one for Armenians. The political rights of these minorities have been severely impeded by their displacement from IS-occupied areas.

The CoR and the Kurdish parliament reserve 25 percent and 30 percent of their seats for women, respectively, though such formal representation has had little obvious effect on state policies toward women, who are typically excluded from political debates and leadership positions. Openly LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) Iraqis are unable to enjoy equal political rights in practice due to harsh societal discrimination that includes the threat of violence.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 2 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 1 / 4

Elected officials' development and implementation of laws and policies has been hampered by factors including IS control over Iraqi territory, irregular Kurdish occupation of some areas, extensive Iranian influence, and pressure from unelected forces such as the Sadrist protest movement, which has advanced Sadr's agenda using sometimes violent and extralegal tactics in recent years. The United States and its allies also exert some policy influence through their support for the ISF and other state institutions.

In the KRG, Masoud Barzani effectively suspended the parliament in 2015 after the speaker and many members opposed his extended presidential mandate. Although the parliament reconvened ahead of the independence referendum in September 2017, some parties boycotted the session, and the executive governed without a legislature for most of the year. Separately, Kurdish lawmakers boycotted the CoR for several weeks in late 2017 amid the referendum crisis.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 0 / 4

Iraq consistently ranks as one of the world's most corrupt countries. Political parties, which siphon funds from the ministries they control and take kickbacks for government contracts, resist anticorruption efforts; whistle-blowers and investigators are subject to

intimidation and violence. The judicial system, itself marred by politicization and corruption, takes action on only a fraction of the cases investigated by the Integrity Commission.

The KRG suffers from similar problems, and Barzani's wealthy family remains a powerful political and economic force in the region. Among other relatives in key positions, his son serves as the KRG's intelligence chief and his nephew as prime minister.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 1 / 4

Iraq has adopted some practices of open government, including rules on asset disclosure. The CoR debates the budget, and interest groups are often able to access draft legislation. However, security conditions make elected representatives, who usually live and work in a restricted part of the capital, relatively inaccessible to the public. The public procurement system is nontransparent and corrupt, with no recourse to the courts for unsuccessful bidders.

ADDITIONAL DISCRETIONARY POLITICAL RIGHTS QUESTION

Is the government or occupying power deliberately changing the ethnic composition of a country or territory so as to destroy a culture or tip the political balance in favor of another group? -1 / 0 (+2)

IS's loss of territorial control during 2017 largely halted its active campaign to alter religious demography, though many Shiites and religious minorities who were displaced by the group remained unable to return to their homes, for both security and economic reasons. The ISF's return in late 2017 to territories held by Kurdish forces since 2014 resulted in another round of demographic changes for those areas, with some Kurdish residents leaving and displaced Arabs returning. There have also been reports of Sunni Arabs being displaced from areas liberated from IS by Shiite militias. Overall, as of December, about 2.84 million Iraqis displaced by the IS offensive in 2014 had since returned to their home regions, and another 2.78 million remained displaced.

Score Change: The score improved from -3 to -1 because progovernment forces dislodged IS from its last strongholds in the country, mostly ending its sectarian and religious persecution and clearing the way for the return of those who had fled mass killings, discriminatory "taxation," forced conversions, and enslavement.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 15 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 5 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4

The constitution allows limits on free expression to preserve "public order" and "morality." Iraq's media scene appears lively and diverse, but there are few politically independent news sources. Journalists who do not self-censor can face legal repercussions or violent retaliation.

Most of the eight Iraqi journalists killed in the course of their work during 2017 died while covering dangerous military operations, but in October a group of men who identified themselves as militia members broke into the home of a Kurdish television cameraman and stabbed him to death. Also that month, journalist Samir Obeid was arrested in Baghdad and charged with spreading false information after publishing a story that was critical of the prime minister, and Iraqi authorities reportedly banned a Kurdish network from covering the ISF's effort to retake Kirkuk. In August, media regulators threatened legal action against a pro-Kurdish broadcaster for carrying a program hosted by political satirist Ahmed al-Basheer. The governor of Anbar Province ordered the closure of the local offices of

Al-Sharqiya, an independent satellite television channel, in December after it carried a story accusing the governor and his allies of attempting to manipulate voter registration.

In Kurdish-controlled areas, journalists and media outlets that reported critically on the KRG leadership or the independence referendum crisis faced arrests, threats and closure orders from security forces and regulators, and attacks by partisan thugs. Kurdish security forces raided and shut down the offices of a television station in Suleymaniyah that had been covering violent antigovernment demonstrations in the city in December.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 1 / 4

The constitution guarantees freedom of belief, but in practice many Iraqis have been subjected to violence and displacement due to their religious identity, and places of worship have often been targets for terrorist attacks. Most political leaders expressed support for religious pluralism after IS's defeat, and Sunnis living in liberated areas began returning to their preferred religious practices. However, some politicians from leading sectarian parties condemned secularism and atheism, apparently reacting to a public shift against religious extremism and political Islam in the wake of the IS conflict.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 1 / 4

Educators in Iraq have long faced the threat of violence or other repercussions for teaching subjects or discussing topics that powerful state or nonstate actors find objectionable. IS replaced ordinary schooling with heavy indoctrination and military training in areas under its control. Many schools and universities in IS areas have remained closed after liberation, due in part to insufficient funds from the state. The country's official curriculum is often augmented in the classroom by religious or sectarian viewpoints.

Political activism by university students can result in harassment or intimidation. In May 2017, seven student anticorruption activists affiliated with left-wing groups were abducted in Baghdad and held for about three days; the perpetrators were believed to be members of a Shiite militia, and the interior minister—himself a member of the Shiite Badr Organization—reportedly negotiated their release.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 2 / 4

In 2017, private discussion remained limited in IS areas by intense surveillance. Elsewhere in Iraq there were instances of retribution for speech on social media. Political speech in the Kurdish region can also prompt arbitrary detentions or other reprisals from government or partisan forces, and there were reports of intimidation surrounding the September independence referendum, particularly in contested areas like Kirkuk.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 6 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 2 / 4

The constitution guarantees freedom of assembly, and this right is increasingly respected in practice, though deadly violence still occurs. In February 2017, at least five protesters and one police officer were killed when security forces clashed with a Sadrist demonstration calling for electoral reform in Baghdad. Subsequent protests proceeded more peacefully.

Protesters in the Kurdish region faced arrests and deadly violence during the year, particularly amid antigovernment demonstrations in the aftermath of the referendum crisis that featured attacks on state and party facilities. In Suleymaniyah and Halabja in December, at

least five antigovernment protesters were killed by security forces. Separately, at least one Yazidi protester was killed by Kurdish forces in March.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 2 / 4

NGOs enjoy societal support and a relatively hospitable regulatory environment, though they must register with the government and obtain approval from the commission responsible for suppressing Baathism. The main obstacles to NGO operations are a lack of security and impunity for past attacks. In the Kurdish region, NGOs must renew their registration annually. KRG authorities in 2017 raided one NGO that supports Yazidis and briefly closed another.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

Iraq's labor law, which took effect in 2016, allows collective bargaining even by workers without a union, improves the rights of subcontractors and migrant workers, and permits workers to strike, among other features. However, it does not permit unionization in the public sector. In practice, some state officials and private employers discourage union activity with threats, demotions, and other deterrents.

F. RULE OF LAW: 0 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 0 / 4

The judiciary is influenced by corruption, political pressure, tribal forces, and religious interests. Due to distrust of or lack of access to the courts, many Iraqis have turned to tribal bodies to settle disputes, even those involving major crimes.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 0 / 4

Criminal proceedings in Iraq are deeply flawed. Terrorism cases in particular have featured fundamental violations of due process, with human rights groups describing systematic denial of access to counsel and short, summary trials with little evidence that the defendants committed specific crimes other than association with IS. Hundreds of foreign wives and children of suspected IS fighters have also been arbitrarily detained.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 0 / 4

The use of torture to obtain confessions is widespread, including in death penalty cases. More than 100 people were executed during 2017, with dozens put to death in mass hangings. Detainees are held in harsh, overcrowded conditions, and forced disappearances have been reported.

Civilians suffered immensely during 2017 from the conflict with IS. According to the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq, at least 3,298 civilians were killed and 4,781 were wounded in armed conflict and related violence, not including casualties in Anbar in November and December. Those in conflict zones faced bombardment, cross fire, hidden bombs, direct killings by IS fighters, and mass abductions for use as human shields.

Observers of the battles against IS documented summary executions and other abuses by the ISF, PMF, and Yazidi militias. Perpetrators generally enjoyed impunity for such crimes. Both the ISF and supporting U.S. forces also killed and injured civilians in the course of battle, with one U.S. airstrike in Mosul killing more than 100 civilians. Some civilians were killed in the fighting that followed the Kurdish referendum.

Terrorist attacks reportedly declined outside conflict areas in 2017, but bombings and assaults by groups of gunmen still killed dozens of people in Baghdad, Nasiriyah, Basra, and other locations.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 0 / 4

Women face widespread societal discrimination and receive disparate treatment under several aspects of the law. Sexual harassment in the workplace is prohibited, but it is reportedly rare for victims to pursue formal complaints. Mistreatment of women was especially harsh in areas controlled by IS during 2017.

Members of a given ethnic or religious group tend to suffer discrimination or persecution in areas where they represent a minority, leading many to seek safety in other neighborhoods or provinces. Same-sex sexual relations are not explicitly prohibited, but LGBT people risk violence if they are open about their identity. Other disadvantaged groups in the country include Iraqis of African descent, who suffer from high rates of extreme poverty and discrimination.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 4 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 1 / 4

Millions of Iraqis remained internally displaced at the end of 2017. Freedom of movement improved somewhat as IS-ruled areas and conflict zones were brought back under government control. However, large-scale destruction of housing and infrastructure, the presence of sectarian or partisan militias, and the ongoing threat of violence made it difficult for many displaced people to return home.

Women require the consent of a male guardian to obtain a passport, and freedom of movement for women in practice is more restricted than for men.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or non-state actors? 1 / 4

Iraqis are legally free to own property and establish businesses, but observance of property rights has suffered from years of corruption and conflict, most recently the IS-related fighting. Iraqi business owners continue to face demands for bribes, threats, and violent attempts to seize their enterprises. Contracts in Iraq are difficult to enforce. Women are at a disadvantage to men in terms of inheritance rights and may face pressure to yield their rights to male relatives.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 1 / 4

Forced and early marriages are common, especially in the context of displacement and poverty. Nearly one in four Iraqi women aged 20 to 24 were married by 18, and marriage between 15 and 18 is legal with parental approval. Laws on marriage and divorce favor men over women. Domestic violence is criminalized but widespread and rarely punished. So-called honor killings are also seldom punished. Rapists can avoid prosecution if they marry their victims; spousal rape is not prohibited.

Both men and women face pressure to conform to conservative standards on personal appearance. In a high-profile case in July 2017, actor and model Karar Nushi was kidnapped, tortured, and murdered in Baghdad, allegedly because of his long hair and tight clothing.

Restrictions on personal social freedoms have been most severe in areas under IS control, where women in particular were subject to forced marriage, confinement, strict dress requirements, and sexual slavery in the case of Yazidi women and girls.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

IS's market for Yazidi slaves, both women and children, continued to operate for much of 2017. Other forms of human trafficking and exploitation remained problems elsewhere in Iraq, with vulnerable populations including displaced people, foreign migrant workers, children engaged in forced begging, and child soldiers recruited by IS and certain militias.

Ireland

Population: 4,700,000

Capital: Dublin

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 1

Freedom Rating: 1.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Ireland is a stable democracy. Political rights and civil liberties are robust, although the government suffers from some incidence of corruption. There is some limited societal discrimination, especially against the traditionally nomadic Irish Travellers.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Leo Varadkar—the son of an Indian immigrant, openly gay, and 38 years old—was elected by the Dáil as the youngest Prime Minister (Taoiseach) ever, following the decision by Enda Kenny to step down after six years.
- In July, the Council of Europe criticized the Irish government for failing to uphold its commitments to implementing anticorruption measures.
- In March, the country was shocked by the discovery of a mass grave of babies and children at the site of the former Bon Secours Mother and Baby Home in Tuam, Galway. The facility had housed orphaned children and the children of unwed mothers, and closed in 1961.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 39 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The Taoiseach, or prime minister, is nominated by House of Representatives (Dáil Éireann) and formally appointed by the president. Thus, the legitimacy of the prime minister is largely dependent on the conduct of Dáil elections, which historically have free and fair. The Dáil elected Leo Varadkar of the Fine Gael party as Taoiseach in June 2017, following the decision by Enda Kenny, also of Fine Gael, to step down after six years. The son of an Indian immigrant and openly gay, Varadkar is also Ireland's youngest-ever Taoiseach at 38 years old.

Deputy Prime Minister (Tánaiste) Frances Fitzgerald resigned in November to avoid a no-confidence motion that would have provoked a new general election. She had come under pressure for her alleged failure to support a whistleblower when the police (Garda) commissioner attempted to discredit him during a commission of inquiry into Garda behavior.

The president is elected to up to two seven-year terms, and as chief of state has mostly ceremonial duties. Michael Higgins was elected president in 2011.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The 2016 Dáil elections saw no major irregularities or unequal campaigning opportunities. Fine Gael remained the largest party, but with far fewer seats than it had taken in the 2011 general election, while Fianna Fáil more than doubled its share of the vote. The parties formed a minority coalition following the 2016 polls.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

Ireland's electoral framework is strong and government bodies are able to put on credible polls. However, there is no electoral commission in Ireland and the organization of Ireland's elections has been criticized. Following a 2014 Constitutional Convention, the government voiced a commitment to establishing an electoral commission after the next elections. Public consultation has begun but no legislation has been brought before parliament.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 16 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4

Political parties in Ireland are free to form and compete. The two main parties—Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael—do not differ widely in ideology; they represent the successors of opposing sides in the nation's 1922–23 civil war. Other key parties include the Labour Party and Sinn Féin. The Green Party reentered the Dáil in 2016 following previous losses.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

Opposition parties generally do not encounter restrictions or harassment that affects their ability to gain power through elections. Fianna Fáil dominated politics after Ireland became independent, holding power for 61 out of 79 years until 2011. Fine Gael is now the largest party in parliament.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

People's political choices are generally free from domination by military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies and other powerful groups. The influence of the Catholic Church has declined in recent years.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 4 / 4

Ethnic and other minorities are free to participate in politics. Women are active in politics, and due in part to gender quotas, make up 22 percent of Dáil representatives.

The roughly 30,000 member of the Irish Traveller minority have little political representation, and efforts to include them in political processes are minimal.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 11 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4

Elected officials freely determine government policy.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4

Ireland has relatively high levels of government corruption compared to its northern European neighbors, and cronyism, political patronage, and illegal donations are recurring problems. In June 2017, the Council of Europe's anticorruption body, known as GRECO, criticized Ireland for failing to implement 8 out of 11 anticorruption reforms it had recommended concerning parliamentarians, judges, and prosecutors. Government officials continue to affirm their intention to enact an antibribery measure unveiled in 2012, but have yet to do so.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 4 / 4

The public has broad access to official information under the 2014 Freedom of Information Act, though partial exemptions remain for the police and some other agencies. A Transparency Code requires open records on the groups and individuals that advise public officials on policy.

The government has been criticized for failing to consult meaningfully with civil society groups and relevant stakeholders in the formulation of policy, particularly regarding Roma, Travellers, and persons with disabilities.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 57 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 16 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 4 / 4

Irish media are free and independent, and print media present a variety of viewpoints. The state may censor material deemed indecent or obscene, but this provision is rarely invoked. The government announced it will in 2018 finally hold a referendum on removing the offense of blasphemy from the constitution and repealing the 2009 Defamation Act, which made blasphemy punishable by heavy fines. Internet access is unrestricted.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Freedom of religion is constitutionally guaranteed. Although religious oaths are still required from senior public officials, there is no state religion, and adherents of other faiths face few impediments to religious expression. In recent years, Ireland has faced a notable decline in religiosity following a series of sexual abuse scandals linked to clergy in the Catholic Church.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is respected. The Catholic Church operates approximately 90 percent of Ireland's schools and most schools include religious education, but parents may

exempt their children from it. The constitution requires equal funding for schools run by different denominations.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

There are no significant impediments to open and free private discussion, including in personal online communications.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 12 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4

The right to assemble freely is respected, and peaceful demonstrations are held each year.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Freedom of association is upheld, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) can operate freely.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

Labor unions operate without hindrance, and collective bargaining is legal and unrestricted.

F. RULE OF LAW: 14 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 4 / 4

Ireland has an independent judiciary and a legal system based on common law. The Court of Appeal, established in 2014, aims to ease the Supreme Court's backlog. The government has not yet implemented the Council of Europe's recommendations to establish a Judicial Council and improve the judicial appointments procedure. In 2017, the Council of Europe called on the government to implement additional anticorruption measures in the judiciary.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 4 / 4

Due process generally prevails in civil and criminal matters. However, in 2017, the Council of Europe called out corruption in the prosecution service. The police force has been rocked by repeated scandals over the past years, and the head of the Irish police resigned in September in the wake of investigations of her handling of investigations of irregular use of breathalyzer tests, and questions about her approach toward whistleblowers. Separately, the 2017 final report of the Fennelly Commission that investigated allegations that some Garda stations had illegally taped telephone calls found evidence of unlawful recordings, but concluded that it was neither widespread nor systematic. The Garda have also been accused of routinely wiping penalty points from driving licenses of police members.

A series of official inquiries in recent years have detailed decades of physical and emotional abuse—including forced labor as recently as 1996—against women and children in state institutions and by Catholic priests and nuns, as well as collusion to hide the abuse. In March 2017, the country was shocked when government investigators revealed that a mass grave of babies and children was discovered at the site of the former Bon Secours Mother and Baby Home in Tuam, Galway, a Catholic Church-run facility that housed orphaned children and the children of unwed mothers. The facility, which had received unmarried pregnant women and separated their children from them upon birth, had closed in 1961.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 3 / 4

Irish prisons and detention facilities are reportedly dangerous, unsanitary, and overcrowded. In 2016, the inspector of prisons published a review of prisoner complaint procedures that found failures to adhere to complaint protocols. The government has taken some steps to address a 2015 Council of Europe report that criticized the continued lack of toilet access in some cells.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

The Irish Travellers face discrimination in housing and hiring. There are concerns that people with disabilities are persistently institutionalized and have suffered a severe reduction of social benefits as a result of a government austerity drive. Irish law prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation, but some social stigma against LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people persists. In 2015, the parliament passed legislation to curtail an exemption that allowed health and educational institutions run by religious entities to practice employment discrimination on religious grounds—for example, on the basis of sexual orientation.

The asylum application process is complex, and asylum seekers are housed for lengthy periods in poor living conditions. The 2015 International Protection Law expedites asylum procedures, although it focuses on enabling deportations rather than properly identifying and processing asylum cases.

Discrimination in the workplace on the basis of gender is illegal, but gender inequality in wages persists.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 15 / 16**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4**

There are no restrictions on travel or the ability to choose one's place of residence, employment, or education.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 4 / 4

Private businesses are free to operate, and property rights are generally respected.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

Domestic and sexual violence against women is a serious problem, and access to support for victims is particularly difficult for marginalized and immigrant women.

In 2015, referendum voters approved the extension of marriage rights to same-sex couples. The constitution was duly amended and the Marriage Act passed, which provides for same-sex marriages. Also in 2015, the Children and Family Relationships Act extended adoption rights to same-sex as well as cohabiting couples, and the Gender Recognition Act began allowing transgender individuals to obtain legal recognition without medical or state intervention, and—for married transgender people—without divorcing.

A 2013 law granted limited abortion rights in cases where a woman's life is at risk, but abortion otherwise remains criminalized with a penalty of up to 14 years' imprisonment. The constitution acknowledges "the right to life of the unborn."

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 4 / 4

People generally enjoy equality of opportunity. However, although the government works to combat human trafficking and protect victims, undocumented migrant workers remain at risk of trafficking and labor exploitation.

Israel

Population: 8,200,000

Capital: Jerusalem

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 3 ↓

Freedom Rating: 2.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Note: The numerical ratings and status listed above do not reflect conditions in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, which are examined in separate reports. Although the international community generally considers East Jerusalem to be part of the occupied West Bank, it may be mentioned in this report when specific conditions there directly affect or overlap with conditions in Israel proper.

Ratings Change: Israel's civil liberties rating declined from 2 to 3 due to a series of laws that have been enacted or proposed in recent years with the aim of tightening restrictions on critical nongovernmental organizations and denying them access to international support.

Overview: Israel is a multiparty democracy with strong and independent institutions that guarantee political rights and civil liberties for most of the population. Although the judiciary is active in protecting minority rights, the political leadership and many in society have discriminated against Arab and other minorities, resulting in systemic disparities in areas including political representation, criminal justice, and economic opportunity.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In March, the Knesset (parliament) approved a law barring access to the country for any foreign individual or organization that publicly supports a boycott against Israel or its West Bank settlements. Opponents of the measure argued that it would obstruct the work of human rights groups and other nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that are critical of Israeli policies.
- Police confirmed in August that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was a suspect in two ongoing investigations into allegations of fraud, breach of trust, and bribery. His wife and other associates were facing additional corruption probes at year's end.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 36 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

A largely ceremonial president is elected by the Knesset for one seven-year term. In 2014, Reuven Rivlin of the right-leaning Likud party was elected to replace outgoing president Shimon Peres, receiving 63 votes in a runoff against Meir Sheerit of the centrist Hatnuah party.

The prime minister is usually the leader of the largest faction in the Knesset. In 2014, in a bid to create more stable governing coalitions, the electoral threshold for parties to win representation was raised from 2 percent to 3.25 percent, and the no-confidence procedure was revised so that opponents hoping to oust a sitting government must simultaneously vote in a new one.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

Members of the 120-seat Knesset are elected by party-list proportional representation for four-year terms, and elections are typically free and fair. In the March 2015 contest, Likud, led by incumbent prime minister Netanyahu, secured 30 seats, followed by the center-left Zionist Union with 24. The Joint List—a coalition of parties representing Arab citizens of Israel, who often identify as Palestinian—earned 13 seats; the centrist Yesh Atid (There Is a Future), 11; Kulanu, also centrist, 10; Habayit Hayehudi (Jewish Home), 8; the ultra-Orthodox parties Shas and United Torah Judaism, 7 and 6, respectively; the right-wing Yisrael Beiteinu, 6; and the left-wing Meretz party, 5. In May 2015, Netanyahu formed a new coalition government made up of Likud, Kulanu, Jewish Home, Shas, and United Torah Judaism. In May 2016 the coalition was expanded to include Yisrael Beiteinu.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

The fairness and integrity of elections are guaranteed by the Central Elections Committee, composed of delegations representing the various political groups in the Knesset and chaired by a Supreme Court judge. Elections are generally conducted in a peaceful and orderly manner, and all parties usually accept the results.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 14 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 3 / 4

Israel hosts a diverse and competitive multiparty system. However, parties or candidates that deny Israel's Jewish character, oppose democracy, or incite racism are prohibited. Under a 2016 law, the Knesset can remove any members who incite racism or support armed struggle against the state of Israel with a three-quarters majority vote; critics allege that the law is aimed at silencing Arab representatives.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

Israel has undergone multiple, peaceful rotations of power among rival political groups during its history. Opposition parties control several major cities, including Tel Aviv, and many Arab-majority towns are run by mayors from the Joint List parties.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

Israeli voters are generally free from coercion or undue influence from interest groups outside the political sphere. A law adopted in March 2017 imposed funding restrictions on organizations that are not political parties but seek to influence elections. While it was aimed at limiting political interference by outside groups and wealthy donors, critics of the law said its provisions could affect civil society activism surrounding elections and infringe on freedoms of association and expression.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

Women generally enjoy full political rights in law and in practice, though they remain somewhat underrepresented in leadership positions and can encounter additional obstacles in parties and communities—both Jewish and Arab—that are associated with religious or cultural conservatism.

Arab or Palestinian citizens of Israel enjoy equal rights in principle, as enshrined in Israel's Basic Law, but they face some discrimination in practice, both legally and informally. The Joint List's representation in the Knesset falls short of Arabs' roughly one-fifth share of Israel's population, though some vote or run as candidates for other parties. No Arab party has ever been formally included in a governing coalition, and Arabs generally do not serve in senior positions in government.

The roughly 600,000 Jewish settlers in the West Bank and East Jerusalem are Israeli citizens and can participate in Israeli elections. Arab residents of East Jerusalem have the option of obtaining Israeli citizenship, though most decline for political reasons. These non-citizens can vote in municipal as well as Palestinian Authority elections. However, Israeli law strips noncitizens of their Jerusalem residency if they are away for more than three months. Citizenship and residency status are denied to Palestinian residents of the West Bank or Gaza Strip who are married to Israeli citizens.

Courts can revoke the citizenship of any Israeli convicted of spying, treason, or aiding the enemy. It was reported during 2017 that the Interior Ministry had revoked the citizenship of dozens and possibly thousands of Bedouins in recent years, citing decades-old registration errors.

Jewish immigrants and their immediate families are granted Israeli citizenship and residence rights; other immigrants must apply for these rights.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 10 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4

The government and parliament are free to set and implement policies and laws without undue interference from unelected entities.

In September 2017, a Supreme Court ruling barred the Netanyahu government from continuing its practice of passing two-year budgets by issuing temporary ordinances to circumvent the Basic Law, which calls for one-year budgets. The biennial budgets had been criticized for weakening the Knesset's role as a check on the government.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4

High-level corruption investigations are relatively frequent, with senior officials implicated in several scandals and criminal cases in recent years. In August 2017, police confirmed that Prime Minister Netanyahu was a suspect in two investigations into allegations of fraud, breach of trust, and bribery; they pertained to his acceptance of expensive gifts and his apparent attempts to collude with the owner of *Yedioth Ahronoth* to secure positive

news coverage. Two other inquiries that were under way during the year focused on some of the prime minister's closest associates, with allegations involving bribery in a contract to purchase naval vessels and an exchange of regulatory favors for positive news coverage with the telecommunications and media conglomerate Bezeq. Separately in September, the attorney general announced plans to indict Netanyahu's wife for aggravated fraud and breach of trust related to inflated spending at the prime minister's residences.

In December, the Knesset approved a law that limits the circumstances under which the police can file indictment recommendations when investigating elected officials and senior civil servants, and increases the penalties for leaking a police recommendation or other investigative materials. While the final version of the law did not apply to existing investigations, the opposition accused the majority of trying to weaken law enforcement agencies to protect its political leadership.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 3 / 4

Israel's laws, political practices, civil society groups, and independent media generally ensure a substantial level of governmental transparency. Recent corruption cases have illustrated persistent shortcomings, though they also suggest that the system is eventually able to expose wrongdoing. The Freedom of Information Law grants every citizen and resident of Israel the right to receive information from a public authority. However, the law includes blanket exemptions that allow officials to withhold information on the armed forces, intelligence services, the Atomic Energy Agency, and the prison system, potentially enabling the concealment of abuses.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 43 / 60 (-1)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 12 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4

The Israeli media sector as a whole is vibrant and free to criticize government policy. In May 2017, the Knesset revoked a 1933 ordinance that had required newspapers to obtain a license from the Interior Ministry. While the scope of permissible reporting is generally broad, print articles on security matters are subject to a military censor. The Government Press Office has occasionally withheld press cards from journalists to restrict them from entering Israel, citing security considerations. In August 2017, Communications Minister Ayoub Kara attempted to revoke the credentials of Al-Jazeera correspondent Elias Karram, who was accused of supporting the "Palestinian resistance." The decision was suspended for six months after a hearing in which Karram condemned any use of violence. However, in September the government prevented an Al-Jazeera journalist from attending a state-sponsored event on freedom of speech.

In July 2017 the Knesset approved a law allowing police and prosecutors to obtain court orders that require the blocking of websites found to publish criminal or offensive content. Freedom of expression advocates warned that the measure could lead to the suppression of legitimate speech. Separately, in May the Supreme Court blocked a government-backed law approved by the Knesset the same month that would have removed the news division from Israel's new public broadcasting corporation. The prime minister had long displayed opposition to a strong and politically independent public broadcaster.

Netanyahu's dual role as prime minister and communications minister since 2014 raised questions about conflicts of interest involving the ministry's regulatory role. He was forced to resign as communications minister in February 2017 in light of the police investigations into his alleged attempts to arrange favorable coverage from certain private media outlets. Kara, his replacement, was considered a close ally.

Also during the year, the culture minister repeatedly threatened to cut state funding for—or called for the suppression of—artistic works that she found offensive, despite her apparent lack of legal authority to carry out such threats.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4

While Israel defines itself as a Jewish state, freedom of religion is largely respected. Christian, Muslim, and Baha'i communities have jurisdiction over their own members in matters of marriage, divorce, and burial. The Orthodox establishment governs personal status matters among Jews, drawing objections from many non-Orthodox and secular Israelis. Most ultra-Orthodox Jews, or Haredim, have been excused from compulsory military service under a decades-old exemption for those engaged in full-time Torah study, but there have been several political and legal challenges to this dispensation in recent years. In September 2017 the Supreme Court gave the government one year to pass legislation that would end such mass exemptions and uphold the principle of equality.

Although the law protects the religious sites of non-Jewish minorities, they face discrimination in the allocation of state resources as well as persistent cases of vandalism, which usually go unsolved. Four Christian and Muslim sites were attacked or vandalized in the first half of 2017.

Citing security concerns, Israeli authorities have set limits on access to the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif in East Jerusalem in recent years, affecting worshippers across the broader area. In July 2017, after Palestinian attackers killed two Israeli police officers near the site, authorities decided to install metal detectors and other new security structures at the entrances to the compound, setting off clashes between Palestinian protesters and Israeli police that led to several fatalities. The unrest subsided after Israeli officials reversed the changes later that month.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 3 / 4

Primary and secondary education is universal, though divided into multiple public school systems (state, state-religious, Haredi, and Arabic). School quality and resources are generally lower in mostly non-Jewish communities. Secularist groups warned during 2017 that religious content was being added to the curriculums of secular state schools, and the Education Ministry pledged to revise certain textbooks in response to specific complaints.

Israel's universities have long been centers for dissent and are open to all students, though security-related restrictions on movement limit access for West Bank and Gaza residents in practice. Universities have come under pressure from right-leaning groups and politicians in recent years. In June 2017, scholars and university officials denounced a proposed new ethical code commissioned by the Education Ministry that they said would impose limits on academic speech in a bid to combat a perceived left-wing bias among faculty.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4

While private discussion in Israel is generally open and free, there are some restrictions on political expression. For example, the 2011 Boycott Law exposes Israeli individuals and groups to civil lawsuits if they advocate an economic, cultural, or academic boycott of the state of Israel or West Bank settlements.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 9 / 12 (-1)**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 3 / 4**

Israel has an active civil society, and demonstrations are widely permitted and typically peaceful. However, some protest activities—such as desecration of the flag of Israel or a friendly country—can draw serious criminal penalties, and police have sometimes attempted to restrict peaceful demonstrations. In 2017, police sought to block or move weekly protests outside the home of the attorney general, whom the demonstrators accused of stalling corruption probes against the prime minister. The Supreme Court ruled in October that the protests could proceed without a permit.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 2 / 4 (-1)

In recent years the environment for civil society groups has gradually deteriorated. A law that took effect in 2012 requires NGOs to submit financial reports four times a year on support received from foreign government sources. Under a 2016 law, NGOs that receive more than half of their funding from foreign governments must disclose this fact publicly and in any written or oral communications with elected officials. The measure mainly affected groups associated with the political left that oppose Israel's policies toward the Palestinians; foreign funding for right-leaning groups that support Jewish settlements in the West Bank, for example, more often comes from private sources.

In March 2017 the Knesset approved a law that bars access to the country for any foreign groups that publicly support a boycott of Israel or its West Bank settlements. The measure was criticized by civil society organizations as an obstacle to the activity of many pro-Palestinian and human rights groups.

Other bills that were proposed or considered during 2017 would go further than these existing laws, for example by imposing tighter restrictions on foreign funding and allowing the closure of organizations that support boycotts or seek to hold Israeli forces accountable for human rights abuses in foreign tribunals. One proposed measure would make it easier for plaintiffs to file civil suits against NGOs and activists who support boycotts without having to show proof of damages.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 due to a new law barring entry to the country for foreign individuals or groups that support boycotts of Israel or its West Bank settlements, a 2016 law that increased disclosure requirements for NGOs that rely on foreign government funding, and a number of proposed bills that would further tighten rules governing the operations of NGOs and expose them to possible closure, all of which contributed to a climate of political hostility toward groups that have criticized the government in recent years.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

Workers may join unions and have the right to strike and bargain collectively. Most of the workforce either belongs to Histadrut, the national labor federation, or is covered by its social programs and bargaining agreements.

F. RULE OF LAW: 11 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 4 / 4**

The judiciary is independent and regularly rules against the government. Over the years, the Supreme Court has played an increasingly central role in protecting minorities and overturning decisions by the government and the parliament when they threaten human

rights. The Supreme Court hears direct petitions from both Israeli citizens and Palestinian residents of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and the state generally adheres to court rulings.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 3 / 4

Although due process is largely guaranteed in ordinary cases, those suspected of security-related offenses are subject to special legal provisions. Individuals can be held in administrative detention without trial for renewable six-month terms. According to the human rights group B'tselem, there were a total of 5,881 Palestinians from the occupied territories in Israeli Prison Service facilities at the end of November 2017, including 425 in administrative detention. Under criminal law, individuals suspected of security offenses can be held for up to 96 hours without judicial review under certain circumstances, and be denied access to an attorney for up to 21 days.

According to Defense for Children International (DCI) Palestine, 313 Palestinian children (aged 12–17) from the occupied territories were being held in Israeli military detention as of November 2017. Although Israeli law prohibits the detention of children younger than 12, some are occasionally held. Most Palestinian child detainees are serving sentences—handed down by a special military court for minors created in 2009—for throwing stones or other projectiles at Israeli troops in the West Bank; acquittals on such charges are very rare, and the military courts have been criticized for a lack of due process protections. East Jerusalem Palestinian minors are tried in Israeli civilian juvenile courts.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 2 / 4

Israeli border communities receive occasional rocket and artillery fire from Syria and the Gaza Strip. Israeli security forces and civilians also face the ongoing threat of small-scale terrorist attacks, most often involving stabbings or vehicular assaults.

The authorities adopted a series of measures in 2015 to crack down on violent protests. A law set to expire after three years established a three-year minimum prison sentence for stone throwers and the suspension of social benefits for the parents of juvenile offenders. Another law increased the maximum penalties for such crimes, with sentences of up to 20 years in prison for adults in Israel who throw objects at a vehicle with intent to harm the occupants. New regulations also authorized police to fire small-caliber bullets at stone throwers if a third party's life is threatened, not just when the officer's own life is in danger. Human rights groups have sometimes accused police of using deadly force against stone throwers or perpetrators of stabbing and vehicular attacks when they did not pose a lethal threat.

The Supreme Court banned torture in a 1999 ruling, but said physical coercion might be permissible during interrogations in cases involving an imminent threat. Human rights organizations accuse the authorities of continuing to use some forms of physical abuse and other measures such as isolation, sleep deprivation, psychological threats and pressure, painful binding, and humiliation.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

Arab or Palestinian citizens of Israel face de facto discrimination in education, social services, and access to housing and related permits. Aside from the Druze minority, they are exempted from military conscription, though they may volunteer. Those who do not serve are ineligible for the associated benefits, including scholarships and housing loans.

The Jewish National Fund (JNF-KKL), which owns about 13 percent of the land in Israel, has effectively maintained a Jewish-only land-leasing policy thanks to a land-swap arrangement with the Israel Land Authority, which grants the JNF replacement property whenever an Arab bidder obtains a parcel of its land.

Many of Israel's roughly 230,000 Bedouin citizens live in towns and villages that are not recognized by the state. Those in unrecognized villages cannot claim social services, are in some cases off the electricity grid, and have no official land rights, and the government routinely demolishes their unlicensed structures.

Israelis of Ethiopian origin, numbering around 130,000, suffer from discrimination—including in the criminal justice system—and lag behind the general population economically despite government integration efforts.

Women are treated equally in criminal and civil courts and have achieved substantial parity within Israeli society, though economic and other forms of discrimination persist, particularly among Arab and religious Jewish communities. Arab women are far less likely to be employed than either Arab men or Jewish women.

Discrimination based on sexual orientation is illegal, though LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people continue to face bias in some communities. Gay and transgender Israelis are permitted to serve openly in the military.

Individuals who enter the country irregularly, including asylum seekers, can be detained for up to a year without charges. Asylum applications, when fully processed, are nearly always rejected. In recent years the authorities have pressured thousands of African migrants and asylum seekers who entered the country irregularly—mostly from Eritrea and Sudan—to agree to be repatriated or deported to a third country, such as Rwanda or Uganda. In December 2017, the Knesset approved a government plan to increase movement and employment restrictions on the roughly 40,000 who remain; those without pending asylum applications who refuse voluntary deportation would ultimately face either forced deportation or imprisonment, according to the plan. There have been few new irregular entries since a barrier along the border with Egypt was completed in 2013.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 11 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4

Security measures can sometimes present obstacles to freedom of movement, though military checkpoints are restricted to the West Bank. Informal local rules that prevent driving on the Sabbath and Jewish holidays can also hamper free movement.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 3 / 4

Property rights within Israel are effectively protected, and business activity is generally free of undue interference. Businesses face a low risk of expropriation or criminal activity, and corruption is not a major obstacle for private investors. However, Israel's general commitment to property rights has been called into question given its handling of unrecognized Bedouin villages and its settlement policies in the West Bank. In February 2017, the Knesset approved a law that allows for the retroactive expropriation, with compensation, of private Palestinian land where Jewish settlements have been built illegally; implementation of the law was suspended pending a court review.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

Personal social freedoms are generally guaranteed. However, since religious courts oversee personal status issues, women face some disadvantages in divorce and other matters. Marriages between Jews and non-Jews are not recognized by the state unless conducted abroad, nor are marriages involving a Muslim woman and a non-Muslim man. Israel recognizes same-sex marriages conducted abroad. Nonbiological parents in same-sex partnerships are eligible for guardianship rights. Many ultra-Orthodox Jewish communities attempt to enforce unofficial rules on gender separation and personal attire.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Israel remains a destination for human-trafficking victims, and African migrants and asylum seekers residing in the country are especially vulnerable to forced labor and sex trafficking. The government works actively to combat trafficking and protect victims. Israel's roughly 77,000 legal foreign workers are formally protected from exploitation by employers, but these guarantees are poorly enforced. About 17,000 foreigners work in the country illegally. Histadrut has opened membership to foreign workers and called on employers to grant them equal rights.

Italy

Population: 60,600,000

Capital: Rome

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 1

Freedom Rating: 1.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Italy's parliamentary system features competitive multiparty elections. The Vatican has traditionally held significant influence over the country's politics, and ties between organized crime and public officials persist. Civil liberties are respected, though the judicial system is undermined by long trial delays.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In January, the Constitutional Court struck down part of the "Italicum" electoral law that was pushed through by former prime minister Matteo Renzi, and had been designed to encourage parliamentary majorities and avoid postelection deadlock. Some provisions encouraging majorities were preserved by the ruling, but another electoral law, approved in November, supplanted the Italicum law. Its provisions were likely to encourage parliamentary coalitions.
- Center-right parties performed well in local elections held in June, while the anti-establishment Five Star Movement, whose entry into Italian politics in 2013 had shaken the political scene, posted a weak performance.
- Italy continued to experience large-scale migration, with most refugees attempting to reach the country by crossing the Mediterranean Sea from Libya. Migrant flows began to decrease during the second half of the year, due in part to Italian cooperation with the Libyan coast guard.

- The government approved a new code of conduct for nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) involved in rescue operations in the Mediterranean Sea, but some groups refused to assent to it, saying it would constrain their operations.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 36 / 40**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4**

Parliament and regional representatives elect the president, whose role is largely ceremonial but sometimes politically influential, for a seven-year term. The legitimacy of the presidential vote rests largely on the fairness of legislative elections.

The president appoints the prime minister, who serves as head of government and is often, but not always, the leader of the largest party in the Chamber of Deputies, Italy's lower house. The prime minister proposes a Council of Ministers that requires confirmation by Parliament.

Since December 2016, Paolo Gentiloni has served as prime minister. He took office after the defeat of a 2016 constitutional referendum prompted the resignation of then prime minister Matteo Renzi.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The bicameral Parliament consists of the 630-member Chamber of Deputies and the 322-member Senate; most members of both houses were popularly elected to five-year terms. International observers generally praised preparations for the 2013 polls. The center-left Italy Common Good coalition won the most votes and claimed 345 seats in the Chamber of Deputies and 112 of the 315 directly elected seats in the Senate. Local elections held in June 2017 saw gains by the center-right opposition coalition, and political leaders acknowledged the elections' results without objection.

In December 2017, President Sergio Mattarella dissolved the parliament and set a new election for March 2018, which will be held under a new electoral system.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

While Italy's electoral framework and campaign finance regulations are complex, the country has consistently held credible elections under them.

Recent years have seen controversial reforms and court rulings affecting electoral laws, and such developments continued in 2017. In January, the Constitutional Court struck down part of the "Italicum" electoral law, which had been initiated by Renzi and approved by the parliament in 2015. The law was designed to encourage majorities and avoid postelection deadlock by mandating a two-round system that awarded a supermajority of 340 seats in the lower house to a single party. However, the Constitutional Court found it was partly unconstitutional because it could give rise to a situation where a supermajority is awarded to a party that posted a relatively weak showing in the first of the two election rounds. The court preserved other parts of the law, ultimately leaving a system in which a 340-seat supermajority would be awarded to a party that won more than 40 percent of the vote in a single election round.

However, in November, the Italian parliament adopted a new electoral law that replaced Italicum, which introduced a mixed electoral system in both houses. Under the law, 36 percent of seats are allocated using the first-past-the-post system, and 64 percent using a

proportional, party-list method. Unlike Italicum, the new law was viewed as encouraging coalitions. Parliamentary elections are expected in 2018.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 14 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4**

Political parties are generally able to form and operate freely, and the political landscape features a high level of pluralism and competition. Since the beginning of the 1990s, politics have characterized by been unstable coalitions and the frequent emergence of new parties. The most prominent example is the Five Star Movement, whose rise in 2013 elections changed the Italian party landscape into a tripolar system.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

Political alternation has been the rule since the beginning of the 1990s. The anti-establishment Five Star Movement and the center-right opposition coalition posted strong performances in 2016 and 2017 local elections, respectively.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 3 / 4

Historically, the Vatican has held significant influence over politics in Italy, a heavily Catholic country. Ties between organized crime and public officials persist and fuel concerns about undue pressure on government, especially at the local level.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

Electoral laws contain some provisions designed to bring linguistic minorities into the parliament. Women's interests are not well represented in politics. Issues of concern to ethnic minorities play only a marginal role in national and local political agendas, and some municipal policies aggravate the exclusion of Roma.

The parliament failed to vote in 2017 on divisive citizenship reforms that, if adopted, would facilitate new pathways for noncitizen minors to gain citizenship.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 10 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4**

Italy's elected representatives are able to freely craft and implement policy.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4

Corruption remains a serious problem, and ties between organized crime and public officials persist. Government efforts to combat corruption continued in 2017. In October, the parliament approved a new antimafia law intended to make some anticorruption procedures more efficient, and which created a government department to oversee assets confiscated in anticorruption cases. A major corruption prosecution concluded in July, when 2 organized crime figures and some 40 politicians and businesspeople were convicted of involvement in a scheme through which public contracts were awarded improperly.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 3 / 4

A 2013 legislative decree established greater transparency of information within public administration. The government regularly complies with requests for information, though delayed responses have been reported.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 53 / 60**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 15 / 16****D1. Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4**

Freedoms of expression and the press are constitutionally guaranteed. Despite the rapid growth of the online news industry, traditional media still play a large role in news consumption. There are more than 100 daily newspapers, most of them locally or regionally based, as well as political party papers, free papers, and weekly publications. Concentration of media ownership remains a major concern, but many viewpoints are available in the country's media. Internet access is generally unrestricted.

Threats against journalists remain a problem. In 2017, almost 200 journalists received police protection, according to the interior ministry, often in connection with threats from figures involved in organized crime.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Religious freedom is constitutionally guaranteed and respected in practice. There is no official religion, though Roman Catholicism is the dominant faith, and the state grants some privileges to the Catholic Church.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is generally respected.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

People are generally able to discuss controversial or sensitive topics in public without fear of surveillance or retribution.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 12 / 12**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4**

Italian citizens are free to assemble and to organize demonstrations. Demonstrations on a variety of issues—including a large antimafia march in Locri, and a protest in Rome in which participants called on authorities to protect the rights of refugees—took place peacefully in 2017. However, in March, some participants of a demonstration in Naples against the Northern League, an anti-immigrant political party, threw objects including Molotov cocktails at police, who responded with water cannons and tear gas.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

NGOs are generally free to organize and operate. However, in 2017, the government approved a new code of conduct for NGOs involved in rescue operations in the Mediterranean Sea, where thousands of migrants and refugees die each year as they attempt to reach Europe from North Africa. Five NGOs, including Doctors Without Borders (MSF) refused

to sign the code, citing concerns over mandates that would allow police officers to board their vessels, and which could limit their ability to transport migrants from their own vessels to other ships.⁷

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

Trade unions are generally free to organize and operate. The constitution recognizes the right to strike but places restrictions on strikes by employees of essential sectors like transportation, sanitation, and health, as well as on some self-employed individuals, including lawyers, doctors, and truck drivers.

F. RULE OF LAW: 12 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 3 / 4

While the judiciary is generally independent, problems with judicial corruption persist.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 3 / 4

Due process rights are generally upheld, though judicial procedures are often characterized by lengthy delays. Italy has one of the lowest numbers of judges per capita in the European Union (EU).

Italy is a major entry point for migrants and refugees trying to reach Europe, and the government has been criticized for denying detained migrants access to lawyers.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 3 / 4

There have been reports of excessive use of force by police, particularly against people in the country illegally. Refugees and undocumented migrants have been held in overcrowded and unhygienic conditions.

In July 2017, the parliament approved a law criminalizing torture, though rights groups criticized it for defining torture narrowly and mandating a relatively short statute of limitations, which they identified as problematic in light of delays that plague the justice system.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

Italy continued to experience large-scale migration by sea during 2017, though the rate of entries decreased during the second half of the year, due in part to Italian cooperation with and investments in the Libyan coast guard. Immediate emergency services for arriving migrants, many of whom were asylum seekers, were routine and included medical treatment, food, water, and temporary shelter. However, the authorities struggled to provide long-term services such as housing and timely processing of asylum applications.

LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people face societal discrimination and occasional acts of violence. Members of the Roma minority have unequal access to housing, and many live in segregated settlements that lack adequate infrastructure.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 14 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4

Italian citizens are generally free to travel and to choose their place of residence, employment, and education. The right to education is guaranteed by the constitution.

⁷ <http://www.euronews.com/2017/08/03/text-of-italys-code-of-conduct-for-ngos-involved-in-migrant-rescue>

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 3 / 4

Corruption and organized crime can hinder normal business activity, as can highly bureaucratic regulatory structures. Delays in court proceedings often undermine enforcement of protections for property rights.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 4 / 4

Gender-based discrimination is prohibited by law. However, Italian women face serious obstacles in both labor force participation and wage equality. Violence against women is a persistent problem, though public awareness of the issue is increasing due to various advocacy campaigns.

The parliament approved same-sex civil unions in 2016. The law provides civil unions with almost all rights of marriage. However the possibility of step-child adoption was removed from the measure's provisions following parliamentary debate.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

Human trafficking, particularly the trafficking of women and girls for sexual exploitation, remained a concern in 2017. The many migrants and asylum seekers who have entered Italy in recent years are particularly susceptible to exploitation. However, the government actively works to identify and prosecute traffickers, and funds services for victims.

Jamaica

Population: 2,700,000

Capital: Kingston

Political Rights Rating: 2

Civil Liberties Rating: 3

Freedom Rating: 2.5

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Jamaica's political institutions are democratic, with competitive elections and orderly rotations of power. However, corruption remains a serious problem, and long-standing relationships between officials and organized crime figures are thought to persist. Gang and vigilante violence remains a concern, as does harassment and violence against LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In August, the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) published a report denying any wrongdoing over its role in a 2010 raid in Kingston that led to the deaths of over 70 people. The JCF report stood in contrast to the findings of a separate investigation released in 2016, which found that the raid's "execution by some members of the security forces was disproportionate, unjustified, and unjustifiable."
 - In October, National Security Minister Robert Montague said that crime was causing the country to lose around 68 billion Jamaican dollars (\$526 million) per year—the equivalent of 5 percent of Jamaica's gross domestic product (GDP).
-

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 34 / 40**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4**

The British monarch is the ceremonial chief of state and is represented by a governor general. The prime minister is the head of government; the position is appointed after elections by the governor general, and usually goes to the leader of the majority party or coalition. The prime minister's legitimacy rests largely on the conduct of legislative elections, which in Jamaica are generally free and fair. Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) leader Andrew Holness became prime minister after the party's narrow win in the 2016 elections.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

Jamaica's bicameral Parliament consists of a 63-member House of Representatives, elected for five years, and a 21-member Senate, with 13 senators appointed on the advice of the prime minister and 8 on the advice of the opposition leader. Senators also serve five-year terms.

In 2016, the opposition JLP won 32 seats in the legislature, in a narrow victory over the incumbent People's National Party (PNP), which took 31. Monitors from the Organization for American States (OAS) deemed the 2016 general elections competitive and credible, but recorded instances of election-related violence ahead of the polls, and expressed concern about voter apathy, which was manifested in a historically low voter turnout of 48 percent.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

Electoral laws are generally fair, but the 2016 OAS mission suggested various improvements, including strengthening campaign finance rules and making it easier for citizens to vote in areas outside their assigned polling station.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 13 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4**

Political parties form and operate without restriction. Although various smaller parties are active, politics at the national level is dominated by the social democratic PNP and the more conservative JLP.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

Opposition parties operate freely, and political power has alternated between the PNP and JLP.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 2 / 4

Powerful criminal gangs can influence voters who live in areas under their control. Such groups have used intimidation or other tactics to ensure high voter turnout for particular candidates or parties in exchange for political favors.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

Women are underrepresented in politics. Of the 152 candidates contesting the 2016 elections, 26 candidates, or 17.1 percent, were women. Eleven women were elected to the House of Representatives, comprising 17.5 percent of the body. The LGBT community experiences harassment and violence, and this impacts the ability of LGBT people to engage in political and electoral processes.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 9 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4**

The elected prime minister and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government. However powerful criminal gangs, as well as corruption in politics, can affect democratic policymaking.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4

Long-standing relationships between officials and organized crime figures persist. Government bodies continue to pursue corruption investigations, and cases frequently end in convictions. However, the public prosecutor has faced criticism in the media and from nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) for a reluctance to pursue some cases. Government whistleblowers are not well protected.

Allegations that PNP leaders had siphoned off millions of dollars' worth of funds donated to the party in order to bolster their personal campaigns for February 2016 elections remained outstanding. But, the PNP has established an internal oversight body to safeguard against such occurrences in the future.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

An access to information law has been in effect since 2004, though it contains a number of exemptions, and does not address officials who do not reply to requests. Legislative processes are sometimes opaque.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 43 / 60 (+2)**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 15 / 16****D1. Are there free and independent media? 4 / 4**

The constitutional right to free expression is generally respected. Most newspapers are privately owned, and express a variety of views. Broadcast media are largely state-owned but espouse similarly pluralistic points of view. Journalists occasionally face intimidation, especially in the run-up to elections.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Freedom of religion is constitutionally protected and generally respected in practice. While laws banning Obeah—an Afro-Caribbean shamanistic religion—remain on the books, they are not actively enforced.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

The government does not restrict academic freedom.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4

Individuals are generally free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics. However, the presence of powerful criminal gangs in some urban neighborhoods can discourage people from talking openly about such groups' activities.

In September 2017, the House of Representatives passed the National Identification and Registration Bill, which established groundwork for a National Identification System that requires the collection of people's personal information. Privacy advocates have expressed concern about the system's possible overreach; it is expected to be rolled out in 2018.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 9 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 3 / 4

Freedom of assembly is provided for by the constitution, and is generally respected in practice. However, occasionally protests are marred by violence or otherwise unsafe conditions. In 2017, protests in Jamaica's St. Thomas Parish over poor roads saw some participants throwing stones and setting debris on fire. Responding police deployed pepper spray against at least one demonstrator.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 3 / 4

Jamaica has a robust civil society with many active community groups. However, many such organizations struggle financially and at times have difficulty attracting volunteers, negatively impacting their levels of engagement.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

Approximately 20 percent of the workforce is unionized. Labor unions are politically influential and have the right to strike. However, essential services workers most undergo an arbitration process with the Ministry of Labor and Social Security before they may legally strike, and the definition of the work constituting "essential services" is broad. There are reports of private-sector employers laying off unionized workers and then later hiring them as contract workers.

F. RULE OF LAW: 8 / 16 (+1)

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 3 / 4 (+1)

Judicial independence is guaranteed by the constitution, though corruption is a problem in some lower courts. The judicial system is headed by the Supreme Court and includes a court of appeals and several magistrates' courts. The Trinidad-based Caribbean Court of Justice is the highest appellate court.

There were several high-profile convictions during 2017, including in July of a policeman for his involvement in shooting and killing a teenager in 2007. According to a May 2017 report published by the Office of the Contractor General, 68 percent of respondents believed judges had integrity.

Score Change: The score improved from 2 to 3 because the judiciary has established a record of independent decisions, and is regarded as independent by much of the public.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 2 / 4

A large backlog of cases and a shortage of court staff at all levels continues to undermine the justice system. Trials are often delayed for years, and at times cases are dismissed due to systematic failures, including antiquated rules regarding evidence.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 2 / 4

Killings by police remain a serious problem in Jamaica. According to the Independent Commission of Investigations (INDECOM), 168 individuals were killed by security personnel in 2017.

A Commission of Inquiry in 2016 submitted a report on the state of emergency declared in 2010 in response to violence in the Tivoli Gardens neighborhood of Kingston, in which more than 70 civilians were killed in an operation aimed at arresting an alleged drug trafficker. The report found that security forces had acted disproportionately, and recommended that the government apologize for the event and provide victims with compensation and counseling services; the government issued an apology and provided some compensation to relatives of those killed in December 2017. However, the JCF in August 2017 issued its own report on the raid, which cleared members of wrongdoing and questioned the integrity of the earlier report.

Gang and vigilante violence remains a common occurrence. Kingston's insular "garrison" communities remain the epicenter of most violence and serve as safe havens for gangs. Jamaica is a transit point for cocaine shipped from Colombia to U.S. markets, and much of the island's violence is the result of warfare between drug gangs. A range of initiatives have been taken by successive governments, but crime and violence remain deeply entrenched. As of mid-December, there had been over 1,500 killings, according to police data. In an October address, National Security Minister Robert Montague said crime is causing the country to lose around 68 billion Jamaican dollars (\$526 million) a year—the equivalent of five percent of GDP.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

Harassment of and violence against LGBT people remains a major concern and is frequently ignored by the police. Legislation against sodomy, which is punishable by 10 years in prison with hard labor, was challenged in court in 2014; however, the case was withdrawn that year after death threats were made against the claimant and his family. In 2016, a report published by J-Flag (Jamaica Forum of Lesbians, All-Sexuals and Gays) found that approximately 88 per cent of survey respondents felt that male homosexuality was immoral; 83.7 percent felt the same for female homosexuality; and 83.5 percent felt bisexual relationships were immoral; these results represented an increase on a similar survey conducted in 2011. As a modest step forward, in 2014 the government added a provision to the Offences against the Person Act that criminalizes the production, recording, or distribution of any audio or visual materials that promote violence against any category of persons, including LGBT individuals.

Women enjoy the same legal rights as men but suffer employment discrimination and tend to make less money than men for performing the same job.

Employment discrimination against Rastafarians has decreased in recent years, as Rastafarian dress and practices have gained greater societal acceptance.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 11 / 16 (+1)

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4

Although there are constitutional guarantees of freedom of movement, political and communal violence frequently precludes the full enjoyment of this right, and curfews are sometimes imposed as a result of gang activity. There are no formal restrictions on people's ability to choose their place of employment or education.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or non-state actors? 3 / 4 (+1)

Jamaica has an active private sector and a powerful pro-business lobby. Individuals are free to establish businesses subject to legal requirements, which are not onerous. Recent reforms have included expediting the incorporation process, making electricity in Kingston more consistent, and easing the import process. However, corruption and crime can still hamper normal business activity.

Score Change: The score improved from 2 to 3 because Jamaica has a robust private sector and the government has taken legal and practical steps to encourage private business activity.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Legal protections for women and girls are poorly enforced, and violence and discrimination remain widespread. There is not a blanket ban on spousal rape, nor are there laws against sexual harassment.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

Residents of neighborhoods where criminal groups are influential are at a heightened risk of becoming victims of human traffickers. Child sex tourism is present in some of Jamaica's resort areas, according to local NGOs. Jamaica has been taking increased action to prevent trafficking; according to the U.S. State Department's 2017 *Trafficking in Persons Report*, there were two convictions, 9 nine trafficking cases, and 40 new investigations during the period under review.

Japan

Population: 125,300,000

Capital: Tokyo

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 1

Freedom Rating: 1.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Japan is a multiparty parliamentary democracy. The ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) has governed almost continuously since 1955, in opposition only twice. Political rights and civil liberties are generally well respected. Outstanding challenges include ethnic and gender-based discrimination, and claims of unduly close relations between government and the business sector.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Prime Minister Shinzō Abe's LDP decisively won a snap election in October. With ally Kōmeitō, the coalition holds the two-thirds supermajority needed for constitutional revision.
- The main opposition Democratic Party (DP) fractured in September, and was surpassed by the newly formed liberal Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan (CDP) in the October elections.
- In July, new anticonspiracy and antiterrorism legislation went into effect. Critics said the law gives the government broad license to conduct surveillance activities and to restrict civil liberties as part of counterterrorism efforts.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 40 / 40**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4**

Japan is a parliamentary democracy. The prime minister is the head of government, and is chosen by the freely elected House of Representatives. The prime minister selects the cabinet, which can include a limited number of non-politicians. Japan's emperor serves as head of state in a ceremonial capacity.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The parliament, or Diet, has two chambers. The more powerful lower house, the House of Representatives, has 465 members elected to maximum four-year terms. The upper house, the House of Councillors, has 242 members serving fixed six-year terms, half elected every three years. The prime minister and his cabinet can dissolve the House of Representatives, but not the House of Councillors. The lower house can also pass a no-confidence resolution that forces the cabinet to either resign or dissolve the House of Representatives.

Legislative elections in Japan are free and fair. In September 2017, Prime Minister Abe dissolved the lower house and called for snap elections, citing a need for a fresh mandate in light of an increasing threat posed by North Korea, which had fired ballistic missiles over northern Japan. The LDP decisively won October's snap elections, and together with its coalition partner, Kōmeitō, holds a two-thirds supermajority in the lower house.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

Japan's electoral laws are generally fair and well-enforced. However, malapportionment benefitting the rural districts from which the LDP draws significant support has been a persistent problem. In July 2017, a new redistricting law designed to reduce the voting weight disparities between urban and rural districts took effect. Districts will be revised again in 2020 after the census is conducted.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 16 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4**

Parties generally do not face undue restrictions on registration or operation. The CDP and the Party of Hope, both of which were formed in 2017, placed second and third respectively in the October 2017 elections.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

While the LDP has traditionally dominated the political scene, opposition parties have a realistic opportunity to increase their support or gain power through elections. The main opposition party, DP, fractured in September 2017, and was surpassed by the newly formed CDP in the October elections.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

People's political choices are generally free from domination by powerful interests that are not democratically accountable.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 4 / 4

The ability to vote and run in national elections is limited to citizens, who may participate in elections regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Women remain underrepresented in government.

Around 600,000 ethnic Koreans—mainly the multigenerational descendants of forced laborers brought to Japan before 1945—hold special residential privileges but not Japanese citizenship, and are therefore ineligible to participate in national elections.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 12 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4

Elected officials are free to govern without interference, though Japanese bureaucrats have some influence over policy.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 4 / 4

Corruption in government is relatively low. However, some government officials have close relations with business leaders, and retiring bureaucrats often quickly secure high-paying positions with companies that receive significant government contracts. In March 2017, the Ministry of Education reported more than 60 cases of illicit job placements of recently retired ministry bureaucrats.

Reporting on political corruption scandals is widespread and vigorous. In early 2017, active reporting on two scandals involving Prime Minister Abe weakened his popularity; one involved a dubious land deal, and another revolved around the approval of a university department. Separately, Defense Minister Tomomi Inada resigned in July following media reports that defense officials had concealed information revealing the worsening security situation in South Sudan, where Japanese troops were participating in a UN peacekeeping operation.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 4 / 4

The Japanese government generally operates with openness and transparency. Access to information legislation allows individuals to request information from government agencies, but in practice the law has not always been implemented effectively. The Act on the Protection of Specially Designated Secrets went into effect in 2014 and allows for unclassified information to be automatically shared with the public. However, it also empowers state

agencies to protect information on a range of security or diplomatic matters, with criminal penalties for those who reveal designated secrets.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 56 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 15 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4

Press freedom is guaranteed in the constitution, and Japan has a highly competitive media sector. However, press freedom advocates have expressed concern about the Specially Designated Secrets Act, which can allow journalists to be prosecuted for revealing state secrets, even if that information was unknowingly obtained. A May 2017 report by the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of expression expressed concern about pressure exerted on media by the Japanese government, and recommended the repeal of Article 4 of the Broadcast Act, which gives the government the power to determine what information is “fair” and thus acceptable for public broadcast.

Under the traditional *kisha kurabu* (press club) system, institutions such as government ministries and corporate organizations have restricted the release of news to those journalists and media outlets with membership in their clubs.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Freedom of religion is guaranteed by the constitution, and no substantial barriers exist to religious expression or expression of nonbelief.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is constitutionally guaranteed, but education and textbooks have long been a focus of public and political debate. While there is not a national curriculum or single official history text, the Ministry of Education’s screening process has approved textbooks that downplay Japan’s history of imperialism and war atrocities. In May 2017, the UN Special Rapporteur called upon the Japanese government to reevaluate the government’s influence on the textbook approval process.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

The government does not restrict private discussion. Some observers expressed concern that antiterrorism and anticonspiracy legislation that went into effect in July 2017 could permit undue surveillance.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 12 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4

Freedom of assembly is protected under the constitution, and peaceful demonstrations take place frequently. In 2017, protests were held against the new antiterrorism legislation, which demonstrators said allowed the government to justify unwarranted surveillance and restrict civil liberties as part of counterterrorism efforts.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), referred to as nonprofit organizations (NPOs) in Japan, are unrestricted and remained diverse and active in 2017.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

Labor unions are active and exert political influence through the Japanese Trade Union Confederation and other groupings.

F. RULE OF LAW: 15 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 4 / 4

Japan's judiciary is independent. For serious criminal cases, a judicial panel composed of professional judges and *saiban-in* (lay judges), selected from the general public, rule on defendants.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 4 / 4

Constitutional guarantees of due process are generally upheld. However observers have argued that trials often favor the prosecution. There are reports that people are often detained on flimsy evidence, arrested multiple times for the same alleged crime, or subjected to lengthy interrogations leading to forced confessions. Police can detain suspects up to 23 days without charge. Access to those in pretrial detention is sometimes limited.

In July 2017, nearly 300 categories of conspiracy offenses were added to criminal law in order to help identify terror plots and organized crime networks. Critics, including the UN, raised concerns that the changes gave the government too much power to restrict civil liberties.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 4 / 4

People in Japan are generally protected from the illegitimate use of physical force and the threat of war and insurgencies. Violent crime rates are generally low. However, organized crime is fairly prominent, particularly in the construction and nightlife sectors; crime groups also run drug trafficking and loansharking operations.

There are frequent reports of substandard medical care in Japanese prisons. Prisoners facing death sentences or accused of crimes that could carry the death penalty are held in solitary confinement, sometimes for years at a time.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

Although declining, societal discrimination affecting Japan's estimated three million *burakumin*—descendants of feudal-era outcasts—and the indigenous Ainu minority can prevent their access to housing and employment. Japan-born descendants of colonial subjects (particularly ethnic Koreans and Chinese) continue to suffer similar disadvantages. A 2016 hate speech law nominally criminalizes discriminatory speech against non-Japanese citizens, but the law is considered weak and difficult to invoke.

LGBT people face social stigma and in some cases harassment. In late 2016, sexual harassment regulations for national government members were modified to prohibit harassment on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. Employment discrimination and sexual harassment against women are common.

Very few refugees are granted asylum in Japan, with only 20 refugees accepted out of almost 20,000 asylum applications in 2017.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 14 / 16**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4**

Citizens enjoy broad personal autonomy in their choices of residence, profession, and education.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 4 / 4

Property rights are generally respected. People are free to establish private businesses, although Japan's economy is heavily regulated.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

There are some limitations on social freedoms in Japan. The country's system of family registration, *koseki*, recognizes people as members of a family unit and requires married couples to share a surname, which usually defaults to the husband's last name. This can create legal complications for, among others, women, and children born out of wedlock or to divorced parents. Same-sex marriage is illegal in Japan. Violence against women often goes unreported.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

Individuals generally enjoy equality of opportunity. However, long workdays are common and have been criticized as harmful to workers' health. A 2016 government white paper revealed that over 20 percent of companies surveyed had employees working more than 80 hours of overtime a month. Many workers are temporary or contract employees with substantially lower wages and benefits and less job security than regular employees.

Human trafficking is an issue in Japan. Traffickers frequently bring foreign women into the country for forced sex work by arranging fraudulent marriages with Japanese men. Foreign workers enrolled in state-backed technical "internships" sometimes face exploitative conditions and forced labor; in November 2017, legislation was implemented to strengthen oversight of the program and punish violations.

Jordan

Population: 8,200,000

Capital: Amman

Political Rights Rating: 5

Civil Liberties Rating: 5

Freedom Rating: 5.0

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: Jordan is a monarchy in which the king plays a dominant role in politics and governance. The parliament's lower house is elected, but the electoral system continues to put the opposition at a disadvantage despite recent reforms, and the chamber wields little power in practice. The media and civil society groups are hampered by restrictive laws and government pressure. The judicial system is not independent and often fails to ensure due process.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Although the threat of terrorism persisted during the year, there were no high-profile attacks like those in 2016.
- In August, Jordan held elections for mayors, local and municipal councils, and new councils at the governorate (provincial) level that were created under a 2015 decentralization law and have a largely advisory role.
- Also that month, the parliament abolished a penal code provision that had allowed rapists to avoid punishment by marrying their victims.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 12 / 40**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 3 / 12****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4**

King Abdullah II holds broad executive powers. He appoints and dismisses the prime minister and cabinet and may dissolve the bicameral National Assembly at his discretion. The prime minister as of 2017 was Hani Mulki, a veteran former diplomat and cabinet minister who had been appointed in May 2016. Constitutional amendments adopted in 2016 empowered the king to make a number of other appointments, including the crown prince and a regent, without a royal decree countersigned by the prime minister or other cabinet ministers.

Governors and the mayor of Amman are appointed, though other mayors are elected.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4

Members of the upper house of the bicameral National Assembly, the 65-seat Senate, are appointed unilaterally by the king. The lower house, the House of Representatives, is elected for four-year terms, with 115 seats filled through races in 23 multimember districts and 15 reserved seats filled by the leading women candidates who failed to win district seats. Twelve of the district seats are reserved for religious and ethnic minorities.

In the September 2016 elections for the House of Representatives, the first held under a new electoral system, the opposition Islamic Action Front (IAF) participated after boycotting the last two elections. It took 10 seats in its own right, and allied groups won several more. However, as in past polls, most seats went to independents—typically tribal figures and businesspeople—who were considered loyal to the monarchy. Vote buying and other forms of manipulation remained a problem.

Elections were held in August 2017 for mayors, local and municipal councils, and 12 new governorate councils that were created under a 2015 law on decentralization. However, 15 percent of the governorate council seats are appointed, and the largely consultative councils will have no legislative authority. A quarter of the seats in the Amman municipal council are also appointed by the government. As with the parliamentary elections, independent tribal candidates won the vast majority of seats, while the IAF and its allies won a plurality of the few seats captured by party-based candidates.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 2 / 4

Elections are administered by the Independent Election Commission (IEC), which generally receives positive reviews from international monitors in terms of technical management, though irregularities continue to be reported. The 2016 reform to Jordan's election law introduced multiple-vote proportional representation for parliamentary elections,

replacing a single nontransferable vote system that had favored progovernment tribal elites over opposition-oriented political parties. The new law also redrew district lines to mitigate acute malapportionment that had long placed urban voters at a disadvantage and inflated the influence of the regime's rural supporters. However, even after the changes, rural and tribal voters remained heavily overrepresented.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 6 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 2 / 4

Political parties based on ethnicity, race, gender, or religion are banned in Jordan, but the main opposition party, the IAF, is tolerated. Despite recent legal reforms, the system favors tribally affiliated independents over political parties with specific ideologies and platforms, as does the patronage-based political culture. In the 2016 parliamentary elections, only 215 of 1,252 candidates ran for specific parties, according to the IEC.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 1 / 4

The Islamist opposition holds only about 12 percent of the lower house, and the political system—including the overrepresentation of rural voters—limits the ability of any party-based opposition to make significant gains. Moreover, the constitutional authority of the monarchy means that no opposition force can win control of the executive branch by democratic means alone.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 1 / 4

While voters and candidates are generally free from overt threats or violence, they remain heavily influenced by tribal affiliations and the state-sponsored patronage networks that accompany them. Citizens' political participation is also constrained by the fact that many important positions are appointed rather than elected.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 2 / 4

Women have equal political rights, and female candidates have won some seats beyond the legal quotas set for the parliament and subnational councils, but cultural prejudices remain an obstacle to women's full participation in practice. Five women won House of Representatives seats outside the quota system in 2016, and four won governorate council seats beyond the reserved positions in 2017. Women performed better at the municipal and local levels, but none won mayoral posts.

Nine seats in the House of Representatives are reserved for Christians and three for Circassians and Chechens together. Christians are not permitted to contest nonreserved seats. Citizens of Palestinian origin, who tend to live in urban areas, make up a majority of the overall population but remain underrepresented in the political system.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 3 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 0 / 4

The king dominates policymaking and the legislative process. The appointed government submits all draft legislation to the House of Representatives, which may approve, reject, or amend bills, though they cannot become law without approval from the appointed Senate and the king. Groups of 10 or more lawmakers can propose legislation, but the House must then refer it to the government before it can return to the chamber as a draft law. Among other royal prerogatives, the king unilaterally appoints the heads of the armed forces, the intelligence service, and the gendarmerie.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

The government has undertaken some efforts to combat widespread corruption, and the Integrity and Anticorruption Commission (IACC) is tasked with investigating allegations. However, successful prosecutions—particularly of high-ranking officials—remain rare. Anticorruption efforts are undermined by a lack of genuinely independent enforcement institutions and restrictions on investigative journalism and civil society activism.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 1 / 4

Laws governing access to government information are vague, lack procedural detail, and contain sweeping exceptions, according to Access Info Europe and the Centre for Law and Democracy. Officials are not required to make public declarations of their income and assets. The National Assembly does not exercise effective or independent oversight of the government's budget proposals.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 25 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 7 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4

Jordan's media laws are restrictive, vague, and arbitrarily enforced. Various statutes penalize defamation, criticism of the king or state institutions, harming Jordan's relations with foreign states, blasphemy, and a lack of media objectivity. Government gag orders and informal instructions to media outlets regarding news coverage are common. News websites face onerous registration requirements that, if not met, can serve as a justification for blocking. Journalists rarely face serious violence or significant jail time for their work, but they often practice self-censorship. The government closed the local offices of the Qatari television network Al-Jazeera in June 2017 as a result of a political dispute between Qatar and neighboring Persian Gulf monarchies.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 2 / 4

Islam is the state religion. The government monitors sermons at mosques for political, sectarian, or extremist content and has begun issuing recommended texts and themes. Muslim clerics require government authorization to preach or issue religious guidance. Many Christian groups are recognized as religious denominations or associations and can worship freely, though they cannot proselytize among Muslims. While converts from Islam are not prosecuted for apostasy, they face bureaucratic obstacles and harassment in practice. Unrecognized religious groups are allowed to practice their faiths but suffer from a number of disadvantages stemming from their lack of legal status. Atheists and agnostics are required to list a religious affiliation on government documents.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 2 / 4

There is a degree of academic freedom at Jordanian universities, but intelligence services reportedly monitor academic events and campus life, and administrators work with state officials to scrutinize scholarly material for politically sensitive content.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 2 / 4

Open discussion of topics such as politics, the monarchy, religious affairs, and security issues is somewhat inhibited by the threat of punishment under the various laws governing expression. In January 2017, for example, eight activists were arrested and detained for four weeks after criticizing government corruption on social media.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 3 / 12 (-1)

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 1 / 4

Jordanian law limits free assembly. Authorities require prior notification for any demonstration or event and have broad discretion to disperse public gatherings. Violations of the law on assembly can draw fines and jail time. Security forces have in the past engaged in violent confrontations with protesters, though no incidents featuring serious injuries or deaths were reported during 2017.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 1 / 4 (-1)

While many local and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are able to operate in the country, there are significant restrictions on freedom of association. The Ministry of Social Development has the authority to deny registration as well as requests for foreign funding, and can disband organizations it finds objectionable. The ministry also has broad supervisory powers over NGO operations and activities, and all board members must be vetted by state security officials. In practice, these regulations appear to be applied in an opaque and arbitrary manner.

The government issued warnings and denied foreign funding to dozens of NGOs during 2017. The Center for Defending Freedom of Journalists (CDFJ) was accused of operating under an improper registration and ordered to stop accepting foreign funds in September. Separately, in April the cabinet stipulated that the Anti-Money Laundering Law and Counter-Terrorism Financing Law of 2007 would now apply to NGOs, subjecting them to new and onerous regulatory requirements and potential prison time for failure to comply.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 due to an increase in burdensome regulatory requirements and enforcement actions that restrict NGOs' ability to operate and obtain financing.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 1 / 4

Workers have the right to form unions, but only in 17 designated industries, and the groups must obtain government approval and join the country's semiofficial union federation. The right to strike is limited by requirements for advance notice and mediation, and participants in an illegal strike are subject to dismissal.

F. RULE OF LAW: 7 / 16 (+1)

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 2 / 4

The judiciary's independence is limited. Under the 2016 constitutional amendments, the king unilaterally appoints the entire Constitutional Court and the chair of the Judicial

Council, which nominates judges for the civil court system and is made up mostly of senior members of the judiciary. Judges of both the civil and the Sharia (Islamic law) courts—which handle personal status matters for Muslims—are formally appointed by royal decree.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

Police can hold suspects for up to six months without filing formal charges, and governors are empowered to impose administrative detention for up to one year. Legal changes adopted during 2017 aimed to limit the excessive use of pretrial detention, in part by capping the length at 18 months for serious charges. In practice the authorities have often ignored procedural safeguards against arbitrary arrest and detention, holding individuals incommunicado or beyond the legal time limits. Criminal and security defendants generally lack access to counsel before trial, impairing their ability to mount a defense. Despite a constitutional prohibition, courts allegedly accept confessions extracted under torture.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 2 / 4 (+1)

Torture and other mistreatment in custody remain common and rarely draw serious penalties. Prison conditions are generally poor, and inmates reportedly suffer from beatings and other abuse by guards.

The country experienced a number of terrorist attacks and clashes related to disrupted plots associated with the Islamic State (IS) militant group during 2016, causing nearly 30 deaths among security forces and civilians. While terrorism remained a serious threat, there were no similar attacks in 2017.

Score Change: The score improved from 1 to 2 due to a decrease in terrorist attacks compared with previous years.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

Women face discrimination in law and in practice. For example, women's testimony is not equal to men's in Sharia courts, and certain social benefits favor men over women. Jordanians of Palestinian origin are often excluded from jobs in the public sector and security forces, which are dominated by East Bank tribes. Discrimination against LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people is also prevalent and includes the threat of violence, though consensual same-sex sexual activity is not specifically prohibited by law. The authorities have denied registration to NGOs that support the rights of LGBT people. In June 2017, the parliament adopted legislation to improve the rights of people with disabilities, including with regard to discrimination in employment; the quality of enforcement remained unclear.

According to the United Nations, there were nearly 740,000 registered refugees in Jordan as of December 2017, including almost 656,000 from Syria, though the government has reported that the true figure may be double that number. Jordanian authorities forcibly returned some Syrians during 2017 and resisted entry by others encamped along the border, restricting aid flows to the camps for part of the year. Jordan does not accept refugees and asylum seekers for settlement but typically allows those in the country to remain while UN agencies seek more permanent solutions. Most refugees lack access to work permits and instead work informally. The government has sought to provide education to refugee children, but many still do not attend school due to overcrowding and other obstacles.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 8 / 16**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 2 / 4**

Jordanians generally enjoy freedom of domestic movement and international travel. However, refugees face impediments to their rights to travel and change employers, and there have been reports of employers confiscating the passports of foreign migrant workers.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

The legal framework generally supports property rights for citizens, but noncitizens—including those with Jordanian mothers—are not automatically granted similar rights. Women do not have equal access to property under Sharia-based inheritance rules. Private business activity is hampered by obstacles such as corruption and the abuse of political or other connections.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Personal social freedoms are limited by the country's conservative culture and laws. Women cannot pass citizenship to their children. Matters such as marriage and divorce are generally handled by religious courts, which place women and converts from Islam at a disadvantage and restrict some interfaith marriages. Spousal rape is not a crime.

Modest legal improvements have been enacted in recent years. In April 2017, the parliament adopted legislation to better regulate the processing of domestic violence complaints. Laws enacted in August abolished a penal code provision that allowed rapists to avoid punishment by marrying their victims and eliminated some language allowing reduced sentences for perpetrators of so-called honor crimes. However, reduced sentences were still possible for those who murder a spouse caught committing adultery.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

There are approximately 1.4 million migrant workers in Jordan, of whom about a million have no work permit, making them especially vulnerable to exploitation. Most refugees also lack work permits. Labor rights organizations have raised concerns about poor working conditions, forced labor, and sexual abuse in Qualifying Industrial Zones, where mostly female and foreign factory workers process goods for export. Other problematic sectors include agriculture and domestic service. The legal minimum wage remains below the poverty level and excludes large classes of workers. Rules governing matters such as working hours and safety standards are not well enforced.

Kazakhstan

Population: 17,800,000

Capital: Astana

Political Rights Rating: 7

Civil Liberties Rating: 5

Freedom Rating: 6.0

Freedom Status: Not Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: President Nursultan Nazarbayev has ruled Kazakhstan since 1991. Parliamentary and presidential elections are not free or fair, and all major parties exhibit political loyalty to the president. The authorities have consistently marginalized or imprisoned genuine opposition figures. The dominant media outlets are either in state hands or owned by government-friendly businessmen. Freedoms of speech and assembly remain restricted, and corruption is endemic.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Constitutional changes adopted in March shifted some powers from the president to Parliament, granting the latter greater control over government formation and dismissal. However, Parliament remains dominated by Nazarbayev's Nur Otan party.
- Three labor activists were convicted of various offenses between April and July as part of a crackdown on independent unions, and a prominent journalist was convicted on politically motivated money-laundering charges in September.
- Under rules that took effect in January, citizens must register with local authorities if they move within the country and remain in one locality for more than a month.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 5 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 1 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

The president, who holds most executive power, is directly elected for up to two five-year terms. However, Nazarbayev's special status as Kazakhstan's "first president" exempts him from term limits. Presidential elections are neither free nor fair. Nazarbayev was most recently reelected in 2015 with 97.7 percent of the vote. His opponents were Turgun Syzdykov of the government-friendly Communist People's Party of Kazakhstan and Abulgazi Kusainov, who ran as an independent but belonged to the ruling Nur Otan party; both candidates were virtually unknown before the election. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) noted several shortcomings in the process, including a stifling media environment, lack of a genuine opposition candidate, reports of fraud, and opaque counting and tabulation procedures.

Changes to the constitution adopted by Parliament and the president in March 2017 shifted some powers from the president to the Mazhilis, the lower house of Parliament. The amendments gave Parliament greater influence over the choice of prime minister and cabinet members, and authority to dismiss them. They also limited the president's ability to rule by decree.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

The upper house of the bicameral Parliament is the 47-member Senate, with 32 members chosen by directly elected regional councils and 15 appointed by the president. The senators, who are officially nonpartisan, serve six-year terms, with half of the 32 elected members up for election every three years. The lower house (Mazhilis) has 107 deputies, with 98 elected by proportional representation on party slates and 9 appointed by the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan, which ostensibly represents the country's various ethnic groups. Members serve five-year terms.

Legislative elections do not meet democratic standards. Irregularities including ballot stuffing, group and proxy voting, and manipulation of voter lists have been reported, and the ruling party benefits from a blurred distinction between it and the state. In the 2016 Mazhilis

elections, Nur Otan took 84 of the 98 directly elected seats. Two other parties that are generally loyal to the president, Ak Zhol and the Communist People's Party, each secured 7 seats. No genuine opposition party was able to win representation.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 1 / 4

The legal framework is not sufficient to ensure free and fair elections, and the safeguards that do exist are not properly enforced. Electoral laws make it difficult for opposition parties to obtain parliamentary representation. Parties must clear a 7 percent vote threshold to enter the Mazhilis, and they are barred from forming electoral blocs, which prevents opposition groups from pooling votes and campaign resources. Moreover, the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan is appointed by the president at his discretion, giving the executive influence over the nine Mazhilis members chosen by the assembly.

Changes to election laws that were promulgated in July 2017 imposed further restrictions on who can become a presidential candidate, requiring at least five years of experience in public service or elected positions and the submission of medical records. The latter rule raised the possibility that candidates could be arbitrarily disqualified for health reasons. Existing restrictions included a requirement that candidates pass a Kazakh language test whose evaluation criteria are unclear. The 2017 legal changes also banned self-nomination of presidential candidates, effectively excluding independents and requiring a nomination from a registered party or public association.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 3 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 1 / 4

The ability of political parties to organize is heavily restricted by the 2002 Law on Political Parties. To register, a party must have 40,000 documented members, and parties based on ethnic origin, religion, or gender are prohibited. The registration process is onerous, and officials have broad discretion to delay or deny party registration in practice. Opposition parties have also been banned or marginalized through laws against "extremism" and trumped-up criminal charges against their leaders.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 0 / 4

Kazakhstan has never experienced a peaceful transfer of power through elections. Nazarbayev has been the chief executive since before the country gained independence from the Soviet Union, and he holds a special constitutional status as "first president," entitling him to unlimited terms in office, legal immunity, and other privileges. Genuine opposition parties hold no seats in the legislature, and the governors of regions and major cities are presidential appointees, meaning the opposition has virtually no opportunity to present itself as a credible alternative to the ruling party.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 1 / 4

While voters and candidates are not subject to undue influence by the military or foreign powers, the political system is dominated a small group of elites surrounding the president

and his family. The country's politics are shaped largely by competition among these elites for resources and positions, arbitrated by the president.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 1 / 4

The legal ban on parties with an ethnic, religious, or gender focus—combined with the dominance of Nur Otan—limits the ability of women and minority groups to organize independently and advocate for their interests through the political system. The language test for presidential candidates also presents an obstacle for non-Kazakh minorities, as well as many Kazakhs. Women currently hold 27 percent of the seats in the Mazhilis and less than 11 percent of the seats in the Senate.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 1 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 0 / 4

Government policies are determined by the executive branch, which is not freely elected, irrespective of the constitutionally defined roles of the executive, judiciary, and legislature. Nazarbayev wields ultimate power with regard to policy and other decisions. Parliament does not serve as an effective check on the executive, largely providing formal approval for the government's legislative initiatives.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

Corruption is widespread at all levels of government. Corruption cases are often prosecuted at the local and regional levels, but charges against high-ranking political and business elites are rare, typically emerging only after an individual has fallen out of favor with the leadership. Journalists, activists, and opposition figures are often prosecuted for supposed financial crimes.

The extent of corruption within the government was highlighted by the case against Kuandyk Bishimbayev, who held positions including deputy minister of industry and trade and economy minister. Bishimbayev went on trial in November 2017, accused of accepting bribes worth \$2 million while serving as chairman of the national holding company Bayterek; the trial was ongoing at year's end. Separately, in July a military court in Astana convicted five officials from the defense and finance ministries and sentenced them to prison terms for embezzlement and bribery.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 0 / 4

The government and legislature offer little transparency on their decision-making processes, budgetary matters, and other operations. The media and civil society do not have a meaningful opportunity to provide independent commentary and input on pending laws and policies. A new law on public access to government information was adopted in 2015, but it is poorly implemented in practice. Officials' asset and income declarations are not publicly available.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 17 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 4 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 0 / 4

Media independence is severely limited in Kazakhstan. While the constitution provides for freedom of the press, most of the media sector is controlled by the state or government-friendly owners, and the government has repeatedly harassed or shut down

independent outlets. Libel is a criminal offense, and the criminal code prohibits insulting the president. Self-censorship is common. The authorities engage in periodic blocking of online news sources and social media platforms.

The editor of the independent newspaper *Sayasi Qalam-Tribuna*, Zhanbolat Mamay, was arrested in February 2017 for allegedly laundering money on behalf of exiled banking tycoon Mukhtar Ablyazov. Mamay was convicted in September and sentenced to three years of restricted freedom, a form of probation that would prevent him from engaging in journalism. In May, journalist and press freedom activist Ramazan Yesergepov was stabbed while traveling to discuss Mamay's case with foreign diplomats. He later sought refuge in Europe, saying he was expecting to face trumped-up criminal charges.

New media legislation signed by Nazarbayev in December requires journalists to verify the accuracy of information prior to publication by consulting with the relevant government bodies or officials, obtain consent for the publication of personal or otherwise confidential information, and obtain accreditation as foreign journalists if they work for foreign outlets.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 1 / 4

The constitution guarantees freedom of worship, and some religious communities practice without state interference. However, activities by unregistered religious groups are banned, and registered groups are subject to close government supervision. The government has broad authority to outlaw organizations it designates as "extremist." The 2011 Law on Religious Activities and Religious Associations prohibited the distribution of religious literature outside places of worship, required the approval of all religious literature by the state, and prohibited unregistered missionary activity, among other provisions.

Local officials continue to harass groups defined as "nontraditional," including Protestant Christians, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Muslims who do not adhere to the approved version of Islam. The courts imposed three-month suspensions of worship on at least two Protestant churches and a Jehovah's Witness center for minor regulatory violations during 2017. A number of people were also convicted on criminal charges related to religious activities. For example, Jehovah Witness Teymur Akhmedov was convicted and sentenced to five years in prison for "inciting religious discord" because he discussed his faith with seven young men who posed as students but were actually National Security Committee (KNB) officials.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 2 / 4

Academic freedom remains constrained by political sensitivities surrounding certain topics, including the president, his inner circle, and relations with Russia. Self-censorship on such topics is reportedly common among scholars and educators.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 1 / 4

Authorities are known to monitor social media, and users are regularly prosecuted on charges such as inciting social and ethnic hatred, insulting government officials, and promoting separatism or terrorism. Online tools used to ensure anonymity and circumvent censorship are subject to intermittent blocking.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 1 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 0 / 4

Despite constitutional guarantees, the government imposes tight restrictions on freedom of assembly. Any potential public gathering requires permission from the local government administration 10 days in advance. Permits are routinely denied for antigovernment protests, and police frequently break up unsanctioned gatherings. Organizers and participants, including individuals who call for unauthorized protests on social media, are subject to fines and jail terms.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 1 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) continue to operate but face government harassment when they touch on politically sensitive issues. There are extensive legal restrictions on the formation and operation of NGOs, including onerous financial rules and harsh penalties for noncompliance. Organizations can incur fines and other punishments for vaguely defined offenses like interfering with government activities or engaging in work outside the scope of their charters. Prominent civil society activists often face criminal prosecution and imprisonment in retaliation for their work.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 0 / 4

Workers have limited rights to form and join trade unions and participate in collective bargaining, but the government is closely affiliated with the largest union federation and major employers, and genuinely independent unions face repressive actions by the authorities. In January 2017, a court ruling dissolved the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions of Kazakhstan (KNPRK) on the grounds that it had failed to meet registration requirements. After oil workers mounted a hunger strike to protest the decision, dozens of participants were fined, and key leaders of the action faced harsher punishments: Nurbek Kushakbayev was sentenced to two and a half years in prison in April for promoting an illegal strike, and Amin Yeleusinov was sentenced to two years in prison in May for allegedly embezzling his union's funds. In July, KNPRK president Larisa Kharkova was convicted of abuse of power and sentenced to four years of restricted liberty as well as a five-year ban on serving in union leadership positions.

F. RULE OF LAW: 4 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4

The judiciary is effectively subservient to the executive branch, with the president nominating or directly appointing judges based on the recommendation of the Supreme Judicial Council, which is itself appointed by the president. Judges are subject to political influence, and corruption is a problem throughout the judicial system.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

Police reportedly engage in arbitrary arrests and detentions, and violate detained suspects' right to assistance from a defense lawyer. Prosecutors, as opposed to judges, are empowered to authorize searches and seizures. Defendants are often held in pretrial detention for long periods. Politically motivated prosecutions and prison sentences against activists, journalists, and opposition figures are relatively common.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 1 / 4

Conditions in pretrial detention facilities and prisons are harsh. Police at times use excessive force during arrest, and torture is widely employed to obtain confessions, with numerous allegations of physical abuse and other mistreatment documented each year.

Terrorist violence remains rare, though a pair of attacks in 2016 killed some 35 people.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

While the constitution guarantees equality before the law and prohibits discrimination based on gender, race, and other categories, major segments of society do face discrimination in practice. Traditional cultural biases limit economic and professional opportunities for women, and the law offers no protection against sexual harassment in the workplace. Members of the sizable Russian-speaking minority have complained of discrimination in employment and education. The LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) community continues to face societal discrimination, harassment, and violence, despite the decriminalization of same-sex sexual activity in 1998.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 8 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 2 / 4

Kazakhstani citizens can travel freely but must register their permanent residence with local authorities. New rules that went into effect in January 2017 under the pretext of fighting terrorism require citizens to register even temporary residences lasting more than a month with local authorities or face fines. The change increases the ability of the authorities to monitor internal movement and migration, but critics also suggested that it would lead to corruption and create a black market for false registration documents.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

While the rights of entrepreneurship and private property are formally protected, they are limited in practice by bureaucratic hurdles and the undue influence of politically connected elites, who control large segments of the economy.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

There are no significant legal restrictions on personal social freedoms, but NGOs continue to report instances of early and forced marriage, particularly in rural areas. Domestic violence is a serious problem that often goes unpunished, as police are reluctant to intervene in what are regarded as internal family matters.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Migrant workers from neighboring countries often face poor working conditions and a lack of effective legal safeguards against exploitation. Both migrants and Kazakhstani workers from rural areas are vulnerable to trafficking for the purposes of forced labor and prostitution in large cities. The authorities reportedly make little effort to assist foreign victims of trafficking.

Kenya

Population: 45,400,000

Capital: Nairobi

Political Rights Rating: 4

Civil Liberties Rating: 4

Freedom Rating: 4.0

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: Kenya is a multiparty democracy that holds regular elections, but its political rights and civil liberties are seriously undermined by pervasive corruption, and brutality by security forces. The country's media and civil society sector are vibrant, even as journalists and civil society workers remain vulnerable to restrictive laws and intimidation.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- President Uhuru Kenyatta overwhelmingly won a rerun of the year's presidential election, which was boycotted by the main opposition candidate, Raila Odinga. The first presidential election, held in August as part of the year's general elections, was annulled by the Supreme Court, which cited irregularities in the vote count.
- Chris Msando, the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) member in charge of the vote-counting system, was murdered days ahead of the August vote, with his body showing signs of torture.
- Dozens of people were killed in a police crackdown on opposition protests that erupted after the general elections in August.
- A number of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that questioned the election process faced threats of deregistration, and other intimidation by officials.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 19 / 40 (-3)

ELECTORAL PROCESS: 6 / 12 (-1)

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4 (-1)

The president and deputy president, who can serve up to two five-year terms, are directly elected by majority vote; they are also required to win 25 percent of the votes in at least half of Kenya's 47 counties.

President Kenyatta was reelected in October 2017 in a disputed election, the rerun of which was boycotted by the main opposition candidate, Raila Odinga, on account of a lack of electoral reforms. The first presidential election, held in August, was annulled the following month by the Supreme Court, which ruled that vote-counting procedures by the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) had been severely flawed, and that a rerun should be held. (The count had returned a solid victory by Kenyatta, which many analysts had predicted.) In the ruling's wake, the main opposition coalition, the National Super Alliance (NASA), threatened to boycott the rerun unless a number of reforms were implemented at the IEBC. Some of these reforms were not met, prompting a boycott of the rerun by Odinga, who urged his supporters not to participate in the poll. The final results showed that Kenyatta won the rerun with 98.3 percent of the vote. Turnout for the rerun was just 38 percent—much lower than turnout for the August polls, when it had reached nearly

80 percent. Odinga continued to harshly criticize the election process after the rerun, and Kenyatta began his final term facing a significant legitimacy crisis.

Violence and intimidation marred the presidential election period. Chris Msando, the IEBC member in charge of the vote-counting system, was murdered days ahead of the August vote, with his body showing signs of torture. In the weeks between the annulled election round and the rerun, one IEBC commissioner fled Kenya for the US, prompting the IEBC chairman to assert that the body could not guarantee a free election given the atmosphere of intimidation. At the same time, police in Nairobi and Kisumu used excessive force in attempt to quell sometimes-violent opposition protests. Dozens of people were reportedly killed by police in the capital alone, according to Human Rights Watch (HRW).

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 because a rerun of the presidential election was marred by an opposition boycott, and because intimidation and violence against IEBC members affected the body's ability to guarantee free and fair elections.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

The legislature consists of the 349-seat National Assembly and the 67-seat Senate. In the National Assembly, 290 members are directly elected from single-member constituencies. A further 47 special women representatives are elected from the counties, and political parties nominate 12 additional members according to the share of seats won. The Senate has 47 elected members representing the counties, 16 special women representatives nominated by political parties based on the share of seats won, and four nominated members representing youth and people with disabilities. Both houses have speakers who are ex-officio members.

Stakeholders broadly accepted the results of the parliamentary contests. Irregularities and violations were reported, but they were neither systematic nor serving to harm or benefit any specific party.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 2 / 4

The IEBC is mandated with conducting free and fair elections, and operates under a robust electoral framework. However, the IEBC faces frequent allegation of favoritism toward both the incumbent Jubilee Coalition and the opposition, and in 2017 its members experienced violence and intimidation severe enough to prompt its chairman to declare in October that he could not guarantee the integrity of the presidential rerun.

Also in October, a judge ruled that government had made of illegal use of state resources to promote the Jubilee Party, and that the IEBC had failed to enforce the rules against such practices.

After the annulment of the first presidential election in August, the National Assembly approved controversial measures mandating that if a candidate withdraws from a rerun election, the other candidate would automatically win the poll. The amendments additionally limited the Supreme Court's power to annul election results. The measures took effect a few days after the rerun was held.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 8 / 16 (-2)

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 2 / 4 (-1)

Citizens are free to organize into political parties. Kenyan parties represent a range of ideological, regional, and ethnic interests, but are notoriously weak, and are often amalgamated into coalitions designed only to contest elections. Under the Political Parties Act, parties that receive at least 5 percent of the votes cast in a national election are eligible for public funds.

Security forces responded violently to protests in opposition strongholds that took place around the August 2017 elections. In October, as the protests continued, the government implemented a ban on demonstrations in Kenya's three largest cities. Police cracked down violently on protesters who attempted to defy the ban, and dozens of deaths were reported. The unrest also hampered parties' normal campaign activities in the period ahead of the presidential rerun.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 because of violent police crackdowns on opposition protesters, and because election-related unrest hampered campaign activities ahead of the presidential rerun.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 2 / 4 (-1)

Opposition parties and candidates are competitive in Kenyan elections, and the 2017 polls saw a high number of incumbents voted out of office. However, Odinga's decision to boycott the runoff election in protest of a lack of reforms at the IEBC left Kenyatta opponents without a viable candidate to vote for, effectively guaranteeing that Kenyatta would win reelection.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 because the main opposition candidate boycotted the presidential election rerun in protest of a lack of reforms at the IEBC, raising questions about the fairness of the election process and leaving opposition supporters without a viable candidate to vote for.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 2 / 4

People's political choices are generally free from undue influence by powerful, democratically unaccountable actors. However, ethnicity remains the dominant organizing principle in Kenyan politics, and two ethnic groups—the Kikuyu and Kalenjin—have dominated the presidency since independence.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 2 / 4

The 2010 constitution was intended to reduce the role of ethnicity in elections. Fiscal and political devolution, implemented in 2013, has served to generate more intraethnic competition at the county level. Nevertheless, the ongoing politicization of ethnicity at the national level hinders effective representation of different segments of Kenya's diverse population, limits voter choice, and impedes meaningful policy debates.

The stipulation that all voters must possess a National Identity Card impedes historically marginalized groups from obtaining greater access to the political process, particularly the nearly seven million pastoralists from the upper Rift Valley and North Eastern regions.

There are significant implicit barriers to the participation of non-Christian and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people in national politics. A 2017 European Union

election monitoring mission reported harassment and attacks against women candidates during the year's campaign period.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 5 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 2 / 4

The ability of elected officials to set and implement policy is undermined by corruption and other dysfunction. In 2017, government ineffectiveness was reflected in an inadequate response to a cholera outbreak that was left to rage across pockets across the country without any clear strategy for containment.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

Corruption continues to plague national and county governments in Kenya, and state institutions tasked with combating corruption have been ineffective. The country's Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC) lacks prosecutorial powers. The EACC's weakness is compounded by shortcomings at the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP) and within the judiciary. In 2017, the ODPP halted at least two corruption cases, including one against high-level officials.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

Elaborate rules govern public finance in Kenya, but enforcement is often lacking. Parliament's Budget and Appropriations Committee effectively delegates the budget process to the Treasury, and the legislature has demonstrated limited willingness to ensure the Treasury respect budget-making procedures. When budget information is made available, it is generally released long after the planning stages during which stakeholders could offer input.

The central government engages in undisclosed expenditures. In November 2017, the Auditor General accused several counties of fraudulent use of funds. The 2016 Access to Information law contains a broad exemption for national security matters.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 29 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 10 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4

Kenya has one of the more vibrant media landscapes on the African continent, with journalists actively working to expose government corruption and other wrongdoing. However, several laws restrict press freedom, and the government and security forces harass journalists, leading to self-censorship in some cases. A significant portion of the mainstream media in Kenya deliberately failed to report on the extent of violence and the security sector's use of force following the August election. Many journalists and activists have turned to online outlets and social media platforms to bypass political and business influences at established media groups.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 2 / 4

The government generally respects the constitutional guarantee of freedom of religion. However, counterterrorism operations against the Somalia-based Shabaab militant group have left Muslims exposed to state violence and intimidation. Shabaab militants have at times specifically targeted Christians in Kenya.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 3 / 4

Academic freedom in Kenya, though traditionally robust, is increasingly threatened by ethnic politics and political and other violence. In September 2017, one student was killed in a melee that erupted at the University of Nairobi, when police responded violently to protests against the arrest of a student who had allegedly insulted Kenyatta. In October, two lecturers were killed and several other people were injured when suspected Shabaab militants attacked a vehicle on the campus of the Technical University of Mombasa.

Student union elections have led to allegations of fraud and violent protests. In addition, there is evidence that ethnic considerations have influenced university hiring, leaving the staff of some institutions with significant ethnic imbalances.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4

The relatively unfettered freedom of private discussion in Kenya has suffered somewhat from state counterterrorism operations and intimidation by security forces and ethnically affiliated gangs. The government in recent years had also invested in technology used to monitor mobile phone communications.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 7 / 12**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 2 / 4**

The constitution guarantees the freedom of assembly. However, the law requires organizers of public meetings to notify local police in advance, and in practice police have regularly prohibited gatherings on security or other grounds, and violently dispersed assemblies that they had not explicitly banned. In October 2017, the government implemented a ban on demonstrations in Kenya's three largest cities, which was viewed as designed to end continued opposition protests. When the opposition went ahead with the protests anyway, those in attendance were met with police violence. According to the Kenya National Commission for Human Rights (KNCHR), 30 people were killed during and following the October election, largely by security forces. Previously, around the August elections, security forces responded violently to protests in opposition strongholds.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 2 / 4

Kenya has an active NGO sector, but civil society groups have faced growing obstacles in recent years, including repeated government attempts to deregister hundreds of NGOs for alleged financial violations. The attempts were seen in part as an effort to silence criticism of the government's human rights record.

In August 2017, the country's NGO Coordination Board deregistered the Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC), but the move was suspended by the interior minister. The August closure of the Africa Centre for Open Governance (AfriCOG)—which had questioned election processes—was reversed by a court in December. The NGO board questioned several other organizations and activists that had criticized the election process, in some instances threatening deregistration for offenses including failing to have certain paperwork in order.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

The 2010 constitution affirmed the rights of trade unions to establish their own agendas, bargain collectively, and strike. Unions are active in Kenya, with approximately 40 unions

representing nearly two million workers. However, labor leaders sometimes experience intimidation, notably in the wake of strike actions. A number of strikes took place in 2017, including those organized by medical workers and university staff.

F. RULE OF LAW: 5 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 2 / 4**

The judiciary is generally considered to be independent, but judicial procedures are inefficient. In September 2017, Kenya became the first African country in which a court of law annulled a presidential election involving the incumbent president. Members of ruling Jubilee Coalition responded to the ruling with threats and intimidation against judges, but Kenyatta ultimately accepted the ruling and participated in the rerun of the presidential election. Legislation approved later in 2017 limited the Supreme Court's power to annul election results.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

Constitutional guarantees of due process are poorly upheld. There remains a significant backlog of court cases. The police service is thoroughly undermined by corruption and criminality.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 1 / 4

Violence by the Shabaab militant group continued in 2017. Violence against suspects and detainees by security forces remains a serious concern. In November 2017, the *Daily Nation* reported that Kenyan police had shot and killed 214 people between January and the end of October 2017, up from 204 people in all of 2016, and 141 in 2015.

There is widespread impunity for the serious postelection violence that took place after the 2007 presidential election.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

Consensual same-sex sexual activity is criminalized under the penal code, with a maximum penalty of 14 years in prison. Members of the LGBT community continue to face discrimination, abuse, and violent attacks. In 2016, a High Court judge in Mombasa upheld the use of forced anal examinations and testing for HIV and hepatitis B as a means of gathering supposed evidence of same-sex sexual activity. The UN special rapporteur on torture and other experts have condemned such practices. Reports of police abuses against refugees and asylum seekers continued.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 7 / 16**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 2 / 4**

While the constitution provides protections for freedom of movement and related rights, they are impeded in practice by security concerns and ethnic tensions that lead many residents to avoid certain parts of the country. Election-related violence in 2017 impeded movement in some areas. Additionally, there were reports that the opposition NASA alliance took steps to prevent voters from leaving Nairobi in the days before the August elections, to ensure that they would vote. Local authorities characterized the strategy as a response to alleged moves by the Jubilee Coalition to instigate fears of postelection violence and drive voters away from opposition strongholds.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 1 / 4

Organized crime continues to threaten legitimate business activity in Kenya. Political corruption and ethnic favoritism also affect the business sector and exacerbate existing imbalances in wealth and access to economic opportunities, including public-sector jobs.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

The constitution recognizes marriage as a union between two people of the opposite sex, but otherwise does not place explicit restrictions on social freedoms. Rape and domestic violence remain common and are rarely prosecuted.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Kenya remains an unequal society, with wealth generally concentrated in towns and cities. The arid and semi-arid north and northeastern parts of the country have particularly high poverty rates.

Refugees and asylum seekers from neighboring countries, particularly children, have been vulnerable to sex trafficking and forced labor in Kenya, though Kenyan children are also subject to such abuses. Kenyan workers are recruited for employment abroad in sometimes exploitative conditions, particularly in the Middle East.

Kiribati

Population: 100,000

Capital: Tarawa

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 1

Freedom Rating: 1.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Kiribati is a multiparty democracy that holds regular elections and has experienced peaceful transfers of power between competing groups. Civil liberties are generally upheld, though outstanding problems include limited media diversity, a ban on same-sex sexual activity, and some forms of gender discrimination.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- The administration of President Taneti Maamau completed its first year in office in March.
- In October the president signed legislation that strengthened the independence and authority of the country's Audit Office.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 38 / 40 (+1)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The president is elected through a nationwide popular vote and may serve up to three four-year terms. The three to four presidential candidates are nominated by the legislature from among its members, and cabinet members must also be members of the legislature. The president can be removed through a no-confidence vote, but this also triggers general elections.

Taneti Maamau of the Tobwaan Kiribati Party (TKP) was elected president in March 2016, taking 60 percent of the vote in a free and fair contest. His two opponents—Rimeta Beniamina and Tianeti Ioane, both of the Boutokan te Koaua Party (BTK)—received 39 percent and 1 percent, respectively. Incumbent president Anote Tong of the BTK was ineligible to run again, having reached his three-term limit.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The unicameral House of Assembly (*Maneaba ni Maungatabu*) has 46 members, all but two of whom are elected through a two-round runoff system from 26 constituencies. An appointed member is selected by representatives of people originally from the island of Banaba (Ocean Island) who now live on Fiji's Rabi Island, having been displaced by phosphate mining during the 20th century. The attorney general holds a seat ex officio.

Free and fair parliamentary elections were held in December 2015, with a runoff round in January 2016. The BTK took 26 seats, while two parties that merged to form the TKP after the elections won 19.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

The constitution and legal framework provide for democratic elections, and balloting is well administered in practice. Losing candidates and parties typically accept the final outcome and rarely raise accusations of malfeasance.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 16 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4

There are no constraints on the formation or competition of political parties. The country's parties are relatively loose alliances that lack formal platforms and are subject to periodic mergers and reconfigurations.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

Kiribati has a history of smooth and democratic transfers of power between government and opposition parties, with the most recent change in executive leadership occurring in 2016.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

There are no significant constraints on the choices of voters and candidates by forces outside the political system.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 4 / 4

All citizens enjoy full political rights. Geographic and ancestral ties continue to play an important role in political affiliation. While there are no formal restrictions on women's political participation, it is somewhat inhibited in practice by traditional social norms. Only three women hold seats in the legislature.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 10 / 12 (+1)**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4**

The president and cabinet are able to both form and implement their policy agenda without undue interference, while the legislature provides oversight and a check on executive authority.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4

President Maamau's administration has pledged to fight corruption, launching a national anticorruption strategy in September 2017. While there is virtually no large-scale corruption in Kiribati, petty graft and nepotism in public appointments remain problems.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 3 / 4 (+1)

Kiribati lacks comprehensive regulations on public asset disclosure for officials, access to government information, and other transparency matters. In August 2017, a former president told lawmakers that he had been denied access to basic data on copra production despite multiple requests.

However, in October the president signed a new law, the Kiribati Audit Act, that strengthened the autonomy of the country's Audit Office and established an independent board to oversee its work. The office previously reported to the Finance Ministry. The law also laid out enforcement mechanisms and broadened the scope of the Audit Office's mandate, allowing more thorough assessments of budgets, expenditures, and government performance.

Score Change: The score improved from 2 to 3 due to the adoption of a new law that increased the independence and authority of the Audit Office.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 55 / 60**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 15 / 16****D1. Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4**

Although press freedom is generally respected, journalists at state-owned outlets have at times been disciplined for coverage that displeases the government. Media diversity is somewhat limited. However, a small number of private news outlets operate freely, and foreign radio services are available.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

The constitution guarantees freedom of religion. Religious organizations of a certain size are required to register with the government, but there are no penalties for failing to do so. On two islands in the southern part of the archipelago that have overwhelmingly Protestant populations, members of small religious minorities are discouraged from engaging in public worship or proselytizing, though only a few dozen people are believed to be affected.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

The school system is free of political indoctrination, and religious education by various denominations is available in public schools but not mandatory. There are no restrictions on academic freedom in the country, which hosts a campus of the Fiji-based University of the South Pacific as well as a teachers' college and technical training centers.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

The government does not impose constraints on freedom of speech or the expression of personal views.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 12 / 12**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4**

Freedom of assembly is constitutionally protected and generally upheld in practice.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

There are no undue constraints on nongovernmental organizations. The Kiribati Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (KANGO) serves as an umbrella group for some 39 local NGOs, including church-based groups and health associations.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

Workers have the right to organize unions, strike, and bargain collectively. The Kiribati Trade Union Congress, an affiliate of the International Trade Union Confederation, claims some 3,000 members and includes unions and associations for nurses, teachers, fishermen, and seafarers.

F. RULE OF LAW: 15 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 4 / 4**

The judicial system is modeled on English common law, and the courts are independent in practice. The chief justice is appointed by the president on the advice of the cabinet and the Public Service Commission; other High Court judges are appointed by the president on the advice of the chief justice and the Public Service Commission. Judges cannot be removed unless a special tribunal and the legislature find "misbehavior" or an inability to perform their functions.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 4 / 4

Due process guarantees are typically respected during arrests, initial detentions, and trials. Detainees have access to a lawyer, and defendants are usually granted bail while awaiting trial.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 4 / 4

There were no reports of police brutality in 2017, and procedures for punishing such abuse are effective. Prison conditions are not considered harsh or inhumane. Kiribati has no army, relying on Australia and New Zealand to provide defense assistance under bilateral agreements. The use of traditional communal justice systems, which can include corporal punishment, is increasingly rare.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

Women face legal discrimination on some issues as well as societal bias that limits their access to employment in practice. Same-sex sexual activity is a criminal offense, though the ban is rarely enforced; discrimination in employment based on sexual orientation is prohibited.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 13 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4

There are no significant constraints on freedom of movement, though in the past village councils have used banishment as a punishment for wrongdoing.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 3 / 4

The government operates a system of land registration and generally upholds property rights. Land is owned on either an individual or a kinship basis, and inheritance laws pertaining to land favor sons over daughters. The World Bank has reported some bureaucratic obstacles to private business activity.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

Personal social freedoms are largely unrestricted, but citizenship laws favor men over women, for example by allowing fathers but not mothers to confer citizenship on their children. Domestic violence is criminalized but remains a serious and widespread problem despite government efforts to combat it; cultural norms deter formal complaints and police interventions.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

There are few economic opportunities in Kiribati, with most citizens engaged in subsistence agriculture. The economy largely depends on interest from a trust fund built on royalties from phosphate mining, remittances from workers overseas, and foreign assistance. Although forced labor and other exploitative working conditions are uncommon, some local women and girls are vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation, often involving the crews of visiting ships.

Kosovo

Population: 1,800,000

Capital: Priština

Political Rights Rating: 3

Civil Liberties Rating: 4

Freedom Rating: 3.5

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: Kosovo holds credible and relatively well-administered elections, but its institutions remain weak, and rampant corruption has given rise to deep public distrust in the government. Journalists face serious pressure, and risk being attacked in connection with their reporting. The rule of law is inhibited by executive interference in the judiciary.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- A snap election in June followed a vote of no confidence in the government. After nearly three months of negotiations, a deadlock ended with the election of Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj of the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK). Several new parties joined the governing coalition, but the near-term stability of the government remains in question.
- President Hashim Thaçi's December decision to pardon three former Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) members convicted of murder in the so-called Hajra Family Case drew criticism from human rights activists.
- Journalists continued to experience harassment and violence for reporting critical of the government. Two prominent journalists reporting on corruption were assaulted in May and August, respectively.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 24 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 9 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

Kosovo's prime minister, who serves as head of government, is indirectly elected for a five-year term by at least a two-thirds majority of the unicameral Assembly. Snap general elections were held in June 2017 following a vote of no confidence in the government. The elections were considered credible by international observers, although there were inaccuracies in the voter lists and intimidation in Serb enclaves against both voters and candidates. After no party won sufficient seats to form a government, the political deadlock ended in September when Ramush Haradinaj, a former guerilla fighter and leader of the AAK, was elected prime minister by the Assembly.

The president, who serves as head of state, is also elected to a five-year term by a two-thirds majority of the Assembly. President Hashim Thaçi was elected in 2016.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

Members of the 120-seat Assembly are elected to four-year terms. International observers assessed the snap elections held in June 2017 as credible, but highlighted intimidation in Serb constituencies against both voters and candidates. Voter lists contained a number of inaccuracies, including deceased voters and voters being assigned polling stations relatively far from their homes.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4

The Central Election Commission (CEC), which administers elections, generally acts transparently and fairly. However, because elections must take place between 30 and 45 days after the dissolution of parliament, the CEC struggled to meet important deadlines, send materials to voters living abroad, and adjudicate preelection complaints in a timely manner during the 2017 election period.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 10 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 3 / 4**

A proliferation of parties compete in Kosovo. However, political parties sometimes face intimidation and harassment that can negatively impact their ability to operate. The Serb List has been accused of harassing rival parties and creating an environment where voters fear supporting any alternatives to the Serb List.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 3 / 4

Opposition parties have a reasonable chance of gaining power through elections. The ruling PANA coalition, which includes the three largest parties—the AAK, the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK), and the Social Democratic Initiative (NISMA)—lost 15 seats in the 2017 parliamentary elections. Vetëvendosje, a nationalist party, gained 16 seats. After nearly three months of a deadlock, several parties previously in the opposition joined the PANA coalition and elected Prime Minister Haradinaj.

During the campaign in Serb areas, independent candidates and political parties other than the Serbian List experienced intimidation and violence.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 2 / 4

The platform of the Serb List, a member of the coalition government, is influenced by the Serbian government. Several top political figures in Kosovo, including President Thaçi, have links to organized crime, which plays a powerful role in politics and influences the positions of key leaders.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 2 / 4

While several political parties represent the Serb minority, the population is not fully integrated into the electoral process or Kosovo's institutions. Serb List members have halted their participation in parliament, most recently in December 2016, which renders many Serbs without effective representation. The Turkish community is politically well-organized and is represented by three parties. In addition to Serbs, Kosovo's largest ethnic minority, eight other minority groups are officially recognized and politically represented. Serbs are allocated 10 parliamentary seats, and 10 more are reserved for representatives from smaller minority groups.

Kosovo has the largest participation of women in its parliament among western Balkan countries, thanks to gender quotas enshrined in the constitution. However, women's interests are not consistently represented by the government. Many women in rural areas are disenfranchised through the practice of family voting, in which the male head of a household casts ballots for the entire family.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 5 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 2 / 4**

The lengthy deadlock before the formation of a coalition government in September 2017 highlighted the dysfunction and instability that troubles the political system. The

PANA coalition was joined by the Serb List and the New Kosovo Alliance (AKR) to end the deadlock.

Serbia still maintains influence in northern Kosovo, where Kosovar institutions do not have a strong presence. In recent years, the government has advanced the decentralization process, granting self-rule to Serb enclaves in the southern part of Kosovo, which weakened parallel structures run by the Serbian government in those areas. However, parallel structures endure in northern Kosovo's Serb areas, meaning that the Kosovar government cannot fulfill its functions in these areas. A 2015 agreement between Kosovo and Serbia laid the groundwork for the Community of Serb Municipalities, a body intended to promote the interests of Serbs, which includes a proposed legislature for the Serb community. The establishment of the community remains at an impasse, however, and has been violently contested within and outside parliament. Three opposition political parties—Vetëvendosje, AAK, and NISMA—believe it threatens Kosovo's sovereignty.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

Corruption remains a serious problem, and the institutional framework to combat it is weak. The mandates of Kosovo's four main anticorruption bodies overlap, and they have difficulty coordinating their efforts. Authorities have shown little commitment to prosecuting high-level corruption, and when top officials are prosecuted, convictions are rare.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

Despite the passage of the Law on Access to Public Documents in 2010, which was intended to make government documents available upon request, in practice government institutions frequently deny requests for information with little or no justification. Courts are slow to respond to complaints from those denied government information due to persistent backlogs in the judicial system.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 28 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 9 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4

The constitution guarantees press freedom and a variety of media outlets operate in Kosovo. However, the government and business interests exert undue influence on editorial lines, and journalists report frequent harassment and intimidation. In May and August 2017, two prominent journalists who report on political corruption were physically assaulted in separate incidents. These and other occurrences of intimidation and violence lead many journalists to practice self-censorship.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 2 / 4

The constitution guarantees religious freedom. However, the Law on Freedom of Religion prevents some religious communities from registering as legal entities, a designation that would allow them to more easily buy and rent property, access burial sites, establish bank accounts, and carry out other administrative activities. Tensions between Muslims and Orthodox Christians occasionally flare up. In January 2017, protesters threw stones at the bus of Serb pilgrims visiting the Serbian Orthodox church in Gjakovë/Đakovica, amid claims that war criminals were among the visitors.

The government has reacted strongly to the threat of attacks by Islamic extremists and the radicalization of some Kosovar citizens. Bulk arrests and heavy-handed tactics by

authorities have led some members of Kosovo's majority Muslim community to raise concerns about religious persecution.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 2 / 4

Academic freedom has improved in recent years. However, the university system is subject to political influence, as evidenced by 2017 revelations of a spate of suspicious promotions at the University of Priština.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4

Individuals are largely free to express their political views without fear of retribution. In recent years, space has opened for discussion on sensitive topics such as ethnic relations, Roma communities, and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) matters, though some people are still uncomfortable discussing these issues.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 6 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 2 / 4

Freedom of assembly is generally respected, though demonstrations are occasionally restricted for security reasons. The constitution includes safeguards for public order and national security. Numerous antigovernment demonstrations took place in the capital in 2017. Some protests ended in clashes between demonstrators and police.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 2 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) function freely, though the courts can ban groups that infringe on the constitutional order or encourage ethnic hatred. NGOs occasionally experience pressure to curtail criticism of the government. Funding for NGOs remained an issue in 2017, as international sources of support declined. To address this issue, the government passed a regulation in June that created a framework for government support for civil society.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

The constitution protects the right to establish and join trade unions, but employers frequently do not respect collective bargaining rights. It is difficult to form a private-sector union because employers often intimidate workers to prevent them from organizing. As a result, few private-sector unions exist in Kosovo.

F. RULE OF LAW: 6 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4

Authorities and international donors have continued efforts to strengthen Kosovo's judicial system, but political interference in the judiciary, particularly from the executive branch, remains a problem. Widespread judicial corruption also negatively impacts the branch's independence. Resource constraints and a lack of qualified judges hinder the performance of the judiciary.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

Prosecutors and courts remain susceptible to political interference and corruption by powerful political and business elites, affecting the right to a fair trial. Detained suspects

are sometimes denied access to a lawyer until after questioning by authorities; occasionally, suspects do not meet with a lawyer until their first court appearance. Although the law states that defendants should not be detained before trial unless they are likely to flee or tamper with evidence, judges often order suspects detained without cause. Lengthy pretrial detentions are common due to judicial inefficiency and resource constraints.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 2 / 4

Although the European Union (EU) brokered an agreement in 2015 between Kosovo and Serbia to disband the Serb Civilna Zastita (Civil Protection) security force in northern Kosovo, there have been reports that the force is still operating illegally. Prison conditions have improved in recent years, but violence and poor medical care remain problems.

Many former KLA members have been accused of war crimes, yet hold high-level positions in the government. Parliamentarians have attempted to stop the work of a war crimes court based in the Hague through efforts to repeal or renegotiate the 2015 law establishing its existence. Some former KLA members have been convicted by other courts. In December 2017, President Thaçi controversially pardoned three former KLA members who had been convicted of murdering a family in 2001.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

Kosovo's Roma, Ashkali, and Gorani populations face discrimination in employment, education, and access to social services. Attacks on Serbs are common in Albanian areas, and perpetrators are rarely prosecuted. LGBT people face pressure to hide their sexual orientation or gender identity due to social stigma.

Women experience discrimination in employment, particularly in regard to hiring for high-level positions in government and the private sector.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 7 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 2 / 4

Travel to Serb enclaves is sometimes restricted due to security concerns. The government refuses to accept travel documents issued by the Serbian government that show towns in Kosovo as the place of residence, which makes travel difficult for many Serbs.

One of the new government's first acts after its formation in 2017 was to establish a new commission to assess the border demarcation deal with Montenegro. Approval of the deal is one of the conditions for Kosovo citizens to enjoy visa-free travel in Europe's Schengen zone.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 1 / 4

The legal framework on property rights is poorly outlined, and those rights are inadequately enforced in practice. While the law states that inheritance must be split equally between male and female heirs, strong patriarchal attitudes lead to pressure on women to relinquish their rights and surrender land to male family members. According to a study by USAID, less than 4 percent of women in Kosovo have inherited property. Property reclamation by displaced persons is hindered by threats of violence and resistance to accepting returnees from local communities.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Domestic violence remains a problem despite the government's five-year strategy to address the issue that was announced in 2016. The Kosovo Women's Network, an NGO, estimates that two-thirds of women have been victims of domestic abuse. Domestic violence is considered a civil matter unless the victim is physically harmed. When criminal cases are referred, prosecutions and convictions are rare. Rape is illegal, but spousal rape is not addressed by the law. Courts often give convicted rapists sentences that are lighter than the prescribed minimum.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Equal opportunity is inhibited by an unemployment rate of approximately 30 percent, a slight decrease from 2016. Estimates of the youth unemployment rate are above 50 percent.

Kosovo is a source, transit point, and destination for human trafficking, and corruption within the government enables perpetrators. Children are at particular risk of exploitation by traffickers, who can force them to beg or engage in sex work.

Kuwait

Population: 4,000,000

Capital: Kuwait City

Political Rights Rating: 5

Civil Liberties Rating: 5

Freedom Rating: 5.0

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: Kuwait is a constitutional emirate ruled by the Sabah family. While the monarchy holds executive power and dominates the judiciary, the elected parliament plays an influential role, often challenging the government. Partly due to friction between lawmakers and the executive, government turnover and snap parliamentary elections have been frequent since 2011. In recent years, state authorities have narrowed freedoms of speech and assembly.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In October, the Constitutional Court struck down a controversial 2015 law requiring that citizens and visitors supply DNA samples to authorities.
- In an effort to preempt a potential parliamentary crisis caused by allegations of corruption and mismanagement, the ruling government resigned in October. This triggered National Assembly elections held in November, in which opposition factions won 24 of 50 seats.
- In January, the government carried out its first execution in four years. Seven people were executed by hanging in 2017.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 13 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 2 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

The emir, the hereditary head of state, appoints the prime minister and approves the cabinet that the prime minister appoints. While the National Assembly possesses some legislative authority, most decision-making power rests with the emir and senior ministers in the cabinet, which form the government.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4

The 50-member National Assembly is elected by popular vote and serves four-year terms. In October 2017, the emir dissolved the National Assembly and called an election for November, in which the opposition factions, including Islamist, nationalist, and liberal blocs, won 24 of 50 seats. Approximately 70 percent of eligible voters turned out, in a process that monitors regarded as credible. However, Kuwait does not have a history of holding elections that meet democratic standards, and the National Assembly was dissolved before members could serve a full term four times since 2011.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 1 / 4

The electoral system lacks transparency, as evidenced by an opaque voter registration process. The emir has used his extensive powers to implement changes to electoral laws in close proximity to elections. In October 2012, for example, he issued a royal decree two months ahead of elections that reduced the number of candidates elected in each district from four to one—a move designed to limit the opposition’s ability to build effective coalitions within the parliament.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 7 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 2 / 4

Formal political parties are banned, and while parliamentary blocs are permitted, a prohibition on parties inhibits political organization and the sharing of resources among like-minded candidates. The National Assembly’s relationship with the government has been tense since the opposition boycotted the 2013 election. Authorities punish critics of the government through legal prosecutions and other harassment. In November 2017, several MPs were sentenced to lengthy prison terms for storming the parliament in 2011, in an attempt to question the prime minister about corruption. Former member of parliament (MP) Musallam al-Barrak, a prominent critic of the government who had completed a two-year prison sentence in April for insulting the emir, was sentenced in November to another nine years for his role in the 2011 incident.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 2 / 4

Opposition blocs in Kuwait have a realistic opportunity to gain representation, as demonstrated by the results of the 2016 and 2017 legislative elections. However, the 2012 electoral laws introduced by the emir were viewed as a tool to reduce the power of the opposition, and the opposition boycotted the 2012 and 2013 elections to protest them.

B3. Are the people’s political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 2 / 4

The unelected emir and the royal family frequently interfere in political processes, including through the harassment of political and media figures, and the government impedes the activities of opposition parliamentary blocs. Government workers can face retaliation for expressing views the government deems improper; in December 2017, five government employees were arrested for posting a video viewed as insulting to the crown prince.

Since 2014, dozens of people, including journalists, activists, and clerics, have been stripped of citizenship for criticizing the government. However, the government has slowed its use of stripping citizenship as a form of political reprisal over the last two years, and in May 2017, reinstated the citizenship of a number of people who had seen it revoked, including former opposition lawmaker Abdullah al-Barghash.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 1 / 4

The electorate consists of men and women over 21 years of age who have been citizens for at least 20 years and who have a Kuwaiti father. Most members of state security agencies are barred from voting.

Kuwait's more than 100,000 stateless residents, known as *bidoon*, do not have full citizenship rights, are considered illegal residents, and often live in poor conditions. Efforts to grant citizenship to 4,000 of the country's stateless residents through a 2013 law have stalled.

Since 2005, women have had the right to vote and run for office (one woman was elected to the National Assembly in 2016). However, entrenched social attitudes hamper more active participation in the political process, and the interests of women are poorly represented in politics. Societal and legal discrimination against LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people impacts their ability to engage in political and electoral processes.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 4 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 1 / 4

Since Kuwait is a hereditary monarchy with limited oversight from the parliament, the policies carried out by the emir lack an electoral mandate. Members of the ruling elite regularly disregard parliamentary calls for accountability and often obstruct elected officials' efforts to investigate corruption and abuse of power. The emir also has the authority to dissolve the National Assembly at will.

In October 2017, the emir accepted the resignation of the government. The move was widely seen as a ploy to defuse mounting criticism of the government. It came as opposition lawmakers in the National Assembly grilled senior ministers summoned for questioning about austerity measures implemented to reduce budget deficits, as well as corruption. Parliament was also just days away from issuing a vote of no confidence in acting information minister Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah al-Mubarak al-Sabah. Five of the sixteen members of the new cabinet appointed in December are members of the royal family, including the emir's son.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

Corruption is pervasive in Kuwait, and charges of government corruption have been at the heart of the ongoing political crisis. The National Assembly was dissolved in 2017 as parliamentarians questioned key ministers over corruption and mismanagement—undermining a key safeguard. In 2015, the government unveiled the implementing regulations for

the Anti-Corruption Authority, allowing the body to begin its work. However, in 2017, the Authority only referred 10 cases for prosecution.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

Transparency in government spending and operations is inadequate, and there are few mechanisms that encourage officials to disclose information about government operations. Kuwait does not have any legislation guaranteeing the right to access public information.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 23 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 6 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4

Authorities limit press freedom. Kuwaiti law punishes the publication of material that insults Islam, criticizes the emir or the government, discloses information considered secret or private, or calls for the regime's overthrow. Kuwaiti journalists risk imprisonment under a restrictive 2016 cybercrimes law that criminalizes the dissemination online of information on similar topics. However, foreign media outlets operate relatively freely.

Kuwaitis enjoy access to the internet, though the government has instructed internet service providers (ISPs) to block certain sites for political or moral reasons. In 2014, the National Assembly passed a new telecommunications law allowing authorities to monitor, block, and censor online material through a new body, the Commission for Mass Communications and Information Technology.

Several media outlets have been punished for their coverage of the regime. The newspaper *Al-Watan*, often critical of the government and suspended in 2015, remained closed in 2017.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 2 / 4

Islam is the state religion, but religious minorities are generally permitted to practice their faiths in private. Shiite Muslims, who comprise about a third of the population, enjoy full political rights but have experienced increased harassment in recent years.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 2 / 4

Academic freedom is impeded by self-censorship on politically sensitive topics, as well as by larger restrictions on freedom of expression, including the illegality of offending the emir or challenging Islam.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 1 / 4

Freedom of expression is curtailed due to state surveillance and the criminalization of criticism. In June 2017, following the escalation of tensions between Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and other Gulf states, the government established a committee to intensively monitor social media and to surveil citizens thought likely to criticize the government and its regional allies.

A cybercrimes law passed in 2016 imposes up to 10-year prison sentences and fines for online speech criticizing Kuwait's royal family, the government, religious figures, or foreign leaders.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 4 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 1 / 4

Freedom of assembly is constrained in practice. Kuwaitis must notify officials of a public meeting or protest, though some peaceful protests have been allowed without a permit. In December, 67 people received prison sentences for their participation in a 2011 demonstration outside parliament.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 2 / 4

The government restricts the registration and licensing of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), forcing many groups to operate without legal standing. Representatives of licensed NGOs must obtain government permission to attend foreign conferences, and critical groups may be subject to harassment. In 2015, the government dismissed the directors on the board of the Kuwait chapter of Transparency International, replacing them with government appointees who subsequently dismantled the group's assets.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 1 / 4

Labor uncertainty, particularly in the oil sector where low oil prices threatened to cause widespread layoffs in 2016, has led to public agitation between workers and the state. Private sector workers who are citizens have the right to join labor unions and bargain collectively, but labor laws allow for only one union per occupational trade and one national union federation, the Kuwait Trade Union Federation. Noncitizen migrant workers, who comprise two thirds of the population, do not enjoy these rights. However, hundreds of migrants participated in risky illegal labor actions in 2015 to protest nonpayment of wages and other abuses.

F. RULE OF LAW: 7 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4

Kuwait lacks an independent judiciary. The emir appoints all judges, and the executive branch approves judicial promotions. The courts frequently rule in favor of the government in cases related to politics. For example, the Cassation Court in July 2017 upheld a 10-year prison sentence assigned to a blogger who had been convicted on vaguely worded charges of defaming the emir and the judiciary.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 2 / 4

Arbitrary arrest and detention, which is illegal under Kuwaiti law, still occurs with some frequency. Authorities may detain suspects for four days without charge. State prosecutors have issued orders that favor government interests, such as an August 2017 ban on the publication of information related to state security cases.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 2 / 4

The Constitution prohibits torture and other forms of cruel and unusual punishment, but these protections are not always upheld. Detainees, especially bidoon, continue to experience torture and beatings while in custody. Overcrowding and unsanitary conditions are a problem at prisons and deportation centers.

In January, the government carried out its first execution in four years, and a total of seven people were executed by hanging in 2017. The advocacy group Human Rights Watch has reported violations of due process protections in capital cases.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

Discrimination against LGBT people continued in 2017. Same-sex sexual activity remains illegal, as does “imitating the opposite sex.” In August 2017, a government morals committee launched a nationwide crackdown on the LGBT community, shutting down over 20 massage parlors and deporting 76 suspected gay men.

Despite some legal protections from discrimination and abuse, women remain underrepresented in the workforce and face unequal treatment in several areas of law and society. Women comprise more than 60 percent of the student body at several leading universities, but the government enforces gender segregation in educational institutions.

Officials consider the stateless bidoon to be illegal residents, and they lack the protections and benefits associated with citizenship.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 6 / 16**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 2 / 4**

For the most part, Kuwait does not place constraints on the movement of its citizens, but migrant workers—who comprise some two-thirds of Kuwait’s population—often face de facto restrictions on freedom of travel and residence.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 1 / 4

Kuwaiti law allows citizens and noncitizens to own private property. Although the law allows for the establishment of businesses, bureaucratic red tape sometimes slows the process.

Inheritance laws discriminate against women. Bidoon, who are considered to be in the country illegally, do not have the ability to own or acquire property. Companies are legally prohibited from conducting business with citizens of Israel.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

The 1962 constitution guarantees gender equality, but many government policies discriminate against women. Women must have a male guardian in order to marry, and are only permitted to seek a divorce when deserted or subjected to domestic violence. Domestic abuse and sexual harassment are not specifically prohibited by law.

In 2015, in an unprecedented attack on privacy rights, the National Assembly approved new counterterrorism legislation that requires all citizens and residents to provide genetic samples to the government. In 2016, mandatory DNA testing and the creation of a genetic antiterrorism database went into effect. In October 2017, the Constitutional Court struck down the law, saying it was a violation of privacy.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

Foreign domestic servants and migrant workers are subject to frequent abuse and exploitation, often treated like slaves by their employers. They are frequently confined to slums, lack access to public services, and are forced to work in dangerous conditions for low pay. In 2016, the National Assembly passed legislation expanding the rights of domestic workers, including requiring mandatory leave and regular bonuses. However, critics decried the lack of enforcement mechanisms in the law.

Inadequate safety measures plague many large construction projects and led to multiple worker deaths in 2017.

Kyrgyzstan

Population: 6,100,000

Capital: Bishkek

Political Rights Rating: 5

Civil Liberties Rating: 5

Freedom Rating: 5.0

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: After two revolutions that ousted authoritarian presidents in 2005 and 2010, Kyrgyzstan adopted a parliamentary form of government. Governing coalitions have proven unstable, however, and corruption remains pervasive. In recent years, the ruling Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan (SDPK) has sought to consolidate power, using the justice system to suppress political opponents and civil society critics.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Sooronbay Jeenbekov of the SDPK, the chosen successor of term-limited incumbent Almazbek Atambayev, won the presidential election in October and took office in November. Independent observers noted that Jeenbekov's campaign benefited from the misuse of administrative resources.
- Shortly after the election, law enforcement authorities launched a criminal investigation against Jeenbekov's main opponent, Omurbek Babanov, for alleged incitement of ethnic hatred during the campaign. Babanov left the country and subsequently withdrew from politics.
- Omurbek Tekebayev, the leader of another opposition party, was sentenced to eight years in prison on corruption charges in August, after what was widely considered a politically motivated prosecution. Also that month, authorities closed down a television station linked to Tekebayev for allegedly airing "extremist" content.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 12 / 40 (-1)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 4 / 12 (-1)

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4 (-1)

The directly elected president, who shares executive power with a prime minister, serves a single six-year term with no possibility of reelection. The October 2017 presidential election was marked by inappropriate use of government resources to support Jeenbekov, who had served as prime minister under outgoing president Atambayev. There were also reports of voter intimidation, including pressure on public-sector employees. Jeenbekov defeated 10 other candidates, securing 54 percent of the vote amid 56 percent turnout. Babanov of the Respublika party placed second with about 33 percent.

Sapar Isakov of the SDPK, previously Atambayev's chief of staff, was confirmed as prime minister in August after Jeenbekov stepped down to run for president. He led a coalition government with two other parties: Bir Bol and Kyrgyzstan.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 due to the poor quality of the 2017 presidential election, particularly the abuse of state resources by the ruling party and reports of voter intimidation.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4

The unicameral parliament consists of 120 deputies elected by party list in a single national constituency to serve five-year terms. No single party is allowed to hold more than 65 seats. Observers from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) found that the 2015 parliamentary elections were competitive and that the 14 registered parties offered voters a wide range of options. However, the monitoring group noted significant procedural problems, flaws in the rollout of a new biometric registration system, inadequate media coverage, and widespread allegations of vote buying. Civil society groups and media reports raised concerns that the SDPK had used state resources and pressure on public employees to enhance its position. Six parties cleared the 7 percent vote threshold to secure representation. The SDPK led the voting with 38 seats, followed by Respublika–Ata Jurt (28), the Kyrgyzstan party (18), Onuguu-Progress (13), Bir Bol (12), and Ata Meken (11).

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 1 / 4

The Central Commission for Elections and Referenda exhibited political bias during the 2017 presidential election, according to international observers. Amendments to the election law that were enacted in June made it more difficult for nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to field observers and appeal decisions by election officials.

In 2016, a referendum on constitutional amendments was conducted hastily, with little transparency or opportunities for public debate on the package of proposed changes, which ultimately won adoption. Administrative resources were reportedly used to support a “yes” vote, and state employees faced pressure to participate in the effort.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 5 / 16 (-1)

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 2 / 4

Citizens have the freedom to organize political parties and groupings, especially at the local level. However, in addition to the 7 percent national threshold, parties must win at least 0.7 percent of the vote in each of the country’s nine regional divisions to secure seats in the parliament, which discourages locally organized groups from participating in national politics.

Political parties are primarily vehicles for a handful of strong personalities, rather than mass organizations with clear ideologies and policy platforms. Although the 2015 elections featured several new parties, almost all were the result of splits or mergers among the factions in the previous parliament, meaning the actual roster of deputies changed very little.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 1 / 4 (-1)

The 2010 constitutional reforms aimed to ensure political pluralism and prevent the reemergence of an authoritarian, superpresidential system. Since 2012, however, observers have noted signs that Atambayev was consolidating power and using executive agencies to target political enemies. Opposition members and outside observers have accused the SDPK

of attempting to improperly influence electoral and judicial outcomes. The constitutional amendments approved in 2016 included measures that made it more difficult to bring down a sitting government or withdraw from a coalition, effectively solidifying the position of the SDPK.

In August 2017, Omurbek Tekebayev, leader of the opposition Ata Meken party, was sentenced to eight years in prison for allegedly taking bribes. He had been a vocal critic of Atambayev, accusing him of corruption and threatening him with impeachment, and his trial was criticized for basic violations of due process. A number of Tekebayev's allies were also subjected to flawed prosecutions during the year. In another case with apparent political motivations, presidential runner-up Omurbek Babanov, leader of the Respublika party, was accused in November of "incitement to interethnic violence" based on remarks he made at a campaign rally with ethnic Uzbeks. Babanov fled the country and resigned as a member of parliament, and he remained in exile at year's end.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 due to a series of criminal cases against opposition leaders that were widely viewed as politically motivated.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 1 / 4

While largely free from military domination, Kyrgyzstani politics are subject to the influence of organized crime and economic oligarchies. Political affairs are generally controlled by a small group of elites who head competing patronage networks.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 1 / 4

Ethnic minority groups face political marginalization. Politicians from the Kyrgyz majority have used ethnic Uzbeks as scapegoats on various issues in recent years, and minority populations remain underrepresented in elected offices, even in areas where they form a demographic majority.

Women enjoy equal political rights and have achieved some notable leadership positions, but they are also underrepresented, having won 19 percent of the seats in the last parliamentary elections despite a 30 percent gender quota for party candidate lists.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 4 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 1 / 4

Unresolved constitutional ambiguities regarding the division of power among the president, the prime minister, and the parliament—combined with the need to form multiparty coalitions—have contributed to the instability of governments in recent years. The prime minister has been replaced nearly a dozen times since 2010.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

Corruption is pervasive in politics and government. Political elites use government resources to reward clients—including organized crime figures—and punish opponents. A new anticorruption office within the State Committee of National Security (GKNB) was formed in 2012, but it has primarily been used to target the administration's political enemies in the parliament and municipal governments.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

Kyrgyzstan's laws on access to public information are considered relatively strong, but implementation is poor in practice. Similarly, although public officials are obliged to disclose information on their personal finances, powerful figures are rarely held accountable for noncompliance or investigated for unexplained wealth. Oversight of public contracts is inadequate; corruption scandals in recent years have often centered on procurement deals or sales of state assets.

ADDITIONAL DISCRETIONARY POLITICAL RIGHTS QUESTION

Is the government or occupying power deliberately changing the ethnic composition of a country or territory so as to destroy a culture or tip the political balance in favor of another group? -1 / 0 (+1)

Southern Kyrgyzstan has yet to fully recover from the ethnic upheaval of June 2010, which included numerous documented instances of government involvement or connivance in violence against ethnic Uzbeks in the region, with the aim of tipping the political and economic balance in favor of the Kyrgyz elite. Many Uzbek homes and businesses were destroyed or seized. While intimidation has continued and little has been done to reverse the outcomes of the violence, some steps have been taken to restore Uzbek-language media in the region, and fears of further unrest have eased over time.

Score Change: The score improved from -2 to -1 due to partial stabilization of the situation in southern Kyrgyzstan, where state actors were complicit in violence against the ethnic Uzbek population in 2010.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 25 / 60 (+1)**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 10 / 16 (+1)****D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4**

The media landscape is relatively diverse but divided along ethnic lines, and prosecutions for inciting ethnic hatred have tended to focus on minority writers despite the prevalence of openly racist and anti-Semitic articles in Kyrgyz-language media. A 2014 law criminalized the publication of "false information relating to a crime or offense" in the media, which international monitors saw as a contradiction of the country's 2011 decriminalization of defamation. The law assigns penalties of up to three years in prison, or five years if the claim serves the interests of organized crime or is linked to the fabrication of evidence.

Civil suits against journalists and media outlets were more common in 2017. The General Prosecutor's Office filed a series of lawsuits against the online news outlet Zanos and Radio Azattyk, the Kyrgyz service of U.S.-funded Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, accusing them of defaming Atambayev and spreading false information. Atambayev ultimately asked prosecutors to drop the cases against Azattyk, but only after the head of its Bishkek bureau resigned. The courts upheld the lawsuits against Zanos, ordering it to pay heavy financial damages.

Also during the year, a number of journalists facing lawsuits were barred from leaving the country, and two foreign reporters who had covered domestic affairs in Kyrgyzstan were expelled or denied entry for supposed visa and registration violations. Ulugbek Babakulov, a contributor to the Russia-based news site Ferghana News, fled the country in June after being charged with inciting ethnic hatred for reporting on anti-Uzbek social media content.

The authorities closed the television station Sentyabr for allegedly carrying extremist content in August, shortly after Tekebayev, its reputed owner, was sentenced to prison. In

December, a court ordered authorities to seize the assets of the television channel NTS, owned by Babanov, though it reportedly remained on the air.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 2 / 4 (+1)

All religious organizations must register with the authorities, a process that is often cumbersome and arbitrary. Groups outside the traditional Muslim and Orthodox Christian mainstream reportedly have difficulty obtaining registration, and the 2009 Law on Religion deems all unregistered groups illegal. Organizations such as the Jehovah's Witnesses often face police harassment. Nevertheless, some unregistered religious communities have been able to practice their faiths without state intervention, and the authorities have investigated and punished relatively rare acts of violence against religious figures or minorities. The government monitors and restricts Islamist groups that it regards as a threat to national security, particularly Hizb ut-Tahrir.

Score Change: The score improved from 1 to 2 because restrictive laws on religion have not been aggressively enforced in recent years, and violence against religious minorities or leaders has been rare.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 3 / 4

The government does not formally restrict academic freedom, though teachers and students have reportedly faced pressure to participate in political campaigns and voting, including in the 2017 presidential election. In September, for example, an investigation was launched into a teacher at the state law academy who allegedly coerced students to vote for Jeenbekov.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4

Private discussion is generally free in the country, and prosecutions of individuals for the expression of personal views on social media are rare. However, state and local authorities regularly raid homes where they believe members of banned groups like Hizb ut-Tahrir or certain religious minorities, such as Jehovah's Witnesses, are meeting to discuss their beliefs.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 4 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 1 / 4

A 2012 law allows peaceful assembly, and small protests and civil disobedience actions, such as blocking roads, take place regularly. Nevertheless, domestic and international watchdogs remain concerned about police violations of the right to demonstrate, including arrests and other forms of interference. Intimidation by counterprotesters has also emerged as a problem in recent years. In 2017, courts approved bans on public assemblies at key locations in Bishkek in the months preceding the presidential election and a period surrounding Jeenbekov's inauguration.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 1 / 4

NGOs participate actively in civic and political life, and public advisory councils were established in the parliament and most ministries in 2011, permitting improved monitoring

and advocacy by NGOs. However, human rights workers who support ethnic Uzbek victims face threats, harassment, and physical attacks. Ultrationalists have stepped up harassment of U.S. and European NGOs as well as domestic counterparts that are perceived to be favored by foreign governments and donors, and some foreign activists have been banned from the country. In 2017, human rights activist Cholpon Djakupova was sued along with journalists and news outlets for allegedly defaming the president, and her travel was restricted. She was ultimately ordered to pay a large sum in financial damages for her remarks.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

Kyrgyzstani law provides for the formation of trade unions, which are generally able to operate without obstruction. However, strikes are prohibited in many sectors. Legal enforcement of union rights is weak, and employers do not always respect collective-bargaining agreements.

F. RULE OF LAW: 4 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4

The judiciary is not independent and remains dominated by the executive branch. Corruption among judges is widespread.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

Defendants' rights, including the presumption of innocence, are not always respected, and evidence allegedly obtained through torture is regularly accepted in courts. Observers noted a serious lack of due process in high-profile cases against opposition leaders and other critics of the government during 2017.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 1 / 4

There are credible reports of torture during arrest and interrogation, in addition to physical abuse in prisons. Most such reports do not lead to investigations and convictions. Few perpetrators of the violence against the Uzbek community in southern Kyrgyzstan in 2010 have been brought to justice.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

Legal bans on gender discrimination in the workplace are not effectively enforced. Traditional biases also put women at a disadvantage regarding education and access to services. Ethnic minorities—particularly Uzbeks, who make up nearly half of the population in Osh—continue to face discrimination on economic, security, and other matters. Uzbeks are often targeted for harassment, arrest, and mistreatment by law enforcement agencies based on dubious terrorism or extremism charges. Same-sex sexual activity is not illegal, but discrimination against and abuse of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people at the hands of police are pervasive. Ultrationalist groups have also engaged in intimidation of LGBT activists.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 7 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 2 / 4

The government generally respects the right of unrestricted travel to and from Kyrgyzstan, though journalists and human rights activists sometimes face bans and other obstacles.

Barriers to internal migration include a requirement that citizens obtain permits to work and settle in particular areas of the country.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

The misuse of personal connections, corruption, and organized crime impair private business activity. The ethnic violence of 2010 has affected property rights in the south, as many businesses, mainly owned by ethnic Uzbeks, were destroyed or seized.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Cultural constraints and inaction by law enforcement officials discourage victims of domestic violence and rape from contacting the authorities. Legislation enacted in April 2017 aimed to broaden the definition of domestic abuse and improve both victim assistance and responses from law enforcement bodies. The quality of implementation remained unclear at year's end.

The practice of bride abduction persists despite the strengthening of legal penalties in 2013, and few perpetrators are prosecuted. In November 2016, the parliament passed a law introducing criminal penalties for anyone carrying out or enabling underage marriages. The 2016 constitutional amendments included a clause that formalized a de facto ban on same-sex marriage.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

The government does not actively enforce workplace health and safety standards. Child labor is restricted by law but reportedly occurs, particularly in the agricultural sector. The trafficking of women and girls into forced prostitution abroad is a serious problem. Police have been accused of complicity in the trafficking and exploitation of victims. Kyrgyzstani men are especially vulnerable to trafficking for forced labor abroad.

Laos

Population: 7,100,000

Capital: Vientiane

Political Rights Rating: 7

Civil Liberties Rating: 6

Freedom Rating: 6.5

Freedom Status: Not Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: Laos is a one-party state in which the ruling Lao People's Revolutionary Party (LPRP) dominates all aspects of politics and harshly restricts civil liberties. There is no organized opposition and no truly independent civil society. News coverage of the country is limited by the remoteness of some areas, repression of domestic media, and the opaque nature of the regime. Economic development has led to a rising tide of disputes over land and environmental issues, which frequently lead to violence.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In May, the government sentenced three Laotian citizens to lengthy jail terms for criticizing the government on social media while living in Thailand. They had been arrested in connection with the remarks upon their return to Laos.
- There were several violent attacks against Chinese citizens during the year. The attacks came amid rising tensions over the development of Laotian land by Chinese companies.
- The year saw modest progress in the fight against rampant corruption, under initiatives spearheaded by Prime Minister Thongloun Sisoulith.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 1 / 40**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 0 / 12****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4**

Laos is a one-party communist state and the ruling LPRP's 61-member Central Committee, under the leadership of the 11-member Politburo, makes all major decisions. The LPRP vets all candidates for election to the National Assembly, whose members elect the president and prime minister.

The LPRP selected new leaders through an opaque process at a party congress in 2016. After that year's tightly controlled National Assembly election, lawmakers chose Bounnhang Vorachith to serve as president, and Thongloun Sisoulith to serve as prime minister.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

National Assembly elections are held every five years, but are not considered free or fair and international observers are not permitted to monitor them. The LPRP won 144 of 149 seats in the 2016 legislative elections 2016, with the remainder going to carefully vetted independents.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 0 / 4

The electoral laws and framework are designed to ensure that the LPRP, the only legal party, dominates every election and controls the political system.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 0 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 0 / 4**

The constitution makes the ruling LPRP the sole legal political party, and grants it a leading role at all levels of government.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 0 / 4

Although LPRP is the only legal party, National Assembly candidates are not required to be members. However, all candidates must be approved by assembly-appointed committees. In practice, almost all lawmakers belong to the LPRP, and legislate alongside a handful of party-vetted independents.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 0 / 4

The authoritarian one-party system in Laos excludes the public from any genuine and autonomous political participation.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 0 / 4

The right to vote and run for office are guaranteed in the constitution, but due to the one-party system, no portion of the population may exercise full political rights and electoral opportunities. Nominal representatives of ethnic minorities hold positions in the Politburo, Central Committee, and National Assembly, but they are limited in their ability to advocate for policies that benefit minorities. Women hold approximately 28 percent of the National Assembly seats, but their presence in the legislature similarly does not guarantee that the interests of women are represented in politics. At the local level, village-level leaders are responsible for many of the decisions affecting daily life, and nearly all village chiefs are men.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 1 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 0 / 4

None of the country's nominally elected officials are chosen through free and fair contests, and major policy decisions are reserved for the LPRP. In recent years the government has more frequently passed laws, rather than decrees, to govern, though there is still little room for the public to influence policy.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 0 / 4

Corruption by government officials is widespread. Laws aimed at curbing graft are poorly enforced, and government regulation of virtually every facet of life provides many opportunities for bribery and fraud.

Prime Minister Thongloun Sisoulith has initiated some anticorruption drives since taking office in 2016. After taking office, he empowered the State Audit Organization (SAO) to conduct financial and budget investigations. The office has since uncovered several instances of misappropriated state funds and unreported expenditures, and some LPRP officials have apparently returned money that they stole to the national treasury. The State Inspection Authority (SIA) reported in 2017 that 71 officials had been investigated for corruption the previous year. In February 2017, the government publicly auctioned off luxury cars that had previously been used by top officials. Additionally, the prime minister has targeted drug traffickers in an effort to combat corruption and crime, and a few key drug traffickers have been arrested.

The prime minister also placed a ban on export timber in 2016, in an effort to crack down on illegal logging and the extensive deforestation of the country. Despite the ban, government officials continue to be linked to the illegal smuggling of timber.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 1 / 4

There are no access to information laws in Laos. However, the 2012 Law on Making Legislation increased legislative transparency by requiring bills proposed at the central and provincial levels to be published for comment for 60 days and, once passed, to be posted for 15 days before coming into force.

A 2014 asset declaration program has helped identify corrupt government officials. Meanwhile, SIA reported that over 240,000 government officials and employees submitted asset declarations for review in 2017. In October 2017, SAO reported that over \$120 million of unapproved state spending was discovered in the 2015–16 budget.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 11 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 4 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 0 / 4

Authorities use legal restrictions and intimidation tactics against state critics, and as a result, self-censorship is widespread. The state owns nearly all media, though some independent outlets, primarily entertainment magazines that steer clear of political commentary, have emerged in recent years.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 2 / 4

Religious freedom is guaranteed in the constitution, but in practice is constrained, in part through the LPRP's control of clergy training and supervision of temples. There have been multiple cases in recent years of Christians being briefly detained or sentenced to jail for unauthorized religious activities, or pressured by authorities to renounce their faith. In May 2017, Pope Francis appointed the first-ever Laotian cardinal, demonstrating the potential for improved relations between the government and the Vatican.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 1 / 4

University professors cannot teach or write about politically sensitive topics, though Laos has invited select foreign academics to teach courses in the country, and some young people go overseas for university education.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 1 / 4

Government surveillance of the population has been scaled back in recent years, but security agencies and LPRP-backed mass organizations continue to monitor for public dissent, which is punishable under a variety of laws. As a result, there is little space for open and free private discussion of sensitive issues.

The government attempts to monitor social media usage for content and images that portray Laos negatively. In 2016, three Laotians living in Thailand criticized Laos's government on social media, and when they returned to Laos, they were arrested. In May 2017, the government, in a secret trial, sentenced them to between twelve and twenty years in jail.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 0 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 0 / 4

Although protected in the constitution, the government severely restricts freedom of assembly. Protests are rare, and those deemed to be participating in unsanctioned gatherings can receive lengthy prison sentences. The government occasionally allows demonstrations that pose little threat to the LPRP. In September 2017, upset investors gathered in Vientiane to protest against an alleged pyramid scheme by a Laotian agricultural company. The government later detained two of the companies' executives.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 0 / 4

Alongside LPRP-affiliated mass organizations, there are some domestic nongovernmental welfare and professional groups, but they are prohibited from pursuing political agendas. Registration and regulatory mechanisms for nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are onerous and allow for arbitrary state interference. A new decree on associations, which came into force in November 2017, mandates that NGOs secure government approval for their initiatives and funding, among other new restrictions.

The 2012 disappearance of prominent antipoverty activist Sombath Somphone remained unsolved in 2017.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 0 / 4

Most unions belong to the official Lao Federation of Trade Unions. Strikes are not expressly prohibited, but workers rarely stage walkouts. Collective bargaining is legally permitted, but rarely exercised by workers.

F. RULE OF LAW: 2 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 0 / 4

The courts are wracked by corruption and subject to LPRP influence. Major decisions are often made secretly.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 0 / 4

Due process rights are outlined in the law, but these rights are routinely denied. Defendants are often presumed guilty, and long procedural delays in the judicial system are common. Appeals processes are often nonexistent or delayed, sometimes indefinitely. Searches without warrants occur and arbitrary arrests continue, particularly those arrested for drug use or activism. Villages are encouraged to settle non-criminal disputes in local mediation units, which are outside the formal judicial system.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 1 / 4

Security forces often illegally detain suspects. Prison conditions are substandard, with reports of inadequate food and medical facilities. Torture of prisoners is occasionally reported.

A Thai antigovernment activist living in exile in Laos was reportedly abducted in Vientiane in July 2017 by a group of armed men.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

Equal rights are constitutionally guaranteed, but are not upheld in practice. Discrimination against members of ethnic minority tribes is common. The Hmong, who fielded a guerrilla army allied with US forces during the Vietnam War, are particularly distrusted by the government and face harsh treatment. Asylum for refugees is protected by law, but not always granted.

There have been multiple violent attacks, including murders, of Chinese nationals in Laos in recent years. A Chinese worker was killed in March 2017 at a logging site in Luang Prabang and in June, a Chinese national was shot and killed in Xaysomboun Province. Some observers suggested that local anger at the environmental destruction caused by

foreign-owned mining, logging, and farming concessions has been a contributing factor to the attacks on Chinese nationals, many of whom traveled to Laos for work in these sectors.

While same-sex sexual acts are legal and violence against LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) is rare, no legislation provides explicit protection against discrimination based on sexual preference or gender identity.

Gender-based discrimination and abuse are widespread. Discriminatory traditions and religious practices have contributed to women's limited access to education, employment opportunities, and worker benefits.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 5 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 1 / 4

The dominance of the LPRP over most aspects of society can effectively restrict individuals' ability to choose their place of residence, employment, or education.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 1 / 4

All land is owned by the state, though citizens have rights to use it. Land rights have become an increasing source of public discontent. Construction began on a high-speed rail line from China through Laos at the end of 2016, resulting in the displacement of over 4,000 families, and many villagers remain uncertain of what kind of compensation they will receive. In July 2017, the government arrested eleven people in Sekong Province who were involved in a decade-long land dispute with a Vietnamese rubber company. Three more villagers were arrested in September and were reportedly assaulted by the police. Villagers who live on or near the sites of planned dams on the Mekong River are also increasingly caught up in land disputes.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Social freedoms can be restricted, especially for women and children. Marriage to foreign citizens requires approval by the government. In 2016, a survey supported by the UN and the World Health Organization (WHO) revealed that close to one third of women in Laos had experienced domestic violence. Abortion is illegal and only permitted when the mother's life is at risk. There are no penalties for facilitating child prostitution, and underage marriage is permitted with parental permission.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

Trafficking in persons, especially to Thailand, is common, and enforcement of antitrafficking measures is hindered by a lack of transparency and weak rule of law. The building of new roads through Laos in recent years has aided trafficking operations.

Children as young as 12 years old may be legally employed in Laos. Inspections of workplaces, including those for industries considered hazardous, are required by law but do not take place regularly. Public workers are not always paid on time.

Latvia

Population: 2,000,000

Capital: Riga

Political Rights Rating: 2 ↓

Civil Liberties Rating: 2

Freedom Rating: 2.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Ratings Change: Latvia's political rights rating declined from 1 to 2 due to the "Oligarch Talks" scandal and the government's weak response, which revealed the extent to which recent legal improvements have failed to loosen the grip of oligarchic figures on the political arena.

Overview: Latvia has successfully developed into a democracy since regaining independence in 1991. Elections are regarded as free and fair, and political and civil rights are generally respected in practice. However, Latvia is troubled by corruption and high income inequality, and a relatively high homicide rate.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In June, transcripts of secretly recorded talks between politically powerful businessmen revealed the extent of their influence over Latvian media, business, and politics, shaking public confidence in state institutions.
- In June's local elections, an alliance between Harmony Center and the Honor to Serve Riga (GKR) party won a plurality of votes the capital. However, the results also indicated declining support for Harmony Center, which seeks to represent the interests of Latvia's ethnic Russians.
- A proposal to reduce school instruction in languages other than Latvian sparked protests.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 35 / 40 (-1)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The parliament elects the president in a secret-ballot vote, and the president may serve up to two four-year terms. The prime minister is nominated by the president and approved by the parliament. Both the 2016 parliamentary confirmation of current prime minister, Māris Kučinskis of the Union of Greens and Farmers (ZZS), and the 2015 election of president Raimonds Vējonis, former ZZS leader, took place according to legal requirements.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The Latvian constitution provides for a unicameral, 100-seat parliament (Saeima), whose members are elected to four-year terms. The 2014 parliamentary elections were viewed as competitive and credible, and stakeholders accepted the results. The polls saw a victory by the ruling conservative coalition, which is comprised of the Unity party, ZZS,

and the nationalist National Alliance, which together took 58 percent of the vote. Harmony Center, which represents the interests of Latvia's ethnic Russians took 23 percent of the vote—won more votes than any other single party.

Elections to local councils took place in June 2017. Turnout was low, at just over 50 percent. The polls brought little change to the composition of municipalities' councils. An alliance between Harmony Center and the Honor to Serve Riga (GKR) party won a plurality of votes in Riga, the capital, but the results indicated declining support for Harmony Center.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

In general, the electoral legal framework is implemented fairly by the Central Election Commission (CEC) and regional and local election administrations.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 14 / 16 (-1)

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4

Latvia's political parties organize and compete freely. However, Latvian political candidates cannot run as independents, and those who belonged to communist or pro-Soviet organizations after 1991 may not hold public office. Parliamentary elections usually result in the entry of new political parties to the Saeima.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

Opposition parties compete freely and have a realistic chance of increasing power through elections. However, Harmony Center and its predecessors, mostly supported by Latvia's Russian-speaking population, have never been invited to participate in a coalition government.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 3 / 4 (-1)

In the summer of 2017, the political scene was shaken by the release of transcripts of talks between so-called oligarchs Aivars Lembergs, mayor of Ventspils, and Ainārs Šlesers, a former transportation minister, and their associates in 2009–11. The conversations—which were apparently recorded by Latvia's Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau (KNAB) and leaked to the Latvian weekly magazine *Ir*, which released them—included discussions on their efforts to replace the general prosecutor and other officials, influence media outlets, and influence strategic Latvian companies, and some of the plans discussed were ultimately realized. Key political figures failed to respond meaningfully to the revelations. KNAB opened an investigation in response to the disclosures, but at year's end had not issued related charges. A previous, long-running KNAB investigation against Lembergs and Šlesers had been closed in 2016. The lack of a powerful institutional response to the latest revelations of oligarchs' influence over Latvian politics prompted protests, and undermined public confidence in the government.

Authorities and other observers continue to express concern about the presence of disinformation and Russian propaganda in Latvian media.

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 because the “Oligarch Talks” scandal revealed the extent to which oligarchic figures influence Latvia’s politics.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

Approximately 240,000 of Latvia’s registered residents are stateless persons, most of whom are ethnic Russians. They may not vote, hold public office, work in government offices, or establish political parties. Children of noncitizens born after August 1991 can gain Latvian citizenship if they reside in Latvia permanently and have never acquired citizenship in another state. Lawmakers in September 2017 rejected legislation that would have granted citizenship to Latvian-born children automatically.

Women hold 19 percent of seats in the Saeima and few senior-level political posts. Latvia has no gender equality law, though the government has undertaken some initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality, and there are some associated protections in the country’s labor laws.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 9 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 3 / 4

While elections are held on time and elected representative duly seated, Latvian governments are frequently fragmented and short-lived. Although the government is generally capable of developing and implementing policies, oligarchs have tended to exploit the fragility of government coalitions to influence its decisions.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4

In recent years, the Latvian government has taken efforts to fight corruption and money laundering. Its admission to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2016 has raised international credibility. However, the investigative and auditing bodies have not been very successful so far in taming the corrupt behavior of politicians, due in part to institutions’ inability to consolidate power within their own fields of competence

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 3 / 4

The legislative framework for ensuring openness and transparency of the government is extensive. However, there is a notable lack of transparency in functioning of state companies, and in public procurement processes.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 52 / 60 (+1)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 15 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4

While Latvian media outlets publicize a wide range of political views in both Latvian and Russian, government offices and courts sometimes interfere with media outlets’ and reporters’ work. The “Oligarch Talks” recordings released in 2017 revealed influence on Latvian media by Lembergs, who used his influence to persuade government-controlled enterprises to purchase advertising space in the *Neatkarīga Rīta Avīze* daily newspaper, which he controlled, and by Šlesers, who took over the liberal *Diena* daily newspaper and replaced the staff with journalists sympathetic to his now-defunct political party. In the tapes, the men expressed annoyance at radio journalists at the public broadcaster, whom they were apparently unable to influence.

Libel remains a criminal offense. Financial pressures have prompted changes in ownership or in senior editorial staff at numerous media outlets in recent years.

Authorities have occasionally restricted Russian radio and news websites, citing concerns about propaganda.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Freedom of religion is generally respected. However, in the wake of the 2015 refugee crisis, social pressure on the country's roughly 1,000 Muslims has increased.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is generally respected. However, a number of potentially restrictive laws are on the books. In 2015, parliament adopted a law mandating that schools provide children a "moral education" that coincides with the values of the constitution, including traditional views of marriage and family life. A law that came into effect in January 2017 enabled the firing of teachers found to be "disloyal to the state." In addition, the government continued to voice an intention to reduce school instruction in languages other than Latvian, measures that would affect the country's minority schools.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

Private discussion is open and free. The public display of Soviet and Nazi symbols is banned.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 12 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4

Freedom of assembly is protected by law and generally respected in practice. A number of protests and demonstrations took place in 2017, including events opposing proposals to make most school curriculum Latvian-language, and to express dismay about corruption following the release of the "Oligarch Talks" transcripts.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

The government does not restrict the activities of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). However, advocacy by NGOs is increasingly viewed as partisan activity.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

Workers may establish trade unions, strike, and engage in collective bargaining.

F. RULE OF LAW: 12 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 3 / 4

While judicial independence is generally respected, inefficiency, politicization, and corruption within the judicial system continue to be problems. According to European Union (EU) polling, only about half of respondents from among the general public and companies agree that the courts in Latvia are independent.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 3 / 4

The legal system is widely considered corrupt and ineffective; according to EU polling, more people tend not to trust it than to trust it. By law, legal aid must be provided to people who cannot retain their own, but this is inconsistently enforced. Suspects are sometimes interrogated without the presence of a lawyer. Lengthy pretrial detention remains a concern. The justice system is overburdened and almost half of all criminal cases being investigated by the state police are over five years old.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 3 / 4

Latvia has one of the highest prison population rates in the EU. Prisons continue to suffer from overcrowding, and abuses of detainees and prisoners by law enforcement agents has been reported.

The rate of intentional homicides in Latvia is among the highest in the EU.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

Latvian laws do not offer specific protection against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation (except in employment) or gender identity. Women often face employment and wage discrimination. Members of the country's Roma minority face discrimination in schools and workplaces. Unemployment is higher among ethnic Russians than ethnic Latvians.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 13 / 16 (+1)

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4

Citizens and noncitizens may travel freely within the country and internationally.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 4 / 4

Years of reform efforts have created an environment in which people may freely establish businesses and own property, though corruption can impede business activities.

Score Change: The score improved from 3 to 4 because there are no significant impediments on people's ability to own property or engage in commercial activity.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

Domestic violence is not frequently reported, and police do not always take meaningful action when it is. Same-sex marriage was banned in 2005, and Latvia is one of six remaining countries in the EU that does not recognize same-sex partnerships.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Around 28 percent of Latvia's population was at risk of social exclusion or poverty in 2016, according to EU statistics. The shadow economy is extensive, and informal workers are vulnerable to labor abuses and being drawn into criminal operations. Under labor laws approved in July 2017, the monthly minimum wage will increase by €50 (\$57), to €430 (\$490), in 2018.

Men, women, and children continue to fall victim to human traffickers, who tend to transport them to other European countries for forced labor or servitude. The government

has increased efforts to provide services to victims of human trafficking, but victim services remain inadequate. A lack of awareness of human trafficking hampers the government's ability to respond to the problem.

Lebanon

Population: 6,200,000

Capital: Beirut

Political Rights Rating: 6 ↓

Civil Liberties Rating: 4

Freedom Rating: 5.0

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Ratings Change: Lebanon's political rights rating declined from 5 to 6 due to the further extension of the incumbent parliament's mandate, which originally expired in 2013, and a new electoral law that appeared to reinforce the sectarian political system and protect the position of established parties.

Overview: Lebanon's troubled political system ensures representation for its many sectarian communities, but suppresses competition within each community and impedes the rise of cross-sectarian or secularist parties. It effectively elevates communities over individuals and communal leaders over state institutions. Residents enjoy some civil liberties and media pluralism, but the rule of law is undermined by political interference and partisan militias, and the country has struggled to cope with an influx of Syrian and other refugees who make up more than a quarter of its population.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In June, the parliament adopted a new electoral law and scheduled legislative elections for May 2018, allowing citizens to vote for new national representatives for the first time in nine years.
- In parallel operations in July and August, government forces and the powerful Lebanese Shiite militia Hezbollah expelled the Syria-based Sunni jihadist groups Islamic State and Hayat Tahrir al-Sham from the Lebanon-Syria border area, improving security in the country's northeast.
- Prime Minister Saad Hariri unexpectedly announced his resignation while visiting Saudi Arabia in November, evidently under Saudi government pressure, but after diplomatic talks involving France and other powers, he returned to Lebanon and rescinded his resignation in December.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 11 / 40 (-3)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 3 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

The president, who is elected for six-year terms by the parliament, appoints the prime minister after consulting with the parliament. The president and prime minister choose the cabinet of ministers, which holds most formal executive power. According to long-standing

de facto agreements on sectarian power-sharing, the president must be a Maronite Christian, the prime minister must be a Sunni Muslim, and the speaker of the National Assembly must be a Shiite Muslim.

The presidency remained vacant for two years due to a lack of political consensus on a successor to Michel Suleiman, whose term expired in 2014. In October 2016, lawmakers finally elected former military commander Michel Aoun as president, and Aoun nominated Saad Hariri as prime minister in November. The parliament approved Hariri's unity cabinet, which included representatives of most major factions, in late December 2016. While these steps ended the long deadlock over Lebanon's executive leadership, they were carried out by a parliament whose electoral mandate had expired in 2013, critically undermining their democratic legitimacy.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4

The last elections for the 128-member National Assembly were held in June 2009. The Sunni-led March 14 coalition won 71 seats, while the rival March 8 coalition, backed by the Shiite militant group Hezbollah, took 57 seats. Although the elections were conducted peacefully and judged to be free and fair in some respects, vote buying was reported to be rampant, and the electoral framework retained a number of fundamental structural flaws linked to the country's sectarian political system.

New elections were due in June 2013, but disagreement over electoral reforms led the parliament to extend its own term until late 2014. Citing security concerns associated with the Syrian conflict, lawmakers in 2014 extended their mandate again, this time until June 2017. That month, the parliament adopted a new electoral law and scheduled elections for May 2018, extending its own term yet again until the new legislature could be seated.

Separately, relatively successful and peaceful municipal council elections were held across the country in May 2016, marking the first subnational elections since 2010. More than 30,000 candidates participated in contests in 1,015 municipalities, though turnout was generally low.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 2 / 4

Elections in Lebanon are overseen by the Interior Ministry rather than an independent electoral commission. Parliamentary seats are divided among major sects under a constitutional formula that does not reflect their current demographic weight. No official census has been conducted since the 1930s. The electoral framework is generally inclusive and supports pluralism, but it is the product of bargaining among established leaders and tends to entrench the existing sectarian and communalist political system.

The 2017 electoral law introduced proportional representation and preferential voting within a smaller number of enlarged multimember districts, and improved opportunities for diaspora voting. However, the districts were still drawn along communal lines, with each featuring a strong confessional majority, and the mechanisms for seat allocation seemed to favor incumbent forces. The law sharply raised registration fees for candidates as well as spending caps for campaigns, and allowed private organizations and foundations to promote coalitions and candidates, which could hand an advantage to wealthy groups and individuals. As under past electoral laws, members of the security forces and citizens who have been naturalized for less than 10 years cannot participate in elections.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 7 / 16 (-2)**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 3 / 4**

Citizens are free to organize in different political groupings, and the system features a variety of competing parties in practice. While parties do rise and fall to some extent based on their performance and voters' preferences, most of Lebanon's political parties are vehicles for an established set of communal leaders who benefit from patronage networks, greater access to financing, and other advantages of incumbency.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 1 / 4 (-2)

A handful of political parties have dominated Lebanese politics since 2005, and under the country's prevailing power-sharing system, none of them could accurately be described as opposition groups. The incumbent parties collaborated to formulate the 2017 election law, which gives them a number of advantages in the 2018 parliamentary elections and makes it more difficult for smaller parties and independents to compete.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 1 due to established parties' agreement on an election law that appeared to reinforce the sectarian political system and further extended the incumbent parliament's expired mandate until 2018.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 1 / 4

A variety of forces that are not democratically accountable—including entrenched patronage networks, religious institutions, armed nonstate actors such as Hezbollah, and competing foreign powers—use a combination of financial incentives and intimidation to exert influence on Lebanese voters and political figures. In 2017, Prime Minister Hariri's resignation under Saudi pressure—and his subsequent retraction of that decision after an intervention by France and other powers—highlighted the extent to which foreign governments are willing and able to interfere in Lebanese politics.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 2 / 4

Lebanon officially recognizes 18 religious communities, and the political system ensures that nearly all of these groups are represented, though not according to their actual shares of the population. Individuals who are not or do not wish to be affiliated with the recognized groups are effectively excluded. Moreover, the country's unusually large refugee population, including decades-old Palestinian communities, are not eligible to acquire citizenship and have no political rights.

Women have the same formal political rights as men, but they are marginalized in practice due to societal discrimination. Only four women held seats in the parliament elected in 2009, and all were relatives of previous members, reflecting a tendency of prominent families to head the established sectarian parties. The 2017 electoral law contained no provisions designed to increase women's participation as voters or candidates.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 1 / 12 (-1)**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 0 / 4**

Sectarian and partisan divisions, exacerbated by foreign interference and more recently the Syrian civil war, have frequently prevented Lebanese governments from forming and operating effectively and independently after elections. When the government is able to develop policies, they tend to be the result of negotiation among the country's dominant political figures, regardless of formal titles and positions; the legislature generally implements these policies rather than serving as an independent institutional check on the government. The National Assembly's lack of an electoral mandate has further undermined the government's legitimacy in recent years. The authority of the government is also limited in practice by the power of autonomous militant groups like Hezbollah.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 0 / 4 (-1)

Political and bureaucratic corruption is widespread, businesses routinely pay bribes and cultivate ties with politicians to win contracts or avoid unfavorable state actions, and anticorruption laws are loosely enforced. In October 2017, the parliament approved its first annual state budget since 2005, but it rejected calls to conduct an audit of extrabudgetary spending from the preceding years before approving the new funds. State expenditures remain irregular, with few benchmarks or parameters for effective oversight.

Score Change: The score declined from 1 to 0 due to the lack of basic safeguards against endemic political corruption, including the parliament's failure to require an audit of extra-budgetary spending before it passed a long-overdue state budget in 2017.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 1 / 4

There is no freedom of information law, and government documents are difficult to obtain in practice. Officials often negotiate behind closed doors, outside of state institutions, and with little regard for formal procedures. There are few practical opportunities for civil society groups to influence pending policies or legislation, though they and the media are able to discuss proposals that have been made public.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 32 / 60 (+2)**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 12 / 16 (+1)****D1. Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4 (+1)**

Freedom of expression and freedom of the press are guaranteed by law. The country's media are among the most open and diverse in the region, though nearly all outlets depend on the patronage of political parties, wealthy individuals, or foreign powers, and consequently practice some degree of self-censorship. Books, movies, plays, and other artistic works are subject to censorship, especially when the content involves politics, religion, sex, or Israel.

It is a criminal offense to criticize or defame the president or Lebanese security forces, and an audiovisual media law bans broadcasts that seek to harm the state or its foreign relations or incite sectarian violence, among other broadly worded provisions. These and similar laws have been used to intimidate and prosecute journalists who disseminate criticism of the government or powerful nonstate actors. Some defamation cases against journalists were reported in 2017, though any fines were relatively small, and no journalists were behind bars at year's end.

Journalists and media outlets occasionally face physical violence, but such incidents have grown less frequent and severe in recent years. A partisan mob attacked the offices of the television station Al-Jadeed in February 2017, damaging the building's exterior, and journalists were reportedly assaulted by police while covering protests over the U.S. recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital in December.

Score Change: The score improved from 2 to 3 due to journalists' greater demonstrated ability to cover sensitive political topics without fear of detention or physical reprisals in comparison with previous years.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4

The constitution protects freedom of conscience, and the state does not typically interfere with the practice or expression of religious faith or nonbelief. Blasphemy is a criminal offense, though enforcement varies and has become relatively lax in recent years. Individuals may face societal pressure to express faith or allegiance to a confessional community. Leaders and members of different communities discourage proselytizing by rival or outside groups.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 3 / 4

Academic freedom is generally unimpaired. Individuals are mostly free to select subjects for research and disseminate their findings. However, various laws and customary standards—including restrictions on defamation, blasphemy, and work or opinions related to Israel—deter open debate on certain issues. The state does not engage in extensive political indoctrination through education, though religious and other nonstate entities do seek to reinforce communal identities and perspectives.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4

Private discussion and expression of personal views are largely uninhibited, but the authorities monitor social media and other communications, and individuals sometimes face arrests, short detentions, or fines if they criticize the government, the military, foreign heads of state, or other powerful entities. Nonstate actors who feel that they have been harmed by critical speech may seek retribution through defamation suits or, more rarely, violence and intimidation.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 8 / 12 (+1)

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 3 / 4 (+1)

The authorities generally respect the right to assemble, which is protected under the constitution, and demonstrators have been able to mount protests against government dysfunction and lack of services in recent years. While protests over a garbage crisis in 2015 led to mass arrests and police violence that caused hundreds of injuries, assemblies since then have been more peaceful. In 2017, demonstrations were organized on issues including tax hikes, the extension of the parliament's mandate, and the U.S. decision to move its embassy in Israel to Jerusalem in December. Police or soldiers were accused of using excessive and indiscriminate force on some occasions, particularly in response to protester violence at the Jerusalem demonstrations, but no deaths, grievous injuries, or large-scale arrests were reported.

Score Change: The score improved from 2 to 3 due to protesters' greater ability in recent years to demonstrate on various topics without risking serious injury or punishment.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 3 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) for the most part operate freely in Lebanon, though they must comply with the Law on Associations, which has not been thoroughly updated since 1909, as well as other applicable laws relating to labor, finance, and immigration. NGOs must also register with the Interior Ministry, which may oblige them to undergo an approval process and can investigate a group's founders, officers, and staff.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

Individuals may establish, join, and leave trade unions and other professional organizations. However, the Labor Ministry has broad authority over the formation of unions, union elections, and the administrative dissolution of unions. The state regulates collective bargaining and strikes, and many unions are linked to political parties and serve as tools of influence for political leaders. Public employees, agricultural workers, and household workers are not protected by the labor code and have no legal right to organize, though they have formed unrecognized representative organizations in practice.

F. RULE OF LAW: 5 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4

Lebanon's judiciary is not independent. Court processes and decisions are affected by corruption and undue influence from political parties. Political leaders also exercise significant influence over judicial appointments.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4 (-1)

Due process is subject to a number of impediments, including violations of defendants' right to counsel and extensive use of lengthy pretrial detention. Some 57 percent of inmates were awaiting trial as of mid-2017, up from 55 percent a year earlier. Due process guarantees are particularly inadequate in the country's exceptional courts, including the military courts, whose judges do not require a background in law and are authorized to try civilians and juveniles in security-related cases. In practice, military courts have asserted jurisdiction over cases involving human rights activists and protesters in addition to those focused on alleged spies and militants. At the same time, they have failed to hold military personnel accountable for abuses. The armed forces detained some 350 Syrian men during June 2017 raids in the Arsal area, and four died in custody amid reports of torture and other ill-treatment, but a closed military investigation concluded that the men had died of chronic ailments.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 due to a lack of due process in the resolution of legal cases, particularly those handled by military courts, which have broad authority to try civilians and do not hold security forces accountable for abuses.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 2 / 4 (+1)

Prisons and detention centers are badly overcrowded and poorly equipped, and the use of torture by law enforcement, military, and state security personnel remains a problem. A new law that took effect in October 2017 added the offense of torture to the criminal code

and barred the use of evidence extracted under torture. However, it failed to criminalize other forms of ill-treatment, imposed a statute of limitations, and confined the definition of torture to specific situations related to investigations and trials. Independent experts also found that the law's prescribed penalties were insufficient.

Security in Lebanon continued to be undermined by the presence of a variety of armed militias and terrorist groups in 2017, but the authorities made some progress during the year. In July and August, government forces and Hezbollah conducted parallel operations that expelled the Syria-based jihadist groups Islamic State and Hayat Tahrir al-Sham from an area along the country's northeastern border, where they had maintained a presence for a number of years.

Score Change: The score improved from 1 to 2 due to the expulsion of militant groups that had operated along the Syrian border and a new law that marked a step forward in the criminalization of torture.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

The country's legal system is meant to protect members of recognized confessional communities against mistreatment by the state, but mutually hostile groups have engaged in discriminatory behavior toward one another in practice, and those who do not belong to a recognized community have difficulty obtaining official documents, government jobs, and other services.

Despite some legal protections, women are barred from certain types of employment and face discrimination in wages and social benefits. LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people face both official and societal discrimination and harassment. The penal code prescribes up to one year in prison for "sexual intercourse against nature," though this is rarely enforced. NGOs work to uphold the human rights of LGBT people, and social acceptance is more common in urban and cosmopolitan areas, particularly in Beirut.

There were roughly 1.5 million Syrian refugees in Lebanon as of 2017, of whom about one-third were not registered with the UN refugee agency; the government had instructed the agency to suspend registrations in 2015. Syrian refugees have faced arbitrary arrests and other forms of harassment from both security forces and Lebanese civilians. A large majority live in poverty, partly due to limitations on refugees' employment options.

About 450,000 Palestinian refugees were registered in Lebanon, though fewer than 300,000 were believed to reside in the country in 2017. They also face restrictions on economic activity, contributing to widespread poverty.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 7 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 2 / 4

Citizens enjoy constitutional and legal rights to freedom of movement, though it is extremely difficult to transfer one's official place of residence for voting purposes. Other impediments to internal movement include de facto sectarian boundaries or militia checkpoints in some areas and curfews on Syrian refugees in many municipalities. Migrant workers can lose their legal residency if they are dismissed by or leave their registered employer. Restrictive social customs in some communities allow men to control female relatives' movements and employment outside the home.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

Lebanese law protects citizens' rights to own property and operate private businesses, but powerful groups and individuals sometimes engage in land-grabbing and other infringements without consequence, and business activity is impaired by bureaucratic obstacles and corruption.

Refugees, including longtime Palestinian residents, have few property rights. Women have weaker property rights than men under the religious codes that govern inheritance and other personal status issues in Lebanon, and they often face family pressure to transfer property to male relatives.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Because the religious codes and courts of each confessional community determine personal status law in Lebanon, an individual's rights regarding marriage, divorce, and child custody depend on his or her affiliation, though women are typically at a disadvantage to men. Women cannot pass Lebanese citizenship to foreign husbands or children.

In August 2017, the parliament repealed Article 522 of the penal code, which allowed rapists to evade criminal prosecution if they subsequently married their victims for a period of at least three years. However, the change did not affect a similar article related to sex with a minor, and spousal rape is still not a criminal offense.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

Communal affiliation can either enhance or restrict an individual's economic opportunities in a given area, company, or public-sector entity, depending on which group is in a dominant position. Individuals must also contend with political patronage and clientelism in the public and private sectors.

Refugees and migrant workers are especially vulnerable to exploitative working conditions and sex trafficking. The authorities do not effectively enforce laws against child labor, which is increasingly common among Syrian refugees.

Lesotho

Population: 2,200,000

Capital: Maseru

Political Rights Rating: 3

Civil Liberties Rating: 3

Freedom Rating: 3.0

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Lesotho is a constitutional monarchy. In recent years, the army's involvement in the country's already fragile politics has resulted in political instability and a security crisis. Corruption remains a challenge. Customary practice and law restricts women's rights in areas such as property, inheritance, and marriage and divorce.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- A parliamentary no-confidence vote in March triggered the third round of legislative elections in five years. The polls took place peacefully and were deemed well administered and credible by international election observers, who offered particular praise for the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC).
- Thomas Thabane's All Basotho Convention (ABC) won a plurality of seats in the snap polls, and formed a coalition government.
- In September, Army Chief Khoantle Motsomotso was assassinated by rivals. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) subsequently deployed a 258-person regional force to Lesotho, tasked with helping reestablish security.
- Police were criticised for a violent response to student protests held in April on a campus of the National University of Lesotho.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 27 / 40**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 10 / 12****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4**

Lesotho is a constitutional monarchy. King Letsie III serves as the ceremonial head of state. The prime minister is head of government; the head of the majority party or coalition automatically becomes prime minister following elections, making the prime minister's legitimacy largely dependent on the conduct of the polls. Thomas Thabane became prime minister after his ABC party won snap elections in 2017. Thabane, a fixture in the country's politics, had previously served as prime minister from 2012–14, but spent two years in exile in South Africa amid instability that followed a failed 2014 coup.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The lower house of Parliament, the National Assembly, has 120 seats; 80 are filled through first-past-the-post constituency votes, and the remaining 40 through proportional representation. Members serve five-year terms. The Senate—the upper house of Parliament—consists of 22 principal chiefs who wield considerable authority in rural areas and whose membership is hereditary, along with 11 other members appointed by the king and acting on the advice of the Council of State.

In March 2017, the coalition government of Prime Minister Pakalitha Mosisili—head of the Democratic Congress (DC)—lost a no-confidence vote. The development triggered the third round of legislative elections held since 2012. Election observers from the SADC, African Union (AU), and the Commonwealth Observer Group reported that the elections took place peacefully and were generally well administered and competitive. However, some isolated instances of political violence were noted, as was a heavy security presence at many polling places, which electoral officials said intimidated some voters. Thabane's ABC won a plurality of seats formed a coalition government, with Thabane serving again as prime minister.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4

Although the IEC faces capacity constraints, and the credibility of the voters' roll has been questioned in the past, it has been commended for its independence and its efforts to uphold electoral laws and oversee credible elections. In 2017, international election observer missions broadly commended the IEC's administration of the snap polls, but noted

deficiencies they linked to the body's lack of capacity, including late disbursement of campaign funds to political parties.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 11 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 3 / 4

Political parties may form freely and are allotted funding by the IEC, and 27 parties contested the 2017 elections. However, politics have been unstable since a failed 2014 coup. The country has seen politically motivated assassinations and assassination attempts, and political leaders operate within the country at some risk to their personal safety. Lipolelo Thabane, Prime Minister Thabane's estranged wife, was shot and killed two days before his June 2017 inauguration, though the motive was unclear. No arrests had been made at year's end.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 3 / 4

Opposition parties have a realistic chance of gaining power through elections, and power has rotated frequently between DC- and ABC-led coalitions. However, political instability and associated violence and intimidation has at times prompted opposition leaders to flee the country.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 2 / 4

Recent political instability is largely related to politics becoming entangled in disputes among factions of the Lesotho Defence Force (LDF). Although the heavy military presence at voting stations during the 2017 elections was questioned, no incidences of interference with voters were reported. Traditional chiefs wield some political influence over their rural subjects.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

The constitution guarantees political rights for all. However, societal norms discourage women from running for office, and women remain underrepresented in Parliament; following the 2017 elections, 23 percent of seats are held by women, down from 25 percent previously. The inaccessibility of some polling stations to persons living with disabilities was raised as a concern during the year's elections. LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) individuals generally face societal discrimination, and this discourages them from advocating for their rights in the political sphere.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 6 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 2 / 4

While elections are held without delays and representatives are duly seated, persistent political instability disrupts normal government operations.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

Official corruption and impunity for it are perceived as a significant problem in Lesotho. The main anticorruption agency, the Directorate on Corruption and Economic Offences (DCEO), lacks full prosecutorial powers, and faces capacity and funding challenges. However, its budget was increased by 40 percent in 2017, and despite its challenges, DCEO officers do work to pursue the body's mandate. In 2017, it pursued several controversial cases that involved former cabinet ministers. For example, in August, it interrogated former ministers implicated in a vehicle contract controversially awarded to South African company Bidvest.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

Lesotho has no access to information law, and responses to information requests are not guaranteed. While the Finance Ministry, Bureau of Statistics, and other government bodies publish some data online, not all government departments have an online presence; notably, the Energy and Defence Ministries do not have websites. The management of public finances is clouded in secrecy. Government procurement decisions and tenders generally cannot be accessed online.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 37 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 12 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4

Freedom of the press is only indirectly protected under constitutional guarantees of freedom of expression. Journalists are subject to threats and intimidation from both authorities and private citizens. Both state and private media stand accused of being openly biased, and 2017 election monitoring missions noted media bias. Both the current and previous administration shut down radio stations in 2017. In February, Pakalitha Mosisili's government shut down two local radio stations for allegedly broadcasting defamatory content against himself and his deputy prime minister. In September, Mo-Afrika FM was temporarily prevented from broadcasting by the ABC-led government, and its owner was arrested and charged with defamation over airing content perceived as antigovernment.

In October, a South African Broadcasting Corporation correspondent fled Lesotho after receiving death threats. Five soldiers went on trial in December for the 2016 attempted murder of a *Lesotho Times* journalist.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

The Constitution provides legal protections for freedom of religion and prohibits religious discrimination, and religious freedom is generally upheld in practice.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 3 / 4

Academic freedom is generally respected in practice. However, police were criticised for a violent response to student protests on a campus of the National University of Lesotho that took place in April. The students were protesting then prime minister Mosisili's failure to intervene in a dispute involving nondisbursement of scholarship funds, and the events raised questions about the ability of students to organize antigovernment protests on university grounds. Separately, in May, the DC leaders accused the university of having sought the ouster of the DC-led coalition government, and declined to participate in a debate the university had planned.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4

The constitution provides legal protections for freedom of expression. However political violence in recent years has discouraged some open political debate. Additionally, in February 2017, authorities temporarily detained and questioned the operators of a Facebook page in an attempt to learn the identity of a user who had published sensitive government information using a pseudonym.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 7 / 12**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 2 / 4**

Protests and demonstrations are permitted, but organizers must seek a permit seven days in advance. Demonstrations take place each year, but are sometimes broken up violently by police, as was the case with the 2017 student demonstrations at the National University of Lesotho.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 3 / 4

NGOs generally operate without restrictions. However, the Mosisili government was notably reluctant to cooperate with such NGOs and accused them of bias, according to the US State Department.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

While labor and union rights are constitutionally guaranteed, the union movement is weak and highly fragmented, and these challenges have undermined unions' ability to advance the rights of workers. The government also stands accused of undermining bodies like the National Advisory Committee on Labour (NACOLA), Wages Advisory Board, and Industrial Relations Council. Many employees in the textile sector—Lesotho's largest formal employer—face obstacles when attempting to join unions.

F. RULE OF LAW: 9 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 3 / 4**

The constitution of Lesotho protects judicial independence and the judiciary is generally independent in practice. However, it is underresourced and some appointments have been criticized." The August 2017 reappointment of Justice Mosito as head of the Court of Appeal raised questions among many observers, as he had resigned eight months earlier to avoid impeachment over allegations of tax evasion. Separately, the government in 2017 asked the country's chief justice to either resign or face impeachment over a controversial rental transaction, she has also been accused of political bias.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 2 / 4

Courts uphold fair trial rights in most judiciary proceedings. However, the large backlog of cases often leads to trial delays and lengthy pretrial detention. Officials within the criminal justice system have faced intimidation. In October 2017, the 35-year-old practice of well-known human rights lawyer Zwelakhe Mda was allegedly burned down. At the time, he was involved in a high-profile case challenging the appointment of Mosito, the new head of the Court of Appeal.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 2 / 4

Violence related to factional disputes in the army continued to play out in 2017. In September, Army Chief Khoantle Motsomotso was assassinated by rivals. The SADC subsequently deployed a 258-person regional force to Lesotho, tasked with helping reestablish security. Separately, soldiers who fled to South Africa in 2014–15 amid mutiny charges began arriving back in Lesotho in October 2017, after being asked to return.

Although the constitution provides legal protections against torture, allegations of torture have been levelled against the police, LDF, and prison authorities. In April 2017, Opposition Alliance of Democrats (AD) Youth League President Thuso Litjubo and his bodyguard were allegedly tortured by the police following their arrest on a murder charge. The LDF has been accused of carrying out extrajudicial killings of suspected gang members.

In April, a student from the National University of Lesotho was shot in the back of the head by a police officer and died from the injury while at a club near the campus.

Prison conditions are inadequate and detainees are subject to physical abuse.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

Rights are restricted for some groups. Same-sex sexual relations between men is illegal, though this law is not enforced. LGBT individuals face societal discrimination, and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity is not prohibited by law. Schools often lack facilities for students with disabilities.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 9 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4

The constitution protects freedom of movement, and this is generally upheld. In 2017, media reported that a high incidence of rape on a path near the Ha Lebona and Ha Koeshe villages has prompted some women to reduce travel in the area.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

The Constitution protects property rights, though in practice the related laws are inconsistently upheld. Customary practice and law still restricts women's rights in areas such as property, and inheritance. Expropriation is provided for in the Constitution but is unlikely, and subject to fair compensation. Government instability and the country's volatile politics hampers normal business activity.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Not all individuals enjoy full social freedom. Traditional practices and harmful patriarchal attitudes negatively affect women. Violence against women is high, and there is still no domestic violence law, despite government promises to enact one. Forced and child marriages remain an ongoing problem. Customary practices and law restrict women's rights in and marriage and divorce.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Human trafficking remains an ongoing challenge. The State Department's 2017 *Trafficking in Persons Report* found Lesotho's legal framework for prosecuting human trafficking to be weak and inconsistent with international law. It also noted a lack of inspections in informal work settings where forced labor is rife. However, government efforts to fight

trafficking including the signing of a memorandum of understanding to help reestablish the only NGO that had provide shelter for victims.

Liberia

Population: 4,600,000

Capital: Monrovia

Political Rights Rating: 3

Civil Liberties Rating: 3↑

Freedom Rating: 3.0

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Ratings Change: Liberia's civil liberties rating improved from 4 to 3 due to gradual improvements in freedom of movement within the country.

Overview: Liberia has enjoyed more than a decade of peace and stability since the second civil war ended in 2003. During this time, the country has made considerable progress rebuilding government capacity, reestablishing the rule of law, and ensuring the political rights and civil liberties of citizens, and 2017 saw the first peaceful transfer of power between leaders since 1944. However, Liberia still faces serious issues with corruption and unequal access to justice.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Legislative and presidential elections held in October were described as peaceful and generally well administered by both domestic and international observers, despite some procedural challenges.
- George Weah of the Coalition for Democratic Change (CDC) won the presidency, defeating incumbent vice president Joseph Boakai with 61.5 percent of the vote in a run-off.
- The National Elections Commission (NEC) was considered to have operated impartially during the election period, but struggled to enforce electoral laws. The Supreme Court also overturned two NEC decisions that were aimed at enforcing the 2014 National Code of Conduct Act, prompting concern from election observers and others.
- The government debated a promised Land Reform Act needed to address ongoing land disputes, but lawmakers rejected the measure.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 27 / 40 (-1)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 8 / 12 (-1)

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

Liberia's president is directly elected, and can serve up to two six-year terms. Since the end of the civil wars in 2003, Liberia has had three peaceful presidential elections. The most recent election, held in 2017, was commended by domestic and international observers, who assessed the poll as generally peaceful and credible, while also noting difficulties including long queues at polling places and challenges related to voter identification.

A runoff between Weah and Boakai, the top two finishers in the first round of polling, was delayed when third-place finisher Charles Brumskine of the Liberty Party challenged the first-round results on grounds of fraud. The Supreme Court found that his fraud claim was not supported by evidence, and the run-off was held several weeks later than scheduled, in late December. Weah won the runoff with 61.5 percent of the vote, and Boakai conceded defeat. Observers noted procedural and administrative improvements in the run-off, compared to the first round.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

Liberia has a bicameral legislature composed of a 30-member Senate and a 73-member House of Representatives; senators are elected to nine-year terms, and representatives to six-year terms. Legislative elections were held concurrently with the presidential election in October 2017. While there were some administrative problems, including complaints that registered voters could not be found on the voter rolls, observers said the elections were generally peaceful and well-administered. There were minor incidents of violence between political party supporters during the campaigning period, but candidates were largely able to campaign freely.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 2 / 4 (-1)

The independence of Liberia's NEC is mandated by law, and political parties expressed confidence in its impartiality during the 2017 election campaign. However, its capacity is limited, and it struggles to enforce electoral laws.

The 2017 elections were the first to apply the provisions of the 2014 National Code of Conduct Act, which laid out rules applying to government officials seeking to run for elected office, and included measures aimed at avoiding conflicts of interest. The NEC attempted to enforce the provisions of the Code of Conduct during the elections. However, the Supreme Court reversed the NEC's rulings in two instances where the NEC had disqualified high-profile candidates for failing to meet the Code of Conduct's eligibility requirements. Separately, the NEC failed to enforce a provision of the Election Law stipulating that parties must field candidates in at least half of all constituencies. Eleven political parties did not meet this requirement, but were permitted to run. The NEC additionally struggled to complete voter lists.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 because the National Elections Commission struggled to enforce electoral laws in the lead-up to the 2017 elections.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 12 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 3 / 4

Political parties generally do not face undue legal or practical obstacles that prevent them from forming or operating. However, in the run-up to the 2017 elections, election monitors recorded allegations that the ruling party drew on public resources to fund political campaigns—notably by taking advantage of state-owned vehicles and facilities.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 3 / 4

Opposition parties hold support among the population and have a realistic chance of gaining power through elections. In the 2017 presidential election, Weah, of the opposition CDC, won the presidency over the incumbent party's candidate. Similarly, the Congress for Democratic Change, the largest party within the CDC coalition that backed Weah, won 21 seats in the legislature in the elections, and displaced the Unity Party as the party with the greatest representation.

However, in the run-up to the 2017 elections, election monitors recorded allegations that opposition candidates had to pay higher fees to rent public facilities than did those affiliated with the ruling party.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 3 / 4

Allegations of undue influence or pressure on voters by powerful groups that are not democratically accountable to the people are rare. However, a general wariness of potential electoral violence persists in Liberia. A few instances of violence between party supporters took place during the 2017 campaign, but generally the election period was peaceful.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

Some minority groups continue to be stigmatized as outsiders. Members of Lebanese and Asian minority groups whose families have lived in Liberia for generations are denied citizenship, and cannot participate in political processes. Monitors noted that many women experienced difficulty registering to vote, attributed in part to limited hours registration offices were open.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 7 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 3 / 4

Once elected, government officials are duly installed in office, and elected legislators generally operate without interference. However, bribery and corruption can influence policy prioritization.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

Many institutions are devoted to fighting corruption, but they lack the resources and capacity to function effectively, and corruption remains pervasive. The Supreme Court in October 2017 signaled that adjudication of a high-profile bribery case against former house speaker Alex Tyler was not a priority, and that courts would instead focus on election-related cases.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

Liberia's Freedom of Information Act is rarely used, and government responsiveness to requests tends to be slow. Transparency guidelines for public procurement processes are not fully enforced.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 35 / 60 (+1)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 11 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4

Liberia's media express a range of views. Despite becoming a signatory to the Declaration of Table Mountain, a pan-African initiative that calls for the abolition of criminal defamation laws, Liberia has long been criticized for its onerous criminal and civil libel laws, which authorities have invoked to harass and intimidate journalists. The government does not restrict internet access, but poor infrastructure and high costs limit usage.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4

Religious freedom is protected in the constitution and there is no official religion. However, about 86 percent of the population is Christian, and the Muslim minority reports discrimination. In 2015, a proposal to amend the constitution to establish Christianity as the official religion contributed to interreligious tensions. While then president Sirleaf shelved this proposal, some discussion of it reemerged during the 2017 campaign period.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 3 / 4

The government does not restrict academic freedom, though educational quality and infrastructure remain inadequate.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4

People are generally free to engage in private discussion while in public spaces, but some topics are taboo, such as discussion of issues affecting LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people. The government is not known to illegally monitor online communications.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 8 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 3 / 4

Freedom of assembly and of association is constitutionally guaranteed and largely respected. While there have been some instances of violence between political party supporters, people are largely able to gather and protest freely.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 3 / 4

Numerous civil society groups, including human rights organizations, operate in the country. However, groups focused on LGBT issues tend to keep a low profile due to fears of retribution for their activism.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

Unions are free to form and mobilize, and are well organized. The rights of workers to strike, organize, and bargain collectively are recognized. However, the law does not protect workers from employer retaliation for legal strike activity. Labor disputes can turn violent, particularly at the country's various mines and rubber plantations.

F. RULE OF LAW: 7 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 2 / 4

Constitutional provisions guarantee an independent judiciary. Although petty corruption and backlogs remain major impediments to justice, some rulings by the nation's highest court in recent years point to increased judicial independence and increased willingness to

intervene to protect people's rights. However, the Supreme Court's move to overturn NEC rulings aimed at enforcing the National Code of Conduct Act during the 2017 election cycle prompted concern from election observers, lawmakers, NEC officials, and other observers, some of whom alleged that the court was trying to appease all parties by not fully enforcing the Code.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

The right to due process under the law is guaranteed by the constitution but poorly upheld. Many people accused of crimes spend more time in pre-trial detention than the length they would serve for a guilty sentence. Those with money may be able to bribe judges to rule in their favor. Reports of arbitrary arrest by law enforcement agents continue.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 2 / 4

The security environment in Liberia has improved dramatically in the years since warfare ended in 2003. However the police force is still seen to be corrupt, and lacks the financial support to be able to provide robust protection for Liberia's people. Prison conditions are very poor, and reports of abuse and threats against detainees and prisoners by law enforcement agents and prison guards continue.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

LGBT people face social stigma and the threat of violence. The penal code makes "voluntary sodomy" a misdemeanor offense that can carry up to a year in prison, and this provision can be invoked against LGBT people. In a presidential debate with 9 candidates, none supported same-sex marriage.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 9 / 16 (+1)

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4 (+1)

People enjoy increasing freedom to move throughout the country. Some unofficial border checkpoints remain, at which border patrol agents sometimes attempt to extract bribes. However, people have enjoyed a gradual increase in the right to move about freely in the years since large-scale violence ended.

Score Change: The score improved from 2 to 3 due to gradual improvements in freedom of movement within the country.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

Conflicts over land remain pervasive. Many of these conflicts originated in the civil wars and subsequent displacement, and resettlement. Others are the result of opaque concession agreements granting foreign corporations access to lands for production of timber and palm oil. While the government in 2017 debated a Land Reform Act that would address some of these concerns, lawmakers rejected the measure.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

While men and women enjoy equal legal rights under civil law, customary law remains dominant in many parts of the country, especially in rural areas, creating gender discrepancies in access to land, custody of children, and impartial adjudication of disputes. Violence against women and children, particularly rape, is a pervasive problem. In October 2017, the Senate voted to make rape a bailable offense—a decision that sparked protests outside the Capitol building by women’s rights activists.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Human trafficking for the purpose of forced labor and prostitution remains a problem, with most victims trafficked from rural areas to cities. Many trafficking victims are children, who can be found working in diamond mines, agricultural operations, or as domestic laborers, or engaged in forced begging or prostitution.

Libya

Population: 6,300,000

Capital: Tripoli

Political Rights Rating: 7

Civil Liberties Rating: 6

Freedom Rating: 6.5

Freedom Status: Not Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: While a popular armed uprising in 2011 deposed longtime dictator Mu’ammār al-Qadhafi, Libya is now racked by internal divisions, and international efforts to bring rival administrations together in a unity government have failed to date. A proliferation of weapons and autonomous militias, flourishing criminal networks, and the presence of extremist groups like the Islamic State (IS) have all undermined security in the country. The ongoing violence has displaced hundreds of thousands of people, and human rights conditions have steadily deteriorated.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Despite UN-led attempts at reconciliation, Libya remained mired in political disarray throughout the year, with three separate governments competing for power and legitimacy.
- In July, the Constitutional Drafting Assembly voted to approve a draft constitution, but plans for a referendum on the text remained stalled at year’s end.
- Khalifa Haftar, the commander of a military alliance known as the Libyan National Army (LNA), expanded his control over eastern and southern Libya during the year. He reached a cease-fire deal in July with the government recognized by the UN, but in December he claimed that the UN-brokered Libyan Political Agreement (LPA) of 2015—which led to the creation of the UN-recognized unity government—had expired.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 1 / 40 (-2)**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 0 / 12 (-1)****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4**

The LPA was signed in December 2015 in an effort to resolve a civil conflict that erupted after the 2014 elections led to the formation of two rival governments. However, the resulting UN-backed government has failed to assert its authority over the two existing structures, meaning Libya has had three governments competing for control and legitimacy since 2016. The internationally recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) is based in Tripoli and led by Prime Minister Fayed al-Serraj. Khalifa al-Ghwell is the prime minister of the National Salvation Government (NSG), also located in Tripoli, which stemmed from a faction that rejected the outcome of the 2014 elections. A third government based in the east is led by Abdullah al-Thinni, associated with the House of Representatives (HoR) elected in 2014, and militarily aligned with Haftar's LNA.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

The 2014 elections were deeply flawed, with less than a month of preparation and ongoing fighting in some areas. Only a small fraction of the voting-age population cast ballots, and all candidates were required to run as independents. Some members of the incumbent legislature, the General National Congress (GNC), challenged the new Tubruk-based HoR's legal validity and continued to meet in Tripoli, backing the NSG as the legitimate government.

Under the LPA, the HoR was to remain in place as the interim legislature. The agreement also created the State Council, a secondary consultative body comprising members of the GNC who had rejected the outcome of the 2014 elections. However, the HoR never formally approved the LPA's provisions or recognized the GNA.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 0 / 4 (-1)

An August 2011 constitutional declaration, issued by an unelected National Transitional Council, serves as the governing document for the ongoing transitional period between the revolution and the adoption of a permanent constitution. While an electoral law was published in the aftermath of the 2011 revolution and an electoral commission was appointed, Libya lacks a functioning electoral framework in practice.

In July 2017, a Constitutional Drafting Assembly that was originally elected in 2014 voted to approve a draft constitution, but given the broader political impasse, there was no subsequent progress on holding a referendum to formally adopt the document.

Ghassan Salamé, head of the UN Support Mission for Libya (UNSMIL), laid out a roadmap in September to address the breakdown of the LPA. The plan included amending the agreement, convening a national conference with all political actors, and holding the constitutional referendum, to be followed by parliamentary and presidential elections. The HoR voted in favor of the roadmap in November, but the State Council rejected it. In December, Haftar declared that the LPA and the mandate of the GNA had expired, further dimming the prospects for political reconciliation and national elections.

Score Change: The score declined from 1 to 0 due to ongoing political disagreements and civil conflict that obstructed the creation of a functional system for conducting a constitutional referendum and national elections.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 1 / 16 (-1)**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 1 / 4**

A range of political parties organized to participate in the 2012 GNC elections, but all candidates were required to run as independents in the 2014 HoR elections, and civilian politics have since been overshadowed by the activities of armed groups. While various political groups and coalitions existed as of 2017, the chaotic legal and security environment did not allow for normal political competition.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 0 / 4

Libya remained divided between rival political and military factions throughout 2017, with no legal framework for holding elections and no opportunity for a democratic rotation of power.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 0 / 4

Citizens and civilian political figures are subject to violence and intimidation by various armed groups, which continued to engage in active fighting during 2017. In one of the year's most high-profile assassinations, unidentified gunmen abducted and killed Mohamed Eshewi, the mayor of Misrata, in December. Separately, the LNA has replaced a number of civilian mayors with military figures in areas under its control.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 0 / 4 (-1)

The ongoing political impasse and civil conflict prevented all segments of the population from exercising their basic political rights in 2017, and communities that lacked an affiliation with a powerful militia were especially marginalized. For example, tens of thousands of people who were forcibly displaced from the town of Tawergha after the 2011 uprising due to their perceived loyalty to the old regime remained under the control of militias from Misrata. The Tawerghans, whom many Libyans regard as ethnically distinct, were supposed to be returned under an agreement ratified by the GNA in June, but disputes persisted and the Misratan forces continued to block the displaced people's return at year's end.

Score Change: The score declined from 1 to 0 due to the complete breakdown of the political process, which made it impossible for any major segment of the population to participate in politics and advocate for their interests.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 0 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 0 / 4**

None of the country's feuding political institutions constituted an effective national government in 2017, and all were dependent for their security on fragile alliances with autonomous armed groups.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 0 / 4

Corruption has long been pervasive in both the private sector and the government. The fall of the Qadhafi regime initially raised hopes that the level of graft would decline, but oil interests, foreign governments, smuggling syndicates, and armed groups still wield undue influence, and opportunities for corruption and criminal activity abound in the absence of functioning fiscal, judicial, and commercial institutions.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 0 / 4

There are no effective laws guaranteeing public access to government information, and none of the three competing governments are able to engage in transparent budget-making and contracting practices.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 8 / 60 (-2)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 4 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4

Most Libyan media outlets are highly partisan, producing content that favors one of the country's political and military factions. The civil conflict and related violence by criminal and extremist groups have made objective reporting dangerous. Many journalists and media outlets have censored themselves or ceased operations to avoid retribution for their work, and a growing number of journalists have fled the country.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 1 / 4

Religious freedom is often violated in practice. Nearly all Libyans are Sunni Muslims, but Christians form a small minority, with most hailing from neighboring countries. Christian and other minority communities have been targeted by armed groups, including IS. Salafi Muslim militants, whose beliefs reject the veneration of saints, have destroyed or vandalized Sufi Muslim shrines with impunity.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 1 / 4

There are no effective laws guaranteeing academic freedom. The armed conflict has damaged many university facilities and altered classroom dynamics, for example by subjecting professors to intimidation by students aligned with militias.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 1 / 4

Although the freedom of private discussion and personal expression improved dramatically after 2011, the ongoing hostilities have taken their toll, with many Libyans increasingly withdrawing from public life or avoiding criticism of powerful figures.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 2 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 1 / 4

A 2012 law on freedom of assembly is generally compatible with international human rights principles, but in practice the armed conflict and related disorder seriously deter peaceful assemblies in many areas.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 1 / 4

The number of active nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) has declined in recent years due to armed conflict and the departure of international donors. Militias with varying political, tribal, and geographic affiliations have attacked civil society activists with impunity. Many NGO workers have fled abroad or ceased their activism in the wake of grave threats to themselves or their families.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 0 / 4

Some trade unions, previously outlawed, formed after 2011, but they remain in their organizational infancy, and normal collective-bargaining activity is impossible in the absence of basic security and a functioning legal system.

F. RULE OF LAW: 0 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 0 / 4

The role of the judiciary remains unclear without a permanent constitution, and judges face frequent threats and attacks. The national judicial system has essentially collapsed, with courts unable to function in much of the country. In some cases, informal dispute-resolution mechanisms have filled the void.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 0 / 4

Militias and semiofficial security forces regularly engage in arbitrary arrests and detentions with impunity. Thousands of individuals remain in custody without any formal trial or sentencing. Investigations into a large number of cases involving torture and extrajudicial executions before and during the 2011 revolution, including the killing of Qadhafi, have made little progress.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 0 / 4

Libya's warring militias operate with little regard for the physical security of civilians. Various armed groups have carried out indiscriminate shelling of civilian areas, torture of detainees, summary executions, rape, and the destruction of property. Militias also engage in criminal activity, including extortion and other forms of predation on the civilian population.

The conflict's main battleground has been eastern Libya, in the cities of Benghazi and Derna, though fighting has taken place across the country. During 2017, the LNA continued its siege of Derna, which was controlled by the Derna Mujahedeen Shura Council, an alliance of anti-LNA Islamist groups. Civilians in the city faced shortages of vital supplies.

Although IS was largely ousted from its stronghold in Sirte on the central Mediterranean coast in 2016, it maintained a presence in the region and continued to carry out attacks in other parts of the country during 2017.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 0 / 4

Libyans from certain tribes and communities—often those perceived as pro-Qadhafi, including the Tawerghans—have faced discrimination, violence, and displacement since 2011. The Tebu and Tuareg minorities in the south also face discrimination, and migrant workers from sub-Saharan Africa have been subject to serious mistreatment, particularly at the hands of armed groups.

Women are not treated equally under the law and face practical restrictions on their ability to participate in the workforce. Widows and displaced women in particular are vulnerable to economic deprivation and other abuses.

Under Libya's penal code, sexual activity between members of the same sex is punishable by up to five years in prison. LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people face severe discrimination and harassment, and have been targeted by militant groups.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 2 / 16 (-2)

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 0 / 4

The 2011 constitutional declaration guarantees freedom of movement, but government and militia checkpoints restrict travel within Libya, while poor security conditions more generally affect movement as well as access to health care, education, and employment. Airports in Benghazi, Tripoli, Sabha, and Misrata have been attacked and damaged, severely limiting access to air travel. The UN Office for Humanitarian Affairs estimated that 1.3 million people in Libya would need humanitarian assistance in 2017, including more than 313,000 who were internally displaced. Many others have reportedly sought safety in neighboring Tunisia and Egypt.

In February 2017, the LNA issued a decree banning women under the age of 60 from traveling outside Libya without a male guardian. However, backlash against the decree led to its replacement later in the month by a new order barring men and women between the ages of 18 and 45 from unapproved travel.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 1 / 4

While Libyans formally have the right to own property and can start businesses, legal protections are not upheld in practice. Businesses and homes have been confiscated by militias, particularly in Libya's eastern regions, and ongoing unrest has severely disrupted ordinary commerce, allowing armed groups to dominate smuggling networks and informal markets.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 1 / 4 (-1)

Laws and social customs based on Sharia (Islamic law) put women at a disadvantage in personal status matters including marriage and divorce. Libyan women with foreign husbands do not enjoy full citizenship rights and cannot transfer Libyan citizenship to their children. There are no laws that specifically address or criminalize domestic violence, and most such violence goes unreported due to social stigma and the risk of reprisals. The law imposes penalties for extramarital sex and allows rapists to avoid punishment by marrying their victims. Rape and other sexual violence have become increasingly serious problems in the lawless environment created by the civil conflict.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 because the general breakdown of state authority has increased opportunities and impunity for personalized forms of violence.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 0 / 4 (-1)

Forced labor, sexual exploitation, abuse in detention facilities, and starvation are widespread among migrants and refugees from sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and South

Asia, many of whom are beholden to human traffickers. There are an estimated 750,000 to 1 million migrants in the country.

Libya lacks comprehensive laws criminalizing human trafficking, and the authorities have been either incapable of enforcing existing bans or complicit in trafficking activity. Traffickers have taken advantage of civil unrest to establish enterprises in which refugees and migrants are loaded into overcrowded boats that are then abandoned in the Mediterranean Sea, where passengers hope to be rescued and taken to Europe. The voyages often result in fatalities.

A series of reports by foreign media during 2017 exposed a growing practice in which detained migrants are sold as slaves or rented out to perform forced labor. The reports linked the trend to an increased backlog of migrants in the country as European governments work with local authorities and militias to reduce sea crossings.

Score Change: The score declined from 1 to 0 due to the increasing scale and severity of the labor exploitation suffered by migrants and refugees who are detained in the country while attempting to reach Europe.

Liechtenstein

Population: 40,000

Capital: Vaduz

Political Rights Rating: 2

Civil Liberties Rating: 1

Freedom Rating: 1.5

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: The Principality of Liechtenstein combines a powerful monarchy with a parliamentary system of government. The prince of Liechtenstein has an influential political role, which was enhanced by a constitutional referendum in 2003. Human rights and civil liberties are generally respected in the country.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Parliamentary elections in February resulted in a victory for the ruling Progressive Citizens' Party (FBP), which formed a coalition with the Fatherland Union (VU). The right-wing populist Independents party, which ran by criticizing the political establishment as corrupt and out of touch and occasionally made appeals to xenophobia, gained a seat.
- Significant progress was made with the implementation of anticorruption laws, including the adoption of a code of conduct for corruption prevention.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 33 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 10 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4

Liechtenstein has one of the most politically powerful unelected monarchs in Europe. In a 2003 constitutional referendum, voters granted significantly more power to the monarch.

The prince, as hereditary head of state, appoints the prime minister on the recommendation of parliament and possesses the power to veto legislation, dismiss the government, and dissolve parliament. Prince Hans-Adam II is the current head of state, but he handed his governmental powers over to his son, Hereditary Prince Alois, in 2004.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The Landtag, the unicameral parliament, consists of 25 deputies chosen by proportional representation every four years. Voting is compulsory under the law, but not enforced. International observers considered the 2017 parliamentary election to be credible. Four parties competed and Prime Minister Adrian Hasler's FBP won 35 percent of the vote and nine seats.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

The electoral framework provides a sound basis for democratic elections. There are no provisions for election observation, but domestic and international observers are free to monitor the election process. Liechtenstein remains one of the few European countries without a legal framework on party finance—parties can spend unlimited money and do not have to disclose their sources of funding.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 13 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4

There are no limits on the establishment or participation of political parties. There are currently four political parties in Liechtenstein. Parties must obtain eight percent of the vote to meet the threshold for representation in parliament—it is one of the highest electoral thresholds in the world, making the formation of competitive new parties difficult.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 3 / 4

The unelected prince wields significant political power in Liechtenstein, which limits the impact of legislative elections on power dynamics. However, opposition parties have the ability to gain power in parliament through elections, as demonstrated by the right-wing populist Independents party, which won four seats in 2013, its first election, as well as an additional seat in 2017. The Independents ran on a platform criticizing the political elite as out of touch and corrupt, and made occasional appeals to xenophobia. The ruling FBP lost one seat in the 2017 election.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 3 / 4

Although citizens are largely free to make their own political choices, the prince has the power to veto the outcome of national referendums and popular initiatives. The prince has occasionally threatened to use these veto powers, thereby exercising undue influence on such plebiscites.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

Approximately one-third of the population consists of foreign nationals who do not have political rights. Under Liechtenstein's restrictive naturalization criteria, one must marry a resident Liechtenstein citizen and live in the country for more than 10 years, or live in the country for 30 years, to qualify for citizenship.

The number of women in parliament declined in 2017 from six members to three, which led to calls for the introduction of a quota. In 2016, in a move that showed the government's commitment to representing women's interests, Liechtenstein signed the Istanbul Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. At the end of 2017, the government was working to harmonize it with domestic law in order to ratify it.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 10 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 2 / 4**

Although parliament sets the legislative agenda, the prince has significant political power with no electoral mandate. The prince can dismiss the government and parliament, veto legislation, call referendums, and nominate judges.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 4 / 4

Anticorruption laws are effectively implemented, and levels of corruption are reportedly low. In a 2017 evaluation report, the Council of Europe's Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) applauded Liechtenstein for the implementation of anticorruption measures, including the adoption of a code of conduct for corruption prevention.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 4 / 4

Although there is no constitutional guarantee of access to information, laws are in place to provide for government transparency, which are largely respected in practice. The government has made efforts in recent years to increase transparency in the banking sector.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 57 / 60 (-1)**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 16 / 16****D1. Are there free and independent media? 4 / 4**

The constitution guarantees freedom of the press, which is respected in practice. Liechtenstein has one private television station, one public radio station, and two main newspapers that are owned by the two major political parties. The media lacks pluralism, but citizens do have access to foreign broadcasting, mostly from Germany, Austria, and Switzerland.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Religious freedom is constitutionally guaranteed and protected in practice. The constitution establishes Roman Catholicism as the state religion. Catholic or Protestant education is mandatory in all primary schools, but exemptions are routinely granted. Islamic religious classes have been offered in some primary schools since 2008. All religious groups are tax-exempt.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is largely respected, with no restrictions from state or nonstate actors.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

The law guarantees freedom of expression, but prohibits public insults directed against a race or ethnic group. There are no restrictions on internet access or online communication.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 12 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4

The constitution guarantees freedom of assembly, and this right is respected in practice.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Domestic and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are able to function freely. The government largely cooperates with NGOs and is receptive to their viewpoints.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

The law facilitates the formation of trade unions and collective bargaining, and the principality has one small trade union. A 2008 law gives civil servants the right to strike.

F. RULE OF LAW: 14 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 3 / 4

The judiciary is independent and impartial, but the 2003 constitutional referendum gave the prince the power to appoint judges, meaning that the judicial appointment process lacks a key element of democratic accountability. The appointments of ad hoc judges, who often serve for a short time, are not publicly announced.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 4 / 4

The constitution provides for the right to a fair trial, and the rights of defendants are usually respected. Most trials in 2017 were public and defendants were considered innocent until proven guilty.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 4 / 4

People in Liechtenstein are largely free from the illegitimate use of physical force, as well as war and insurgencies.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

In 2015, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance reiterated its recommendation to abrogate specific sections of the Law on Foreigners, which allow for the withdrawal of a permanent residency permit if the foreign national is highly dependent on social welfare.

Despite antidiscrimination laws, women, particularly Muslim women, experience employment discrimination. LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) individuals

face social stigma, and according to a leading human rights group, often do not disclose their orientation out of fear of discrimination.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 15 / 16 (-1)

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4

There are no restrictions on the freedom of movement in Liechtenstein.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 4 / 4

There are no undue restrictions on the right to own property or to establish a private business for residents. Non-residents are not allowed to establish a business in Liechtenstein, but prospective business owners exploit loopholes to work around the law.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4 (-1)

Same-sex registered partnerships are legal, but in a 2016 speech, Prince Hans-Adam II announced his opposition to adoption rights for same-sex couples. At the end of 2017, single LGBT people could adopt children, but same-sex couples could not.

Domestic violence and spousal rape are illegal in Liechtenstein and authorities effectively prosecute offenders and protect victims. Abortion is illegal with only a few exceptions—a 2011 referendum to legalize it was defeated by voters.

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 because same-sex couples continue to face restrictions on their ability to adopt children.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 4 / 4

Liechtenstein is largely free from economic exploitation and human trafficking. Despite its relative wealth, poverty is still a persistent issue in Liechtenstein, particularly in immigrant communities. Immigrants often struggle to find jobs and social mobility for immigrant communities is limited.

Lithuania

Population: 2,900,000

Capital: Vilnius

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 1

Freedom Rating: 1.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Lithuania is a democracy in which political rights and civil liberties are generally respected. However, corruption and income inequality are issues that often arouse public dissatisfaction with the government.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- A new Labor Code that provided additional instruments for the organization of strikes took effect in July.
- In September, the Lithuanian Special Investigation Service brought formal corruption complaints against the Liberal Movement, and the Labor Party, in connection with allegations of wrongdoing that had shaken the country's politics when they emerged in 2016.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 38 / 40**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4**

The president, who is chief of state and whose main competencies lie in foreign affairs, is directly elected to up to two five-year terms. The prime minister, who as head of government is the central executive authority, is appointed by the president with the approval of the parliament.

The present prime minister, Saulius Skvernelis, was appointed after the parliamentary elections in October 2016 and began serving that December. The current president, Dalia Grybauskaitė, was elected to a second term of office in 2014. Both the appointment of the prime minister and election of the president took place in a free and fair manner.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

A unicameral, 141-seat Parliament (Seimas) consists of 71 members elected in single-mandate constituencies and 70 chosen by proportional representation, all for four-year terms. The most recent parliamentary elections took place in October 2016. The elections were somewhat unexpectedly won by the centrist Lithuanian Peasant and Greens Union (LVZS), which took 56 seats. The party formed a coalition government with the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party (LSDP), which received 17 seats. The main opposition Homeland Union–Lithuanian Christian Democrats (TS-LKD) took 31 seats.

The elections were considered free and fair, though the election commission faced criticism for delays in announcing the official results—problems linked to issues with new electronic infrastructure for the polls. While relatively few irregularities were reported, there was one notable case of vote buying, to benefit the Order and Justice (TT) party. In late October 2016, the election commission stripped lawmaker Kęstas Komskis of TT of his parliamentary mandate in connection with the events.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

The legislative framework for conducting elections is clear and detailed. The boundaries of single-mandate districts of parliamentary elections were redrawn at the end of 2015 to comply with the ruling of the Constitutional Court. The electoral commission operates and adjudicates election-related complaints in a fair manner.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 16 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4**

Lithuania's political parties generally operate freely. Citizens of other European Union (EU) member states are eligible to become members of Lithuanian political parties, but cannot found them.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

Lithuanian politics are dynamic, and opposition parties usually come to power after every parliamentary election.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

Sporadic cases of vote buying during national elections has been observed, and clientelism can influence politics at the local levels. However, people are generally free to exercise their political choices without undue influence or interference.

The State Security Department (VSD) has issued numerous warnings about efforts by Russian to influence politics, including through its energy policies and by influencing the country's ethnic Russian minority.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 4 / 4

Political rights of minorities are generally upheld. In the 2016 parliamentary elections, the Lithuanian Poles Electoral Action (LLRA) for the second consecutive time overcame the 5 percent electoral threshold for parties, and took seats in the legislature.

Women are underrepresented in politics, though they do hold senior political positions, including the presidency. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) working toward greater representation of women in politics and business, and combating violence against women, are active in the political sphere.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 10 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4

Lithuania's freely elected lawmakers are seated according to schedule and are able to design and implement policy. However, bribery scandals that erupted in 2016 raised concerns about the influence of large businesses on politics.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4

Corruption remains an issue in Lithuania, and certain sectors, including health care and territorial planning, are widely perceived as prone to corruption. While anticorruption bodies are active, there are sometimes considerable delays in the investigation of cases of political corruption. In 2016, the leaders of three political parties were implicated in separate bribery scandals involving illicit deals with Lithuanian businesses. In September 2017, the Lithuanian Special Investigation Service (STT) brought formal complaints in response to two of the scandals, one against the Liberal Movement, and another against the Labor Party.

The protection of whistleblowers and journalists who report on corruption cases is guaranteed, though at the local level it is less effective than nationally.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 3 / 4

Lithuanian law grants the public the right to request information, and the government generally complies with information requests. However, the operations of state companies remains somewhat opaque, and prone to financial misconduct. Improvements to make public procurement more fair and open to public scrutiny have also been limited.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 53 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 16 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 4 / 4

The government generally respects freedoms of speech and the press. While the media market is vibrant, some owners of media outlets attempt to use their position to influence political processes. Local outlets are usually financially dependent on the local government.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Freedom of religion is guaranteed by law and largely upheld in practice. However, nine so-called traditional religious communities enjoy certain government benefits, including annual subsidies that are not granted to other groups. Despite the presence of a Muslim community, Vilnius has been without a mosque since one was demolished by the Soviet government in the 1960s, and the planned construction of a new one remains stalled.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is respected, and the educational system is generally free from political influence.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

Private discussion is generally robust and unrestricted. However, in the wake of increasing concerns about Russia's aggressive foreign policy, individuals who criticize the government's foreign policy stances can face pressure.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 11 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4

Freedom of assembly is generally respected.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations may register without facing serious obstacles, and operate without restrictions.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

Workers may form and join trade unions and engage in collective bargaining, though there have been reports of employees being punished for attempting to organize. In July 2017, a new Labor Code came into force, which among other things provided additional instruments to organize strikes.

F. RULE OF LAW: 12 / 16 (-1)

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 3 / 4 (-1)

Businesspeople and politicians closely linked with business exert pressure on the judiciary, and according to the most recent results of an EU survey, only about half of the general public and representatives of the business sector believe that judicial independence is guaranteed. Nontransparent decisions by the courts also remain an issue.

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 due to influence by business groups and politicians on judicial decisions, and a lack of transparency surrounding some judgements.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 3 / 4

Defendants generally enjoy the presumption of innocence and freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention, but detained suspects are not always granted timely access to an attorney. Their rights to fair and impartial trial and other processes are also not always respected.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 3 / 4

Police abuse of detainees and lengthy pretrial detentions are lingering issues. Separately, despite some progress in recent years, Lithuania still has one of the highest homicide rates in the EU.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

Public signs must be written only in Lithuanian, even in areas predominantly inhabited by minorities who speak different languages. Members of the LGBT community face discrimination, and there have been several cases in the past in which public information about rights for LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people has been restricted.

Men and women enjoy the same legal rights, though women generally earn less than men per hour worked.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 14 / 16 (+1)

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4

Lithuanian residents may travel freely within the country and internationally.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 4 / 4 (+1)

Successive Lithuanian administrations have worked to maintain a well-regulated market economy, and economic freedoms are generally ensured.

Score Change: The score improved from 3 to 4 because there are no significant impediments on people's ability to own property or engage in commercial activity.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

Domestic violence remains a problem. Lithuania's constitution defines marriage as a union between a man and a woman, and same-sex partnership is not legally established. Legal regulations that would allow sex reassignment procedures are not in place.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

Regional economic disparities remain acute. The minimum wage remains one of the lowest within the EU, and the share of the population at risk of poverty and social exclusion is a little over 30 percent.

Trafficking of adults and children for the purposes of forced labor or sex work occurs in Lithuania. The government actively works to prosecute traffickers, and provides aid to victims in conjunction with NGOs.

Luxembourg

Population: 569,200

Capital: Luxembourg

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 1

Freedom Rating: 1

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Luxembourg is a small, landlocked state in western Europe. It is officially trilingual, with German, French, and Luxembourgish as the official languages. Luxembourg is a constitutional monarchy ruled by a democratically elected government. Grand Duke Henri is the head of state and holds largely ceremonial powers. Political rights and civil liberties are generally safeguarded. Luxembourg, as a major financial hub, is considered a tax haven.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In March, the minister of justice presented plans to create a Supreme Judicial Council, which would be responsible for nominating judges; currently the grand duke is responsible for judicial nominations.
- In July, parliament passed a law to end religious instruction at schools, a move observers believe will strengthen the separation of church and state.
- At the end of the year, parliament still had not passed a comprehensive access to information law.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 38 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The prime minister is the head of government and serves five-year terms. The leader of the majority coalition formed after parliamentary elections is appointed prime minister by the monarch, the grand duke. Prime Minister Xavier Bettel of the Democratic Party (DP) was appointed in 2013 following the parliamentary elections. The elections were viewed as credible by international observers. Luxembourg's head of state is Grand Duke Henri, whose powers are largely ceremonial.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The unicameral legislature, the Chamber of Deputies, consists of 60 members elected to five-year terms by proportional representation. The last parliamentary elections were held in

2013. Former prime minister Jean-Claude Juncker's Christian Social People's Party (CSV) captured 23 seats, down from 26 in the 2009 elections. The Luxembourg Socialist Workers' Party (LSAP) and the DP each won 13 seats, the Green Party took 6 seats, and smaller parties won the remaining 5 seats. The elections were held seven months early as a result of the collapse of Juncker's government, and were conducted credibly according to observers. The DP built a coalition with the LSAP and the Green Party to form a government.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

The electoral laws and framework are considered fair, and are generally implemented impartially. Voting is compulsory for Luxembourg's citizens. In February 2017, the government passed a law allowing postal ballots for all citizens. Foreigners constitute nearly half of the population and are allowed to vote in local elections.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 16 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4

The political system is open to the establishment of new parties, which do not face undue obstacles in their formation. There are three parties that have traditionally dominated politics: the CSV, historically aligned with the Catholic Church; the LSAP, a formerly radical but now center-left party representing the working class; and the DP, which favors free-market economic policies.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

The opposition has a realistic opportunity to gain power through elections. Both the DP and the Green Party were in the opposition before forming the governing coalition with the LSAP in 2013. The CSV, which had dominated politics since 1945, was shut out of power for the first time since 1979.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

The people's political choices are generally free from domination by any democratically unaccountable groups.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 4 / 4

Women participate actively in politics, and the government has taken measures to encourage greater women's participation. In 2016, parliament passed a law mandating that 40 percent of each party's candidates in elections be women; parties risk losing a portion of their public financing if they do not meet the quota. Minority groups are free to participate in politics as well.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 10 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4

The prime minister and parliament determine the government's policies.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4

Corruption is not widespread in Luxembourg, and allegations of corruption are generally investigated and prosecuted. However, the Council of Europe's Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) has criticized the government for lacking a comprehensive strategy to prevent corruption. Additionally, rules on accepting gifts, lobbying, and mitigating conflicts of interest after government officials leave office are lacking.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 3 / 4

Cabinet members are obligated to disclose any shares in companies that they own, but there are no penalties for those who do not cooperate. There is no comprehensive access to information law in place, and in practice, the media and civil society groups often have difficulty obtaining official government information.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 60 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 16 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 4 / 4

Freedom of the press is guaranteed by the constitution and generally respected in practice. A single conglomerate, RTL, dominates broadcast radio and television. Press outlets usually represent a broad range of opinions. Internet access is not restricted.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Freedom of religion is largely respected in practice. The state pays the salaries of clergy from a variety of Christian groups. Islamic clergy, however, are not supported by the government. A law passed in 2016 ended the practice of the government paying the salaries of any clergy that began their careers after 2016. In 2017, Prime Minister Bettel's government introduced reforms to increase the separation of church and state, including a July law passed by parliament that ends religious instruction at public schools.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is generally respected in practice.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

Freedom of expression is largely respected, and individuals can express their political views without fear of retribution.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 12 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4

Freedom of assembly is guaranteed by the constitution and generally respected in practice.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are largely free to operate without any undue restrictions.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

Luxembourgers are free to organize in trade unions, and approximately 41 percent of the workforce is unionized. While the right to strike is not explicitly guaranteed by the constitution, it is protected by case law stemming from a 1952 Court of Cessation ruling.

F. RULE OF LAW: 16 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 4 / 4**

Judicial independence is generally upheld. In March 2017, the minister of justice presented plans to create a Supreme Judicial Council, which would be responsible for nominating judges; the grand duke currently nominates judges. Civil society leaders believe that the proposed legislation would further strengthen judicial independence. The reforms were still being debated by parliament at the end of 2017.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 4 / 4

Due process is largely upheld in criminal and civil matters. Defendants have the right to a fair and public trial, and this right is generally respected. Trials can be lengthy because many defendants are foreign nationals, and cases often involve other foreigners.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 4 / 4

Luxembourg is free from war and insurgencies. Protections against the illegitimate use of force are adequate.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 4 / 4

Discrimination on the basis of race, religion, disability, age, gender, or sexual orientation is prohibited by law. The rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people are generally respected. Xavier Bettel became the nation's first openly gay prime minister in 2013.

Despite reductions in the gender pay gap and an increase in the labor participation rate in recent years, women hold significantly fewer positions of power than men; according to government statistics, only 20 percent of people serving on boards of directors are women.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 16 / 16**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4**

Individuals generally enjoy freedom of movement and choice of residence, employment, and institution of higher education.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 4 / 4

The rights to own property and operate private businesses are legally protected and respected in practice.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 4 / 4

Same-sex marriage has been legal since 2014 and same-sex couples have full adoption rights. Abortions are legal within the first trimester of pregnancy, although women must wait three days before the procedure and are required to receive counseling. Additionally, women

must determine themselves to be “in distress,” a condition that is confirmed in the required counseling session, before receiving an abortion.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 4 / 4

Luxembourgers generally enjoy equality of opportunity. Occasional cases of forced labor in the construction and food service industries have been reported, especially among migrant workers.

Macedonia

Population: 2,100,000

Capital: Skopje

Political Rights Rating: 4

Civil Liberties Rating: 3

Freedom Rating: 3.5

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: Macedonia is a parliamentary republic. A left-leaning government took power in 2017 after credible allegations of a massive, government-sponsored wiretapping and surveillance program emerged in 2015, prompting a crisis that paralyzed normal political activity. Macedonia continues to struggle with corruption, and while the media and civil society are active, journalists and activists face pressure and intimidation.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In April, supporters of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization–Democratic Party for Macedonian Unity (VMRO–DPMNE) stormed into the parliament in protest of the election of an ethnic Albanian opposition lawmaker as the body’s speaker. The police response to the unrest—in which around 100 people were injured—was notably delayed.
- In May, after months of resistance, President Gjorge Ivanov issued a mandate to the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM) to form a government. An SDSM-led coalition government that included two ethnic Albanian parties was subsequently seated, capping months of political uncertainty and marking the end of more than a decade of rule by the VMRO–DPMNE.
- The SDSM and their coalition partners posted a strong showing in October’s municipal elections, reflecting the popular legitimacy of the new government and its agenda.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 21 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 6 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4 (-1)

The president is elected to a five-year term through a direct popular vote. President Gjorge Ivanov of the VMRO–DPMNE won a second term in the 2014 general elections, which were criticized by international observers for a number of shortcomings. The presidential portion was marked by relatively low turnout.

The unicameral Assembly elects the prime minister, who is head of government and holds most executive power. The formation of a new government was delayed for months after December 2016 elections, as Ivanov refused the SDSM's request for a mandate to form a government after the VMRO–DMPNE, which had won a plurality of seats in the elections, was unable to cobble together enough support to form its own. VMRO–DMPNE deputies, meanwhile, filibustered a vote to install an SDSM-backed Assembly speaker, Talat Xhaferi, an ethnic Albanian member of the Democratic Union for Integration (DUI), an Albanian party.

In April, after Xhaferi was finally elected, VMRO–DMPNE supporters stormed the Assembly and violently assaulted several opposition leaders, including Zaev and Radmila Šekerinska Jankovska, a former prime minister. In May, following mediation by U.S. State Department's Deputy Assistant Secretary Hoyt Yee, the SDSM and their Albanian coalition partners were finally able to form a government, with Zaev as prime minister. The SDSM-led government has prioritized rebooting Macedonia's European Union (EU) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) accession paths.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 due to the VMRO–DMPNE's attempts to obstruct the formation of a new government.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4 (+1)

Parliamentary elections took place in 2016. An Organization for Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) monitoring mission deemed the polls “competitive,” but said issues with the media and voter rolls had “yet to be addressed in a sustainable manner,” noted instances of voter intimidation, and concluded that the polls were marked by “a lack of public trust in institutions and the political establishment.” The formation of the SDSM-led government in May 2017 marked a democratic transfer of power between parties, and capped the period of political uncertainty that followed the 2016 polls.

While irregularities were reported in October 2017 municipal elections, the polls were competitive and generally credible, and played a role in building trust in the government and democratic institutions. The SDSM posted a strong showing, winning the most municipalities of any party, including Skopje, the capital.

Score Change: The score improved from 1 to 2 due to the completion of the 2016 parliamentary election process, and because the conduct of municipal elections held in October represented an improvement from past polls.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4

Election laws are fairly robust, and the 2017 polls saw some minor improvements in the overall accessibility of election results and reporting by the State Election Commission. However, some ambiguities in election laws have yet to be addressed, including regulations governing the registration of candidates, and resolution mechanisms for election-related disputes.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 9 / 16 (-1)

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 2 / 4 (-1)

While the constitution protects the right to establish and join political parties, vast patronage networks hamper democratic competition. In April 2017, the election of a new, SDSM-backed parliament speaker was immediately followed by violent attacks on the floor of the Assembly by VMRO–DMPNE supporters against SDSM lawmakers, including the party leader. Around 100 people were injured in the melee.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 due to violent physical attacks by VMRO–DMPNE supporters against SDSM lawmakers, which took place on the floor of the parliament and resulted in the injury of around 100 people.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 2 / 4

In 2017, power rotated between the center-right VMRO–DPMNE—which had been in power since 2006—to the left-leaning SDSM, which had held power through much of the 1990s and early 2000s. The SDSM had boycotted the parliament on several occasions before taking power in 2017 over claims of electoral fraud, as well as issues related to allegations that the administration of former Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski of the VMRO–DPMNE had directed the secret service to operate a massive wiretapping and surveillance program.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 2 / 4

While voters are largely free to make political decisions, there were reports of voter intimidation and vote-buying during the 2017 local election campaign. Patronage networks remain influential in Macedonia political life, and can influence political outcomes.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

Ethnic Albanians make up about 25 percent of the population, and a political party representing Albanians has sat in each ruling coalition. Certain types of legislation must pass with a majority of legislators from both major ethnic groups in the Assembly.

Macedonia's Roma community remains politically marginalized.

Despite the introduction of parity laws, and joint initiatives on behalf of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and electoral authorities, societal attitudes discourage women from participating in politics. Some women are disenfranchised through the practice of family voting. Notably, however, in June 2017 the first female defense minister was appointed.

Small LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) advocacy groups are politically active, but LGBT people are poorly represented in politics—as reflected in Macedonia's lack of any law protecting against discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 6 / 12 (+1)

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 2 / 4 (+1)

The first half of 2017 was characterized by VMRO–DPMNE attempts to prevent the formation of an SDSM-led government, and by the parliamentary melee in April in which Zaev and other SDSM lawmakers were injured. After Zaev's SDSM-led government was seated, the VMRO–DPMNE made efforts to obstruct its work, including by employing filibusters and forming a number of new parliamentary caucuses with the power to individually

demand recesses. However, the formation of the new government six months after the December 2016 elections ushered in a stabilization of national politics, and a return to more normal parliamentary activity.

Score Change: The score improved from 1 to 2 because the inauguration of a new government ended a long period of parliamentary gridlock.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

Corruption remains a serious problem, and there has been widespread impunity for corrupt behavior by government officials.

In June 2017, a special prosecutor, appointed following a 2015 internationally-backed political agreement, charged former Prime Minister Gruevski, along with nearly 100 other people, with corruption. Gruevski's trial began in December. The special prosecutor was appointed in 2015 to investigate the revelations of the wiretapping program.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

The law on open access to public information is inconsistently enforced. While the new government has pledged to undertake reforms aimed at increasing government transparency, it has yet to register concrete progress.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 37 / 60 (+1)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 11 / 16 (+1)

D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4

Macedonian journalists are subject to political pressure and harassment, and physical attacks continue to be reported; attackers generally enjoy impunity. According to the Association of Journalists of Macedonia, 21 reporters were attacked between the start of 2016 and May 2017. At times journalists were attacked while on the job, such as in March 2017, when masked assailants attacked two journalists reporting on a VMRO–DPMNE rally.

Macedonia's media landscape is deeply polarized along political lines, and private media outlets are often tied to political or business interests that influence their content. Some critical and independent outlets operate, and are found mainly online.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4

The constitution guarantees freedom of religion. However, Islamophobia is present in the rhetoric of politicians and in public discourse.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 3 / 4

Academic freedom is largely respected. However, corruption in universities is significant, and the large-scale emigration of young scholars has been detrimental to the country's research institutions. Many textbooks barely cover the postindependence period, primarily because ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians interpret the 2001 civil conflict differently. However, student protests in 2014 and 2015 were instrumental in bringing about the ouster of the Gruevski government, reflecting the ability of students to discuss and act upon issues of a political nature.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4 (+1)

Allegations of widespread wiretapping and monitoring of private citizens, journalists, politicians, and religious leaders by the previous, VMRO–DPMNE government helped bring about its ouster. The SDSM-led government has taken some steps to reform the security services, which were widely believed to have carried out the wiretapping and surveillance program under Gruevski’s direction. As a result of the change in government, private discussion has been less constrained.

Score Change: The score improved from 2 to 3 due to a lessening of fears about speaking openly, which had been aggravated by 2015 revelations of a mass surveillance program.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 8 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 3 / 4

Constitutional guarantees of freedom of assembly are generally well respected. However, protests have sometimes given way to property damage, and are typically monitored by riot police. In 2017, a mob of protesters stormed the parliament and attacked SDSM lawmakers, and the police response to the events was notably slow.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights– and governance-related work? 3 / 4

The new SDSM-led government has indicated support for civil society, as opposed to the previous government, which had announced plans to more heavily scrutinize NGOs’ finances. However, groups that focus on human rights– and governance-related work, and particularly those that receive foreign funding, face pressure from the VMRO–DPMNE and its supporters. In January 2017, several figures associated with the party announced the establishment of a movement aimed at scrutinizing NGOs funded by the Hungarian-born liberal philanthropist George Soros.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

Workers may organize and bargain collectively, though trade unions lack stable financing and skilled managers, and journalists have reportedly been fired for their union activities. The informal economy is large, leaving many workers vulnerable to abuses by employers.

F. RULE OF LAW: 8 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 2 / 4

Concerns remain about the efficacy and independence of the Macedonia judiciary. The EU has stressed judicial reforms as a key priority for the new government. In July, the new administration endorsed judicial reforms as part of a larger package aimed at reducing election-related misconduct.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 2 / 4

Due process rights remain compromised by corruption and patronage within the justice system, which has a low level of public confidence. However, in a positive development, in June 2017 the special prosecutor charged 94 people and 7 legal entities with crimes connected to the wiretapping scandal.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 2 / 4

The violent attack against SDSM lawmakers on the parliament floor in 2017 represented a major escalation of the country’s political crisis. However, calm was later restored,

and a number of police officers and interior ministry employees were disciplined for the slow response to the violence. In October, a VMRO–DMPNE supporter was sentenced to four years in prison for assaulting Šekerinska Jankovska during the melee.

There are occasional outbreaks of violence in Macedonia. In November, a number of men were convicted of crimes connected to a deadly 2015 clash between police and gunmen in an Albanian neighborhood of Kumanovo. Considerable controversy surrounds the events, with prosecutors saying the men were terrorists bent on destabilizing the country, while the defendants and their supporters claim that the men had acted in self-defense against a politically motivated police raid.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

A 2010 antidiscrimination law does not prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity, and anti-LGBT sentiment is widespread. Laws prohibit workplace sexual harassment, but sexual harassment against women employees is rarely reported, and remains a problem.

Anti-Albanian sentiment flared in 2017, as ethnic Albanian political parties called for, among other things, greater representation in government and adding Albanian as an official language, in exchange for joining the SDSM coalition. Roma face employment and other discrimination.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 10 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4

Travel and movement are generally unrestricted. Corruption can hamper people's ability to freely choose their place of employment or education.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 3 / 4

The right to own property and establish private businesses is generally respected, though corruption remains a barrier to free enterprise, and certain fees associated with starting a business remain relatively high.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Rape, including spousal rape, is illegal, as is domestic violence, which remains common; both are infrequently reported. The government and some NGOs provide services to victims of domestic violence.

A September 2017 ruling by the Administrative court allowed people to change their gender in the country's official registry.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Laws do not impose rigid barriers to social mobility, though rampant corruption can effectively hamper individuals from rising to higher income levels.

Human trafficking remains a problem. The government has taken some steps to better identify trafficking victims, notably at government-run transit centers that house migrants and refugees. However, government support to NGOs that aid trafficking victims has decreased.

Madagascar

Population: 23,700,000

Capital: Antananarivo

Political Rights Rating: 3

Civil Liberties Rating: 4

Freedom Rating: 3.5

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: An unelected administration governed Madagascar following a 2009 coup, but the country returned to electoral politics in 2013. However, the judiciary remains weak, and government corruption and a lack of accountability persist. Defamation and other laws restrict press freedom, and demonstrations are frequently banned or dispersed. The government has struggled to manage lawlessness in the south.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In May 2017, an investigative reporter was arrested for forgery and defamation in connection with statements he made implicating authorities in illicit mining activities.
- The former chief of staff at the Communications Ministry was convicted of embezzling public funds in April, in what was viewed as a victory in a difficult fight against government corruption.
- Madagascar reduced its efforts to decrease human trafficking, and government officials were accused of colluding with traffickers.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 24 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 9 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

Madagascar is a semipresidential republic, with a president elected for a five-year term and a prime minister nominated by the National Assembly and appointed by the president. The 2013 presidential election—the first since the 2009 coup—was deemed competitive and generally well run by international election observers. Hery Rajaonarimampianina, head of the New Forces for Madagascar party (HVM), won the election, defeating more than 30 other candidates.

Rajaonarimampianina's HVM won more than half the races in the 2015 mayoral elections. Though the electoral process was relatively free and fair, there were complaints of inaccuracies on voter rolls, and the use of state resources for campaigning.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

The bicameral legislature consists of the 63-seat Senate, in which one-third of seats are appointed by the president, and the remaining two-thirds are indirectly elected from an electoral college; senators serve six-year terms. Members of the 151-seat National Assembly are directly elected to four-year terms. The National Assembly elections, organized with the presidential election in 2013, were deemed competitive and credible by international

observers, though irregularities with the voter rolls were noted. The With Andry Rajoelina (MAPAR) party won 49 of 151 National Assembly seats, and over 50 other parties and independent candidates took the remainder.

The HVM won more than half the races in 2015 Senate elections. Though the electoral process was relatively free and fair, the opposition made accusations of fraud, and challenged the results. Ultimately, the High Constitutional Court (HCC) upheld the elections' results in early 2016.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4

The Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) is subject to some influence by the executive, which controls member nomination and budget allocation processes. An interministerial cabinet was organized in mid-2017 to review the electoral code, which still contains inconsistencies left over from the past political transition. However, at the end of 2017, draft electoral legislation had not yet been submitted to Parliament for approval.

In September 2017, Rajaonarimampianina expressed support for several amendments to the constitution. Civil society activists criticized his remarks, suggesting he sought a lengthy amendment process and public referendum that would in effect delay the 2018 presidential election.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 10 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 3 / 4

Almost 200 registered political parties participate in elections. However, the political parties law is widely viewed as a flawed document that places undue burdens on individual candidates, effectively mandating a high cost for political candidacy.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 3 / 4

Opposition parties have the opportunity to increase their support through elections, but most political parties lack the financial resources to engage in vibrant competition. The government has habitually denied opposition parties permits to hold demonstrations, and opposition and independent political figures have experienced harassment in the form of frivolous legal cases.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 2 / 4

Economic networks compete for power through strategic support of political candidates. In turn, a narrow group of political elites survive by supporting the interests of their private-sector patrons. As a result, lines between public and private expenditures are blurry, and democratic accountability is reduced. Separately, political leaders frequently use religion, ethnicity, and caste as instruments to mobilize voters.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 2 / 4

The constitution guarantees political and electoral rights for all citizens, but in practice, discrimination impedes the political representation of some groups. While there is a small,

active LGBT community in the capital, LGBT people face social stigma that discourages political participation and open advocacy for LGBT rights. Cultural norms can restrict the political participation of women, who hold approximately 20 percent of Senate and National Assembly seats. Muslims are disproportionately affected by the nationality code, which can make it difficult for them to secure citizenship documents and thus voting rights. Ethnicity and caste generally do not affect political rights.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 5 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 2 / 4**

Following a 2009 coup, the country returned to electoral politics in 2013. However, government instability has been reflected in the frequent replacement of the prime minister, and frequent changes to the composition of the cabinet. In 2016, Rajaonarimampianina appointed the interior minister, Olivier Mahafaly, as his third prime minister in three years. In August 2017, Rajaonarimampianina reshuffled the cabinet for the fourth time.

According to the constitution, the president determines policies, and Parliament evaluates and votes on them. However, in practice the National Assembly lacks the strength to act as an effective check on executive power. Additionally, economic elites have significant influence on the president and other elected officials.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

Corruption remains a serious problem in Madagascar, despite a series of recent reforms and anticorruption strategies aimed at addressing it. Investigations and prosecutions of corruption by the Independent Anticorruption Bureau (BIANCO) are infrequent and rarely target high-level officials. However, in what was viewed as a positive development, in April 2017 the former chief of staff of the Communications Ministry was convicted of embezzlement of public funds. He was sentenced to five years' hard labor.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

The constitution provides for the right to information, but no law defines a formal procedure for requesting government information. There is little oversight of procurement processes. Asset declarations are required for most government officials, and while many complied with these laws, there are few practical consequences for those who refuse.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 32 / 60**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 10 / 16****D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4**

The constitution provides for freedom of the press. However, this guarantee is undermined by criminal libel laws and other restrictions, as well as safety risks involved in the investigation of sensitive subjects such as cattle rustling and the illicit extraction and sale of natural resources. The government controls the issuance of broadcast licenses and can confiscate equipment or shut down stations if they violate sections of the Communications Code. In May 2017, an investigative reporter, Fernand Cello, was arrested for forgery and defamation, among other charges, over statements he made implicating authorities in illicit mining activities.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 2 / 4

Religious freedom is provided for in the constitution, though this right is upheld inconsistently. Religious leaders have noted that some workers were unable to practice their religion due to poor enforcement of labor laws. The government has restricted the Muslim community's access to education by threatening to close down Islamic schools.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 3 / 4

Academic freedom is generally respected. However, a lack of resources and frequent strikes have hampered normal operations at the University of Antananarivo.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4

There were no official reports of the government monitoring online activity. However, a cybercrimes law prohibits online defamation, and has been used to prosecute social media users. There are concerns that it could be used to restrict online speech during what is expected to be a tense 2018 presidential election campaign period.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 8 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 2 / 4

The constitution guarantees the freedom of assembly, but authorities routinely decline requests for protests and rallies in the name of public security. Political demonstrators are still occasionally subject to violence from security forces. In July 2017, police used tear gas to disperse a demonstration celebrating the anniversary of an opposition party's founding.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 3 / 4

Freedom of association is provided for in the constitution and is generally respected. A wide variety of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are active. Although no restrictions are placed on NGOs, the government was not always receptive to their opinions. Domestic human rights groups often lack the resources to operate independently.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

Workers have the right to join unions, engage in collective bargaining, and strike. However, more than 80 percent of workers are engaged in agriculture, fishing, and forestry at a subsistence level, and therefore have no access to unions.

F. RULE OF LAW: 6 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4

The executive influences judicial decisions through the reassignment of judges. Trial outcomes are frequently predetermined and the Malagasy people generally regard the judiciary as corrupt. Local tribunals in particular are seen as overburdened and corrupt.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

Due process rights are poorly upheld. A lack of training, resources, and personnel hampers the effectiveness of the criminal justice system. Case backlogs are lengthy, and some 50 percent of detained persons were being held before facing trial in 2017, according to the rights group Amnesty International. Many people held in pretrial detention do not have access to lawyers.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 2 / 4

The police and military are unable to assert authority over the entire country, and areas in southern Madagascar are subjected to raids and violence by bandits and criminal groups. Security forces operate with little oversight or accountability for extrajudicial killings, particularly against cattle thieves, known as *dahalo*.

Detainees and prisoners suffer from harsh and sometimes life-threatening conditions due to overcrowding in detention facilities, and substandard hygiene and health care. People convicted of crimes can be sentenced to hard labor.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

Legal provisions prohibit discrimination based on race, gender, disability, and social status. However traditional, cultural, social, and economic constraints prevent women from having equal opportunities as men. There are no legal protections against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity, and members of the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) community face social stigma, particularly in rural areas, and experience employment discrimination and occasional acts of violence. Muslims have experienced employment and education discrimination.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 8 / 16**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4**

Citizens are generally allowed to move freely within Madagascar, and may travel internationally. However, travel between cities can be dangerous due to bandit attacks in the south.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

Madagascar's legal structure provides protections for private property rights, though enforcement of these protections is inconsistent, in part because the vast majority of farmers do not hold the official rights to their land. There is a history of competition between the state-recognized property rights system and customary land use practices, as well as attempts by the state to permit mining, commercial agriculture, and other economic pursuits on land where ownership is disputed.

In recent years, Madagascar has made it easier to start a business by reducing the number of procedures to register a business, and simplifying the payment of registration fees.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4 (+1)

Women and children have limited social freedoms in Madagascar, especially in rural areas. Forced child marriage and domestic abuse are common. Although sexual harassment is illegal, the law is not enforced and harassment is common. Abortion is illegal in Madagascar. No law prohibits same-sex sexual relations.

Score Change: Due to a methodological change, the score improved from 1 to 2; the methodology was reorganized to address sex trafficking and related problems under G4, which covers other forms of human trafficking, forced labor, and child labor. For more information see the report methodology page.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4 (-1)

Most people work in subsistence agriculture, making advancement in the local economy extremely challenging.

According to the U.S. State Department's 2017 *Trafficking in Persons Report*, Madagascar has recently reduced efforts to combat human trafficking. Government officials were implicated in colluding with trafficking offenders, and no effort was made to investigate the allegations. These included claims of a network within the government that was helping to facilitate child sex trafficking through the forgery of identity papers.

Score Change: Due to a methodological change, the score declined from 2 to 1; the methodology was reorganized to address sex trafficking and related problems under G4. For more information see the report methodology page.

Malawi

Population: 17,200,000

Capital: Lilongwe

Political Rights Rating: 3

Civil Liberties Rating: 3

Freedom Rating: 3.0

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Malawi holds regular elections and has undergone multiple transfers of power between political parties, though the changes were frequently a result of rifts among ruling elites rather than competition between distinct parties. Political rights and civil liberties are for the most part respected by the state. However, corruption is endemic, police brutality and arbitrary arrests are common, and discrimination and violence toward women, minority groups, and people with albinism remain problems.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Former minister of agriculture George Chabonda was implicated in the Maizegate scandal, which involved irregular maize purchases from Zambia. He was fired in February and charged with graft in July. Maizegate is the latest in a string of scandals that have rocked Malawi's political elite.
- An access to information bill was signed into law in February. However, at the end of the year the law still had not been implemented.
- Domestic violence, child labor, and female genital mutilation remained persistent problems.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 26 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 8 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

In Malawi, the president is directly elected for five-year terms and exercises considerable executive authority. Malawi's last general election was held in 2014. The polls were

marred by logistical problems and postelection controversy surrounding allegations of vote rigging made by incumbent president Joyce Banda, but were largely regarded as credible by local and international observers. Peter Mutharika of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) was declared the winner, with 36 percent of the vote. Lazarus Chakwera of the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) placed second, with 28 percent. Banda, of the People's Party (PP) won 20 percent, and Atupele Muluzi of the United Democratic Front (UDF) won 14 percent.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

The unicameral National Assembly is comprised of 193 members elected by popular vote to five-year terms. The last legislative elections, held concurrently with the presidential election in 2014, were generally regarded as credible, despite a number of irregularities and logistical problems. In the parliamentary elections, the DPP won the most seats with 50.

The opposition MCP won five of six available seats in the October 2017 by-elections for both local and national positions. Voter turnout was relatively low and there were no reports of irregularities in the voting.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 2 / 4

Although it lacks resources and is often unprepared to carry out elections, the Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) is generally viewed as impartial. The MEC has, however, been plagued by financial mismanagement and in May 2017 fired chief electoral officer Willie Kalonga for alleged fraud and mismanagement.

In 2017, several electoral reform bills proposed by the Malawi Law Commission, including a bill to make the Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) financially independent and another proposal to increase the threshold for winning presidential elections to 50 percent, were presented to parliament. However, only one bill, which introducing referendums, was passed in December. International analysts have called for requiring political parties to disclose their sources of financing and to report on campaign spending.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 12 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 3 / 4

For the most part, people can organize in political parties without undue burden. However, the government has occasionally held up the registration of new parties that present a threat to the incumbent. In January 2017, the DPP got an injunction to delay the registration of the Democratic Progressive Congress (DEPECO), claiming that the name was too similar to its own.

Recent years have seen the rise and fall of parties through democratic processes. In 2014, the ruling PP finished third in the presidential election. Malawi has four main political parties—DPP, MCP, PP and UDF—all of which have held power at some point. The parties are loosely formed, with politicians frequently moving between parties or breaking away to form their own parties.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 3 / 4

Political parties are generally able to campaign freely throughout the country. Opposition parties have demonstrated their ability to grow their support and gain power through elections. In 2014, the DPP, an opposition party at the time, won both the presidency and the most seats in parliament.

The playing field during election campaigns is often skewed toward the governing party. In 2014, the ruling PP used state-owned media to broadcast campaign rallies and events where participants wore PP paraphernalia.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 3 / 4

Malawi's population is deeply religious and voting choices are sometimes influenced by the opinions of religious leaders. Local traditional leaders can also have an influence on voters' choices, especially in smaller villages. However, the people are largely free from any form of coercion to influence their choices.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

All ethnic, religious, and gender groups have full political rights. However, women remain underrepresented in politics, and according to Afrobarometer, are less likely than men to become politically involved. In September 2017, the MEC lowered nomination fees for women by 25 percent in an effort to promote their participation in elections, including in the 2017 by-election. While more women ran as candidates in the 2014 elections, only 32 were elected to the 193-seat National Assembly.

Political parties often appeal to ethnic, regional, and religious groups. The LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) community faces societal discrimination, and political parties do not advocate for LGBT rights in their platforms.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 6 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 3 / 4

Executive and legislative representatives are generally able to determine the policies of government unhindered. However, patronage and clientelism are common, and wealthy business leaders often have great influence over policymaking, forging relationships with elected leaders and extracting policy outcomes favorable to their business interests.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

Corruption is endemic in Malawi. The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB), which is responsible for investigating corruption, has been accused by civil society leaders of being ineffective and compromised.

The trial of the 18 main suspects in the 2013 Cashgate corruption scandal, which involved \$800 million in missing public funds, had not concluded at the end of 2017. Former president Banda, under suspicion of involvement in the scheme, was living abroad in self-imposed exile at the end of 2017, and has not been charged with a crime. Maizegate, a corruption scandal involving irregular maize purchases from Zambia by agriculture minister George Chaponda, unfolded in 2017. President Mutharika fired Chaponda in February for his alleged involvement. A raid on Chaponda's home revealed more than \$200,000 in cash hidden in suitcases. Chaponda was charged with graft in July, and his trial was ongoing at year's end. Despite the allegations, he retained a senior position in the DPP.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

Malawi lacks budgetary transparency; the government still fails to make year-end budget audit reports available to the public.

In February 2017, President Mutharika signed an access to information bill after a 12-year civil society campaign. However, the law had not been implemented by year's end. Laws require high-level public officials to declare their assets and other financial interests while in public service. Mutharika declared his assets in 2015, but 28 legislators missed the July deadline and faced no sanctions as of December 31.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 37 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 13 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4

Freedom of the press is legally guaranteed and generally respected in practice. However, news outlets have experienced intimidation. In January 2017, the offices of the private Times Group were raided and shut down. The government claimed the raid was based on failure to pay taxes, but the Times Media Group alleged that the shutdown was in response to critical coverage of the Maizegate scandal in its publications. Private media outlets were also frequently denied access to government events. There is still a law against insulting the leader of Malawi, but there were no arrests under this legislation in 2017.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

The constitution upholds freedom of religion, and this right is respected in practice.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 3 / 4

Malawi's education system is largely free from political indoctrination. However, President Mutharika was criticized in 2015 for saying that university professors should focus on academic publications rather than commenting on public matters in the media.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

Citizens are largely free to express their personal views on political and sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution. However, according to a November 2017 report by Afrobarometer, many Malawians do not feel comfortable criticizing the government and engage in self-censorship. President Mutharika has not yet signed the Declaration of Table Mountain, which calls on African governments to abolish criminal defamation laws.

Civil society leaders suspect that the government surveils private electronic communications. The Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA), after a series of court challenges, announced in June 2017 that it would implement the Consolidated ICT Regulatory Management System (CIRMS), also known as the "spy machine" in September 2017. Although the government claims the system is for quality control, critics fear that it will be used to monitor phone calls and text messages.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 8 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 3 / 4

Freedom of assembly is guaranteed in the constitution, but the government sometimes limits this right. In September 2017, 26 students at the Lilongwe University of Agriculture

and Natural Resources were arrested for participating in a peaceful protest. Police also blocked MCP supporters from welcoming Lazarus Chakwera at the airport in April.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 2 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have generally operated without interference from the government. However, draft amendments to a new NGO law introduced in 2017 have led to an outcry among civil society leaders for potentially placing serious restrictions on their activities. If the law passes, an NGO board would approve NGOs' applications for funding from donors and require that the applications align with the policies of the government. NGOs would also be required to register with the NGO board, which would have the power to deregister them.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

The rights to organize labor unions and to strike are legally protected, but workers in essential services have limitations on their right to strike. Unions are active and collective bargaining is practiced, but retaliations against unions that are unregistered and strikers are not illegal.

F. RULE OF LAW: 9 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 3 / 4

Judicial independence is generally respected. However, the appointments process for judges lacks transparency and undermines the legitimacy of the judiciary.

The courts have in recent years served as a check on executive power. A notable example occurred when the courts struck down former president Banda's attempt to nullify the results of the 2014 election. However, the judiciary's role as the arbiter of several hot button issues poses a danger that the courts could become politicized and thus vulnerable to outside interference.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 2 / 4

Arbitrary arrests and detentions are common in Malawi. Defendants are legally entitled to legal representation, but in practice they are frequently forced to represent themselves in court. Although the law requires that suspects be released or charged with a crime within 48 hours of arrest, these rights were often denied.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 2 / 4

Police brutality and extrajudicial killings are not uncommon in Malawi. In 2017, three women accused of assaulting another woman were allegedly assaulted by police. In recent years, there has been an upsurge in criminal activity by police officers, including armed robberies and break-ins. The police are poorly trained and often ineffective. As a result, vigilantism has increased in recent years.

Prison conditions are dire, characterized by overcrowding and extremely poor health conditions; many inmates die from AIDS and other diseases.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

The Malawian constitution explicitly guarantees the rights of all humans. However, violence and discrimination against the LGBT community is a persistent problem. LGBT

persons are often unable to access the medical care that they need. Societal stigma against people with HIV leads to patients receiving inadequate care.

Despite constitutional guarantees of equal protection, customary practices perpetuate discrimination against women in education, employment, business, and inheritance and property rights.

Persons with albinism experience discrimination and have been attacked, abducted, killed, and mutilated. In 2016, a UN human rights expert stated that persons with albinism in Malawi are “an endangered group facing a risk of systemic extinction over time if nothing is done.”

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 7 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 2 / 4

The constitution establishes freedom of internal movement and foreign travel, which are generally respected in practice. However, government policy confines refugees to two camps, and the police frequently round up those found outside of the camps and return them. Hundreds of migrants from various African countries trying to reach South Africa were detained in Malawi on charges of entering the country illegally in 2017. Many have remained in detention even after finishing their sentences because the government cannot afford to return them to their home countries.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

Property rights are inadequately protected in Malawi. Most land is held under customary land tenure and the process of creating titles that would allow legal ownership of land have moved slowly. Starting a business can be a cumbersome process, a problem worsened by corruption in several key government agencies.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 1 / 4

Domestic violence is common in Malawi, but victims rarely come forward and the police usually do not intervene in domestic violence cases. According to the Violence against Children and Young People Survey report produced by the Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare (MoGCDSW) and others in 2015, one in five girls are sexually abused. Around half are married before the age of 18, despite a marriage law that took effect in 2015 that raised the minimum age of marriage to 18 years. There are no laws that specifically prohibit female genital mutilation, and the practice still occurs in some ethnic communities on girls between 10 and 15 years old.

Consensual sexual activity between same-sex couples remains illegal and punishable by up to 14 years in prison. In 2017, the Malawi Human Rights Commission’s plan to conduct a survey on LGBT people was abandoned after an outcry from civil society organizations who claimed that the survey would not address the pervasive discrimination that LGBT people face.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Revenues from large, state-run industries tend to benefit the political elite. A study by Oxfam found that between 2004 and 2011, economic inequality increased by around 15 percent.

The enforcement of labor laws is weak, and employees are often paid extremely low wages, despite minimum wage laws. Child labor remained a persistent issue in 2017, even though laws restricting such practices are on the books. Forced labor for children also occurs with some frequency. Trafficking in women and children, both within the country and to locations abroad, remained a problem in 2017. The government, however, has stepped up its efforts to address the issue, prosecuting and convicting 26 traffickers in 2017.

Malaysia

Population: 30,800,000

Capital: Kuala Lumpur

Political Rights Rating: 4

Civil Liberties Rating: 4

Freedom Rating: 4.0

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: Although Malaysia holds regular elections, it has been ruled by the same political coalition since independence in 1957. Despite a vibrant political opposition, the ruling coalition has maintained power by manipulating electoral districts, appealing to ethnic nationalism, and suppressing criticism through restrictive speech laws and politicized prosecutions of opposition leaders.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In July, former prime minister Mahathir Mohamed became the new chairman of the opposition coalition Pakatan Harapan—a development that could bolster the opposition ahead of 2018 elections.
- Prime Minister Najib Razak's mismanagement of and possible embezzlement from the state development fund 1MDB continued to be highly controversial domestically and internationally.
- In August, the High Court upheld an 18-month jail term given to an opposition leader, Rafizi Ramli for disclosing parts of the Auditor General's report on the 1MDB scandal.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 18 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 6 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4

The prime minister is the head of government and chief executive. The leader of the coalition that wins a plurality of seats in legislative elections becomes the prime minister. Thus, the legitimacy of the prime minister generally rests on the conduct of elections.

The paramount ruler, the monarch and titular head of state, is elected for five-year terms by fellow hereditary rulers from 9 of Malaysia's 13 states. In 2016, a new king, Sultan Muhammad V, was sworn in. The role of the king is largely ceremonial, though he retains the power to approve the prime minister.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4

The upper house of the bicameral Parliament, the Senate, or Dewan Negara, consists of 44 members appointed by the king and 26 members elected by the 13 state legislatures, serving three-year terms. The Senate has limited powers. The House of Representatives, or Dewan Rakyat, has 222 seats filled through regular elections, the most recent in 2013. The ruling National Front (BN) coalition won the 2013 parliamentary elections, capturing 133 seats in the lower house despite receiving only 47 percent of the overall popular vote. The opposition and observers accused the BN of electoral fraud, citing irregularities such as “phantom voting” and power outages in vote-tallying centers in a number of constituencies that opposition parties hoped to win.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 2 / 4

The Election Commission (EC) is officially independent but is comprised of the prime minister and government allies. In practice, it is subordinate to the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), which dominates the BN coalition. The EC is responsible for maintaining voter rolls, and has been accused of enabling “phantom voting” by creating duplicate records of some voters, or by leaving deceased persons on the rolls. The politicized delineation of electoral districts gives the UMNO a significant advantage over the opposition in national elections.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 7 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 2 / 4**

Opposition parties have a long and vibrant history in Malaysia, and several state governments are under opposition control. New opposition parties regularly emerge, such as the Bersatu party, which was formed in 2016 and now counts several former leaders of the UMNO in its ranks.

However, opposition parties also face obstacles such as unequal access to the media, restrictions on campaigning and freedom of assembly, and politicized prosecutions. The main opposition coalition has struggled with cohesion since the 2014 re-imprisonment of its Anwar Ibrahim of the opposition People’s Justice Party (PKR); Ibrahim has been dogged by claims that he “sodomized” a male aide in 2008, a charge seen as politically motivated.

The Registrar of Societies (ROS) oversees the registration of political parties and in the past has issued politicized decisions. In 2017, it declared the 2013 internal leadership elections of the opposition Democratic Action Party (DAP) to be illegal, compromising the party’s ability to operate normally ahead of the 2018 polls. In November, the ROS indicated that it was weighing whether to deregister Bersatu on grounds that the name of its youth wing was illegal.

Separately, in August 2017, the High Court upheld an 18-month jail sentence for opposition politician Rafizi Ramli for making public an audit report on the ongoing 1MDB scandal, leaving the Appellate Court as his final course of appeal.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 2 / 4

The extensive manipulations of the electoral process make it exceedingly difficult for the opposition to secure a parliamentary majority without defections from the dominant

UMNO-led coalition. State resources are also used to secure support among key voting blocs. There is, however, an opposition presence in the federal parliament and at the state level.

The political opposition has entered new territory with the return of former prime minister Mahathir Mohamed as the founder and chairman of the Bersatu party, and the chairman of the opposition coalition Pakatan Harapan; previously he was with the UMNO, but had broken with the party. Pakatan Harapan may be able to attract additional votes to the opposition in the next general election, which is due by August 2018.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 2 / 4

The military is not active in politics and foreign powers do not directly meddle with voting (though China is an increasingly active player in the country). The traditional media and print media especially favor the government, leaving voters with limited information about opposition parties. The ruling party has close links with much of the country's elite business community, giving the ruling party a financial advantage over the opposition.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 1 / 4

Suffrage in Malaysia is universal for adult citizens. However, social and legal restrictions limit political activism among some minority groups—including LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) communities. Women's interests remain generally underrepresented in politics.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 5 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 2 / 4

Most major policy decisions are reached by the prime minister and the cabinet, sometimes with limited input from the remainder of the elected legislature. The biased electoral framework reduces the legitimacy of the elected officials.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

High-level corruption remains a major issue in Malaysia. Institutional safeguards are weak and there is insufficient political will to substantially mitigate the problem. Misuse of resources and favoritism are facilitated by the close nexus between political and economic elites, which blurs the distinction between public and private enterprises and creates opportunities for collusion and graft.

Prime Minister Najib's mismanagement of and possible embezzlement from the state development fund 1MDB has continued to be highly controversial domestically and internationally. The U.S. Department of Justice has moved to seize U.S. assets amounting to more than \$1 billion in connection with the scandal.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

Many key policy decisions are reached by the inner circle of the ruling coalition without extensive consultation in the legislature or with the broader public. The government regularly clamps down on scrutiny of its operations. In attempting to contain fallout from 1MDB, for example, Prime Minister Najib in 2015 replaced the attorney general and fired several cabinet members that had been critical of the scandal.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 45 / 60 (+1)**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 7 / 16****D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4**

Freedom of expression is constitutionally guaranteed but restricted in practice. A 2012 amendment to the Printing Presses and Publications Act retains the home minister's authority to suspend or revoke publishing licenses but allows judicial review of such decisions. Most private publications are controlled by political parties or businesses allied with the BN, as are most private television stations, which generally censor programming according to government guidelines. State outlets reflect government views. Books and films are directly censored or banned for profanity, violence, and political and religious content.

The internet is an outlet for the exposure of political corruption, but the Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) monitors websites and can order the removal of material considered provocative or subversive. A 2012 amendment to the 1950 Evidence Act holds owners and editors of websites, providers of web-hosting services, and owners of computers or mobile devices accountable for information published through their services or property.

The government engages in legal harassment of critical voices, charging them under defamation laws, the Official Secrets Act, and the Sedition Act—all of which include imprisonment as a possible penalty. In 2016, an independent Malaysian news site, the *Malaysian Insider*, shut down. Though officially for administrative reason, the closure came just after the MCMC ordered the site blocked in response to a report it published claiming that the local antigraft agency had sufficient evidence to bring criminal charges against Prime Minister Najib. Other independent online news services, like *Malaysiakini* and *Free Malaysia Today*, remain active.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 1 / 4

While Malaysia is religiously diverse, some key provisions restrict religious freedom. Ethnic Malays are constitutionally defined as Muslim and are not entitled to renounce their faith. Practicing a version of Islam other than Sunni Islam is prohibited, and Shiites and other sects face discrimination. Muslim children and civil servants are required to receive religious education using government-approved curriculums and instructors. Non-Muslims are not able to build houses of worship as easily as Muslims, and the state retains the right to demolish unregistered religious statues and houses of worship. Despite this, many religious minority communities remain active.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 2 / 4

There is some degree of academic freedom in Malaysia, though instructors and students espousing antigovernment views or engaging in political activity are subject to disciplinary action under the Universities and University Colleges Act (UUCA) of 1971.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 2 / 4

Surveillance of private activities is largely limited to public personas, though areas deemed to be a threat to Islam are increasingly scrutinized. The Sedition Act has been used to target individuals that publically express ideas deemed sensitive by the state.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 6 / 12 (+1)**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 2 / 4**

Freedom of assembly is limited on the grounds of maintaining security and public order. Street protests are generally prohibited, with high fines for noncompliance. The law delineates 21 public places where assemblies cannot be held—including within 50 meters of houses of worship, schools, and hospitals—and prohibits persons under the age of 15 from attending any public assembly.

However, demonstrations often occur despite these restrictions. In September 2017, the Purple March against Toxic Politics saw over 1,000 women gather in Kuala Lumpur to denounce corruption, electoral fraud, sexism, racism, and other forms of discrimination.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 2 / 4 (+1)

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) must be approved and registered by the government, which has refused or revoked registrations for political reasons. Some international human rights organizations are forbidden from forming local branches.

Nevertheless, a wide array of civil society groups operate in Malaysia. The Bersih (Clean) coalition of civil society organizations and opposition parties has visibly campaigned for electoral, anticorruption, and other reforms in recent years. The government cracked down on Bersih in 2015 and 2016, raiding the offices of various organizers and arresting its senior officials. However, in 2017, Bersih was able to operate somewhat more freely, with representatives able to make public statements and engage in other activities without incurring such serious reprisals.

Many smaller groups operate as well. Civil society organizations played a critical role in the 2017 Purple March against Toxic Politics.

Score Change: The score improved from 1 to 2 due to evidence that Malaysia has a vibrant civil society in spite of government restrictions, and because repression of the Bersih movement eased in 2017 compared to previous years.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

Most Malaysian workers can join trade unions, but the law contravenes international guidelines by restricting unions to representing workers in a single or similar trade. The director general of trade unions can refuse or withdraw registration arbitrarily. Collective bargaining is limited, as is the right to strike.

F. RULE OF LAW: 5 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4**

Judicial independence is compromised by extensive executive influence. Arbitrary or politically motivated verdicts occur, as seen in the convictions of Anwar Ibrahim in 1999, 2000, and 2014 on charges of corruption and sodomy.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 2 / 4

The 2012 Security Offences (Special Measures) Act allows police to detain anyone for up to 28 days without judicial review for broadly defined “security offenses,” and suspects may be held for 48 hours before being granted access to a lawyer. It was renewed for another five years in April 2017. Later, in August, lawmakers amended the Prevention of Crime Act to revoke detainees’ right to address the government-appointed Prevention of Crime Board (POCB), which makes rulings on their detention.

Malaysia's secular legal system is based on English common law. However, Muslims are subject to Sharia (Islamic law), the interpretation of which varies regionally, and the constitution's Article 121 stipulates that all matters related to Islam should be heard in Sharia courts. This results in vastly different treatment of Muslims and non-Muslims in "moral" and family law cases.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 1 / 4

Allegations of torture and abuse, including deaths, in police custody continue, and a number of criminal offenses can be punished with caning. Prisons are overcrowded and dangerous. In April 2017, Malaysia's national human rights panel said more than 600 people had died in Malaysian prisons and detention centers over the last two years.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

Although the constitution provides for equal treatment of all citizens, it grants a "special position" to ethnic Malays and other indigenous people, known collectively as *bumiputera*. The government maintains programs intended to boost the economic status of *bumiputera*, who receive preferential treatment in areas including property ownership, higher education, civil service jobs, business affairs, and government contracts.

LGBT Malaysians face widespread discrimination and harassment. Same-sex sexual relations are punishable by up to 20 years in prison under the penal code, and some states apply their own penalties to Muslims under Sharia statutes. The Ministries of Health and Education conduct campaigns to "prevent, overcome, and correct" homosexuality in children, while the Ministry of Information has banned television and radio shows depicting gay characters. The Malaysian Islamic Development Department operates camps to "rehabilitate" transgender Muslims.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 9 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4

Citizens are generally free to travel within and outside of Malaysia, as well as to change residence and employment. However, professional and business opportunities and access to higher education are affected by regulations and practices favoring ethnic Malays (and other *bumiputera*) and those with connections to political elites.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 3 / 4

Malaysia has a vibrant private business sector. Bribery, however, is common in the private sector, and the close nexus between political and private sector elites results in some interference in business from state officials. Some laws pertaining to property and business differentiate between *bumiputera* and non-*bumiputera*.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Ethnic Malays and other Muslims face restrictions on marriage partners and other social choices. Social pressures may also regulate appearance, especially among Malay women. Sharia courts often favor men in matters of inheritance and divorce.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

The legal differentiation between bumiputera and non-bumiputera citizens effectively places restrictions on the latter. Gender norms likewise restrict some opportunities.

Rural residents continue to find themselves at disadvantages in terms of professional opportunities. Foreign workers, especially those working illegally, are often vulnerable to economic exploitation and abuse.

The trafficking of men, women, and children for the purpose of forced labor or sex work remains a problem, but authorities have recently made some efforts to address the issue, as reflected by an increase in trafficking prosecutions and convictions.

Maldives

Population: 400,000

Capital: Malé

Political Rights Rating: 5

Civil Liberties Rating: 5

Freedom Rating: 5.0

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: Following decades of authoritarian rule under former president Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, the Maldives held its first multiparty presidential election in 2008. However, democratic gains have been reversed in recent years amid severe restrictions on opposition activities, the imprisonment of opposition figures, restrictions on freedoms of expression and assembly, politicization of the judiciary and other independent institutions, and increasing Islamist militancy.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Yameen Rasheed, a prominent blogger, human rights defender, and critic of religious extremism, was murdered in April. The killing was followed by increased threats and state persecution aimed at other liberal writers and perceived opponents of Islam.
- To prevent a vote to replace the parliament speaker, military forces removed opposition lawmakers from the parliament in March and July and maintained a presence in or around the chamber itself during subsequent sessions.
- The Supreme Court ruled in July that lawmakers who switch or are expelled from their parties should lose their seats. A dozen members of the governing Progressive Party of Maldives (PPM) who had defected to the opposition were consequently removed, though the action was still being disputed in the courts at year's end.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 14 / 40 (-3)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 5 / 12 (-2)

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4

The president is directly elected for up to two five-year terms. In the 2013 election, PPM leader Abdulla Yameen, a half-brother of former president Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, won a runoff vote against former president Mohamed Nasheed of the Madivian Democratic

Party (MDP), 51 percent to 49 percent. The process, which included an annulment and rerun of the first round, was marred by repeated interference from the Supreme Court and the police.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4 (-1)

The unicameral People's Majlis is composed of 85 seats, with members elected from individual districts to serve five-year terms. Elections held in 2014 were largely transparent and competitive, though they also featured some Supreme Court interference, vote buying, and other problems. The PPM won 33 seats, while the MDP captured 26. The Jumhooree Party won 15 seats, the Maldives Development Alliance won 5, and independents took an additional 5. The Adhaalath Party won the remaining seat. Subsequent party-switching gave the PPM a majority.

In July 2017, after a number of defections from the PPM threatened its control over the legislature, the Supreme Court ruled that members of parliament who switch or are expelled from their parties should lose their seats; the constitution contained no such provision. The decision did not apply retroactively, but the PPM and the Elections Commission argued that 12 members who defected to the opposition earlier in the year had not been officially removed from the party registry until after the ruling. While the seats were formally vacated, and the constitution required by-elections within 60 days, no such elections were held. The ousted lawmakers continued to contest their disqualification at year's end.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 due to the politicized removal of a dozen ruling party lawmakers from their seats after they joined the opposition, as well as delays in the holding of by-elections to fill the vacancies.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 1 / 4 (-1)

The independence of the Elections Commission has been seriously compromised in recent years. In addition to its handling of the party-switching dispute, which was widely seen as favoring the PPM, it repeatedly delayed the holding of local council elections in 2017. When the elections ultimately proceeded in May, leading to losses for the PPM, the commission delayed the announcement of results without a clear explanation.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 due to politicized and irregular actions taken by the Elections Commission in its management of local elections and its removal of parliament members who defected from the ruling party.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 5 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 2 / 4

Political pluralism and participation have deteriorated in recent years as the authorities continue a pattern of persecuting and jailing opposition figures. Restrictions on and dispersals of political protests, raids on opposition offices, and arbitrary detentions of opposition politicians are common. Former president Nasheed, who had been sentenced to 13 years in prison in 2015 after a flawed trial on terrorism charges, remained in Britain in 2017, having obtained asylum there while on medical leave in 2016. Among other cases during 2017, Gasim Ibrahim, leader of the Jumhooree Party, was arrested on dubious bribery charges in

April and sentenced to more than three years in prison after a politicized legal process in August. Gasim was allowed to seek medical treatment in Singapore in September, and he remained abroad at year's end. Faris Maumoon, the son of former president Gayoom, was arrested on similar charges in July; both he and his father had split with the PPM and moved to the opposition.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 1 / 4

Under President Yameen, the government and the PPM have used the politicized justice system and the security forces to cripple the opposition and maintain control of the legislature. In March 2017, during a failed opposition vote to remove the parliament speaker, Abdulla Maseeh Mohamed, military personnel physically removed protesting lawmakers. In July, the military blocked opposition members from entering the parliament, and several faced criminal charges for forcing their way in. A combination of military guards and the dubious expulsion of opposition members under that month's Supreme Court decision prevented further attempts to remove the speaker for the rest of the year.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 1 / 4

The incumbent leadership has exerted improper influence over a number of state institutions to restrict the political choices of voters and politicians. In addition to using security forces, the Elections Commission, and the justice system to suppress dissent, the president's allies have reportedly threatened public and private-sector employees with dismissal for participating in opposition protests or other political activities. Such workers have also been forced to attend progovernment events. Vote buying remains a problem during elections, and allegations of bribery and corruption have surrounded instances of party switching in recent years.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 1 / 4

The Maldivian constitution and legal framework require all citizens to be Muslims and all candidates for elected office to be followers of Sunni Islam. Societal discrimination against women has limited their political participation. Just 39 of 653 local council seats were won by women candidates in the May 2017 local elections, and five women won seats in the parliament in 2014. Foreign workers, who make up between a quarter and a third of the population, have no political rights.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 4 / 12 (-1)

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 2 / 4 (-1)

Elected officials generally determine and implement government policies, but the functioning of the parliament was seriously impaired during 2017 by the leadership's heavy-handed attempts to retain control in the face of defections to the opposition. After the military closed off the parliament in July, the speaker held a brief session in August with military personnel physically surrounding the rostrum. The military continued to provide security inside the parliament for the rest of the year, and when the body reconvened after a recess in October, a large wall had been constructed around a newly elevated speaker's desk.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 due to the disruption of normal legislative business caused by the use of closures, physical barriers, and military personnel to suppress opposition lawmakers' efforts to replace the speaker of parliament.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

Corruption continues to be endemic at all levels of government. The Anti-Corruption Commission is only moderately effective, often launching investigations and taking other actions in response to public complaints, but rarely holding powerful figures to account for abuses.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 1 / 4

Large state contracts for infrastructure and other projects are regularly awarded through opaque processes, in which bribery and kickbacks are widely believed to play a role. The president, cabinet ministers, and members of parliament are required by the constitution to submit annual asset declarations, but these are not made public, and the relevant agencies have even resisted disclosing how many officials comply with the rule.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 21 / 60 (-2)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 3 / 16 (-2)

D1. Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4

The constitution guarantees freedom of expression so long as it is exercised in a manner that is “not contrary to any tenet of Islam,” a vague condition that encourages self-censorship in the media. Regulatory bodies, especially the Maldives Broadcasting Commission (MBC), are conspicuously biased in favor of the government and restrict coverage of the opposition. A 2016 law imposed criminal penalties for defamation or any other expression that “threatens national security” or “contradicts social norms,” and it has been used to intimidate journalists and media outlets. Several journalists were arbitrarily detained during 2017, and others reported receiving death threats, including from PPM members.

In April 2017, prominent liberal blogger and political commentator Yameen Rasheed was fatally stabbed near his home. Seven alleged religious extremists were charged with the crime, but the subsequent court hearings were closed, and Rasheed’s family called for an independent investigation. Rasheed had complained that police failed to investigate multiple death threats against him. Among other activities, he had led a campaign to solve the 2014 disappearance of journalist Ahmed Rilwan.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 0 / 4 (-1)

Freedom of religion is severely restricted. Islam is the state religion, and all citizens are required to be Muslims. Imams must use government-approved sermons. Non-Muslim foreigners are allowed to observe their religions only in private. In recent years, growing religious extremism has led to an increase in threatening rhetoric and physical attacks against those perceived to be insulting or rejecting Islam. Religious leaders and PPM members accused Rasheed of insulting Islam, and shortly after the blogger’s murder in April 2017, President Yameen gave speeches that appeared to justify the killing. The authorities intensified a crackdown on secularist writers in the wake of the murder, ordering four online activists who worked in exile to report for questioning or face prosecution. Other prominent Maldivians who defended freedom of conscience from abroad were labeled apostates or faced death threats. Also during the year, the Ministry of Islamic Affairs undertook a number

of projects with religious leaders, media outlets, and others to promote religious conformity and combat “atheism.”

Score Change: The score declined from 1 to 0 due to an increase in threats and government harassment aimed at perceived opponents of Islam surrounding the April murder of liberal blogger Yameen Rasheed.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 1 / 4

Academic freedom has narrowed in recent years as the government steps up monitoring and punishments for academics and teachers who espouse opposition political views or participate in protests. Islam is a compulsory subject in schools and is incorporated into all other subject areas. School and university curriculums are coming under increased influence from hard-line religious leaders, resulting in some content that denigrates democracy and promotes jihadist narratives.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 1 / 4 (-1)

It has become increasingly dangerous for individuals to express political and religious opinions freely. The jailing of opposition leaders, the murder of Yameen Rasheed, police harassment of other social media activists, and death threats against anyone speaking out in favor of tolerance or religious pluralism—including Maldivian citizen Ahmed Shaheed, the UN special rapporteur for freedom of religion or belief—all served to inhibit free speech in 2017.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 due to growing violence, intimidation, and state persecution targeting outspoken liberals and opposition figures, which contributed to broader self-censorship.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 5 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 1 / 4

Freedom of assembly is severely constrained. A 2016 law requires protest organizers to obtain police permission for their events and restricts demonstrations to certain designated areas. In 2017 authorities allowed progovernment assemblies but consistently banned or dispersed other protests. In August, relatives of Rilwan and Rasheed were dismissed from their civil service jobs after participating in protests marking Rilwan’s disappearance.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 2 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) continue to operate in a restrictive environment. They are required to obtain government approval before seeking domestic or foreign funding, and regulators have broad discretion to investigate and dissolve NGOs. The Human Rights Commission of Maldives is not independent in practice.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

The constitution and labor laws allow workers to form trade unions, and a number of unions are active. However, collective bargaining is not protected, and strikes are prohibited in many sectors, including the crucial tourism industry.

F. RULE OF LAW: 6 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4

Judicial independence is seriously compromised. Many judges are unqualified, and the courts are widely considered vulnerable to corruption or political influence. The Supreme Court has repeatedly intervened in political affairs and apparently exceeded its constitutional authority, typically acting in the ruling party's interests. In May 2017, for example, it declared that it would be the final arbiter of the validity of parliamentary no-confidence or impeachment motions against executive, judicial, or independent officials. In September, after a group of 56 lawyers filed a petition calling for reforms to ensure judicial independence, the Supreme Court summarily and indefinitely suspended them from legal practice. Those affected made up nearly a third of all registered criminal lawyers in the country who do not represent the state, and many were defending opposition figures.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

Police regularly engage in arbitrary arrests, often to disrupt opposition activities, protests, or the work of journalists. Due process rights are not well enforced in practice, and opposition figures have been subjected to deeply flawed trials on politically motivated charges, according to human rights groups and international monitors. In Gasim's bribery case, two judges who initially dismissed charges against the Jumhoorree Party leader were quickly demoted; the new judge held an accelerated, closed trial and issued the August sentence while the defendant was hospitalized.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 2 / 4

The constitution bans torture, but police brutality and the abuse of detainees remain problems. Flogging and other forms of corporal punishment are authorized for some crimes, and flogging sentences are issued in practice. Prisons are overcrowded, and inmates reportedly lack proper access to medical care.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

Gender-based discrimination in employment is prohibited by law, but women continue to face discrimination in practice, and they are disproportionately affected by Sharia (Islamic law) penalties for crimes like fornication and adultery.

Migrant workers in the country encounter disparate treatment by state authorities and have difficulty accessing justice.

Same-sex sexual acts are prohibited by law and can draw prison sentences and corporal punishment. As a result, LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people rarely come forward to report societal discrimination or abuse.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 7 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 2 / 4

Freedom of movement is provided for by law, but there are some restrictions in practice. Authorities have imposed travel bans on members of opposition parties and other perceived government opponents. Migrant workers are also subject to constraints on their movement, including through retention of their passports by employers.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

Property rights are limited, with most land owned by the government and leased to private entities or commercial developers through what is often an opaque process.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 1 / 4

Personal social freedoms are restricted by Sharia-based laws and growing religious extremism in society. Among other rules on marriage and divorce, citizen women are barred from marrying non-Muslim foreigners, while citizen men can marry non-Muslim foreigners only if they are Christian or Jewish. Extramarital sex is criminalized, and there is a high legal threshold to prove rape allegations. Women face increasing pressure to dress more conservatively, in keeping with hard-line interpretations of Islam.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

The legal framework provides some protections against worker exploitation, including rules on working hours and bans on forced labor. However, migrant workers are especially vulnerable to abuses such as debt bondage and withholding of wages. Women and children working in domestic service may also be subject to exploitative conditions.

Mali

Population: 17,300,000

Capital: Bamako

Political Rights Rating: 5

Civil Liberties Rating: 4

Freedom Rating: 4.5

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: Mali experienced a political transition away from authoritarian rule beginning in the early 1990s, and gradually built up its democratic institutions for about 20 years. However, the country displayed characteristics of state fragility along the way that eventually contributed to a 2012 military coup, and a rebellion in northern Mali that erupted the same year. Though constitutional rule was restored and a peace agreement signed in the north in 2015, the events have left an enduring situation of insecurity.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Peace talks between the government and armed groups that back it, the political opposition, and former rebel groups took place in the spring. The talks, which were mandated by the 2015 peace agreement, ended inconclusively, and some groups boycotted parts of the event.
- Violence by armed Islamist groups not involved in the peace talks continued, as did rights abuses committed by government security forces fighting them.
- Constitutional amendments giving the executive branch more power were approved by the parliament in June, but intense opposition and an accompanying

protest movement prompted the president to indefinitely postpone a referendum on the changes.

- The government temporarily interrupted internet service and shut down a number of radio stations in an apparent effort to discourage protests against the constitutional changes.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 17 / 40**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 6 / 12****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4**

The president, who appoints the prime minister, is elected by popular vote and may serve up to two five-year terms. In a two-round presidential election in 2013, Ibrahim Bou-bacar Keïta, a former prime minister known by his initials, IBK, defeated Soumaïla Cissé, a former finance minister. International election observers found the election to be relatively well conducted in the places where it was held, though a fragile security situation led to very low turnout in parts of the north. Despite the election's relative success, the political system remains fragile due to the security situation, and as the country continues to address the aftermath of the 2012 coup.

In April 2017, President Keïta appointed Abdoulaye Idrissa Maïga as the new prime minister to replace Modibo Keïta. However, in December, Maïga and his cabinet unexpectedly resigned. Days later, Soumeylou Boubèye Maïga, secretary general to the president, and a former defense minister, was appointed prime minister and formed a new government.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4

Members of the 147-seat unicameral National Assembly serve five-year terms, with 13 seats reserved to represent Malians living abroad. IBK's Rally for Mali (RPM) party won 66 seats in legislative elections held in 2013, and its allies took an additional 49 seats. Cissé's Union for the Republic and Democracy (URD) won 17 seats, and the third-largest party, the Alliance for Democracy (ADEMA), won 16. Like the presidential elections, international election observers concluded the legislative elections to be credible despite insecurity that depressed turnout.

Long-delayed local elections were held in most of the country's communes at the end of 2016, despite the threat of attacks by armed Islamists. The elections were relatively well administered and considered credible, although there were issues with voter registration and reports of violence, kidnappings, and intimidation. Regional elections scheduled for December 2017 were postponed until 2018 because various armed groups objected to the timing.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 2 / 4

Electoral operations are divided among three administrative bodies in Mali—the Ministry of Territorial Administration, the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI), and the General Office of Elections (DGE), ensuring a degree of mutual control. The Constitutional Court also participates in the electoral process by validating election results and resolving disputes. Electoral bodies have struggled to establish secure polling places in areas where armed groups operate. Voters have been disenfranchised in past elections due to delays in the distribution of electoral identity cards, and an outdated voter registry.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 7 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 2 / 4**

The creation and the functioning of political parties are determined by a legal framework known as the Political Parties Charter, which is generally considered fair. This Charter prohibits the creation of political parties on an “ethnic, religious, linguistic, regionalist, sexist, or professional basis.” There are more than 100 registered political parties in Mali, though fewer than 20 are active. Political parties are relatively weak, and are usually based around support for a particular personality, and policy differences between parties are not always clear. Parties are often poorly funded, which hampers their ability to effectively organize and win voter support.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 2 / 4

Electoral competition is open to opposition forces. A 2014 law institutionalized specific privileges for opposition parties in the parliament, such as the ability to choose an official leader of the opposition. However, in 2016 the ruling majority passed, over the objections of opposition parties, amendments to the electoral code that favored establishment and majority parties by requiring candidates to make a significant financial campaign deposit, and to receive support from national councilors.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 1 / 4

Political choices remain the privilege of the Malian people, though these choices are occasionally influenced by religious authorities, such as the High Islamic Council, as well as the promise of patronage appointments or other benefits in exchange for political support.

Insecurity in the country has restricted people’s ability to freely make political choices, especially in northern and central Mali. During the 2016 local elections, 58 communes were not able to participate in the elections because of violence in the region, and some polling stations were also attacked. The December 2017 regional elections were postponed until 2018 because various armed groups objected to the timing.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 2 / 4

No law limits the political rights of minorities, and no single ethnic group dominates the government or security forces. Tuareg pastoralist groups in the north have historically occupied a marginal position in national political life, but members from these groups have positions in the cabinet, and hold at least 16 National Assembly seats.

Societal attitudes can discourage women from participating in political processes. Only about 14 percent of candidates in the 2013 legislative elections were women, and women occupy less than 10 percent of National Assembly seats.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 4 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 2 / 4**

The president and national assembly members were freely elected in the 2013 national elections. The prime minister is generally able to set national policy, and the parliament

to enact new laws. However, the executive branch has exhibited influence on the other branches of government. For instance, in 2016, President Keita established a committee to draft revisions to the 1992 constitution. Despite protests from opposition groups that the revision would strengthen the president's powers, the bill was adopted by the parliament in June 2017. However, the scheduled July referendum on the changes was indefinitely postponed amid public protests.

The volatile security situation has also affected the ability of government to effectively operate in northern and central Mali, but there was some improvement in 2017. The establishment of all interim authorities in five troubled administrative regions (Kidal, Gao, Menaka, Timbuktu, and Taoudéni) between February and April, despite some initial contestation, marked a step towards improving governance in the former strongholds of the Tuareg rebellion. The governor of Kidal, Sidi Mohamed Ag Ichrach, returned to office in September after an absence of more than three years, after a ceasefire agreement took effect.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

Corruption remains a problem in government, notably in public procurement. Bribery and embezzlement of public funds is common and impunity for corrupt officials is the norm. The Office of the Auditor General is an independent office responsible for analyzing public spending, but despite identifying sizable embezzlement cases, very few prosecutions have been made.

Some efforts were made in 2017 to deter corruption. In March, 15 finance and equipment directors were removed from their posts within the Finance Ministry as part of an anti-corruption effort. Also in March, the Central Office for the Fight against Illegal Enrichment was formed to organize anticorruption activities.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 1 / 4

Government operations remain generally opaque. Mali does not have a comprehensive freedom of information regime, although numerous laws do provide for public access to some official documents and information. However, such laws are replete with extensive and vague exceptions, and journalists have faced obstacles when attempting to obtain information about the military in particular.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 27 / 60 (-1)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 11 / 16 (-1)

D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4 (-1)

The media environment in Mali's capital, Bamako, and in the rest of the south is relatively open, though there are sporadic reports of censorship, self-censorship, and threats against journalists. Reporting on the situation in the north remains dangerous due to the presence of active militant groups.

Defamation is a crime that can draw fines or prison time. In April 2017, Ammy Baba Cissé of *Le Figaro* was sentenced to six months in prison after being convicted of defaming the president of the National Assembly.

Intimidation of journalists, including death threats, were reported frequently in 2017, with incidents often coming in connection with reporting on constitutional referendum scheduled for July, or the upcoming 2018 general elections. In July, the influential blogger, Madou Kanté, who was known for his criticism of political corruption and had been highly critical of the 2017 constitutional reforms, was shot in the chest, which some claimed was an assassination attempt. He survived the attack, and it was unclear whether anyone had been arrested in connection with it.

Additionally, the government began restricting media licenses in 2017 and closed approximately 50 radio stations in June for operating without a license, shortly before planned protests against the constitutional referendum.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 due to the closure of radio stations and increasing intimidation of journalists ahead of a planned constitutional referendum and 2018 general elections, and the nonfatal shooting of a blogger known for reporting on corruption.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4

Freedom of religion is constitutionally guaranteed in Mali, which is a secular state, and discrimination on the basis of religion is prohibited. The population is predominantly Sunni Muslim, and Sufism plays a role in the beliefs of most residents. Armed extremist groups have terrorized northern and central Mali, attacking those who they perceive as failing to follow their interpretation of Islam. They have also prevented traditional religious ceremonies including weddings and baptisms, and have occasionally carried out targeted kidnappings and violence against Christians.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 3 / 4

Academic freedom is upheld in areas with a consolidated government presence, but restricted in areas with a heavy militant presence. However, the security situation has improved in recent years, allowing a freer environment in many places.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4

Private discussion has grown more open and free as violence and political instability have ebbed. However, the government temporarily restricted social media use in 2017, in an apparent attempt to prevent activists from organizing protests against constitutional revisions.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 6 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 2 / 4

The constitution guarantees freedom of assembly, but participants in public gatherings risk violence by state security forces. In December 2017, one person was killed and 15 were injured after the police opened fire on demonstrators in Konsiga who had blocked the city hall for a week in an attempt to force the mayor's resignation.

Between June and August 2017, thousands protested against the government's proposed constitutional changes under the platform "Touche pas à ma Constitution," or "Don't touch my constitution." The movement prompted the president to indefinitely postpone the scheduled constitutional referendum.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 2 / 4

Many nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operate in Mali without state interference. However, large, established NGOs with ties to the political elite are influential, and can overshadow smaller and more innovative groups, particularly in the competition for funding. Furthermore, ongoing lack of security in some parts of the country hampers NGO

efforts to provide aid and services to returning refugees and others affected by instability in those regions.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

The constitution guarantees workers the right to form unions and to strike, with some limitations for essential services workers, and requirements involving compulsory arbitration. The government has broad discretionary power over the registration of unions and recognition of collective bargaining, and the authorities do not effectively enforce laws against antiunion discrimination.

F. RULE OF LAW: 6 / 12

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 2 / 4

The judiciary is beholden to the executive, despite constitutional guarantees of judicial independence. Judges are appointed by the president, while the minister of justice supervises both law enforcement and judicial functions. Additionally, the overall efficiency of the judicial system remains low. Militant attacks against judicial personnel have prompted some judges to vacate their posts. In November 2017, Malian judge Soungalo Koné was kidnapped in central Mali by armed men who asked for the release of detained militants in exchange for his freedom.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 2 / 4

Due process rights are inconsistently upheld, and a 2017 AfroBarometer survey reported that the police and justice system are perceived to be the least trustworthy institutions in the country. Detainees are not always charged within the 48-hour period set by law, and arbitrary arrests are common. Since a deadly 2015 hotel attack in Bamako, a national state of emergency has remained in force, and was extended in October 2017 for one more year. The emergency state gives more authority to security services to search homes without a warrant, detain suspects, and restrict protests.

The trial of Amadou Sanogo, the former army captain who staged a military coup in Mali in 2012, and more than a dozen codefendants began in late 2016 on charges related to the abduction and killing of 21 soldiers. The trial was quickly adjourned until 2017, and has yet to reopen. In November, Sanogo and the other defendants began a hunger strike in prison, denouncing the duration and conditions of their detention. In August, Aliou Mahamar Touré—a leading figure in the Al-Qaeda offshoot known as the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) and the former head of a rebel-controlled Islamic police force in the northern city of Gao—stood trial for aggravated assault and endangering state security. He was sentenced to 10 years in prison, though rights activists said the charges filed against him did not reflect the severity of the crimes he stood accused of, which included amputating the limbs of those accused of stealing and whipping women deemed to be dressed immodestly.

The Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission created in 2014 is responsible for investigating human rights violations committed since 1960, but is restricted by the rise of terrorist activities and intercommunal tensions within Mali's borders. However, Human Rights Watch (HRW) noted that the commission received more funding in 2017, opened regional offices, and took thousands of witness statements regarding potential human rights violations.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 1 / 4

Islamist militant groups not party to Mali's peace agreement continued to carry out acts of violence against civilians in the northern and central regions in 2017. Additionally, in February 2017, a Colombian nun, Gloria Cecilia Narvaez Argoti, was kidnapped from a health center in the southern region of Karangasso, and as of the end of the year was being held by one such group, Support to Islam and Muslims (JNIM). And in June, at least five people were killed in a jihadist attack on a tourist resort popular with foreigners outside of Bamako.

A September report by HRW described significant human rights violations committed by Malian armed forces in the name of the fight against Islamist armed groups, including extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and torture.

Prisons are characterized by overcrowding, insufficient medical care, and a lack of proper food and sanitation. The government made some effort in 2017 to improve conditions by holding staff trainings and building a new prison.

Scores were killed and many more were displaced in 2017 in incidents of intercommunal violence. Ongoing instability has contributed to the spread of organized crime, and accompanying violence and kidnappings.

In March and April 2017, Mali held a weeklong Conference of National Understanding in which some 300 government officials, opposition members, representatives of armed groups, and civil society representatives worked toward a final agreement that would end the country's separatist conflict. However, some groups boycotted most of the conference, and a lack of trust between the participants prevented constructive dialogue. The talks were mandated by the 2015 peace accord.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

Members of a northern caste known as black Tamasheqs face societal discrimination, including slavery-like treatment and hereditary servitude. Authorities sometimes deny them official documents or discriminate against them in housing, schooling, and police protection.

Same-sex sexual acts are legal, but LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people face discrimination, including cases of violence from family members meant as a corrective punishment.

Although equal rights are provided for in the constitution, the law does not provide for the same legal status for women and men, and women are required by law to obey their husbands. Sexual harassment is not prohibited by law and is a common practice in schools and the workplace.

Conditions in northern Mali have left many refugees unable or unwilling to return, although the government did report that approximately 1,600 refugees returned to Mali in 2017. However, continuing insecurity in the region complicated resettlement. According to the UN, there were more than 130,000 Malian refugees outside the country and almost 40,000 people displaced inside the country as of December 2017.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 4 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 1 / 4

Freedom of movement and choice of residence remain affected by insecurity, especially in northern and central Mali. HRW reported that in 2017, over 150,000 children in northern and central Mali did not have access to education because of the lack of security.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 1 / 4

Citizens have the right to own property and conduct business activity, but these rights are not consistently respected and widespread corruption hampers normal business activities. Notably, it is generally necessary to pay bribes in order to operate a business.

Traditional customs sometimes undermine the right of women to own property. The law discriminates against women in matters of marriage, divorce, and inheritance.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 1 / 4

Rape and domestic violence against women are widespread, and most such crimes go unreported. There are no specific laws prohibiting spousal rape or domestic violence. Female genital mutilation or cutting is legal and commonly practiced in the country. LGBT couples cannot adopt children in Mali.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

Although trafficking in persons is a criminal offense, prosecutions are infrequent. Many judicial officials remain unaware of the antitrafficking law, and the police lacked adequate resources to combat trafficking. Traditional forms of slavery and debt bondage persist, particularly in the north, with thousands of people estimated to be living in such conditions.

Although the government has taken steps to eliminate child labor, it is a significant concern, especially in the agricultural and artisanal gold-mining sectors. Armed groups also regularly recruited and used child soldiers, and in 2017, the government reportedly assisted militia groups that included child soldiers.

Malta

Population: 400,000

Capital: Valletta

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 1

Freedom Rating: 1.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Malta is a parliamentary democracy with regular, competitive elections and periodic rotations of power. Civil liberties are widely respected. However, the political system makes it difficult for new or smaller groups to challenge the dominance of the two main parties, and recent revelations have underscored the threat of official corruption.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- After the opposition called on Prime Minister Joseph Muscat to resign amid corruption allegations involving his wife and associates, he called snap elections for June. His Labour Party won with 55 percent of the vote, and he secured another term in office.
 - In July, the parliament approved legislation that legalized same-sex marriage, fulfilling one of Muscat's campaign promises.
-

- Journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia, who had reported aggressively on political corruption, was killed in October by a bomb planted in her car. Three men with alleged links to organized crime were charged with carrying out the bombing in December, though it remained unclear who had ordered the assassination.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 36 / 40 (-3)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The president, who serves as a largely ceremonial head of state, is elected by the parliament for a single five-year term. The president nominates the prime minister, who is usually the leader of the majority party or coalition in the parliament.

In 2014, the legislature elected former Labour Party member Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca to the presidency, replacing George Abela. Joseph Muscat has served as prime minister since 2013, when he led the Labour Party to victory in parliamentary elections.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

Members of Malta's unicameral legislature, the House of Representatives, are elected for five-year terms through a single-transferable-vote system in multimember districts. Snap elections were held in June 2017, about nine months ahead of schedule. The ruling Labour Party took about 55 percent of the vote and 37 seats, leaving the opposition Nationalist Party and its allies with 30 seats.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

The constitution and the electoral law provide for democratic elections, and balloting is generally free and fair in practice. Members of the Electoral Commission are appointed by the president on the basis of consultation between the government and the opposition, meaning both major parties have representatives on the panel. The electoral system has been criticized in the past for electoral boundaries that favor the incumbent parties and for a voting system that makes it difficult for smaller parties to win representation. To secure a seat, a party must take about 16–17 percent of the valid votes in one of the 13 electoral districts.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 14 / 16 (-2)

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 3 / 4 (-1)

There are no significant restrictions on the formation of political parties, though the ruling party benefits from progovernment bias in the state media, and smaller parties have difficulty competing against the two established parties given the voting system and their superior access to private donations. The newly formed Democratic Party won two seats in the 2017 elections only by forging an alliance with the Nationalists and running candidates on their lists.

The Financing of Political Parties Act was adopted in 2015 to improve the transparency of party fundraising, but doubts persisted in 2017 as to whether the law's provisions were either adequate or properly observed by the main parties. Critics of the law have noted that compliance is overseen by the Electoral Commission, whose members are effectively appointed by the two parties, and that the commission's investigative powers remain

unclear. While the law caps individual donations, it imposes no overall cap on electoral spending, and parties are not obliged to identify donors who contribute less than €7,000 (\$8,000). The Labour Party did not amend its own statute to comply with the law, which took effect in January 2016, until April 2017. For its part, the Nationalist Party was accused in early 2017 of using false invoices to conceal unreported donations; an investigation was ongoing at year's end.

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 due to flaws in the content and implementation of the law on political party financing.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

The Labour Party and its rival, the Nationalist Party, have regularly alternated in power since independence from Britain in 1964, establishing a strong pattern of peaceful democratic transfers after elections. The most recent change occurred in 2013.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 3 / 4 (-1)

Voters are generally free from undue interference with their political choices, and no military, foreign, or religious entities exert undemocratic influence over the vote.

However, in recent years, observers including slain journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia have highlighted the role that powerful economic interests play in financing political parties and thereby influencing their positions. In the 2013 election campaign, for example, the head of Malta's construction and land-development lobby reportedly operated from inside the Labour Party headquarters and raised large donations. The Labour government subsequently favored the industry in its policies, and the two sides maintained a close relationship. According to the party's 2017 disclosures on the previous year's donations, several construction companies made seven-figure contributions; the Nationalist Party reported no similar donations from private companies.

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 due to the influence of powerful economic interest groups in national politics.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 4 / 4

Women and minority groups enjoy full political rights and electoral opportunities, though conservative societal norms have limited women's participation to some extent. Women hold 10 parliament seats, or about 15 percent of the total, in addition to the presidency.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 10 / 12 (-1)

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4

Elected officials are largely free to make and implement laws and policies without improper obstacles from unelected groups. The parliamentary system ensures that the government is supported by a majority in the legislature, but the parliamentary opposition serves as a check on executive power. In 2016, the opposition presented a no-confidence motion after members of the government were linked to the so-called Panama Papers, a

trove of documents leaked from a Panama-based law firm that exposed its efforts to hide the assets of prominent individuals from around the world. The motion was defeated after a lengthy debate.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4

The Panama Papers have led to a series of corruption allegations against Maltese officials since 2016, and related investigations were ongoing throughout 2017. The most important cases centered on the revelation that a government minister and the prime minister's chief of staff had set up trusts in New Zealand and secret accounts in Panama shortly after taking office in 2013. Caruana Galizia later alleged that the beneficial owner of a third Panama company was the prime minister's wife. Another inquiry involves claims of kickbacks to Muscat's chief of staff from a program that issues Maltese passports to foreign investors. A key whistle-blower in these cases, former bank employee and Russian national Maria Efimova, fled the country in 2017, saying she feared for her life after Caruana Galizia's murder.

Critics from the opposition and civil society warned of possible political influence over the corruption investigations. In June, two senior officials at the Financial Intelligence Analysis Unit (FIAU) were dismissed after a government minister criticized leaks from the agency. Following Caruana Galizia's murder, civil society activists demanded the replacement of the attorney general and the police commissioner—who were seen as loyal to the prime minister—with nominees backed by a two-thirds majority in the parliament.

Meanwhile, the Permanent Commission against Corruption was crippled by vacancies for much of the year. A chairperson was in place, but the two other commission posts remained unfilled at year's end after becoming vacant in April and May, with the government stating that it was awaiting a nomination from the opposition.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 3 / 4 (-1)

Malta has a freedom of information law and asset disclosure rules for public officials. However, the Swiss Leaks scandal in 2015 revealed that a number of politicians had apparently hidden assets in Swiss bank accounts, and investigations by tax authorities were still under way as of 2017. In March 2017, the parliament passed legislation calling for the appointment of a commissioner for standards in public life to monitor ethical standards among public officials, including discrepancies between lawmakers' tax returns and asset declarations. The commissioner, who would be approved with a two-thirds parliamentary majority, had yet to be appointed at year's end.

The government has been criticized in recent years for withholding important details on a series of large public contracts. For example, a 30-year contract for the management of three hospitals was handed in 2015 to Vitals Global Healthcare, a company with no previous record in the industry, for an annual payment of about €70 million (\$80 million). A heavily redacted copy of the contract was submitted to the parliament under pressure from the opposition in 2016, but the full agreement was only leaked to a newspaper in 2017. The firm was owned by a shell company whose true beneficiaries had not been publicly identified. In December, Vitals agreed to sell the concession to a U.S.-based hospital operator.

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 due to a lack of transparency in the allocation and terms of public contracts.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 56 / 60 (-1)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 15 / 16 (-1)

D1. Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4 (-1)

The media are generally free and diverse. Residents have access to international news services as well as domestic outlets that provide a range of political perspectives, though the opposition often complains that state-owned media favor the government.

In February 2017, the government proposed a new media bill that would decriminalize defamation and end the practice of freezing a journalist's assets while civil cases are proceeding. Although the initial bill was later revised to eliminate several problematic provisions, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe recommended additional changes to strengthen defendants' ability to use the truth and honest-opinion defenses regarding matters of public interest. The legislation had yet to pass through the parliament at year's end.

Meanwhile, journalists and others continued to face libel suits during 2017. Caruana Galizia alone was fighting multiple cases, and was subjected to an asset freeze in February as part of a lawsuit in which the economy minister was seeking €47,000 (\$54,000) in damages for allegations that he had visited a brothel while in Germany for a conference.

Caruana Galizia's murder in an October car bombing added a new level of physical danger to the work of journalists in Malta, particularly those investigating political corruption. Three suspects with long criminal histories were charged in December with carrying out the assassination, but it was believed to be a contract killing, and the ultimate organizer of the crime had yet to be identified.

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 due to the murder of investigative journalist and blogger Daphne Caruana Galizia.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

The constitution establishes Roman Catholicism as the state religion, but religious minorities are generally able to worship freely. A 2016 legal reform decriminalized the vilification of religion, or blasphemy, and instead expanded a provision banning incitement of hatred to include religious hatred.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Scholarship and the education system are free from political control and indoctrination. In 2017, the government proposed a reform that would subject the University of Malta to a governing board appointed by the prime minister, though it was unclear at year's end whether the plan would proceed.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

There are no significant constraints on the expression of personal views among the general public, notwithstanding laws banning defamation and incitement of hatred on various grounds.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 12 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4

The constitution provides for freedom of assembly, and the government generally respects this right in practice.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Freedom of association is constitutionally protected. Nongovernmental organizations, including those that investigate human rights issues, operate without state interference.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

The law recognizes the rights to form and join trade unions, engage in collective bargaining, and strike. The government enforces labor protections, and antiunion discrimination by employers is relatively uncommon.

F. RULE OF LAW: 15 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 4 / 4

The judiciary is generally considered independent. The president appoints senior judges on the advice of the prime minister. A 2016 constitutional reform created a Judicial Appointments Committee to make recommendations to the prime minister, except in the case of the chief justice, who chairs the committee. If the prime minister rejects the committee's recommendations, he is obliged to explain his reasons in writing and before the parliament. In December 2017, the justice minister said the government would seek consensus with the opposition on the appointment of a new chief justice when the incumbent retired in 2018.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 4 / 4

Police and prosecutors typically observe due process guarantees, including access to defense counsel and protections against arbitrary arrest.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 4 / 4

The authorities do not engage in torture or other ill-treatment of detainees. Rates of violent crime are comparatively low, though various forms of organized crime remain a problem, and a series of car bombings in recent years preceded the 2017 murder of Caruana Galizia.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

Discrimination based on gender, race, sexual orientation, and other such categories is prohibited by law, and these rules are generally enforced, though some forms of societal discrimination—a gender pay gap, for example—persist in practice.

Malta largely complies with international and EU rules on refugees and asylum seekers; a legal amendment adopted in April 2017 gave asylum seekers the right to appeal decisions on their claims. However, the country has been criticized for resisting acceptance of migrants rescued at sea, and advocates for migrants and refugees sometimes report police harassment and hostility from far-right groups.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 14 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4

Residents are largely free to move within the country and travel abroad, and to change their place of employment or education without undue interference.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 4 / 4

There are no significant restrictions on property rights, and the legal framework is generally supportive of private business activity.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

Divorce was legalized in 2011, and subsequent laws have allowed transgender people to express their gender identity on government documents, legalized same-sex civil unions, and permitted adoption by same-sex couples. In July 2017, the parliament approved legislation that legalized same-sex marriage.

Malta is the only EU country where abortion is strictly prohibited in all cases, even when the woman's life is in danger. Domestic violence remains a problem despite government efforts to combat it.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

Residents generally enjoy fair access to economic opportunity and protections from labor exploitation, though migrant workers in particular are vulnerable to labor and sex trafficking or conditions that amount to forced labor.

Marshall Islands

Population: 60,000

Capital: Majuro

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 1

Freedom Rating: 1.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: The Republic of the Marshall Islands is a stable democracy with regular, competitive elections, an independent judiciary, and a free press. Civil liberties are generally respected. Persistent problems include corruption, gender discrimination, and domestic violence.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In June, the Finance Ministry completed its annual audit of government finances on time for first time since 2011.
- Mattlan Zackhras, minister in assistance to the president and a parliament member since 2004, died of heart failure at age 47 in August. David Paul was named to replace him in the cabinet in October.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 37 / 40**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4**

The president, who is elected by the unicameral legislature from among its members for four-year terms, nominates fellow lawmakers to serve as cabinet ministers, and they are formally appointed by the parliament speaker.

In January 2016, following legislative elections in November 2015, Casten Nemra was elected president by a narrow margin with support from the governing Aelon Kein Ad (AKA) party. However, he lost a confidence vote only two weeks later after shifts in party affiliation gave the opposition Kien Eo Am (KEA) party a majority. Hilda Heine was chosen to replace Nemra.

Mattlan Zackhras, the minister in assistance to the president, died suddenly of heart failure in August 2017. David Paul was named to replace him in October.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The parliament, known as the Nitijela, consists of 33 members, with 19 directly elected in single-member districts and five in multimember districts with between two and five seats. Elections are officially nonpartisan, and lawmakers are free to form alliances and change party affiliations after taking office.

The 2015 elections featured significant turnover, with 14 of the 33 seats changing hands. The results were a blow to the government of incumbent president Chris Loeak, who saw about half of his cabinet members voted out of office. There were no reports of violence or complaints of fraud or irregularities. Voter turnout was lower than usual at 46 percent, though some observers suggested that the list of registered voters was inflated with deceased citizens, making the turnout figure artificially low.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

The constitutional and legal framework provides for democratic elections, and it is implemented impartially.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 15 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 3 / 4**

Although political parties compete freely, they tend to function as loose coalitions among lawmakers, and party switching is common. Parliamentary candidates formally run without party affiliations.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

The country has an established record of democratic transfers of power between rival party groups. Some governments have been replaced as a result of elections, while others have been toppled by no-confidence votes like that which brought Heine to power in 2016.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

There are no significant undue constraints on the political choices of voters or candidates. Traditional chiefs play an influential but gradually waning role in politics.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 4 / 4

Naturalized citizens were allowed to run as candidates in the 2015 elections after a court ruling found that a 1980 law requiring parliamentary candidates to have at least one Marshallese parent and traditional land rights was unconstitutional.

Women have full political rights, though traditional gender roles have limited their participation to some extent, and just three women won seats in the 2015 elections. Heine is the country's first woman president.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 10 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4

There are no undue restrictions on the elected government's ability to form and implement laws and policies. A body of traditional leaders, the Council of Iroij, has an advisory role under the constitution. Its 12 members can offer joint opinions and request reconsideration of any bill affecting customary law, traditional practices, land tenure, and related matters.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands has close relations with the United States under a 1986 Compact of Free Association, which allows the U.S. military to operate in the country in exchange for defense guarantees and development assistance. A component of the compact in force through 2023 calls for the United States to provide about \$70 million in annual aid, including contributions to a trust fund for the country.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4

Corruption has been a chronic problem, though auditing bodies and the independent courts are somewhat effective in detecting abuses and holding officials accountable. A former member of parliament was reportedly convicted in March 2017 for misusing aid funds from Taiwan.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 3 / 4

There is not a strong legal mechanism for obtaining access to government information, but documents can often be obtained through the courts. Auditors have repeatedly found invalid or poorly documented spending practices at government ministries, agencies, and state-owned enterprises. Under new leadership, the Finance Ministry in June 2017 completed its annual audit of government finances on time for first time since 2011.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 55 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 16 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 4 / 4

The government generally respects the freedoms of speech and the press. A privately owned newspaper, the *Marshall Islands Journal*, publishes articles in English and Marshallese. Broadcast outlets include both government- and church-owned radio stations, and cable television offers a variety of international news and entertainment programs. Internet

access is expanding, reaching as much as a third of the population by 2017, but it remains limited due to poor infrastructure and high costs.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Religious freedoms are respected in practice. Religious groups are not required to register with the government, but those that register as nonprofits are eligible for tax exemptions.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

There are no significant restrictions on academic freedom.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

Citizens are generally free to discuss their political opinions, and there are no reports of improper government surveillance.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 11 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4

The government upholds constitutional guarantees of freedom of assembly. Protests in recent years have addressed issues including climate change, women's rights, and the legacy of U.S. nuclear weapons tests in the country.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Civil society groups, many of which are sponsored by or affiliated with church organizations and provide social services, are able to operate freely.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

Constitutional and legal provisions that protect freedom of association also apply to trade unions. However, there are no laws regulating the right to strike, and few employers are large enough to support union activity among their workers.

F. RULE OF LAW: 15 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 4 / 4

The constitution provides for an independent judiciary, and the judiciary generally operates without political interference. Judges are appointed by the cabinet on the recommendation of the Judicial Service Commission, and the legislature confirms the appointments. High Court and Supreme Court judges can only be removed by a two-thirds vote in the Nitijela, for clear failure or inability to perform their duties or for serious crimes or abuses.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 4 / 4

The authorities generally observe legal safeguards against arbitrary arrest and detention. The state provides lawyers for indigent defendants, and due process standards for trials are upheld.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 4 / 4

Violent street crime and other such threats to physical security are relatively rare, though conditions in the country's few prison and jail facilities are sometimes overcrowded or otherwise below international standards.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

Women generally enjoy equal treatment under the law, but there is no explicit ban on discrimination in employment, and women tend face disadvantages in the workplace in practice. While same-sex sexual activity was decriminalized in 2005, discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity is not prohibited by law.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 13 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4

Freedom of movement is generally respected. Marshallese citizens have the right to live and work in the United States and to travel there without a visa.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 3 / 4

Individuals have the rights to own property and establish private businesses, and these rights are largely observed in practice.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

Personal social freedoms are mostly upheld. However, the minimum age for marriage is 16 for women and 18 for men; about a quarter of women aged 20–24 were married by age 18. While domestic violence remains widespread, reporting of the problem has apparently increased in recent years due to improved processes for obtaining orders of protection.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

The government enforces a minimum wage law, though it does not apply to the informal sector. Some local and East Asian women are subjected to forced prostitution in a trade that depends on visiting freight or fishing vessels.

Mauritania

Population: 4,200,000

Capital: Nouakchott

Political Rights Rating: 6

Civil Liberties Rating: 5

Freedom Rating: 5.5

Freedom Status: Not Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: The current leadership in Mauritania came to power in 2008 through a military coup. It has since confirmed its position in flawed elections that were boycotted by the main opposition parties. The government has adopted laws to address the problem of

institutionalized slavery and discrimination, but it continues to arrest antislavery activists. Blasphemy and apostasy are punishable under the death penalty.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Constitutional reforms adopted through a referendum held in August dissolved the Senate, the upper chamber in the bicameral legislature. The main opposition coalition boycotted the referendum, claiming that the president sought the dissolution of the body to pave the way for a constitutional amendment that would allow him to seek a third term.
- In August, Senator Mohamed Ould Ghadda, who opposed dissolving the Senate, was arrested on vaguely defined corruption charges. At the end of the year, he was still held in detention.
- In November, an appeals court reduced the sentence for a blogger who had been sentenced to death for apostasy in 2014 to two years. Also in November, a draft law was presented to the National Assembly that would no longer make it possible for those found guilty of apostasy to repent and thus avoid the death penalty.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 9 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 3 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4

The president is directly elected to as many as two consecutive five-year terms by popular vote. Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, who first came to power through a military coup in 2008, won a second term in 2014 representing the Union for the Republic (UPR), taking 82 percent of the vote. Most opposition parties, including the main opposition coalition, the National Front for the Defense of Democracy (FNDU), boycotted the election, claiming that the process was flawed and biased. The antislavery activist Biram Dah Abeid ran as an independent and captured 9 percent of the vote. His allegations of electoral misconduct and fraud were dismissed by the authorities.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4

Until 2017, the Mauritanian legislature was bicameral, with a National Assembly and a Senate. Constitutional reforms adopted through the passage of an August referendum dissolved the Senate. The National Assembly was elected in 2013 in a poll that most major opposition parties boycotted, claiming the results were predetermined and the process nontransparent.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 1 / 4

The opposition has denounced the lack of independence of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). Opposition leaders have also criticized the electoral party lists as discriminatory, arguing that the electoral census deliberately excluded many Haratin and Afro-Mauritians. The most recent legislative and presidential elections were conducted before the completion of the national census. As a result, Mauritians without a newly issued identity card were unable to vote.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 2 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 1 / 4

Though political parties are free to operate, many obstructions prevent parties from successfully mobilizing their bases. Authorities often break up or otherwise prevent demonstrations organized by political parties. In November 2017, police violently dispersed protests organized by several political parties against the commutation of a blogger's death sentence for apostasy. Also in November, several opposition parties, including the National Rally for Reform and Development, an Islamist party, were denied a permit for a planned protest against the government's policies.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 1 / 4

The opposition does not have a realistic opportunity to gain power through elections. Most opposition parties boycotted both the 2013 parliamentary elections and the 2014 presidential election, citing a system dominated by the ruling UPR, which won both elections handily.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 0 / 4

The political choices of Mauritians are greatly influenced by the military, which dominates the political system. Since 1978, Mauritania has either been under military rule or led by a military leader, with the exception of 18 months of civilian government between 2007 and 2008.

Traditional religious leaders exert influence on voters, often backing the ruling UPR and urging voters to support its initiatives.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 0 / 4

The Bidhan ethnic group dominates the Mauritanian government, while Afro-Mauritians and the Haratin ethnic group are underrepresented in elected positions and in high-level government roles. Discrimination hinders the ability of these groups to gain power. Thousands of Afro-Mauritians who were forced out of their villages by the military in 1989 have been allowed to return, but many of them face difficulties when trying to enroll in the census and register to vote. Discrimination against Afro-Mauritians persists in the electoral process, since many lack the government identity cards necessary to vote.

Women participate in politics at lower levels than men, largely due to traditional cultural norms. 31 out of 147 seats in the National Assembly are held by women, and nine out of 29 ministers are women.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 4 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 1 / 4

The executive dominates the legislative branch in Mauritania. The president has the power to dissolve the National Assembly, but the legislature has no impeachment power over the president. The 2017 referendum that dissolved the Senate was viewed by many observers as an attempt by President Aziz to consolidate his dominance over the legislative

branch, which could make it easier to pass a constitutional amendment that would allow him to run for a third term. The opposition called for a boycott of the vote.

The military remains a powerful force in the Mauritanian government, and still has a great deal of influence on policymaking.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

Although the government has adopted numerous anticorruption laws and in 2005 signed the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption, corruption remains widespread and the laws are not effectively enforced. A report published in July 2017 by Sherpa, a nongovernmental organization (NGO), documents multiple cases of corruption at the highest levels of the Aziz administration that have gone unpunished. Among other cases, the report alleges that the president's son used his influence to ensure that the French subsidiary of a Finnish company, Wärtsilä, received a contract to construct a power plant in exchange for a payment of over \$11 million.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 1 / 4

The government largely lacks transparency, particularly in granting mining and fishing licenses, land distribution, government contracts, and tax payments. The construction of a new airport in Nouakchott that opened in 2016 drew criticism—a company with no experience in airport construction won a contract to build the facility through an opaque procurement process.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 21 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 9 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4

Mauritania has a vibrant media landscape, with several privately owned newspapers, television stations, and radio stations in operation. However, journalists who cover sensitive topics or scrutinize the political elite can face harassment and arrest. In October 2017, the government shut down five television stations for failing to pay their airing bills. Journalists claimed that the move was in retaliation for critical coverage of the August referendum to dissolve the Senate. Several journalists covering protests against the referendum were also arrested in August and September.

In 2014, a court in Nouadhibou sentenced Mohamed Cheikh Ould Mohamed M'Kheir, an independent blogger, to death for apostasy in an expedited judicial process. Ould M'Kheir had criticized the unequal social order in Mauritania and the prophet Muhammad. In November 2017, an appeals court in Nouadhibou reduced Ould M'Kheir's death sentence to two years in prison, which he had already served. Ould M'Kheir was still in custody at the end of the year.

Criminal defamation laws remain on the books, and are sometimes enforced against journalists. Most journalists practice a degree of self-censorship when covering potentially contentious issues such as the military, corruption, and slavery.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 2 / 4

Mauritania is an Islamic republic. Non-Muslims cannot proselytize or become citizens, and those who convert from Islam to another religion lose their citizenship. In practice, however, non-Muslim communities have not been targeted for persecution.

Apostasy is a crime punishable by death. To date, nobody has been executed for the crime. However, a draft law was presented to the National Assembly in November 2017 that would mandate the death penalty for all apostasy convictions.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 3 / 4

Academic freedom is largely respected. However, the increasing use of Arabic as the lingua franca at universities has hindered Afro-Mauritanian students' access to education. Student activists sometimes face pressure from university administrators, including threats of expulsion and intimidation.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 2 / 4

At times, individuals face reprisals for expressing views critical of the government on social media, including termination of employment from government agencies. In October 2017, Abdellahi Ould Mohamed Ould El Haimer was fired from his job at the National Rural Water Agency after writing a Facebook post critical of the prime minister. The director of the agency claimed he was fired for "gross misconduct."

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 4 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 1 / 4

While the constitution guarantees freedom of assembly, organizers are required to obtain consent from the government for large gatherings, which is often denied. In 2017, protests and demonstrations were often violently broken up by authorities. In April, police used tear gas to suppress a peaceful demonstration in Nouakchott convened to address youth unemployment; at least 26 protesters were arrested.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 1 / 4

NGOs, particularly antislavery organizations, frequently encounter intimidation, violence, and repression in carrying out their activities. At the end of 2017, Abdallahi Maatalla Seck and Moussa Biram, leaders of the Initiative for the Resurgence of the Abolitionist Movement in Mauritania (IRA Mauritania), an antislavery organization, remained in prison after their conviction for membership in an unauthorized association, among other charges. IRA Mauritania has repeatedly been denied registration by the government.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

Workers have the legal right to unionize, but unions require approval from the public prosecutor to operate and often confront hostility from employers. Approximately 25 percent of Mauritians are employed in the formal economy, but around 90 percent of workers in the industrial and commercial sectors are unionized. The right to collective bargaining is not always respected, and the government sometimes pressures union members to withdraw their membership. The right to strike is limited by notice requirements and other onerous regulations.

F. RULE OF LAW: 4 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4

Mauritania's judiciary lacks independence. The president has the power to unilaterally appoint many key judges, including three of the six judges on the Constitutional Court and

the chair of the Supreme Court. The courts are subject to political pressure from the executive branch. Instances of judges facing retaliatory measures for issuing rulings against the government have been reported.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

Due process rights are often not respected in practice. Suspects are frequently arrested without being informed of the charges against them. Lengthy pretrial detentions are common.

Arbitrary arrests of opposition politicians, journalists, and human rights activists occur with some frequency. In August 2017, Mohamed Ould Ghadda, a senator who opposed the 2017 referendum to abolish the Senate, was arrested on vague corruption charges. At the end of 2017, he was still held in detention.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 1 / 4

Torture and abuse at Mauritania's prisons and detention centers remained a problem in 2017, and perpetrators are rarely held accountable. Police frequently beat suspects following arrest.

Prisons are plagued by violence, are overcrowded, and lack basic sanitation. Food shortages are also common in prisons. Children are sometimes held with the adult prison population.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

Same-sex sexual activity is illegal in Mauritania and punishable by death for men. LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) individuals generally hide their sexual orientation or gender identity due to severe discrimination.

Sharia law as it is applied in Mauritania discriminates against women. The testimony of two women is equal to that of one man. Female victims of crime are entitled to only half the financial compensation that male victims receive.

There were reports of refugees being expelled and ultimately abandoned just across the border in Senegal, violating the principal of *nonrefoulement*, which obligates countries to not return refugees to a country where they will face further persecution.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 4 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 1 / 4

While the Bidhan population is relatively free to make personal decisions about residence, employment, and education, the choices of Afro-Mauritanians and the Haratin are often constrained by racial and caste-based discrimination. People lacking government identity cards are not allowed to travel in some regions, which disproportionately affects Afro-Mauritanians.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

Though the law guarantees property rights, these rights are not always enforced in practice, as it can be difficult to get property disputes fairly adjudicated in court. Complex laws and an opaque bureaucracy present challenges to starting a business.

Many Afro-Mauritanians who left their homes in the Senegal River Valley in the wake of the 1989 conflict have returned, but have been unable to regain ownership of their land. Local authorities reportedly allow the Bidhan to appropriate land used by the Haratin and Afro-Mauritanians.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 1 / 4

According to UNICEF's 2016 *The State of the World's Children* report, 37 percent of girls are married before the age of 18. In January 2017, the government sent parliament a bill that would ban marriage for girls under 18. The bill failed in the National Assembly, largely due to pressure from religious leaders. Female genital mutilation is illegal, but the law is rarely enforced and the practice is still common. Domestic violence and rape remained problems in 2017, and victims rarely sought legal redress—convictions for these crimes were rare.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 0 / 4

Despite amendments to the antislavery law passed in 2015 meant to address the problem more robustly, slavery and slavery-like practices continued in 2017, with many former slaves still reliant on their former owners due to racial discrimination, poverty, and other socioeconomic factors. Some rights groups estimate that up to 20 percent of the population is enslaved or endures slavery-like practices. The government rarely prosecutes perpetrators and cracks down on NGOs that push for greater enforcement of the law.

Trafficking in persons remains a problem in Mauritania in 2017. The government failed to prosecute a recruitment agency that allegedly recruited more than 200 women under false pretenses into forced prostitution and domestic slavery in Saudi Arabia in 2016.

Mauritius

Population: 1,300,000

Capital: Port Louis

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 2

Freedom Rating: 1.5

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Mauritius is home to an open, multiparty system that has allowed for the regular handover of power between parties through free and fair elections. However, the political leadership remains dominated by a few families, corruption is a problem, and journalists occasionally face legal pressure.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In January, Prime Minister Anerood Jugnauth resigned and named his son, Pravind Jugnauth, as the new prime minister. The move prompted opposition protests.
 - In September, the justice minister was forced to resign after an investigation by journalists implicated him in a money laundering scheme.
-

- The journalists responsible for the story implicating the justice minister in corrupt activities were arrested and detained for questioning, but ultimately released without charge.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 37 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The president, whose role is mostly ceremonial, is elected by the unicameral National Assembly to a five-year term. Executive power resides with the prime minister, who is appointed by the president from the party or coalition with the most seats in the legislature. After the 2014 general elections, Anerood Jugnauth, leader of the Militant Socialist Movement (MSM), was appointed to the post for his sixth nonconsecutive term since 1982. He resigned in January 2017 and named his son, Pravind Jugnauth as his replacement. The opposition decried the power handover as immoral, though it was approved by the president and considered legal under the constitution. The developments reflect the dynastic character of Mauritian politics.

Ameenah Gurib-Fakim was elected the country's president in 2015, becoming the first woman to hold the post.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

Of the National Assembly's 70 members, 62 are directly elected and up to 8 "best losers" are appointed from among unsuccessful candidates who gained the largest number of votes. The members of the National Assembly serve five-year terms.

The 2014 elections took place peacefully, and stakeholders accepted the results. Mauritius's two main political parties—former prime minister Navinchandra Ramgoolam's ruling Mauritian Labour Party (PTR) and former prime minister Paul Bérenger's Mauritian Militant Movement (MMM)—unexpectedly lost the elections to the Alliance Lepep coalition, made up of the MSM, the Mauritian Social Democratic Party (PMSD), and the Liberation Movement (ML). The 2014 election results were widely interpreted as a reaction to Ramgoolam's proposed constitutional reform to increase the power of the president. The Alliance Lepep won 47 of the 62 elected seats, while PTR-MMM alliance gained 13 of the elected seats. In 2016, the PMSD left the Alliance Lepep and joined the opposition.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

The Electoral Supervisory Commission has impartially supervised the electoral process. There have been 10 general elections in Mauritius since the country became independent in 1968.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 15 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4

Political parties are generally free to form and operate. Forty-five parties competed in the 2014 elections.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

Since independence, political power has peacefully rotated among the three largest parties—the PTR, the MSM, and the MMM.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

Voters and candidates are generally able to express their political choices without pressure from actors not democratically accountable.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

The Hindu majority is viewed as maintaining most positions of political influence. Women hold a handful of cabinet seats and other high-level political positions, but are generally underrepresented in politics. Local elections require that women comprise one third of political parties' candidates in each district.

At least two small LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) groups are active in Mauritius, and seek to raise visibility of LGBT issues and counter homophobia.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 10 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4

Elected representatives are duly seated, and the government has generally been able to make policy without interference or major political disruptions. However, politics in Mauritius are dominated by a few families, with coordination among the head of the government, members of the National Assembly, and other relevant individuals. Only five different individuals have held the post of prime minister since independence in 1968.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4

The country's anticorruption framework is robust, but at times inconsistently upheld. In September 2017, the justice resigned in the wake of money laundering allegations levied against him.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 3 / 4

The government openly debates the country's budget in the National Assembly and publishes it and other legislation online and in the press. In May 2017, the Minister of Technology, Communication, and Innovation announced that a National Open Data Portal was being developed to provide Mauritians with data in numerous categories. In recent years, the authorities have worked to implement other transparency initiatives, though the country still lacks a freedom of information act.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 52 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 15 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4

The constitution guarantees freedom of expression. Several private daily and weekly publications freely report on the ruling and opposition parties, but the state-owned Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation's radio and television services generally reflect government viewpoints. A small number of private radio stations compete with the state-run media.

Journalists occasionally face legal pressure. In 2017, three journalists were arrested in apparent connection with reporting that had implicated Justice Minister Ravi Yerrigadoo in a money laundering scheme, and ultimately forced his resignation. The journalists were detained for several hours before being released; the incident was described in the media as an attempt to intimidate them.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Religious freedom is generally upheld. The government grants subsidies to Hindu, Roman Catholic, Muslim, Anglican, Presbyterian, and Seventh-day Adventist communities, but not to smaller groups, though all religious groups may apply for tax-exempt status. Tensions between Muslim and Hindu communities continue to be reported. Several Hindu sites were vandalized during the year.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is generally upheld.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

Private discussion is unrestricted.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 12 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4

Freedom of assembly is generally upheld. A number of protests took place in 2017, including one in January 2017 against Anerood Jugnauth's move to install his son, Pravind Jugnauth, as the prime minister.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Civil society groups operate freely. However, many are reliant upon government funding that could compromise their independence.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

Unions regularly meet with government leaders, protest, and advocate for improved compensation and workers' rights. There are more than 300 unions in Mauritius.

F. RULE OF LAW: 13 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 3 / 4

The generally independent judiciary, headed by the Supreme Court, administers a legal system that combines French and British traditions. The judicial system is considered transparent and nondiscriminatory. The judiciary's independence is sometimes questioned, however, in cases involving politicians. Mauritius has maintained the right of appeal to the Privy Council in London.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 4 / 4

Constitutional guarantees of due process are generally upheld. However, Mauritian criminal law allows for police to charge suspects provisionally, and then hold suspects indefinitely for months until a formal charge is issued. Due to court backlogs, many of those

being held in prison are in pretrial detention, and some detainees reportedly must wait years before facing trial.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 3 / 4

Mauritius is free from war and insurgencies. Allegations of abuses by police continue. A measure establishing an Independent Police Complaints Commission was passed in 2016, but the body, which was not yet in operation in 2017, is expected to have limited power to investigate police misconduct.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), set up by the 2008 Equal Opportunities Act, prohibits discrimination, promotes equality of opportunity in the public and private sectors, and investigates possible cases of discrimination. Though the law and the EOC do not allow for discrimination in the workforce, some citizens view economic leadership to be closed to ethnic minorities. Women generally earn less money than men for equal work. Sodomy is a crime, but is rarely invoked as a means of punishing same-sex sexual activity.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 12 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4

Citizens are generally allowed to move freely within Mauritius but there are some restrictions on travel in the Chagos Islands, which are disputed between Mauritius and Great Britain. Mauritians are free to change their place of residence, employment, and education.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 3 / 4

Mauritius is considered among the most business-friendly countries in Africa. However, the Non-Citizen Property Restriction Act limits most noncitizens from owning or acquiring property. Corruption can hamper business activity.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

The government generally does not limit social freedoms, though same-sex unions are not recognized. Rape is against the law, but spousal rape is not specifically criminalized. Although domestic violence is against the law, it remains a significant concern.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Women and children are vulnerable to sex trafficking, and while the government has made some efforts to prosecute traffickers and provide services to victims, these efforts are generally inadequate. The position of migrant workers in the manufacturing and construction can be precarious, and there have been reports of employers confiscating their passports.

Mexico

Population: 128,600,000

Capital: Mexico City

Political Rights Rating: 3

Civil Liberties Rating: 3

Freedom Rating: 3.0

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Mexico has been an electoral democracy since 2000, and alternation in power between the leading parties is routine at both the federal and state levels. However, the country suffers from severe rule-of-law deficits that limit full citizen enjoyment of political rights and civil liberties. Violence perpetrated by organized criminals, corruption among government officials, human rights abuses by both state and nonstate actors, and rampant impunity are among the most visible of Mexico's many governance challenges.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Corruption scandals ensnared a number of high-ranking officials, primarily in the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), and the creation of an anticorruption system stalled.
- Revelations emerged in June that a number of civil society activists and journalists had been the victims of attempts to spy on their electronic communications, presumably by government agencies.
- Mexico recorded its highest murder rate—and highest number of murders—since the government started keeping records in 1997.
- According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), six journalists were killed in direct connection with their work during the year. Another organization, Article 19, counted 12 journalists killed in possible connection with their work, making 2017 one of the deadliest years for the media profession.

Executive Summary

The administration of President Enrique Peña Nieto, head of the PRI, began its term in December 2012 with a promising set of reforms accompanied by slowing homicide rates, generating optimism about Mexico's economic and social direction. However, starting in 2014 the government's narrative of progress has been undermined by corruption scandals and rights abuses. The problems continued in 2017, with an increase in homicide rates, widespread attacks on journalists, and growing doubts about the government's will to tackle corruption scandals implicating high-level PRI officials.

Corruption, and the administration's tepid response to it, was a major focus of citizen discontent and government turmoil throughout 2017. Multiple former PRI governors, some of whom fled the country, faced corruption allegations during the year, and several extradition and prosecution processes were initiated. However, legislators have been slow to implement a new National Anticorruption System (SNA) that took effect in July. As of year's end, one of the most important positions, the anticorruption prosecutor, remained unfilled. In a related initiative, an autonomous attorney general's office is scheduled to begin work in 2018. Attorney General Raúl Cervantes—a government ally—resigned in October amid allegations from the opposition and civil society groups that he was not impartial; the move

could allow for a more autonomous candidate to fill the position. Later that month, electoral crimes prosecutor Santiago Nieto was dismissed following his pronouncement that Emilio Lozoya, the former head of national oil company PEMEX and a top Peña Nieto campaign adviser, had pressured him to deny culpability in a growing corruption and campaign finance scandal involving payments to public officials by Brazilian construction firm Odebrecht.

In addition to slow progress on corruption, revelations emerged in June that the government had used sophisticated spyware to electronically surveil perceived opponents. Anticorruption activists, journalists, and human rights workers critical of the government—including lawyers probing the 2014 disappearance of 43 college students in Iguala, Guerrero—were among the dozens of targets. The government acknowledged possession of the spyware but denied specific abuses, and resisted making public the contracts related to its purchase.

All of this occurred against a backdrop of rapidly rising violence, with homicides reaching their highest level since the initiation of the country's "drug war" in 2006. Journalists, a frequent target of both criminals and corrupt officials, continued to pay a heavy price, with as many as 12 journalists killed in suspected connection with their work during the year, according to the freedom of expression group Article 19. The government's primary security initiative in 2017, the Internal Security Law, passed in December. It was intended to regulate the deployment of the military to fight crime, but was denounced by numerous domestic and international rights observers, including UN and Organization of American States (OAS) officials, as lacking safeguards against potential human rights abuses.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 26 / 40 (-2)**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 9 / 12****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4**

The president is elected to a six-year term and cannot be reelected. Peña Nieto won the 2012 presidential election with 38 percent of the vote, followed by veteran Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) leader Andrés Manuel López Obrador with 31 percent. Although López Obrador initially refused to accept the results, alleging infractions such as widespread vote buying, overspending, and media bias, the Federal Electoral Tribunal found insufficient evidence to invalidate the election. In Mexico's federal system, the elected governor and legislature in each of the 31 states have significant governing responsibility. Accusations of illicit campaign activities are frequent at the state level, including during June 2017 gubernatorial elections in Coahuila and the State of Mexico, both of which were won by the PRI candidate following widespread accusations of vote buying and other irregularities.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

Senators are elected for six-year terms through a mix of direct voting and proportional representation, with at least two parties represented in each state's delegation. In the Chamber of Deputies, the lower house of the bicameral Congress, 300 members are elected through direct representation and 200 through proportional representation, each for three-year terms. In 2015 midterm elections, the PRI and allied parties overcame poor approval ratings to garner a 260-seat majority in the Chamber of Deputies. The right-wing National Action Party (PAN) won 108 seats, while left-wing parties (the PRD, the López Obrador-led National Regeneration Movement [MORENA], and the Citizens' Movement) won 120.

No coalition commands a majority in the 128-member Senate, where the PRI–Green Party alliance won 61 seats in 2012, the PAN took 38, and the PRD won 22.

Under 2013 electoral reforms, current members of Congress are no longer barred from reelection and candidates are permitted to run as independents. As of 2018, elected senators will be eligible to serve up to two six-year terms, and deputies will be permitted to serve up to four three-year terms.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4

Mexico’s National Electoral Institute (INE) supervises elections and enforces political party laws, including strict regulations on campaign financing and the content of political advertising—although control is weaker in practice. Both the 2012 and 2015 elections were generally considered free and fair, but complaints about vote buying and misuse of public funds persisted. Political analysts fault the INE’s unwillingness to adequately investigate and punish violations at both the federal and state levels, exemplified by delays in resolving complaints regarding the 2017 state elections. The October firing of electoral crimes prosecutor Santiago Nieto was viewed as a government move to protect top PRI officials.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 12 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 3 / 4

Mexico’s multiparty system features few official restrictions on political organization and activity. Power has changed hands twice at the national level since 2000, opposition parties are competitive in many states, and independent candidacies are becoming more common. However, in states with lower levels of multiparty contestation, locally dominant political actors often govern in a highly opaque manner that limits political activity and citizen participation, and opens the door to corruption and organized crime.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

The PRI, which had ruled Mexico without interruption from 1929 to 2000, returned to national government in 2012 after losing two consecutive presidential races to the right-leaning PAN. The left, which had previously been dominated by the PRD, fragmented prior to the 2015 midterms, with López Obrador forming his own party, MORENA. In September 2017, the PAN joined with the PRD and the smaller Citizen’s Movement to form an opposition alliance in anticipation of a showdown with López Obrador and the PRI in the 2018 general elections.

B3. Are the people’s political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 2 / 4

Politicians and municipal governments have been subject to significant pressure from criminal groups in recent years. Nine mayors were killed in 2017, adding to a tally of more than 50 mayors killed since 2006 and contributing to a spike in murders of politicians and officials in the run-up to the 2018 elections.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

Indigenous groups are underrepresented in formal political institutions; however, they are not blocked from participating in the political process. The federal constitution and Oaxaca state law include some provisions for the integration of traditional community customs. Women play a prominent role in political life, and female representatives increased their share of seats in the Chamber of Deputies to 42 percent in the 2015 elections.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 5 / 12 (-2)**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 2 / 4**

Organized crime and related violence have limited the effective governing authority of elected officials in some areas of the country. Members of organized crime groups have persisted in their attempts to infiltrate local governments to ensure their own impunity. The mass student disappearance in Iguala in 2014 has been linked to a deeply corrupt local government working in conjunction with a drug gang. In the most violent regions, the provision of public services has become more difficult, as public-sector employees such as teachers face extortion.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4 (-1)

Official corruption remains a serious problem. Billions of dollars in illegal drug money—as well as large quantities of powerful firearms—enter the country each year from the United States, and such funds affect politics, particularly at the state and local levels. Attempts to prosecute officials for alleged involvement in corrupt or criminal activity have often failed due to the weakness of the cases brought by the state. The extent of state-level corruption uncovered in Veracruz—where former PRI governor Javier Duarte and his cronies are accused of pilfering hundreds of millions of dollars—led to a sharp outcry that prompted action against additional ex-governors. Duarte was extradited from Guatemala back to Mexico in July 2017. A former PRI governor of Tamaulipas, Tomás Yarrington, was arrested in Italy in April; he was wanted in both Mexico and the United States on drug-trafficking charges and for financial crimes. A former PRI governor of Chihuahua, César Duarte, fled Mexico in March to avoid corruption charges. In August, testimony by former employees of Odebrecht implicated former PEMEX head Lozoya in corruption allegations, but no charges had been filed as of year's end.

Pressure for reform has intensified since 2014, when it was revealed that Peña Nieto's wife and the finance minister had purchased multimillion-dollar houses from an active government contractor. In 2015, all were cleared of wrongdoing following a widely derided investigation; however, the civil society outcry about lack of progress in combatting corruption contributed to the 2015 passage of constitutional amendments creating the SNA. Some elements of the SNA were implemented in 2017, including a Citizens' Participation Committee, but others continued to lag. Corruption accusations involving fraudulent building permits followed two earthquakes in September that killed hundreds of people.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 as a result of a number of corruption scandals with few high-level prosecutions or convictions, and delays in implementing a new National Anticorruption System.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4 (-1)

Despite some limitations, a 2002 freedom of information law successfully strengthened transparency at the federal level, though implementation has slowed and enforcement is uneven across states. A new and more extensive transparency law passed in 2015 was

mostly praised by good governance advocates. However, in recent years the government has failed to release relevant information on some of the country's most controversial issues, including abuses by the security forces, the investigation into the missing 43 students, and, in 2017, the contracts with the Israeli company that provided the spyware used against journalists and activists. The Internal Security Law has been criticized for limiting openness and transparency by restricting public access to information related to the enforcement of the law on national security grounds.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 because government transparency regarding controversial issues has stalled.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 36 / 60 (-1)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 13 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4

Legal and constitutional guarantees of free speech have been improving gradually, but the security environment for journalists remains highly problematic. News coverage in many media outlets is affected by dependence on the government for advertising and subsidies. In November 2017, the Supreme Court ordered Congress to pass statutes regulating the distribution of government advertising. Broadcast media are dominated by a corporate duopoly composed of Televisa and TV Azteca. Televisa has faced accusations of supporting specific politicians over the years, usually from the PRI. A 2013 telecommunications law established a new telecommunications regulator and the Federal Economic Competition Commission. However, civil society groups have criticized the limited scope of the reforms and their effectiveness in promoting increased broadcast diversity.

Reporters probing police issues, drug trafficking, and official corruption face an increasingly high risk of physical harm. The watchdog group Article 19 logged at least 12 murders of journalists in possible connection with their work in 2017. The slayings of widely recognized print reporters Miroslava Breach in March in Chihuahua and Javier Valdéz in May in Sinaloa generated particularly wide coverage and uproar. Self-censorship has increased, with many newspapers in violent areas avoiding publication of stories concerning organized crime. Press watchdog groups hailed the 2012 federalization of crimes against journalists as well as a 2015 law in Mexico City aimed at protecting journalists and human rights defenders, but they have decried the slow pace of the federal government's special prosecutor for crimes against freedom of expression since the office gained authority in 2013. Despite improvements in legal status, community radio stations continue to face occasional harassment from criminals and state authorities.

Mexico has been at the forefront of citizen-led efforts to ensure internet access. The government amended Article 6 of the constitution in 2013 to make access to the internet a civil right. However, gangs have targeted bloggers and online journalists who report on organized crime, issuing threats and periodically murdering online writers.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Religious freedom is protected by the constitution and is generally respected in practice.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

The government does not restrict academic freedom, though university students and some academics are occasionally threatened for their political activism.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4

While there are no formal impediments to free and open discussion, fear of criminal monitoring restricts citizens' willingness to converse publicly about crime in some areas of the country.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 7 / 12 (-1)**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 3 / 4**

Constitutional guarantees regarding free assembly and association are largely upheld, but political and civic expression is restricted in some regions. Protests across the country over increased gas costs led to five deaths, including one police officer, in January.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 2 / 4 (-1)

Although highly active, nongovernmental organizations sometimes face violent resistance, including threats and murders. Environmental activists and representatives of indigenous groups contesting large-scale infrastructure projects have been particularly vulnerable. In 2012, civil society pressure prompted the government to create a Protection Mechanism for Human Rights Defenders and Journalists, which had offered protection to more than 500 people as of October 2017 but has also been critiqued by rights groups as slow and suffering from insufficient governmental commitment. The spyware scandal that broke in 2017 accelerated the already rapid decline of civil society trust in the government. In addition to the surveillance, several of the victims, especially anticorruption advocates, were subjected to repeated tax audits.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 due to endemic violence and threats against human right defenders, revelations of extensive government surveillance of activists, and abuses of authority targeting critical groups.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

Trade unions, long a pillar of the PRI, have diminished significantly, but independent unions still face interference from the government. Informal, nontransparent negotiations between employers and politically connected union leaders often result in "protection contracts" that govern employee rights but are never seen by workers. Several large unions are considered opaque and antagonistic to necessary policy reforms. Longtime teachers' union leader Elba Esther Gordillo—widely perceived as extremely corrupt—was arrested in 2013 and charged with embezzling more than \$150 million; she alternated between detention, hospital stays, and finally house arrest in 2017.

F. RULE OF LAW: 6 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 2 / 4**

Mexico's justice system is plagued by delays, unpredictability, and corruption, leading to impunity. A 2008 constitutional reform replaced the civil-inquisitorial trial system with an oral-adversarial one. Although it was expected to strengthen due process while increasing efficiency and impartiality, human rights groups raised concerns about the weak protections it affords to those suspected of involvement in organized crime. Implementation of the new system was technically completed in 2016, but deficient training at all levels, from police to judges, led to poor prosecutorial results, which harmed the credibility of the system.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

Lower courts—and law enforcement in general—are undermined by widespread bribery and suffer from limited capacity. According to a government survey released in September 2017, more than 90 percent of crimes committed in 2016 went unreported because the underpaid police are viewed as either inept or in league with criminals. Even when investigations are conducted, only a handful of crimes end in convictions.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 1 / 4

Abuses during criminal investigations are rife; in 2015, a UN special rapporteur released a report characterizing torture as “generalized” within Mexican police forces. In June 2017, a comprehensive General Law on Torture took effect that attempts to modernize protection from torture. In October, the Congress responded to domestic and international pressure by passing a new General Law on Disappearances intended to confront the problem of forced disappearance, which affects an unknown portion of the more than 33,000 Mexicans registered as disappeared in a national database. The weakness of forensic investigations was notably highlighted in 2016, when international experts cast doubt on numerous crucial pieces of evidence backing the government’s claims that the murdered Iguala students were incinerated at a dump, with the ashes thrown in a nearby river. The government made little progress in 2017 in efforts to prosecute alleged perpetrators, convince the public of its version of events, or pursue new lines of investigation.

Prisons are violent and overcrowded, and it is not uncommon for prisoners to continue criminal activity while incarcerated. In July 2017, 28 prisoners died in a riot in a prison in Acapulco, while 18 more were killed in a Monterrey prison in October. The National Human Rights Commission (CNDH), long maligned due to its perceived passivity in the face of rampant rights abuses, began to regain some credibility following the appointment of a new director in 2014.

Presidential authority over the armed forces is extensive, but the military has historically operated beyond public scrutiny. Human rights advocates for years have expressed concern about a lack of accountability for rights abuses including torture, forced disappearances, and extrajudicial executions. Only a handful of soldiers have been convicted in civilian courts for abuses against civilians. A wide range of rights observers harshly criticized the Internal Security Law as an unconstitutional expansion of the military’s mission that would grant the armed forces greater autonomy without ensuring transparency, effective civilian oversight, or a strategy for eventual military withdrawal from policing functions. Peña Nieto promulgated the law in December, but stated that implementation would await Supreme Court validation.

The number of deaths attributed to organized crime rose sharply each year between 2007 and 2011, declined from 2012 to 2014, and subsequently began trending upward. In 2017, homicides reached a record number and the highest rate since the beginning of the country’s “drug war” in 2006. Violence in 2017 spiked in Baja California Sur, Nayarit, and Guanajuato, while remaining acute in Guerrero. Gang murders continue to feature extreme brutality designed to maximize the psychological impact on civilians, authorities, and rival groups.

In recent years, the government has taken a number of steps to curb violence and ease popular frustration with the problem. These include engaging in consultations with civic leaders, the continued deployment of troops, the strengthening of the federal police and development of the National Gendarmerie, and the decriminalization of possession of small quantities of drugs. The high rate of violence in 2017 generated renewed pressure for strategic changes in state efforts to contain the carnage.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

Mexican law bans discrimination based on ethnic origin, gender, age, religion, and sexual orientation. Nevertheless, the large indigenous population has been subject to social and economic discrimination, and at least 70 percent of the indigenous population lives in poverty. Southern states with high concentrations of indigenous residents suffer from particularly deficient services. Indigenous groups have been harmed by criminal violence; in recent years, a series of communities in Guerrero and Michoacán have formed self-defense groups, some of which were subsequently legalized. In addition, disputes over land issues within indigenous groups have occasionally become violent, particularly in the states of Chiapas and Oaxaca.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 10 / 16**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4**

Criminals have impeded freedom of movement by blocking major roads in several states in recent years, and ordinary citizens avoid roads in many rural areas after dark. Rights groups frequently detail the persecution and criminal predation faced by migrants from Central America, many of whom move through Mexico to reach the United States. Despite government initiatives to improve protections, pressure from the United States to crack down on migration pathways generated ongoing accusations of abuses against migrants in 2017. As of mid-2017, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center estimated that there were more than 311,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) in Mexico, many of whom had fled cartel-related violence.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

Property rights in Mexico are protected by a modern legal framework, but the weakness of the judicial system, frequent solicitation of bribes by bureaucrats and officials, and the high incidence of criminal extortion harm security of property for many individuals and businesses. Large-scale development projects have been accompanied by corruption and rights-related controversy in recent years.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

Sexual abuse and domestic violence against women are common, and perpetrators are rarely punished. Implementation of a 2007 law designed to protect women from such crimes remains halting, particularly at the state level, and impunity is the norm for the killers of hundreds of women each year. State authorities can issue “gender alerts” that trigger greater scrutiny and an influx of resources to combat an epidemic of violence against women, but in March 2017 a CNDH representative described meager results in six states that had activated the alerts. Abortion has been a contentious issue in recent years, with many states reacting to Mexico City’s 2007 liberalization of abortion laws by strengthening their own criminal bans on the procedure.

Mexico has taken significant steps toward equality for the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) population, courtesy of Supreme Court rulings in 2015 that struck down state laws defining the purpose of marriage as procreation. However, implementing the jurisprudence in all Mexican states will take time, as the court’s rulings do not apply in blanket form.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Equality of opportunity is limited in Mexico, which has one of the highest rates of income inequality in the developed world.

Mexico is a major source, transit, and destination country for trafficking in persons, including women and children, many of whom are subject to forced labor and sexual exploitation. Organized criminal gangs are heavily involved in human trafficking in Mexico and into the United States. Government corruption is a significant concern as many officials are bribed by or aide traffickers.

Micronesia

Population: 100,000

Capital: Palikir

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 1

Freedom Rating: 1.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: The Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) is a relatively stable democracy that holds regular, competitive elections. However, secessionist movements have sometimes unsettled the country's politics and threatened its unity. The judiciary is independent, and civil liberties are generally respected. Ongoing problems include underreporting of domestic violence and a lack of legal protections for LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Congressional elections were held in March, with all candidates running as independents.
- A proposed constitutional amendment that would have allowed dual citizenship failed to pass in a referendum held concurrently with the March elections. It reached the required 75 percent approval threshold in only one of the federation's four states.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 37 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The FSM president and vice president are indirectly elected for four-year terms by members of Congress from among the legislature's four at-large state representatives, known as senators. In 2015, Congress named Peter Christian, the senator representing the state of Pohnpei, as president and Yosiwo George, the senator for Kosrae, as vice president.

Each of the four states (Yap, Chuuk, Pohnpei, and Kosrae) also has its own elected governor.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The federal Congress consists of one senator elected by each state to serve four-year terms and 10 members elected for two-year terms in single-member districts that are allocated according to population. Each state also has its own elected legislature.

In March 2017, the FSM held congressional elections for the 10 two-year seats. Eight of the 10 incumbents were returned to office, and all candidates ran as independents. There were no reports of fraud or irregularities.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

Elections in Micronesia, which are generally considered free and fair, are administered by a government agency headed by a national election director and one commissioner for each state.

Constitutional amendments must be approved by three-quarters of the votes cast in at least three of the four states. In March 2017, referendum voters in all four states endorsed a proposed amendment that would have allowed dual citizenship, but it reached the required 75 percent threshold in only one state (Kosrae).

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 15 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4

There are no formal political parties, but there are no restrictions on their formation. All candidates ran as independents in the 2015 general elections and the 2017 congressional elections.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

The country has an established record of democratic power transfers. Under an informal agreement, the presidency has typically rotated among the four states, but Congress has sometimes chosen to deviate from this pattern.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

Traditional leaders and institutions exercise significant influence in society, especially at the village level. However, neither these nor donor countries like the United States and China exert undue control over the political choices of voters or candidates.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

Women and minority groups formally have full political rights, and they are free to participate in practice, though women's political engagement is limited to some extent by traditional biases. Two female candidates ran unsuccessfully in the 2017 congressional elections, and the FSM remained one of the few countries in the world with no women in its national legislature.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 10 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4

Elected officials determine and implement policy and legislation at the federal level, though considerable authority is vested in the states and their elected governments. Some leading politicians from Chuuk, by far the most populous state, have advocated independence from the FSM in recent years, and during 2017 the issue remained a topic of public discussion under the guidance of the Chuuk Political Status Commission.

The FSM relies on defense guarantees and economic assistance from the United States under a 1986 Compact of Free Association. Under the current terms of the compact, the United States will provide more than \$130 million in annual aid through 2023, in addition to funding from applicable U.S. federal programs. China has also become an increasingly important partner for trade and development aid in recent years, though its role does not amount to undue interference in FSM governance.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4

Official corruption is a problem and a source of public discontent. Complaints about misuse of public resources are frequent, particularly from U.S. authorities overseeing aid funds. Government entities responsible for combating corruption, including the attorney general's office and a public auditor, are independent and fairly effective, though some corrupt officials reportedly enjoy impunity. In February 2017, former Pohnpei governor John Ehsa was charged with misappropriating travel funds in 2014.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 3 / 4

Government operations and legislative processes are generally transparent, though there is no comprehensive law guaranteeing public access to government information. Limited technical capacity and the country's sprawling geography pose practical barriers to openness and accountability in the FSM. Officials are not legally obliged to submit asset disclosures.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 56 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 16 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 4 / 4

The news media operate freely. Print outlets include government-published newsletters and several small, privately owned weekly and monthly newspapers. There are a number of radio stations, cable television is available, and satellite television is increasingly common. More than a third of the population has internet access.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Religious freedom is generally respected, and religious groups are not required to register with the government. About 99 percent of the population is Christian. A small Ahmadi Muslim community has reported some instances of discrimination and vandalism.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

There were no reports of restrictions on academic freedom in 2017.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

The constitution guarantees freedom of expression, and there are no significant constraints on this right in practice. The government does not improperly monitor personal communications or social media activity.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 11 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4

Freedom of assembly is protected by the constitution, and demonstrations typically proceed peacefully.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Citizens are free to organize in civic groups, and a number of students' and women's organizations are active.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

Freedom of association in general is respected, and there are no laws to prevent workers from forming unions, engaging in collective bargaining, or striking. However, such activities are not specifically protected or regulated by law, and few employers are large enough to support unionization in practice.

F. RULE OF LAW: 15 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 4 / 4

The judiciary is independent. The chief justice, who administers the judicial system, and the associate justices of the Supreme Court are appointed by the president with the approval of a two-thirds majority in Congress. They are appointed for life terms and cannot be removed arbitrarily.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 4 / 4

The police respect legal safeguards against arbitrary arrest and detention, and defendants are generally provided with basic due process guarantees surrounding trials and appeals. However, a shortage of lawyers may sometimes impair detainees' access to counsel in practice, according to the U.S. State Department.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 4 / 4

There were no reports of physical abuse or inhumane treatment by police or prison officials in 2017. Criminal activity does not pose a major threat to physical security, though police have struggled to deal with illegal fishing.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

The constitution gives citizens equal protection under the law and prohibits discrimination based on race, ancestry, national origin, gender, language, or social status. Women generally receive equal pay in formal employment, though they continue to suffer from a degree of societal discrimination.

Same-sex sexual activity is legal, but no laws protect against hate crimes or discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 14 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4

Freedom of movement is generally respected. Under the Compact of Free Association, Micronesians are free to travel to the United States without visas for residence, education,

and employment. Many Micronesians have migrated to U.S. Pacific states or territories such as Hawaii and Guam.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 4 / 4

Property rights are protected by law, and individuals are able to operate private businesses; most such enterprises are small and family owned in practice. There are some legal restrictions on noncitizens' ability to own land and run businesses in certain sectors.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

Personal social freedoms are largely protected. However, there are no specific laws against spousal rape, and both rape and domestic violence are rarely prosecuted due to societal inhibitions against reporting such crimes.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

Forced labor is prohibited, and the government effectively enforces basic standards for working conditions in the formal sector. Foreign migrant workers nevertheless remain vulnerable to exploitative labor practices, including on foreign fishing vessels in FSM waters, and some Micronesian women are reportedly trafficked for sexual exploitation.

Moldova

Population: 3,600,000

Capital: Chişinău

Political Rights Rating: 3

Civil Liberties Rating: 3

Freedom Rating: 3.0

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Note: The numerical ratings and status listed above do not reflect conditions in Transnistria, which is examined in a separate report.

Overview: Moldova has a competitive electoral environment. Rights of assembly, speech, and religion are largely protected. Nonetheless, the pervasive corruption in the government sector, links between major political parties and vested economic interests, and deficiencies in the rule of law continue to hamper democratic governance.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- The parliament passed a controversial electoral law in July, which opposition parties allege is designed to keep oligarch Vlad Plahotniuc and his Democratic Party in power.
- In June, opposition politician Grigore Petrenco received a four-and-a-half-year suspended sentence for “organizing mass disturbances” in 2015, a charge that the opposition claimed was politically motivated.

- The 2017 Moldovan LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) march was stopped by police concerned about the potential for violent clashes with counter-protesters. President Igor Dodon, who attended the counterprotest, drew criticism for making inflammatory remarks about the LGBT community.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 26 / 40 (-1)**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 10 / 12****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4**

A prime minister nominated by the president exercises the most authority over governance. Moldova held its first direct presidential election in 2016, after shifting back from an indirect system. Now, the president is elected by direct popular vote to a four-year term. If a candidate receives more than 50 percent of votes in the first round, they are elected. If no candidate reaches the 50 percent threshold, the two candidates who received the most votes compete in a second round. In the 2016 election's second round, Socialist Party candidate Igor Dodon defeated Maia Sandu of the Action and Solidarity Party in a tight race. This followed a first round in which nine candidates competed. International observers concluded that the election was largely credible. However, state resources were occasionally misallocated and transparency in campaign funding was lacking.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

Voters elect the 101-seat unicameral parliament by proportional representation for four-year terms. Although observers praised the most recent parliamentary elections in 2014 as genuinely competitive and generally well administered, there were some significant deficiencies. The pro-Russian Patria Party was disqualified days before the vote on the grounds that it received campaign funds from abroad. The distribution of overseas polling places favored residents of European Union (EU) countries over those living in Russia. Nevertheless, the constitutional court approved the election results, rejecting challenges by opposition parties.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4

The administration of elections is conducted professionally and impartially, despite a lack of resources.

In July 2017, the parliament changed electoral rules from the previous proportional system to a mixed system with both single-member constituencies and seats allocated proportionally. The new system will be in place for the next parliamentary elections in November 2018. Opposition parties claim that the head of the Democratic Party, Vladimir Plahotniuc, an oligarch who controls a media and business empire, is behind the law, and that the new electoral framework could allow his party to consolidate power despite its modest following. The Venice Commission of the Council of Europe strongly urged against the switch to single-member constituencies, saying they may allow local business interests to subvert the needs of constituents.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 11 / 16 (-1)**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 3 / 4 (-1)**

There are no legal restrictions on party formation in Moldova. However, business elites dominate party politics, and this effectively discourages the formation and rise of new parties and hampers the competitiveness of existing ones. Members of parliament have charged that, in recent years, some of their colleagues have been coerced or bribed to transfer to Plahotniuc's Democratic Party.

Campaign finance laws favor parties over independent candidates. For the 2014 legislative elections, the limit on private donations to political parties doubled, but remained the same for independent candidates. The ability of the Central Election Commission (CEC) to monitor the financing of campaigns is limited.

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 because the dominance of powerful parties backed by business elites hampers the competitiveness of new and smaller parties.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 3 / 4

Opposition parties have a reasonable chance of increasing their support through elections. In the 2014 parliamentary elections, 21 political parties participated and five gained seats. However, weak campaign finance laws allow business elites to pour funds into their parties, making it difficult for underfunded opposition parties to gain significant power.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 2 / 4

Economic oligarchies and business interests underpin political party structures in Moldova, harming political accountability. Weak campaign finance laws allow business interests undue influence on the electoral process.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

Women and minorities do not experience legal barriers to political participation, but some minority groups remain underrepresented in Moldovan politics. The Gagauz, a Turkic minority concentrated in the country's south, enjoy regional autonomy, but their leaders allege that their interests are not well represented at the national level.

Although the first two Roma women were elected to local councils in 2015, Roma women and women with disabilities have low levels of political participation, and social barriers prevent women from playing a more active role at all levels of Moldovan politics. Law No. 71, introduced in 2016, addresses the gender gap in politics by mandating that 40 percent of all party candidates and cabinet nominees must be women. Moldova is diverse—22 percent of its population are minorities, but they have little representation in government.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 5 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 3 / 4

Unelected business elites hold sway over the government and government policies. The chairperson of the Democratic Party, Vladimir Plahotniuc, has an outsized influence on policy making, even though he does not hold elected office and his party finished fourth in the 2014 elections. Despite his party's poor electoral performance, he was instrumental in forming the governing coalition and plays a strong role setting the agenda for the government.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

Corruption remains a widespread problem at all levels of government, and existing anticorruption laws are inadequately enforced. In a report published in 2017, the National Anticorruption Center recorded a 23 percent increase in corruption cases in 2016 compared to 2015, with the most cases in law enforcement and in the banking and financial sectors. An anticorruption sweep conducted in April 2017 targeted a number of politicians, particularly in local government. In August, former minister of transport and road infrastructure Iurie Chirinciuc, one of the officials caught up in the sweep, was sentenced to one year and four months in prison for corruption.

Moldova is still reeling from a 2014 scandal involving the Central Bank, in which \$1 billion was stolen and former prime minister Vlad Filat was sentenced to nine years in prison.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 1 / 4

The government does not operate with transparency. Most political activity takes place behind the scenes in negotiations between and within political parties. A number of laws have been passed in recent years to increase transparency in decision-making processes and require public officials to disclose their assets, but they have not been effectively enforced due to lack of political will.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 35 / 60**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 12 / 16****D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4**

The media environment is highly polarized. More than 80 percent of domestic television stations are owned by people affiliated with political parties, and some 70 percent of the market is controlled by Vladimir Plahotniuc. Reporters often experience political pressure from the government, such as denial of access to information and events, or public denunciations by government officials. This contributes to self-censorship and the suppression of critical news coverage.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4

The constitution upholds religious freedom and establishes no religious authority in the state, though it provides special status to the Moldovan Orthodox Church. Religious minorities, particularly Jehovah's Witnesses, Pentecostals, Jews, and Baptists, experienced attacks against their communities in 2017, and report that the police often made little effort to bring the perpetrators to justice.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 3 / 4

Academic freedom is generally respected. However, the Gagauz community has complained of exclusion from the mainstream higher education system, as most Gagauz are more fluent in Russian than Romanian, the official language in Moldova.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

Individuals are generally able to engage in discussions of a sensitive or political nature without fear of retribution or surveillance.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 8 / 12**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 3 / 4**

Freedom of assembly is guaranteed by the Moldovan constitution and mostly upheld in practice. Protests of the new electoral laws in 2017 did not result in any reported detentions, but some protesters were harassed by the police. Protest leader and opposition politician Grigore Petrenco was sentenced in June 2017 to a four-and-a-half-year suspended sentence for “organizing mass disturbances” in 2015, a charge that the opposition claimed was politically motivated. The 2017 Moldovan LGBT march was stopped by police because they claimed its continuation could lead to violent clashes with counterprotesters.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 3 / 4

The nongovernmental organization (NGO) sector is vibrant. In September 2017, the government withdrew proposed legislation that would have potentially hindered the activities of NGOs. However, NGO leaders have alleged that the government unfairly brands them as political partisans. Human rights lawyers and activists have endured media smear campaigns and targeted criminal investigations and prosecutions.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

Trade unions are permitted to operate in Moldova and the government has passed regulations protecting the rights of workers. However, collective bargaining is not allowed in some sectors and union membership is declining. The government often fails to enforce the right to collective bargaining when it is denied. Antiunion discrimination by employers is illegal, but workers have no effective legal recourse when they are fired for union activity.

F. RULE OF LAW: 6 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4**

Moldova’s judicial branch is susceptible to political pressures that hamper its independence. Judges have been dismissed for their decisions; most prominently, appeals court judge Domnica Manole was dismissed in July 2017 after her decision requiring the Central Electoral Commission to hold a referendum on constitutional amendments. Manole faces criminal charges for her ruling on the referendum, though public hearings have not been held. The prosecution has been criticized by the European Union and civil society leaders for being politically motivated. Judicial appointment processes lack transparency.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

Due process is often lacking in the Moldovan justice system. Some prosecutions are politically motivated, especially those of human rights lawyers and opposition figures. Important cases, including the 2016 trial of former prime minister Vlad Filat, have been held behind closed doors, despite legislation mandating audio and video recordings. In 2017, the media and the public were denied access to court transcripts of several high profile trials, and lawyers claimed that their defendants were denied a fair, public trial as mandated by the constitution.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 2 / 4

Some prisoners and detainees have experienced maltreatment and torture. Prosecution for such offenses is rare, and very few of those convicted in torture cases receive prison sentences. Overcrowding and unsanitary conditions are prevalent throughout the prison system.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

The Roma population experiences discrimination in housing, education, and employment, and have been targets of police violence.

LGBT people are subject to harassment, and the president has drawn criticism from LGBT rights groups for saying “I have never promised to be the president of the gays” in May 2017. While discrimination based on sexual orientation is not explicitly banned by the main article of the 2012 Law on Ensuring Equality, it is understood to be covered under a reference to discrimination on “any other similar grounds.” The law prohibits discrimination in employment on the basis of sexual orientation, but not gender identity.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 9 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4

The law protects freedom of internal movement and foreign travel, and the government generally respects these rights. There are no formal restrictions on the right to choose one’s place of employment or education, but bribery is not uncommon in educational institutions.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

Although Moldovan law guarantees property rights, they are undermined by a weak and corrupt judiciary. In 2016, the government increased the fee for registering a new company, which made establishing a business more difficult.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Domestic violence and sexual assault are prevalent in Moldova. A joint report submitted by several Moldovan NGOs in 2016 found that more than 63 percent of women over the age of 15 have experienced at least one form of violence (physical, psychological, or sexual) in their lifetimes; the same report found over 20 percent of men admitted to having had sex with a woman without her consent. Moldovan law prohibits domestic violence, but the laws are inadequately enforced.

Among the Roma minority in Moldova, there have been reports of marriages of girls under the age of 17. Same-sex marriage or civil unions are not recognized under the law.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Persistent poverty, extensive emigration, and a lack of job opportunities for trained and educated workers bedevil the Moldovan economy.

Human trafficking remains a problem, although Moldova has stepped up its efforts to prosecute traffickers. The number of trafficking cases sent to court increased from 33 in 2016 to 85 in 2017. While women and children have long been subject to trafficking, in recent years, the trafficking of males has increased.

Despite legal protections, child labor remained a pervasive problem in Moldova in 2017. The government estimates that 24 percent of children between the ages of five and fourteen are actively employed.

Monaco

Population: 38,100

Capital: Monaco

Political Rights Rating: 3

Civil Liberties Rating: 1

Freedom Rating: 2.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: The Principality of Monaco is a hereditary constitutional monarchy headed by Prince Albert II. The prince appoints the government, which is responsible only to the monarch. Legislative power is exercised jointly by the prince and the National Council, Monaco's parliament. Human rights and civil liberties are generally respected.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In July, the Council of Europe's Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) released a report that highlighted insufficient mechanisms in place to ensure transparency in parliamentary work, including a lack of consultation with the public on proposed legislation and the confidentiality of committee meetings.
- In September, Minister of Justice Philippe Narmino resigned after it was revealed that Russian oligarch Dmitry Rybolovlev allegedly gave him gifts in exchange for pursuing fraud charges against an art dealer.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 25 / 40 (-2)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 7 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

Monaco has one of the most politically powerful monarchs in Europe. Only the prince, who serves as head of state, may initiate legislation and change the government, though all legislation and the budget require parliamentary approval. Prince Albert II took the throne after his father's death in 2005. No constitutional provisions allow citizens to change the monarchical structure of government. The head of government, known as the minister of state, is traditionally appointed by the monarch from a candidate list of three French nationals submitted by the French government. Serge Telle, the current minister of state, took office in 2016.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The 24 members of the unicameral National Council are elected for five-year terms; 16 are chosen through a majority electoral system and 8 by proportional representation. The last parliamentary elections in 2013 were evaluated as credible by international observers. The Horizon Monaco coalition, which included the conservative Rally & Issues party, won 20 out of 24 seats.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4

While the legal framework provides an adequate basis for credible elections, there are a number of restrictions on voting rights, including the denial of the right to vote for citizens in pretrial detention. City Hall administers elections and observers view their conduct to be credible. However, technical meetings in preparation for the election are not open to the public, limiting the body's transparency.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 10 / 16 (-1)**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 3 / 4**

Political associations, groupings of people who hold similar political viewpoints, compete in Monaco, rather than traditional parties. There are no undue restrictions on the formation of new political associations. However, office seekers are prohibited from running as individual independent candidates: independents must instead form a list of at least 13 candidates to compete in elections.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 2 / 4 (-1)

Opposition political associations can gain seats in parliament. In 2013, Horizon Monaco gained 15 seats to capture parliament, while the Union Monégasque lost 11 seats. However, there are significant limits on the extent to which the opposition can gain power in the executive branch. Executive power is wielded by the prince, and the appointed cabinet is not responsible to parliament.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 because the prince wields executive power and appoints the cabinet, which is not accountable to the parliament, leaving few meaningful opportunities for an opposition movement to gain power.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 2 / 4

Since the head of government is a French national appointed from a list submitted by the French government, and the head of state is an unelected monarch, people's political choices are limited in choosing leaders in the executive branch. The electoral process for parliamentary representatives is largely free from domination by any democratically unaccountable groups.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

Most of Monaco's residents are noncitizens, so approximately 7,000 of the principality's 38,000 residents meet the citizenship requirements to vote or run for office. Women and minority groups are free to participate in elections, both as voters and candidates. Women's issues were not discussed frequently during the 2013 election campaign. Only 8 out of the 24 members of parliament are women.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 8 / 12 (-1)**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 2 / 4**

The prince has significant political powers, including initiating legislation, conducting foreign policy, and approving changes to the constitution, with no electoral mandate. Government ministers appointed by the prince cannot be held accountable by parliament. Parliament is generally free from interference by unelected groups.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4 (-1)

Despite recent improvements in the anticorruption legal framework, several loopholes remain. Parliament lacks a code of conduct on accepting gifts or potential conflicts of interest. High-level corruption is a problem, and officials sometimes act with impunity. In September 2017, Secretary of Justice Philippe Narmino resigned after it was revealed that Russian oligarch Dmitry Rybolovlev allegedly gave him gifts in exchange for pursuing fraud charges against an art dealer. At the end of 2017, Narmino had not faced criminal charges for his role in the scandal.

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 due to new evidence of high-level corruption, including a case in which the secretary of justice was implicated in an art fraud scandal, as well as weak anticorruption mechanisms.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 3 / 4

The law provides for access to government information, including draft laws and proposed legislation. However, a July 2017 report by GRECO highlighted insufficient mechanisms in place to ensure transparency in parliamentary work, including a lack of consultation with the public on proposed legislation and the confidentiality of committee meetings. There are no financial disclosure laws in place for parliamentarians or officials appointed by the prince.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 57 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 16 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 4 / 4

The constitution provides for a free press, which is generally respected in practice. Monaco has a weekly government newspaper, an English-language monthly, and several online publications. In addition, there is one public television channel (Monaco Info) and one privately owned channel (Téle Monte Carlo).

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Freedom of religion is largely respected, although Roman Catholicism is the official state religion.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

There are no undue restrictions on academic freedom.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

People are generally free to express their personal views without fear of retribution, although insulting the ruling family is illegal, and can result in prison sentences of between six months and five years. No persons were charged with this crime in 2017.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 12 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4

The constitution provides for freedom of assembly, which is generally respected in practice.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

No restrictions are imposed on the formation of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), but no human rights organization is active in the country. International NGOs operate without restrictions.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

The law grants workers the right to establish unions, and antiunion discrimination is prohibited. Trade unions operate in the country. All workers except government employees have the right to strike.

F. RULE OF LAW: 15 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 3 / 4

The constitution provides for an independent judiciary. The prince names five full members and two judicial assistants to the Supreme Court based on nominations by the National Council and other government bodies. The recruitment process for judges lacks transparency, which contributes to a perception that they may lack independence. The Judicial Service Commission (HCM) is ostensibly responsible for ensuring the independence of the judiciary, but in practice it lacks enforcement power. Approximately one-half of the judges in Monaco are Monegasque nationals, and the other half are French nationals.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 4 / 4

Due process rights are generally respected. Defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty and are informed of the charges against them promptly. Defendants have access to attorneys and sufficient time to prepare a defense.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 4 / 4

Illegitimate or excessive use of force is rare in Monaco.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 4 / 4

Monaco lacks a law that prohibits discrimination based on race or ethnicity. In the absence of such a law, Article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) is used to prevent and punish discrimination. The government established the Office of the High Commissioner for the Protection of Rights, Liberties, and for Mediation in 2013 to address discrimination. The government does not publish statistics on hate crimes.

The law prohibits discrimination based on gender and women's rights are generally respected. The rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people are legally protected, and incidents of discrimination are rare.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 14 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4

There are no legal or de facto restrictions that limit freedom of movement internally or externally.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 3 / 4

Property rights are respected, and noncitizens holding a residence permit may purchase property and establish businesses. However, obtaining government approval to start a business is often a lengthy and complex process, and startup costs can be prohibitively expensive.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

Personal social freedoms are generally respected. However, abortion is legal only under special circumstances, including rape and medical necessity. Monaco does not recognize same-sex unions or marriages. Domestic violence is outlawed in Monaco and there are few reported incidents. The government and NGOs provide a network of support services for victims of domestic violence.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 4 / 4

Laws protecting against economic exploitation are adequately enforced. However, employers can fire foreign employees without cause. Workers' rights are generally respected. There were no reports of human trafficking in 2017.

Mongolia

Population: 3,100,000

Capital: Ulaanbaatar

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 2

Freedom Rating: 1.5

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Following a peaceful revolution in 1990, Mongolia began holding multiparty elections and has since established itself as an electoral democracy. While the two dominant parties remain rooted in patronage relations, and widespread corruption hinders development, political freedoms and civil liberties are firmly institutionalized.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Khaltmaa Battulga of the Democratic Party (DP) was elected president in July 2017, following a campaign that was characterized in large part by allegations of corruption levied by the candidates against one another. Many frustrated voters submitted blank ballots.
- A new government under Prime Minister Ukhnaagiin Khürelsükh of the Mongolian People's Party (MPP) was formed in the fall, in the wake of factional infighting that followed the narrow defeat of the MPP candidate in the presidential election.

- Many news outlets participated in a media blackout that took place in April to protest changes to libel laws that would have increased fines for offenses.
- A number of peaceful protests took place, including events demanding government action to reduce pollution, and for reforms to the mining industry, which is widely viewed as benefiting elites.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 36 / 40**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 11 / 12****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4**

Under the 1992 constitution, the president is directly elected for up to two four-year terms. Khaltmaa Battulga of the Democratic Party (DP) was elected in July 2017 to succeed Tsakhia Elbegdorj, following a campaign that offered little discussion of policy and was instead characterized by allegations of corruption levied by the candidates against one another. No candidate took a majority in the first round, and a run-off was necessary for the first time in Mongolian democratic history.

Many voters had voiced their frustration with the three candidates participating in the first round, and 1.5 percent of the electorate chose this none-of-the-above option to register their discontent. The number of blank ballots jumped to 8.2 percent in the second round of voting, in which Battulga defeated ruling Mongolian People's Party (MPP) candidate Miyeegombo Enkhbold with 50.6 percent. An Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) election monitoring mission assessed the polls as well run and credible, but noted a lack of analytical media coverage of a "short but fierce" campaign.

The prime minister, who holds most executive power, is nominated by the party or coalition with the most seats in the parliament and is approved by parliament with the agreement of the president. The MPP formed a government under Prime Minister Jargaltulga Erdenebat after the 2016 election. However, amid factional infighting that followed the loss of Enkhbold, the MPP candidate, in the presidential election, the MPP-dominated parliament voted to remove Erdenebat in September 2017. The MPP's Ukhnaagiin Khürelsükh became prime minister in October.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

Under the 1992 constitution, members of the 76-seat parliament (the State Great Khural) are directly elected for four-year terms. In 2016 elections, which were held under a new a majoritarian, or first-past-the-post, system, the MPP won 85 percent of seats. The formerly governing DP was reduced to nine seats with an independent popular singer and a lone representative of the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party claiming the remaining seats. The OSCE mission said polling took place in an orderly manner.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4

While the electoral laws are often changed at the last moment, and favor the two large parties, they are generally fair. While the General Election Commission is often regarded with some suspicion, it conducted the 2017 presidential election in an impartial manner.

In 2016, the OSCE criticized electoral reform processes that brought about the majoritarian system as rushed and opaque, and noted that new districts were drawn inequitably.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 16 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4**

Mongolia features a multiparty system, though the 2016 electoral reforms brought about a shift to two-party dominance. Political parties are largely built around patronage networks rather than political ideologies. Representatives of large business groups play an important role in funding and directing the larger parties.

New political movements may form and operate freely, and smaller political parties have held legislative seats and remain viable. However, a perceived need for significant funding may dissuade some potential organizers of new political movements.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

There are no undue barriers preventing opposition parties from gaining power through elections. The MPP and DP have remained the dominant political forces in the country, taking turns controlling the parliament, and Mongolia has a history of peaceful rotations of power.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

Powerful business interests have some influence over candidates, whom they are able to support through a nontransparent party financing system. However, candidates and voters are generally able to express their political choices without encountering undue influence.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 4 / 4

All adult citizens may vote, other than incarcerated Mongolians. Women are underrepresented in politics, holding just under 20 percent of legislative seats, and few senior posts. Societal norms discourage women from running for office. LGBT people face societal discrimination that hampers their ability to advocate for their rights in the political sphere.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 9 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4**

Elected representatives are duly seated and able to craft policy freely. However, corporations, aided by opaque party finance procedures, can influence policymaking.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

Corruption is endemic in Mongolia and is widely perceived as becoming worse in recent years, notably regarding state involvement in the mining sector. Anticorruption laws are both vaguely written and infrequently enforced. Government officials in a range of departments require bribes in exchange for granting various kinds of licenses or other documentation. Public contracts are frequently secured through bribery.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 3 / 4

There are many laws and regulations that bind the government to transparency and accountability. However, implementation and enforcement of these laws is inconsistent. The

2011 Law on Information Transparency and Right to Information contains restrictions on what information is considered public. Authorities often invoke these exceptions, as well as the State Secrets Law, in order to limit disclosures.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 49 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 14 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4

Press freedom is generally respected, and a variety of media outlets espouse pluralistic views. However, coverage can be partisan, and the OSCE noted xenophobic rhetoric and unsupported allegations of corruption in the media during the 2017 election campaign. Ownership of media companies remains opaque and subject to much speculation. Many journalists practice self-censorship in order not to offend political or business interests.

Journalists in recent years have visibly mobilized against laws and proposals considered repressive. Many outlets participated in a media blackout that took place in April to protest changes to libel laws that would have increased fines for offenses.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

While legally individuals are free to practice their religion, all religious groups are required to register with the government, and the process for doing so can last years due to shifting policies and bureaucratic delays. Additionally, some minority religious groups, including adherents of the Unification Church, have reported harassment from government officials.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is generally respected.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4

There are few significant impediments to free and open private discussion. There were some reports of a tense environment in which voters felt discouraged from criticizing political parties during the 2016 parliamentary election campaign.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 11 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4

Freedoms of assembly is upheld in practice. A number of protests took place in 2017, including events demanding government action to reduce pollution, and for reforms to the mining industry, which is widely viewed as benefiting elites.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Numerous environmental, human rights, and social welfare groups operate without restrictions, though most are very small.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

Trade unions are independent and active, and the government generally respects their rights. Collective bargaining is legal. However, labor rights are restricted for certain groups,

such as foreign and temporary workers, and some employers unlawfully disrupt union activity.

F. RULE OF LAW: 12 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 3 / 4**

Judiciary appointments are a right of the president under Mongolia's constitution. Once appointed, judges are fairly independent, though judicial weakness contributes to Mongolia's failure to address petty corruption including rampant bribery involving government officials. The new Khurelsukh government has made ensuring an independent judiciary a prominent part of its agenda.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 3 / 4

Due process rights are generally respected, there are some sporadic accounts of abuse of power in civil and criminal matters. The police force has been accused of making arbitrary arrests and traffic stops, holding detainees for long periods, and beating prisoners. Recently, Mongolia has focused on holding police more responsible for stopping crimes such as domestic violence.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 3 / 4

Mongolia has not been involved in any armed conflict since 1939. However, there are sporadic accounts of violence in the criminal justice system. While torture and other cruel punishments are forbidden by law, there have been reports of such techniques being employed by police to obtain confessions. Prison deaths continue to be reported, and insufficient nutrition, heat, and medical care remain problems in detention facilities.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

There are no formal barriers to equal treatment. However, segments of the general population, especially in rural areas, hold on to discriminatory beliefs about Kazaks and other ethnic minorities. LGBT people face societal discrimination—notably employment discrimination—and harassment.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 12 / 16**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4**

The government respects the rights of Mongolians to free internal and external travel. However, exit bans can be imposed as part of legal procedures with the permission of the prosecutor general, and several hundred people including some foreign citizens are barred from leaving the country under such orders. Under a new law, the process of issuing an exit ban is now overseen by a judge, providing more legitimacy to the process.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 3 / 4

People are generally free to own property and establish private businesses, though some sectors have a notable presence of state-owned enterprises. Corruption can hamper normal business activities. Officials have withheld operating licenses and other documentation from businesses until bribes are paid. There is a history of corruption and government interference in the mining industry.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

Legally, Mongolia ensures the rights of individuals to have personal social freedoms. However, domestic violence remains a problem. Recently, the government has initiated programs to encourage a better police response to domestic violence complaints.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Inequality is rising in Mongolia. The appearance and growth of herders who are employed by herd owners is one notable indicator of this shift. The gated communities that are beginning to dominate the capital, Ulaanbaatar, also suggest rising inequality in the country.

Women, children, people living in poverty, and other vulnerable populations are at risk of becoming victims of traffickers and forced to engage in sex work or forced labor or begging. Workers in the mining industry are subject to exploitation. The government has taken efforts to better prosecute trafficking cases, but corruption and a lack of will to address the issue impedes the fight against human trafficking.

Montenegro

Population: 600,000

Capital: Podgorica

Political Rights Rating: 3

Civil Liberties Rating: 3

Freedom Rating: 3.0

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: While numerous political parties compete for power in Montenegro, the opposition is fragmented, and the governing Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) has been in power since 1991. Corruption is a serious issue. Investigative journalists and journalists critical of the government face pressure.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- The opposition continued to boycott the parliament over claims that the 2016 elections were fraudulent, though late in the year they indicated that they may return.
- In June, Montenegro officially joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), fulfilling a longstanding goal of the government.
- A trial against opposition members and others on charges of plotting an attempted coup began in September.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 25 / 40 (-1)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 8 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

The president is chief of state and is directly elected for up to two five-year terms. In 2013, President Filip Vujanović was reelected with 51 percent of the vote. Miodrag Lekić of the main opposition Democratic Front (DF) followed with 49 percent. Opposition

supporters protested the results, alleging fraud, and boycotted the parliament for two months; the boycott ended after parties agreed to investigate allegations of the ruling party's misuse of public funds—a complaint common in Montenegrin elections and one which has prompted public mistrust in electoral processes. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which monitored the election, said the poll had been competitive and that “fundamental freedoms of expression, movement, and association were mostly respected” during the campaign.

The president nominates the prime minister, who requires legislative approval. The parliament confirmed Duško Marković of the DPS as the new prime minister in November 2016, following legislative elections. Marković was considered an ally of Milo Đukanović, who has served as either prime minister or president for most of the last two decades, and who as DPS chairman is expected to retain influence in the government even after vacating the prime minister's post in 2016.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4

Members of the unicameral, 81-seat Parliament—the Skupština—are directly elected for four-year terms.

Đukanović's DPS posted the strongest performance in the 2016 polls, taking 36 seats—5 seats short of a governing majority—and eventually forming a government with smaller parties. The main opposition DF took 18 seats. Alleging electoral fraud, the opposition rejected the polls' results, and initiated a boycott of the parliament that lasted through the end of 2017, though at year's end opposition members were indicating that they planned to return to the legislature.

While OSCE election monitors assessed the 2016 polls as credible, numerous violations were reported, and the European Union (EU) days after the election called for fraud claims to be investigated. The Montenegro-based NGO MANS accused the Montenegrin government of trading tax or debt relief for votes, estimating that the DPS could have effectively bought as many as six legislative seats through such efforts. The government also suspended some mobile messaging applications election day, citing “illegal marketing” taking place on the platforms.

Additionally, on the day of the elections, the Montenegrin government arrested 20 people on charges of plotting a coup that allegedly involved plans to assassinate Đukanović. Đukanović accused the DF of plotting the alleged coup, but offered no evidence for his claims; the DF in turn accused Đukanović of manufacturing the events as a means of securing support for the DPS in the elections, and decreasing turnout. A number of people, including members of the opposition, have been charged in connection with the alleged coup.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4

The conduct of elections in Montenegro is facilitated by a comprehensive legal and administrative framework. However, the OSCE following the 2016 elections called on authorities to implement a number of reforms that could boost low stakeholder confidence in electoral processes, among them harmonizing electoral legislation and permitting media access to meetings of the State Election Commission.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 10 / 16 (-1)**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 2 / 4 (-1)**

Political parties are for the most part able to form and operate without direct interference. The new Democratic Montenegro (DCG) party gained 8 seats in the 2016 elections, and according to polls its support is increasing. This party has worked to create strategic partnerships with government opponents in civil society, media, and the intelligentsia.

However, the DPS-led government has relentlessly worked to delegitimize political activity that deviates from its preferred policies, characterizing it as a threat to the state or public order.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 due to the government's efforts to delegitimize political activities that challenge its policies as threats to the state or to public order.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 2 / 4

While numerous political parties compete for power, the opposition is fragmented and weak, and frequently boycotts political processes. The DPS has been in power since 1991.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 3 / 4

While voters are generally free to express their political choices, extensive patronage systems encourage loyalty to the ruling party. Both public-sector employers, and private-sector employers with links to the state, pressure employees to vote for the ruling coalition. Marginalized populations, such as the Roma, are have been mobilized by DPS through vote-buying schemes.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

All citizens have full political rights and electoral opportunities. Small political parties representing minority interests participate in the political sphere, and minorities are represented in larger parties, though the Roma minority is underrepresented. In the 2016 elections, voter materials were provided in the Albanian language, but not Romani.

Women are underrepresented in political leadership positions and politics generally. The government has taken some efforts to increase women's participation, including through gender quotas on electoral lists, though implementation is uneven.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 7 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 3 / 4**

Elected officials can generally determine the policies of the government, though politics in 2017 were characterized in large part by an opposition boycott of the parliament. Milo Đukanović, who has served as either prime minister or president for most of the last two decades, left the post of prime minister following the DPS victory in 2016 elections, but is head of the DPS and remains highly influential.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

Corruption and cronyism remain widespread, though there have been modest efforts by authorities to address them, prompted in part by EU accession requirements. A new anti-corruption agency began its work in 2016, but has been criticized for lacking independence and for failing to do enough to expose systemic corruption. Senior officials implicated in corruption schemes rarely face prosecution. Civil society and independent media provide some accountability by reporting on official corruption and its effects.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

The government publishes some information online, but citizens have few opportunities for meaningful participation in public consultations on legislation. Budget plans are not widely available, nor is information on government contracts.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 42 / 60 (-1)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 11 / 16 (-1)

D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4

A variety of independent media operate in Montenegro, and media coverage tends to be partisan and combative. The government frequently denies opposition media outlets advertising contracts from publicly owned or controlled entities. Journalists self-censor in order to avoid threats, political pressure, costly defamation suits, or job loss.

In a positive development, investigative journalist Tufik Softić was awarded €7,000 (\$8,600) in November 2017 for harm caused by the authorities' failure to effectively investigate two attacks he sustained in connection with work focusing on the activity of criminal groups.

Investigative journalist Jovo Martinović, who was initially detained in 2015 on allegations that he was a member of the criminal group he was investigating, was released in February. However, the case against him remains open.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4

The constitution guarantees freedom of religious belief. However, the canonically recognized Serbian Orthodox Church and a self-proclaimed Montenegrin Orthodox Church continue to clash over the ownership of church properties.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 3 / 4

Academic freedom is guaranteed by law and generally upheld. However, in October 2017, the rector of the University of Montenegro, who was appointed in 2014 and enacted a series of reforms, was removed by the new government. It was the first time the government had intervened in the operations of the university in such a manner, and the events prompted speculation that the move was a reflection of clashes between personalities in the DPS.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4 (-1)

People are generally free to engage in public discussions. However, the existence of extensive, DPS-linked patronage networks has fostered an environment where vocal opposition to the government or its policies is widely believed to jeopardize employment opportunities, both in the public and private sector.

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 due to fears that speaking out against the government or its policies may endanger professional standing or opportunities.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 9 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 3 / 4

While citizens generally enjoy freedom of assembly, authorities in the past have taken efforts to limit protests organized by the DF, and violence at demonstrations erupts occasionally. In 2015, antigovernment demonstrators in Podgorica clashed with police who tried to disperse them, with police on one occasion firing tear gas and stun grenades at protesters. The Special Anti-Terrorist Unit was implicated in misbehavior, and a suit was lodged against its commander in 2016 for failing to punish his officers for the improper use of force. He was sentenced to five months' imprisonment in January 2017.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 3 / 4

Citizens generally enjoy freedom of association. However, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that investigate corruption or criticize the government face pressure. In August, workers with an NGO focused on LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) rights were attacked, with one person requiring hospitalization.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

There is freedom for trade unions, which remain relatively strong in the public sector. However, reports of intimidation of labor activists by employers continue.

F. RULE OF LAW: 10 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 2 / 4

Efforts to bolster judicial independence continue, though the judiciary remains susceptible to pressure from the government.

The trial of DF members and several others on charges of plotting a 2016 coup began in September 2017. The conduct and outcome of their cases will reflect the level of transparency, openness, and accountability in the judicial system.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 2 / 4

Constitutional guarantees of due process are inconsistently upheld. Legal proceedings are lengthy and often highly bureaucratic, particularly when involving business dealings. Police frequently hold suspects in extended pretrial detention while completing investigations. Courts are poorly funded and often overburdened.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 3 / 4

Violent crime is not a significant problem. However, prison conditions do not meet international standards for education or health care. Reports of the abuse of prisoners by prison guards continue, and a number of legal cases filed over such complaints remained unresolved in 2017.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

Roma, Ashkali, Egyptians, LGBT people, and other minority groups face discrimination. Women in Montenegro are legally entitled to equal pay for equal work, but patriarchal attitudes often limit their salary levels, as well as their educational opportunities.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 12 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4

The freedom of movement and the right of citizens to choose their residence, employment, and institution of higher education, are generally respected in practice. However, many jobs are awarded through patronage, limiting access for those without connections.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 3 / 4

The state sector dominates much of Montenegro's economy, and related clientelism, as well as corruption, pose obstacles to normal business activity.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

Domestic violence remains a problem. Same-sex marriage is constitutionally banned.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

Most workers employed in the private sector remain unprotected from exploitation and arbitrary decisions of their employers.

Trafficking in persons for the purposes of prostitution and forced labor remains a problem, and the government has reduced efforts to prosecute traffickers and aid victims, according to the U.S. State Department's 2017 *Trafficking in Persons Report*.

Morocco

Population: 34,700,000

Capital: Rabat

Political Rights Rating: 5

Civil Liberties Rating: 5 ↓

Freedom Rating: 5.0

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Ratings Change, Trend Arrow: Morocco's civil liberties score declined from 4 to 5 and it received a downward trend arrow due to harsh state responses to major demonstrations throughout the year.

Note: The numerical ratings and status listed above do not reflect conditions in Western Sahara, which is examined in a separate report.

Overview: Morocco holds regular multiparty elections for Parliament, and reforms in 2011 shifted some authority over government from the monarchy to the elected legislature. Nevertheless, King Mohammed VI maintains dominance through a combination of substantial

formal powers and informal lines of influence in the state and society. Many civil liberties are constrained in practice.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Antigovernment protests triggered by the 2016 death of a fish vendor in Al-Hoceima continued during the year. Security forces and protesters clashed over the summer following the arrest of leading activists such as Nasser Zefzafi.
- The king appointed Saad Eddine Othmani of the Party of Justice and Development (PJD) as prime minister in March and certified a new cabinet in April. The moderate Islamist party had retained its plurality in the October 2016 elections, but coalition talks faltered for months, leading the king to use his royal prerogative. While the PJD held the premiership, technocrats loyal to the palace received most important ministries.
- In October, the king dismissed three ministers and other officials for poor performance in implementing development programs in the Rif region, which had been at the center of the recent protests.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 14 / 40 (-1)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 5 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4

Constitutional reforms in 2011 required the king to appoint the prime minister from the party that wins the most seats in parliamentary elections, but they preserved most of the king's existing powers. The monarch can disband the legislature, rule by decree, and dismiss or appoint cabinet members.

After the 2016 parliamentary elections, political disagreement over the composition of a new government resulting in months of fruitless coalition talks. In March 2017, the king finally used his royal prerogative to appoint Saad Eddine Othmani, a former PJD foreign minister, as prime minister, replacing Abdelilah Benkirane, also of the PJD. However, the party appeared marginalized in the new cabinet formed in April. Technocrats loyal to the palace obtained key economic portfolios, and the PJD was similarly excluded from the "strategic ministries" of interior, foreign affairs, justice, and Islamic affairs.

In another sign of the palace's dominant role, the king dismissed three ministers and other senior officials in October for poor implementation of development projects in the Rif region.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4

The lower house of Parliament, the Chamber of Representatives, has 395 directly elected members who serve for five-year terms. Of these, 305 are elected from 92 multi-member constituencies. The remaining 90 are elected from a single nationwide constituency, with 60 seats reserved for women and 30 for people under the age of 40. Members of the 120-seat upper house, the Chamber of Counselors, are chosen by an electoral college—made up of professional, labor, and business organizations as well as local and regional officials—to serve six-year terms.

In the October 2016 parliamentary elections, the PJD placed first with 125 seats in the Chamber of Representatives, followed by the royalist Party of Authenticity and Modernity (PAM) with 102. Both increased their share of seats compared with 2011. Istiqlal fell by 14 seats to 46; the National Rally of Independents (RNI) declined by 15 seats to 37; the

Popular Movement (MP) declined by 5 seats to 27; and the Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP) declined by 19 seats to 20. Official turnout was 43 percent of registered voters, lower than the 45 percent in 2011 and representing only 23 percent of eligible voters. Authorities placed limits on some foreign observers, and instances of vote buying and other irregularities were reported.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 2 / 4

The constitutional and legal framework allows for competitive legislative elections, but the transparency of the process is not guaranteed in practice. Elections are overseen by the Interior Ministry, with some participation by the Justice Ministry, rather than an independent electoral commission. Prior to the 2016 elections, then justice minister Mustapha Ramid of the PJD accused then interior minister Mohamed Hassad, a technocrat appointed by the king, of manipulating the upcoming vote, saying he was making decisions on electoral administration without consultation.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 6 / 16 (-1)

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 2 / 4

Morocco has a multiparty system, but the parties are generally unable to assert themselves relative to the power of the palace. Justice and Charity, an illegal Islamist movement, does not participate in elections, though the authorities largely tolerate its other activities. Of the two largest parties, the PJD polls strongly in urban areas, while the PAM dominates rural areas. Smaller parties tend to be unstable and are sometimes built around the personalities of their leaders.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 2 / 4

Prior to 2011, the PJD was a vocal opposition party, and its entry into government shows that the system allows some rotation of power. However, this opportunity is permanently limited by the presence and influence of the monarchy, both formally and in practice.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 1 / 4

The constitution and informal practice give the king considerable influence over political affairs, including government formation after elections. The monarch and his associates also wield enormous private economic power that can be used to shape electoral outcomes more indirectly through patronage networks.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 1 / 4 (-1)

The political system features universal suffrage, but parties based on religious, ethnic, or regional identity are prohibited, and the concerns and interests of women and the indigenous population are not adequately addressed.

The indigenous peoples grouped under the term Amazigh or Berber have long had an uneasy relationship with the state. Some 40 percent of the population is Amazigh, and the vast majority of Moroccans have Amazigh roots. Prominent Amazigh elites enjoy access

to the monarchy and also have their interests represented in Parliament, but the bulk of the indigenous population is marginalized. Unrest throughout 2017 in Al-Hoceima, the surrounding Rif region, and other cities across the country stemmed in large part from the inequities experienced by Amazigh residents.

A system of reserved seats for women is meant to encourage their participation in the electoral process at both the national and local level, partly offsetting traditional social pressures that deter such engagement. Women won a greater share of seats in Parliament in 2016, taking 21 percent of the House of Representatives, compared with 17 percent in 2011. Nevertheless, these women remain underrepresented in leadership positions.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 due to ongoing protests centered on the Amazigh population, especially in the northern Rif region, which illustrated the political system's failure to address the interests of such communities.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 3 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 1 / 4

While elected officials are duly installed in government, their power to shape policy is sharply constrained by the role of the king, who sets national and foreign policy and commands the armed forces and intelligence services.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

Corruption is rife in state institutions and the economy. Despite the government's rhetoric about combating corruption, it has a mixed record on enforcement. The Central Authority for the Prevention of Corruption (ICPC) was strengthened under a 2015 law and renamed as the National Body for Integrity, Prevention, and the Fight against Corruption (INPPLC), but as of late 2017 its new leadership had yet to be appointed.

The government initiated plans for a National Anticorruption Strategy in 2016, but there were also delays in forming a National Anticorruption Commission to administer the strategy. In July 2017, Transparency Morocco petitioned the government to allow members of civil society groups to join the commission, and under a law adopted in September to establish the institution, the government agreed to reserve two seats for nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 1 / 4

Overall transparency is limited. The government publishes budget and financial information online, and public officials—including parliament members, judges, and civil servants—are required to declare their assets. However, the monarchy itself, with its vast array of economic interests, is not subject to these rules.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 25 / 60 (-1)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 7 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4

The state dominates the broadcast media, but more affluent segments of society have access to foreign satellite television channels. Although the independent press enjoys a significant degree of freedom when reporting on economic and social policies, the authorities use an array of financial and legal mechanisms to punish critical journalists, particularly those who focus on the king, his family, the status of Western Sahara, or Islam. The

authorities also occasionally disrupt websites and internet platforms; bloggers are harassed for posting content that offends the monarchy.

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) criticized the government's efforts to suppress reporting from the restive Rif region during 2017, and in November it called on the authorities to respect the rights of journalists and media workers who reported mistreatment in detention. One journalist, Hamid al-Mahdaoui of the online outlet Badil, was arrested in July while traveling to cover a protest near Al-Hoceima. He was initially sentenced to three months in prison for allegedly provocative speech, but the penalty was extended to one year after a review of his appeal in September. Al-Mahdaoui was one of four journalists arrested during the year who remained in detention as of December, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists. Foreign journalists and researchers investigating the protests were harassed and in some cases expelled from the country.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 2 / 4

Nearly all Moroccans are Muslims, and the king, identified as “commander of the faithful” in the constitution, has ultimate authority over religious affairs. Imams are required to obtain state certification, and mosques are monitored by the authorities. The government operates a well-financed training program for imams and female religious counselors tasked with promoting a state-sanctioned version of Islam, which some critics charge is also intended to promote political quiescence. Despite deep societal prejudices, the small Jewish community is permitted to practice its faith.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 2 / 4

Universities generally provide a space for open discussion, but professors practice self-censorship when dealing with sensitive topics like Western Sahara, the monarchy, and Islam. Salafists, adherents of a fundamentalist form of Islam, are closely monitored in universities.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 2 / 4

There is some freedom of private discussion, but state surveillance of online activity and personal communications has been a growing concern in recent years, and the arrests of journalists, bloggers, and activists for critical speech serve as a deterrent to uninhibited debate among the broader population.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 5 / 12 (-1)

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 1 / 4 (-1)

Freedom of assembly is restricted. The authorities sometimes use excessive force and violence to disperse even peaceful protests, and harass activists involved in organizing demonstrations that criticize the government.

These abuses intensified during 2017 in response to continued unrest that began with the 2016 death of Al-Hoceima fish vendor Mouhcine Fikri, which was captured on video. His stock of swordfish had been confiscated by authorities because it was caught out of season; when he climbed into a garbage truck to retrieve it, the trash compactor was turned on—allegedly on orders from a police officer—and he was killed. The incident was seen as a powerful example of the daily indignities suffered by ordinary people at the hands of the state, particularly in the Rif region. The ensuing protest movement, known as Hirak Rif,

gained support from activists in other parts of Morocco. For example, more than 10,000 people took to the streets of Rabat in June 2017 to express solidarity with Hirak Rif, and further protests were held in Casablanca in October.

The government reacted harshly to the movement, dispersing assemblies and carrying out hundreds of arrests during the year. Authorities arrested Hirak Rif leader Nasser Zefzafi in May, and fellow activists Najib Ahamjik and Silya Ziani in June. The king pardoned some protesters, but others received sentences of up to 20 years in prison, and many detainees alleged beatings by police.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 due to the authorities' attempts to suppress protests centered on the Rif region, which featured reports of police violence and mass arrests of organizers and participants.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 2 / 4

Civil society organizations are quite active, but they are subject to legal harassment, travel restrictions, and other impediments to their work. The authorities routinely deny registration to NGOs with links to Justice and Charity or that assert the rights of marginalized communities. Officials also raise obstacles to events held by local human rights groups and increasingly expel or bar entry to representatives of international human rights organizations.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

Workers are permitted to form and join independent trade unions, and the 2004 labor law prevents employers from punishing workers who do so, but there are undue legal and employer restrictions on collective bargaining and strikes. The authorities sometimes forcibly break up labor-related protests. Unions are often closely affiliated with political parties.

F. RULE OF LAW: 6 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4

The court system is not independent of the monarch, who chairs the Supreme Council of the Judiciary. In practice, the courts are regularly used to punish perceived opponents of the government, including dissenting Islamists, human rights and anticorruption activists, and critics of Moroccan rule in Western Sahara.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 2 / 4

Due process is not consistently upheld. Law enforcement officers often violate legal and procedural safeguards against arbitrary arrest and detention, and many convictions rely on confessions that may have been coerced. Pretrial detainees are reportedly held beyond a one-year limit in practice.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 2 / 4

Cases of excessive force by police and torture in custody continue to occur. A number of the Hirak Rif protesters detained during 2017 reported being beaten and injured during arrest, and some prominent detainees—including Zefzafi, who remained in detention at year's end—were subjected to prolonged solitary confinement while awaiting trial. Prisons often suffer from overcrowding.

Terrorism remains a threat to physical security in the country, though the authorities have had some success in preventing attacks. Security forces reportedly broke up local cells of the Islamic State militant group during 2017.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

Constitutional reforms in 2011 granted official status to Tamazight languages, and they and Amazigh culture have been promoted in schools. Nevertheless, Amazigh and other communities that do not identify with the dominant Arab culture tend to face educational and economic disadvantages. Civil society groups that promote Amazigh rights have faced government interference.

Gender equality was also recognized in the 2011 constitution, but women continue to face significant discrimination at the societal level and are seriously underrepresented in the labor force. LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people face harsh discrimination and occasional violence. Same-sex sexual relations can be punished with up to three years in prison.

The government has granted temporary residency permits to refugees and migrants as part of an effort to regularize their status and provide them with basic services. However, it had yet to adopt a law that would allow formal grants of asylum as of 2017, and authorities continued to face accusations of excessive force and other abuses against migrants seeking to enter the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 7 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 2 / 4

Moroccan law guarantees freedom of movement and the ability to change one's place of employment or education, but in practice poor economic conditions and corruption limit these rights. Widespread bribery, nepotism, and misconduct within the educational sector constrain merit-based advancement.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

Well over a third of the land is collectively owned by tribes and managed by the Interior Ministry, and in recent years it has been subject to private development without fair compensation to previous occupants. Moreover, under tribal rules of inheritance, women cannot hold the rights to occupy and use such lands, leaving them more vulnerable to displacement. Ordinary inheritance rules also put women at a disadvantage, generally granting them half the property of an equivalent male heir.

Private business activity is hampered in part by the dominant role of the king and his family. Among other assets, they have a majority stake in the National Investment Company (SNI), a massive conglomerate with businesses in virtually every economic sector, including mining, tourism, food, banking, construction, and energy.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

The 2004 family code granted women increased rights in the areas of marriage, divorce, and child custody, though a number of inequities and restrictions remain, and implementation of the code has been uneven. Spousal rape is not a crime, and domestic violence is

rarely reported or punished due to social stigma. All extramarital sexual activity is illegal, which deters rape victims from bringing charges, among other repercussions.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

Poverty is widespread, and economic opportunities are scarce for a large portion of the population. Two incidents late in 2017 highlighted the hardships faced by some communities. In November, some 15 people in the town of Sidi Boulaalam died in the crush of a crowd that had gathered to receive food distributed by a local donor. In December, two young men died while illegally extracting coal from a defunct mine near the town of Jerada, leading to protests about local economic conditions.

Child laborers, especially girls working as domestic helpers, are denied basic rights. A 2016 labor law for household workers required written contracts, set a minimum age of 18 (with a five-year phase-in period during which those aged 16 and 17 are allowed to work), stipulated weekly rest periods, and provided minimum wage guidelines. The quality of enforcement of the law, which took effect in August 2017, remains to be seen. Separately, Parliament adopted a law in 2016 to criminalize human trafficking; existing measures had defined and banned only some forms of trafficking and left many victims unprotected.

Mozambique

Population: 27,200,000

Capital: Maputo

Political Rights Rating: 4

Civil Liberties Rating: 4

Freedom Rating: 4.0

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: Mozambique has been governed by the same political party since its 1975 independence, and the ruling party's unbroken incumbency has allowed it to establish significant control over state institutions. The opposition has disputed the results of recent elections, and its armed wing fought a low-level conflict against government forces that persisted until a truce was signed in December 2016. Mozambique also struggles with corruption, and journalists who report on it and other sensitive issues risk violent attacks.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- The December 2016 cease-fire that halted fighting between the government's FRELIMO forces and opposition RENAMO fighters was maintained throughout 2017, and dialogue between President Filipe Nyusi and opposition leader Afonso Dhlakama continued throughout the year.
- In October, Islamic extremists attacked several police stations in the northern districts of Mocimboa da Praia and Palma, killing two police officers. In response to the attacks, more than 300 people suspected of having extremist ties were detained and seven mosques were closed.
- The public debt scandal that broke in 2016, in which it was revealed that the government had taken out almost \$2 billion in secret loans, continued to roil

Mozambican politics. An audit report released in June indicated that \$500 million in debt remained unaccounted for.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 20 / 40**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 6 / 12****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4**

The president, who appoints the prime minister, is elected by popular vote for up to two five-year terms. President Filipe Nyusi of the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO) won the presidential contest in 2014 with 57 percent of the vote. Voting was marred by some incidents of reported ballot box stuffing, inaccuracies in the voting register, and irregularities in the tabulation process in some precincts. Despite these flaws, international observers asserted that the election was largely credible. Afonso Dhlakama, the Mozambique National Resistance (RENAMO) candidate, denounced the results as fraudulent and called for new elections.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4

Members of the 250-seat unicameral Assembly of the Republic are elected to five-year terms. The 2014 legislative elections were held concurrently with the presidential election. Incidents of ballot box stuffing, inaccuracies in the voting register, and irregularities in the tabulation process marred the election. International observers, while acknowledging these flaws, determined that overall, the election was conducted credibly.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 2 / 4

Elections are administered by the National Election Commission (CNE). FRELIMO controls the process by which the CNE members are appointed, which critics contend affects the impartiality of the body. Reforms to the electoral code passed in 2014 changed the CNE's composition to include four RENAMO officials and three civil society representatives, which was intended to mitigate distrust of the body. The CNE is supported by the Technical Secretariat for Electoral Administration (STAE), which handles the technical details of elections. STAE performs well generally, but is viewed with distrust by opposition parties and is known to favor FRELIMO.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 9 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 2 / 4**

The right to form political parties is largely respected. A preponderance of parties compete, although most lack resources to campaign effectively and build a public following. Opposition leaders can face harassment and threats for speaking out against the government. Authorities sometimes deny political parties the right to hold peaceful demonstrations. In May 2017, police attempted to block members of the Democratic Movement of Mozambique (MDM) from participating in a march organized by a leading union; authorities later relented and allowed MDM to participate.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 2 / 4

FRELIMO has remained in power since 1992. However, opposition parties made major gains in the 2014 elections: FRELIMO lost 47 seats, while RENAMO gained 38 seats. At the provincial level, FRELIMO suffered a net loss of 219 seats, and RENAMO won some provinces decisively.

FRELIMO has been documented by international observers using public resources to campaign, providing it with an unfair electoral advantage. During the 2014 campaign period, opposition parties had difficulty entering some FRELIMO strongholds due to hostile local crowds.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 2 / 4

Unelected elites in FRELIMO, including former president Armando Guebuza, retain great influence and play a large role in shaping the party's platform. Guebuza has criticized President Nyusi's political positions, including his decision to engage in negotiations with RENAMO to end the conflict, and has attempted to undermine the current president. Business leaders have close ties to government and influence the positions of elected officials, including President Nyusi, on trade and economic issues.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

Ethnic minorities are generally able to participate fully in political life, and people from several ethnic groups hold high-level government positions. FRELIMO's support base lies in the north, and northerners therefore dominate the government while ethnic groups from other regions, such as the Ndau, are underrepresented.

Women participate robustly in politics, both as voters and candidates for office. Of the 250 members of parliament, 39 percent are women, one of the highest rates in the world. However, cultural factors still inhibit the participation of many women, and women are underrepresented in local government positions.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 5 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 2 / 4

Although RENAMO members initially refused to take their seats in parliament after the 2014 elections, they were ultimately seated in early 2015. Power is highly centralized in the executive branch, which dominates the parliament and all other branches of government. Therefore, there are few checks on presidential power.

Foreign donors have a significant influence on policymaking, specifically as it relates to economic policy and public-sector reform. Business elites connected to FRELIMO have a strong impact on government decisions, particularly on foreign investment in the oil, gas, and agriculture sectors.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

Corruption remains widespread at the highest levels of government, and safeguards are ineffective. Patronage networks are deeply entrenched and compete for state resources. The anticorruption legal framework is undermined by a variety of loopholes. For example, embezzlement is not included in the Anti-Corruption Law. The judiciary is known to be corrupt itself, which further hinders the enforcement of anticorruption laws.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

Despite the passage of a freedom of information law in 2014, it is difficult to attain government information in practice. In May 2017, two nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) released a report claiming that out of 49 government entities they contacted requesting information, only 18 percent responded within 21 days, as required by law.

Mozambique remained embroiled in a public debt scandal in 2017. In 2016, it emerged that the Mozambican government had taken out almost \$2 billion in secret loans in 2013 and 2014. The revelation outraged the Mozambican public, exacerbated an existing economic crisis, and prompted the World Bank and IMF to suspend budget assistance to the country. In June 2017, an independent audit determined that over \$500 million in debt remained unaccounted for.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 32 / 60 (-1)**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 9 / 16 (-2)****D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4**

State-run media's influence remains strongest, though smaller independent outlets have increasingly provided important coverage of the conflict and corruption. Authorities often direct state-run outlets to provide coverage favorable to the government. Journalists frequently experience government pressure, harassment, and intimidation, which leads to self-censorship. The government is known to retaliate against journalists who criticize it by cancelling public advertising contracts.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4 (-1)

Religious freedom is generally respected, but the government response to attacks by armed Islamists has alarmed human rights activists. In October 2017, a group of Muslim extremists attacked police stations in Cabo Delgado, a northern province, killing at least two police officers. Muslims reported feeling targeted after the government responded to the attacks by sending troops to the region. More than 300 people were detained, including Muslim leaders, and seven mosques were closed. Authorities claimed that the only mosques closed were connected to the militant group responsible for the attacks.

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 because of the government's disproportionate response to terrorism, including the closure of mosques in areas that are majority Muslim and the detention of more than 300 people.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 2 / 4

There are no legal restrictions on academic freedom. However, university professors are hesitant to criticize the government and frequently practice self-censorship in regard to sensitive or controversial topics. Indoctrination at primary schools has been reported, particularly in Gaza, where some teachers added FRELIMO propaganda to their curricula.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 2 / 4 (-1)

Civil society groups claim that authorities monitor criticism of the government posted online. In 2017, people expressing views critical of the government online have reportedly received threatening Facebook, WhatsApp, and text messages. Civil servants are cautious in

expressing political views over email and on social networks, as there have been reports of government intelligence agents monitoring the emails of opposition party members.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 due to reports of online harassment of individuals who express views critical of the government.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 7 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 2 / 4

Freedom of assembly is constitutionally guaranteed, but the right to assemble is subject to notification and timing restrictions. The government frequently disallows protests on the basis of errors in the organizers' official applications.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 3 / 4

NGOs operate openly but can face bureaucratic hurdles in registering with the government. At the end of 2017, the registration of the Mozambican Association for the Defense of Sexual Minorities (LAMBDA) had still not been approved by the government. LAMBDA first applied for registration in 2008, and has had no success in attaining government approval, despite multiple resubmissions.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

Workers have the right to form unions, but a number of restrictions impede the right to strike and make the practice rare. Public-sector workers are not allowed to strike. In July 2017, administrative and technical staff at Eduardo Mondlane University (UEM) organized a strike to protest the nonpayment of a bonus. The university declared the strike illegal, and riot police broke up the picket line using tear gas and rubber bullets.

F. RULE OF LAW: 7 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 2 / 4

Judicial independence is hampered by the dominance of the executive branch. The attorney general is directly appointed by the president, with no legislative confirmation process. Pressure from FRELIMO's leadership often impedes investigations into corruption and fraud. Former president Guebuza and members of his administration have been credibly implicated in fraud and embezzlement scandals, but there have been no prosecutions. Observers claim that this judicial inaction results from the influence of FRELIMO's leadership.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 2 / 4

Although due process rights are constitutionally guaranteed, these rights are not always respected in practice. RENAMO leaders assert that the police arrest members of their party arbitrarily. Due to resource constraints and an understaffed judiciary, lengthy pre-trial detentions are common. In 2017, reports surfaced of the government entering private homes and offices, as well as surveilling phone calls and emails, without warrants or proper authorization.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 1 / 4

Although the December 2016 truce to halt more than a year of fighting between RENAMO and FRELIMO held up throughout 2017, tensions between the leaders of both parties

remained high. Negotiations continued between the two sides through 2017, but at the end of the year, a peace agreement had not been reached. Human rights abuses committed by FRELIMO forces in 2016, including the murders of civilians perceived to have backed RENAMO forces, did not result in any prosecutions.

Prison conditions improved in 2017 with the opening of several prisons that reduced overcrowding, but many prisons operate well above their prescribed capacity. Poor sanitation and a lack of healthcare still plague most of Mozambique's prison facilities.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

Mozambican police reportedly discriminate against Zimbabwean, Somali, and Chinese immigrants. People with albinism continued to face discrimination, persecution, and violence. At least 13 albino people were murdered in 2017. Government efforts to protect people with albinism have been inadequate—a government strategy to prevent more murders was not implemented by the end of 2017.

Women experience discrimination in education and employment—on average, women are less educated and earn less than men. Sexual harassment in the workplace and at schools remains widespread.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 9 / 16 (+1)

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4 (+1)

As dialogue between the government and RENAMO continued throughout 2017, violence in the central region ended, which made travel throughout the country easier. Although Mozambicans face no formal restrictions on domestic or international travel, movement is hampered by the presence of checkpoints manned by corrupt police officials, who often harass and demand bribes from travelers.

Score Change: The score improved from 2 to 3 because the cease-fire has improved mobility across the country.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

The law does not recognize private property; citizens instead obtain land use rights from the government. Most citizens are uninformed about the land law and fail to properly register their holdings. The government must approve all formal transfers of land use rights in an often opaque and protracted process. As a result, most land transactions occur on an extralegal market.

Under customary law, women usually cannot inherit property. The government does not frequently intervene to protect women's property rights when inheritance is denied.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Domestic violence is pervasive in Mozambique and laws against it are infrequently enforced. According to the Ministry of Women and Social Action, at least 54 percent of women will endure some form of physical or sexual violence at some point in their lives. Early and forced marriages remain common in rural areas. The International Center for Research on Women reports that 56 percent of girls marry before reaching the age of 18.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Since 2012, human trafficking has been on the rise. Women and girls from rural areas are drawn into sex trafficking and domestic servitude. The number of investigations for trafficking decreased in 2017, but the number of prosecutions increased.

Child labor is permitted for children between 15 and 17 years old with a government permit. However, children under 15 frequently labor in the agriculture, mining, and fishing sectors, where they often work long hours and do not attend school. According to an August 2017 report released by the Ministry of Labor, Employment, and Social Security, more than one million children between the ages of 7 and 17 are actively employed.

Myanmar

Population: 52,400,000

Capital: Nay Pyi Taw

Political Rights Rating: 5

Civil Liberties Rating: 5

Freedom Rating: 5.0

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: Myanmar's democratic transition now appears uncertain under the leadership of the National League for Democracy (NLD), which came to power in relatively free elections in 2015, but has since failed to uphold fundamental human rights or bring security to areas affected by militant insurgencies and the army's offensives against them. In 2017, a military clearance operation in response to an armed insurgency forced more than 650,000 members of the country's Muslim Rohingya minority to flee to Bangladesh, in what the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights called "a textbook example of ethnic cleansing." The military retains significant influence over politics.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Military forces launched security clearance operations against Rohingya communities in Rakhine State, which reportedly included torture, rape, indiscriminate killing, and the burning of villages, worsening already dire humanitarian conditions and causing an outflow of more than 650,000 Rohingya refugees to Bangladesh. NLD leader Aung San Suu Kyi drew withering criticism from international observers for her reluctance to explicitly condemn violence by the military against the Rohingya.
 - In January, U Ko Ni, a prominent Muslim lawyer, democracy advocate, and advisor to the NLD, was assassinated at the Yangon airport, in what was interpreted as a warning to democracy and rights activists in the country.
 - Prosecutions for defamation under the 2013 Telecommunications Act continued under the NLD government. Though the parliament amended the law to reduce the maximum prison sentence for defamation to two years from three, lawmakers chose to retain the key restrictive elements.
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POLITICAL RIGHTS: 13 / 40 (-1)**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 5 / 12****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4**

The legislature elects the president, who is chief of state and head of government. Military members have the right to nominate one of the three presidential candidates, and the elected members of each chamber nominate the other two. The candidate with the largest number of votes in a combined parliamentary vote wins the presidency; the other two candidates become vice presidents. Htin Kyaw, the NLD candidate, won the presidency in the 2016 election.

NLD leader Aung San Suu Kyi holds the powerful position of state counselor, a post akin to that of a prime minister. The NLD created the office and named Aung San Suu Kyi to it in 2016, through legislation designed to circumvent constitutional provisions that prevented her from running for president.

The commander in chief of the armed forces holds broad powers and is selected through opaque processes by the military-dominated National Defense and Security Council (NDSC).

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4

Under the 2008 military-drafted constitution, the bicameral Assembly of the Union consists of the 440-seat lower House of Representatives and the 224-seat upper House of Nationalities. Representatives serve five-year terms. A quarter of the seats in both houses are reserved for the military and filled through appointment by the commander in chief of the armed forces.

International electoral observers concluded that the 2015 legislative polls were generally credible and that the outcome reflected the will of the people, despite a campaign period marked by anti-Muslim rhetoric, the exclusion of Muslim candidates, and the disenfranchisement of hundreds of thousands of Rohingya Muslims. The NLD won 135 of the 168 elected seats in the upper house, 255 of 330 elected seats in the lower house, and 496 of 659 seats across 14 state and regional legislatures. The military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) placed second with 12 seats in the upper house, 30 in the lower house, and 76 in the states and regions. (Myanmar's first-past-the-post system allowed the NLD to translate its popular vote margin into a much larger majority in terms of seats; it took 57 percent of the popular vote, compared with the USDP's 28 percent.) The remaining seats were captured by ethnic minority and other parties and independents.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 1 / 4

Numerous legal provisions unduly influence electoral results. A quarter of all legislative seats are unelected, and instead appointed by the military leadership. Rigid citizenship laws have resulted in the disenfranchisement of a significant portion of the population. Citizenship laws and excessive residency requirements prohibit many people from standing for office.

The Union Election Commission (UEC), which is responsible for election administration, operates opaquely, and regulations allow it to adjudicate complaints against itself. Election monitors have expressed concern about the potential for early voting procedures to facilitate fraudulent voting.

Constitutional provisions barred Aung San Suu Kyi from becoming president due to the foreign nationality of her immediate family members, thus prompting the NLD to pass legislation establishing her role as “state counselor.”

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 8 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 2 / 4**

New political parties were generally allowed to register and compete in the 2015 elections, which featured fewer restrictions on party organization and voter mobilization than the 2010 vote. Only sporadic interference from government officials was reported. Ninety-one parties competed in the elections, and many of them, including the NLD, convened meetings and large rallies throughout the country.

However, some legal provisions can be invoked to restrict parties’ operations. The constitution contains a requirement that political parties be loyal to the state, which has the potential for abuse. Laws allow for penalties, including deregistration, against political parties that accept support from foreign governments or religious bodies, or which are deemed to have abused religion for political purposes or disrespected the constitution.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 3 / 4

As evidenced by the NLD’s overwhelming parliamentary victory in 2015, there is a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support and gain power through elections. However, the military still retains substantial influence over politics under a non-democratic constitution.

B3. Are the people’s political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 2 / 4

The results of the 2015 election and subsequent transition talks suggest a waning ability or determination by the military to influence electoral outcomes. Nevertheless, the military retains considerable power over political affairs, and many former military officers hold positions in the country’s bureaucracy. The 2008 constitution allows the military to dissolve the civilian government and parliament and rule directly if the president declares a state of emergency. It has the right to administer its own affairs.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 1 / 4

Minority groups face restrictions on their political rights and electoral opportunities. In particular, citizenship, residency, and party registration laws disadvantage the mainly Muslim Rohingya, who were rendered stateless by a 1982 law. In 2015, under pressure from Buddhist nationalists, the president issued a decree revoking the temporary identification cards, or “white cards,” that had allowed Rohingya to vote in previous elections. A Constitutional Tribunal ruling later in 2015 then found that voting by white-card holders was unconstitutional. Nearly all Rohingya were consequently left off the voter rolls for the 2015 elections. Additionally, a sitting Rohingya lawmaker from the USDP was barred from running in the polls.

Other Muslims with citizenship documents were able to vote, but of more than 6,000 candidates on the final list, only about 28 were Muslim. No Muslim sits in the current parliament.

While ethnic parties generally fared poorly in the 2015 legislative elections, the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD) and the Arakan National Party (ANP) performed well in their respective states.

Women remain underrepresented in the government and civil service, due largely to social pressures that discourage their political participation. Notwithstanding the prominence of Aung San Suu Kyi, whose father led Myanmar's independence struggle, few women have achieved ministerial-level appointments.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 4 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 2 / 4

Though the NLD began in 2016 to lay out plans for policy changes among its various ministry portfolios, the military remains a dominant force in policymaking, particularly through its constitutional control over the Defense, Home Affairs, and Border Affairs Ministries. The military effectively controls at least six seats on the powerful 11-member NDSC. Over one-fifth of the total budget is devoted to the military.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

Corruption is rampant at both the national and local levels and recent government initiatives aimed at curbing it have generally not produced meaningful results. For example, an Anti-Corruption Commission established in 2014 has only penalized a handful of people.

Privatization of state-owned companies and other economic reforms in recent years have allegedly benefited family members and associates of senior officials. The government has ignored tax evasion by the country's wealthiest companies and individuals.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 1 / 4

The government does not operate with openness and transparency. A draft Right to Information Law developed in 2016 remains stalled in the parliament. Some information about the budget has been released in recent years, and saw limited parliamentary scrutiny.

ADDITIONAL DISCRETIONARY POLITICAL RIGHTS QUESTION

ADD Q: Is the government or occupying power deliberately changing the ethnic composition of a country or territory so as to destroy a culture or tip the political balance in favor of another group? -4 / 0 (-1)

The government has long used violence, displacement, and other tactics to alter the demographics of states with ethnic unrest or insurgencies. The Rohingya in Rakhine State have faced particularly harsh restrictions for decades, including limits on family size and the ability and right to marry, the denial of legal status and social services, and disenfranchisement and loss of citizenship. Human rights experts and the United Nations have labeled the abuses against the Rohingya as crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing, while some analysts have argued that they constitute either genocide or a precursor to genocide.

Repression of the Rohingya escalated in August 2017, after armed men from the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), formerly known as Harakah al-Yaqin, attacked multiple police posts with rudimentary weapons. Burmese military forces launched a severe counteroperation on Rohingya communities across the northern part of the state, leading to reports of torture, rape, indiscriminate killings, and the burning of villages, worsening already-dire

humanitarian conditions, and causing an outflow of more than 650,000 Rohingya refugees to Bangladesh. In September, the head of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights deemed the situation “a textbook example of ethnic cleansing.” NLD leader Aung San Suu Kyi has drawn withering criticism from international observers for her reluctance to explicitly condemn violence against the Rohingya.

Score Change: The score declined from -3 to -4 because of renewed violence against Rohingya communities in Rakhine state, which resulted in the forced displacement of over 650,000 people to Bangladesh amid reports of torture, rape, and indiscriminate killing by military forces.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 18 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 6 / 16 (-1)

D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4

Media freedoms have improved since the official end of government censorship and prepublication approval in 2012. However, existing laws allow authorities to deny licenses to outlets whose reporting is considered insulting to religion or a national security danger, and the threat of prosecution under criminal defamation laws encourages self-censorship. Journalists and social media users continued to face defamation cases in 2017. Surveillance of journalists by the military-controlled Home Affairs Ministry remains a common practice.

Reporters covering sensitive topics risk harassment, physical violence, and imprisonment. In June 2017, three journalists covering an antidrug rally conducted by an ethnic armed organization were arrested and imprisoned on junta-era charges of unlawful association, despite a provision in the 2014 News Media Law that exempts journalists from detention while covering conflicts. Two Reuters journalists were imprisoned and charged in December under the State Secrets Act while covering the conflict in Rakhine State.

Previous constraints on internet access have largely unraveled, and the proliferation of smartphones has rapidly increased usage. However, internet activity is still subject to criminal punishment under several broadly worded legal provisions, particularly those in the Electronic Transactions Law.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 1 / 4

The constitution provides for freedom of religion. It distinguishes Buddhism as the majority religion, but also recognizes Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and animism. The government occasionally interferes with religious assemblies and attempts to control the Buddhist clergy. Authorities have also discriminated against minority religious groups, refusing to grant them permission to hold gatherings and restricting educational activities, proselytizing, and construction of houses of worship.

Anti-Muslim hate speech and discrimination has been amplified by social media, and some state institutions and mainstream news websites. Ma Ba Tha, or the Committee for the Protection of Nationality and Religion, agitates for the protection of Buddhist privileges, urges boycotts against Muslim-run businesses, and disseminates anti-Muslim propaganda. Reports have shown systematic discrimination against Muslims in obtaining identity cards, as well as the spread of “Muslim-free” villages with the complicity of officials.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 1 / 4

Political activity on university campuses is generally restricted. Student unions are discouraged, have no formal registration mechanisms, and are viewed with suspicion by authorities.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 2 / 4 (-1)

Free private discussion is constrained by state surveillance and laws that inhibit online speech. Numerous defamation cases involving online commentary have been filed under Article 66(d) of the 2013 Telecommunications Law, which includes broadly worded bans on online activity deemed to be threatening or defamatory. The rights organization Free Expression Myanmar found 106 cases of complaints made under Article 66(d) of the Telecommunications Act between November 2015 and November 2017, most of which were filed under the NLD government. The law was amended in August 2017 to reduce the maximum penalty for violations to two years, from three previously.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 due to continued arrests under Article 66(d) of the Telecommunications Law, and the parliament's move to preserve its repressive nature during an amendment process.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 6 / 12 (+1)

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 2 / 4

Under the 2014 revised Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Law, unauthorized demonstrations are punishable with up to six months in prison; a variety of other vaguely worded violations can draw lesser penalties. An antigovernment protest by farmers in April 2017 was permitted, while in February a medical student was arrested for protesting against violence in Rakhine State.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 2 / 4

The 2014 Association Registration Law features simple, voluntary registration procedures for local and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and no restrictions or criminal punishments for noncompliance. Although the law was seen a positive development, in 2015 the Home Affairs Ministry issued implementing regulations that required NGOs to obtain government approval prior to registration, drawing sharp criticism from civil society leaders.

Surveillance of activists by the military-controlled Home Affairs Ministry continued in 2017.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4 (+1)

Independent trade unions were banned until 2011, and while union organizers continue to face retaliation for their work, union activity has nevertheless taken root in Myanmar. In recent years, factory workers have held strikes in Yangon with fewer repercussions and arrests than in the past. And in late 2017, in response to activism by workers, a government committee approved a 33 percent increase in the national daily minimum wage to approximately \$3.56, which was expected to take effect in 2018.

Score Change: The score improved from 1 to 2 because labor activity has increased gradually over recent years, and labor activists have faced fewer arrests and other repercussions.

F. RULE OF LAW: 1 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 0 / 4

The judiciary is not independent. Judges are appointed or approved by the government and adjudicate cases according to its decrees.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

Administrative detention laws allow individuals to be held without charge, trial, or access to legal counsel for up to five years if deemed a threat to state security or sovereignty. A 2017 assessment by the British-based NGO Justice Base, which promotes the rule of law, found that the country performed poorly in nearly every measure of international fair trial standards. According to a report by the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma), at the end of November, 228 individuals were being repressed due to political activities, of whom 46 were currently serving sentences, 49 were in pretrial detention, and 133 were awaiting trial outside of prison.

In 2016, the parliament repealed the 1950 Emergency Provisions Act, which the previous military government had invoked frequently to silence and imprison dissidents.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 0 / 4

In January, U Ko Ni, a prominent Muslim lawyer, democracy advocate, and advisor to the NLD, was assassinated at the Yangon airport, in what was interpreted as a warning to democracy and rights activists in the country. He had reportedly received death threats from nationalists prior to his murder. While several people were arrested in connection with his killing, at year's end no one had been convicted of it.

The NLD government's push for the creation of a more comprehensive peace mechanism continued to be hampered by military offensives against various ethnic rebel groups, particularly in Shan and Kachin States, attacks by such groups against security forces, and continued divisions among signatories and non-signatories to a 2015 national cease-fire agreement. Reports of indiscriminate shelling, extrajudicial killings, forced disappearances, and other abuses by the military continued, as militant groups engaged in forced disappearances and forced recruitment. Areas in the north remain riddled with land mines planted by both militants and the army. Authorities at times prevented aid groups from reaching populations affected by violence.

Prison conditions are frequently life-threatening.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 0 / 4

Some of the country's worst human rights abuses, commonly committed by government troops, are against ethnic and religious minorities. The government's failure to protect victims, conduct investigations, and punish perpetrators is well documented.

In August 2017, military forces launched a supposed antiterrorist clearance operation against Rohingya communities in northern Rakhine State, which reportedly included torture, rape, indiscriminate killing, and the burning of villages, worsening already dire humanitarian conditions and causing an outflow of more than 650,000 Rohingya refugees to Bangladesh. The NLD government in June refused entry to a UN-mandated fact-finding mission commissioned in the wake of similar attacks and refugee displacement that took place in 2016.

The anti-Muslim Ma Ba Tha and the similar 969 movement have been accused of stoking outbreaks of violence with inflammatory sermons, leaflets, and other materials, and local

government officials have actively sought out administrative loopholes to destroy Muslim schools and houses of worship.

A number of laws create a hostile environment for LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people. Same-sex sexual conduct is criminalized under the penal code, and police subject LGBT people to harassment, extortion, and physical and sexual abuse.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 5 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 2 / 4

Freedom of internal travel is generally respected outside of conflict zones. Numerous exiled activists who returned to the country have experienced substantial delays and evasion from government authorities when attempting to renew visas and residency permits. Illegal toll collection by state and nonstate actors has been a problem in some areas. The parliament voted in 2016 to repeal a long-standing rule requiring overnight houseguests to be registered with local authorities. Guests staying for more than a month must still be registered.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 1 / 4

Contentious disputes over land grabbing and business projects that violate human rights continued in 2017. Instances of forced eviction and displacement, lack of sufficient compensation, and direct violence by state security officials abound. The NLD government's Central Committee on Confiscated Farmlands and Other Lands, formed in 2016 has been accused of releasing data that omits land grabs initiated by the military, other government bodies, and corporations.

In December 2017, President Htin Kyaw approved a law that would simplify processes for establishing private businesses, though it had not been implemented by year's end.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 1 / 4

Laws protecting women from violence and exploitation are inadequate, and violence against women is a persistent problem. The army has a record of using rape as a weapon of war against ethnic minority women, and security personnel typically enjoy impunity for sexual violence.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

While the government has made increased efforts to identify and prosecute human trafficking, it remains a serious problem. Child labor is widespread. Various commercial and other interests continue to use forced labor despite a formal ban on the practice since 2000. Trafficking victims include women and girls subjected to forced sex work and domestic servitude.

Namibia

Population: 2,500,000

Capital: Windhoek

Political Rights Rating: 2

Civil Liberties Rating: 2

Freedom Rating: 2.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Namibia is a multiparty democracy, though the ruling party, SWAPO, has been in power since independence in 1990. Protections for civil liberties are generally robust. Minority ethnic groups accuse government of favoring the majority Ovambo in allocating services. Nomadic San people suffer from poverty and marginalization. Other human rights concerns include the criminalization of same-sex sexual relations under colonial-era laws, and discrimination against women under customary law and other traditional societal practices.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- The Whistleblower Protection Act and Witness Protection Act were signed into law in October. Parliament passed the Combatting of Trafficking in Persons Bill in December, though it had not yet been signed into law at year's end.
- Descendants of the Herero and Nama people filed a lawsuit in January against Germany seeking damages for colonial-era genocide. The case remained open at year's end.
- The government, after a long delay, released a list of beneficiaries of a controversial land resettlement program. The list showed that most beneficiaries were from the central and southern regions. The ruling party rejected activists' demands for parliamentary debate of the program.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 30 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 10 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The president is both chief of state and head of government, and is directly elected for up to two five-year terms. In the 2014 election, Hage Geingob defeated numerous rivals for the presidency, winning 87 percent of the vote. The polls were deemed competitive and credible by election observers, though some logistical glitches with electronic voting machines were reported.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

The Third Constitutional Amendment, approved ahead of the 2014 polls, altered the composition of the legislature. Under it, the National Council is now comprised of 42 seats (from 26), with members appointed by regional councils for six-year terms, and the National Assembly is comprised of 96 seats (from 72), filled by popular election for five-year terms

using party-list proportional representation. The new amendment also allows the president to appoint 8 nonvoting members to the National Assembly.

The 2014 polls were deemed competitive and credible by election observers, though some logistical glitches with electronic voting machines were reported. SWAPO won 80 percent of the vote, giving it 77 National Assembly seats. The closest opposition, the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance of Namibia (DTA), won 4.8 percent of the vote for 5 seats, and eight additional parties won the remaining seats. While voters intimidation was not reported, opposition parties had some difficulty achieving visibility due to the dominance of SWAPO, which some observers said was reinforced by provisions of the the Third Constitutional Amendment.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4

The 2014 polls were the first held under the Third Constitutional Amendment, which increased the number of members in Namibia's bicameral legislature by 40 percent. SWAPO was criticized for rushing passage of the new law, which was seen to be in its favor given its dominant position in politics, in advance of the elections. However, the electoral framework is otherwise robust and well implemented.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 11 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 3 / 4

Political parties may form and operate freely. However, candidate registration fees can place an undue burden on smaller parties with limited resources. In 2015, ahead of regional elections, opposition parties claimed it would have cost them nearly N\$300,000 (US\$21,500) to run candidates in all of the country's 121 constituencies.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 2 / 4

Opposition parties may freely compete in elections and generally do not encounter intimidation or harassment during election campaigns. However, in practice the opposition is weak and fragmented, and does not pose any significant threat to SWAPO's political dominance.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 3 / 4

People are generally able to express their political choices without undue influence from actors that are not democratically accountable. However, the continued domination of SWAPO—an ideologically diverse “big tent” party whose energies are often consumed by intraparty disputes—limits voters' ability to directly express a preference for particular policies.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

The constitution guarantees political rights for all, and the government makes efforts to uphold these rights. Namibia has made great strides in increasing women's representation in Parliament; women now hold 48 of 104 seats in the National Assembly, making it more

likely that women's interests and voices are robustly represented in the political sphere. Election monitors also noted that ahead of the 2014 polls, some parties voluntarily undertook efforts to increase women's political participation. Nevertheless, societal attitudes can discourage women from running for political office.

Almost all of the country's ethnic groups are represented in parliament and in senior political positions. However, members of the ethnic San have faced societal and practical restrictions on their political rights. The government only in 2017 addressed a widespread lack of identification for San from Okakoko village and Eenhana (the capital of Ohangwena Region); they were issued national IDs in January and September respectively, making future voting procedures easier.

Members of the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) community face societal discrimination that hampers their ability to openly advocate for their interests.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 9 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 3 / 4

Namibia has a fully functioning system of democracy with a government and a national legislature that freely execute duties and determine policies. However, 2014 reforms increased executive power, including by permitting new president-appointed members of parliament and limits on the National Council's power to review certain bills. The reforms also granted the president power to appoint the head of the intelligence agency.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4

Namibia has a sound legal framework for combating corruption. In April 2017, reforms to procurement procedures came into force. In October, President Hage Geingob signed into law the Whistleblower Protection Act and Witness Protection Act. However, anticorruption laws are inconsistently enforced. The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) stands accused of moving slowly on cases involving high public figures, and its director general is accused of dropping investigations that could have significant political ramifications. In 2017, the ACC dropped investigations into allegedly high legal fees paid by the government on a genocide case, alleged underpricing practices of Namib Desert Diamonds (Namdia), and corruption linked to a N\$3 billion (US\$230 million) mass housing program. The alleged looting of almost N\$175 million (US\$13.5 million) by the Small and Medium Enterprises Bank (SME Bank), dominated headlines in 2017; the bank was taken over by the government and provisionally closed during the year, following revelations of mismanagement. Additionally, the president's Chinese business partner and friend Jack Huang was arrested in February (and released within days on bail) in connection with a N\$3.5 billion (US\$270 million) tax fraud case, to be heard in 2018.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 3 / 4

Namibia does not yet have a full institutional culture of transparency and openness. The country lacks access-to-information laws, and accessing information from many public agencies remains a challenge in practice. There is not frequent disclosure of private interests by public representatives. A veil of secrecy exists over the extractive industry, military spending, State House upgrades, and state security infrastructure.

Amid allegations that certain ethnic groups were favored in a government land resettlement program, the government for months ignored pleas for the release of a list of resettlement beneficiaries. The list, finally disclosed in October, appeared to show bias

toward central and southern beneficiaries. The ruling party rejected activists' demands for parliamentary debate of the program.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 47 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 14 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4

Namibia's constitution guarantees media freedom and freedom of expression. In practice, journalists face few legal restrictions on their operations and may generally work without risking their personal safety. While self-censorship is common in state media, private media remains critical of government. State officials have frequently spoken harshly about the media, and observers have characterized such remarks by President Geingob and his information minister in particular as intended to intimidate journalists. A 2017 cabinet decision prioritized state-owned over independent media for state information dissemination and advertising.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Although religious freedom is generally respected in practice, two incidents in 2017 raised questions about authorities' commitment to upholding it. In June, police ordered the bishop of Jesus Christ Ministry (JCM) in Windhoek to close his church for disturbing peace and fomenting division in the local community. Also during the year, a Pentecostal church in the village of Oshatowa was shut down, in a disproportionate response to infractions including performing baptisms in a pool set aside for drinking water and occupying land illegally; it too was accused of fomenting division in local communities. A court convicted its leaders on several charges, but the church was able to resume operations after an intervention by a Christian rights activist.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is guaranteed by law and generally respected in practice.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4

Freedom of expression is guaranteed in law and generally observed in practice. Social media is increasingly used to express political dissent. In February 2017, Namibia's vice president called for regulations allowing censorship of social media messages deemed to threaten Namibia's future, though no such regulation was implemented at year's end.

The 2009 Communications Act allows the government to conduct surveillance on various forms of communication without a warrant.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 12 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4

Freedom of assembly is guaranteed in law and is usually observed in practice, but can be restricted in situations of national emergency. In 2017, however, there were some cases of nonviolent interference by authorities in peaceful protest activities. In January, the police stopped a planned march in Walvis Bay by landless dwellers calling for affordable housing and termination of allegedly corrupt local government councilors. In December, police blocked an unannounced march to State House (the administrative capital building) by some

350 former Koevoet and South West Africa Territorial Force (SWATF) soldiers seeking war veteran status.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Human rights groups generally operate without interference, though government leaders sometimes use public platforms to attack civil society. In March 2017, the president derisively labeled some civil society activists as “failed politicians.”

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

Constitutionally guaranteed union rights are respected and observed in practice, though essential public-sector workers do not have the right to strike. Collective bargaining is not widely practiced outside the mining, construction, agriculture, and public-service industries.

F. RULE OF LAW: 11 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 3 / 4

The constitution provides for an independent judiciary. In practice, the separation of powers is observed and judges are not frequently subject to undue influence. The establishment of the Office of the Judiciary separate from the Ministry of Justice in late 2015 affords the former administrative and financial independence. However, the judiciary is underresourced. Judges are appointed by the president upon the recommendation of the Judicial Service Commission, a body whose composition the president has some influence over.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 3 / 4

Namibia’s Constitution protects the rule of law and fair trial rights. However, equal access to justice is obstructed by many factors, including economic and geographic barriers, a shortage of public defenders, and delays and backlogs that can last up to a decade.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 3 / 4

Namibia is free from war and insurgencies. However, police brutality is a problem. Police abuses were reported during land disputes in Walvis Bay in May 2017, and Grootfontein in February. Inmates accused wardens of assault at Windhoek and Oluno correctional facilities during the year; officials from the Ombudsman’s office went to investigate some of these cases. Namibia currently lacks an antitorture law.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

While the Constitution guarantees the right to equality and prohibits discrimination, challenges remain. In 2016, the Muzokumwe Volunteer Organisation petitioned the government to address discrimination against two Kavango regions. San leaders maintain that San people remain oppressed and marginalized. Same-sex sexual relations remain criminalized (though the prohibition is not enforced) and women face discrimination under customary law and traditional societal practices.

Descendants of the Herero and Nama people filed a lawsuit in January 2017 against Germany, seeking damages for colonial-era genocide; the case remained open at year’s end.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 10 / 16**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4**

Freedom of movement is a constitutionally guaranteed right generally observed in practice. However, in October 2017, the Helao Nafidi town council passed a resolution that placed restrictions on the free movement of Angolan and other non-Namibian traders.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 3 / 4

Private property rights are guaranteed in law and the constitution prohibits expropriation without compensation. There are no legal barriers to women's access to land. However, customary norms regarding inheritance procedures and property rights limit women. The Helao Nafidi town council restrictions implemented in 2017 mandate that non-Namibian traders may only engage in business three days a week.

Land rights remain a contentious issue, and a government land resettlement program faced intense public scrutiny and allegations that certain groups are favored.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Not all groups enjoy social freedoms. LGBT people face harassment, discrimination and attacks. Same-sex marriages are not recognized and many churches have indicated their nonwillingness to recognize or perform them, though the state ombudsman in 2016 expressed support for the legalization of same-sex marriage. Gender-based violence is high. Forced and child marriages do happen, although government does not keep official statistics on them.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

The constitution outlaws slavery or servitude. However, forced child labor is rife in the agricultural sector and in people's homes. Human trafficking is a challenge, and Namibia still lacks minimum standards required to confront it. In December 2017, Namibia finally passed an antitrafficking law, which was awaiting the president's signature at year's end.

Nauru

Population: 10,000

Capital: Yaren

Political Rights Rating: 2

Civil Liberties Rating: 2

Freedom Rating: 2.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: People in Nauru generally enjoy political rights and civil liberties, though the government has taken steps to sideline its political opponents, and corruption is a serious problem. The Australian processing center for asylum seekers in Nauru has attracted international criticism over persistent reports of abuses committed against and poor treatment of those housed there.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Reports continued of abuses against residents of the Australian processing center for asylum seekers, as well as of harsh living conditions and inadequate health care.
- A criminal case against several lawmakers and their supporters, filed in connection with their participation in a 2015 antigovernment protest, continued.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 35 / 40**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4**

Nauru is a parliamentary republic and parliament chooses the president and vice president from among its members.

The 2016 parliamentary elections, which were considered generally free, led to the reelection of President Baron Waqa and his government. Waqa moved to consolidate his control after the election by appointing seven new assistant ministers, after obtaining legislative approval of the 2016 Assistant Ministers Bill.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The 19-member unicameral Parliament is popularly elected from eight constituencies for three-year terms. A Commonwealth election monitoring mission found the 2016 elections generally well conducted. The polls resulted in the reelection of all but one of the members of Parliament (MPs) who served in President Waqa's government, and the defeat of four suspended opposition legislators, permitting the Waqa-led government to return with an increased majority. The opposition voiced some complaints that they did not receive equal airtime prior to the elections.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

The electoral laws are generally fair and implemented impartially. The Nauru Electoral Commission is responsible for managing the entire election process. The constitution provides for universal suffrage, and voting is compulsory.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 15 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4**

Although political parties are permitted, most candidates run as independents.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 3 / 4

Intense political rivalries created political instability prior to 2013. However, President Waqa's government served a full term from 2013–16, and was reelected in 2016. Opposition members claimed that some measures implemented by Waqa's first administration, such as higher candidate fees and a requirement that public employees running for office must resign three months prior to an election, were made to discourage opposition candidates from running in the 2016 polls.

Five opposition MPs were suspended without pay in 2014 for what was deemed unruly behavior, and for making remarks to foreign media that were critical of the government.

Four ran for reelection in the 2016 polls, though only one secured reelection. The fifth chose not to compete.

Criminal cases remain open against three of the now-former lawmakers, in connection with their participation in a 2015 antigovernment protest. The MPs are among the at least 16 antigovernment protesters whose case will be heard by a foreign judge on the grounds that it was too “complex” for a local judge.

Another opposition lawmaker saw his passport revoked in connection with his participation in the protest, but in mid-2016 he was issued a New Zealand passport and evaded authorities to board a flight bound for New Zealand.

B3. Are the people’s political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

People’s political choices are generally free from domination by powerful interests that are not democratically accountable.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 4 / 4

Women are underrepresented in Parliament, and in political life generally. Few women ran in the 2016 elections.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 8 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 3 / 4

The freely elected Parliament, led by the prime minister, sets and makes policy. However, Australia has had considerable influence over politics, because its Nauru-based processing center for asylum seekers is critical to the Nauruan economy. According to a 2016 Amnesty International report, Australia pays Nauru over \$26 million per year to house the facility, and a monthly fee of approximately \$760 for each asylum seeker and \$2,300 for each refugee. Also in 2016, the news agency Reuters reported that Australian government officials were advising the Nauru government on how to deal with disturbances by asylum seekers, opposition protests, and corruption allegations.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4

Corruption remains a problem. Allegations of improper payments to senior government officials, including Waqa, by an Australian phosphate company emerged in 2016. Also in 2016, Australia’s Westpac Bank announced it would no longer handle accounts for the Nauruan government, with media reports suggesting that the decision came in response to concerns about suspected financial mismanagement by the government, including money laundering and tax evasion.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

Nauru lacks a law on access to public information, but the Government Information Office releases some budget information. Government officials are not required to disclose financial information.

In July 2017, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) upgraded Nauru’s tax transparency rating, giving it a “largely compliant” rating. Earlier, in May, the government completed an audit of the 2013–14 government accounts. The audit capped a 15-year audit gap that officials blamed on an absence of qualified staff.

The government has made attempts to prevent journalists and other observers from reporting on operations and conditions at the processing center for asylum seekers.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 46 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 13 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4

Freedom of expression is constitutionally guaranteed, but this right is not always respected in practice. Foreign journalists have a particularly difficult time operating in Nauru, as the government has implemented restrictions that appear largely aimed at deterring outside coverage of the Australian processing center for asylum seekers. Since 2014, foreign journalists have been subject to a visa application fee of approximately \$6,000, up from approximately \$150 previously.

There were also reports of foreign journalists being denied visas to cover the 2016 elections. And after the 2016 polls, Justice Minister David Adeang attacked the foreign press, claiming that the Australian and New Zealand media were misleading the public and not accurately reporting progress that Nauru has made towards strengthening democracy.

Separately, the 2016 Crimes Act introduced criminal charges for defamation, now punishable with up to three years in prison.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

The constitution provides for freedom of religion, which the government generally respects in practice.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is generally respected.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4

Asylum seekers are closely monitored.

Authorities are not known to illegally monitor private online communications. However, authorities continued to require that internet service providers block access to Facebook and several other websites. Officials justified the policy by citing a need to protect users from obscene and pornographic content, but the policy more likely represents another example of the government attempting to restrict coverage of the Australian processing center for asylum seekers.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 9 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 3 / 4

The constitution upholds the right to assemble peacefully, but this right has not always been respected in practice. Demonstrations related to the treatment of asylum seekers housed at the Australian processing center are often repressed. In August 2017, rights advocates reported violent arrests at peaceful demonstrators at one of the facilities. In 2016, an Iranian asylum seeker was arrested by police on charges of “threatening behavior” for his daily antigovernment protests at a Nauru family compound. And in 2015, nearly 200 refugees, including children, were arrested during a peaceful protest.

At least 16 antigovernment protestors were arrested in 2015 for protesting the suspension of MPs for making critical comments of the Nauruan government. A number of them still faced criminal proceedings in 2017.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 3 / 4

There are no legal restrictions on the formation of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in Nauru. There are several advocacy groups for women, as well as development-focused and religious organizations. However, authorities have interfered with the operations of activists seeking to improve the treatment of asylum seekers.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

There are no formal trade unions and only limited labor protection laws, partly because there is little large-scale, private employment. The right to strike and collectively bargain are not protected by law.

F. RULE OF LAW: 10 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 2 / 4

The Supreme Court is the highest authority on constitutional issues in Nauru, but appeals in civil and criminal cases are heard in the high court of Australia. Nauru's judiciary is generally independent, but there have been concerns about undue influence by the government, which has been accused of dismissing judges for rulings officials found unfavorable. There have been concerns that government officials have pressured the judiciary in connection with the 2015 antigovernment protest case.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 3 / 4

The constitution provides for due process rights and those rights are generally respected. However, in June 2017, the government passed a law that distinguishes between public servants who testify in favor of the government or against it. Analysts said it appeared that those who miss work to testify against the government would be placed on leave without pay, and that the law appeared to represent an attempt to discourage civil servants from testifying in favor of defendants on trial in connection with the 2015 protest.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 3 / 4

Civilian authorities control the small police force. Nauru has no armed forces; Australia provides defense assistance under an informal agreement.

The Australian processing center for asylum seekers has received considerable international criticism for poor treatment of asylum seekers housed there. Few arrests have been made in connection with alleged abuses of its residents.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

The constitution provides for equal treatment regardless of race, country of origin, ethnicity, politics, or gender, but those rights are not always protected in practice. There are few legal protections against discrimination, which is notably a problem for women in the workplace.

Reports of widespread abuse of asylum seekers forcibly transferred to the Australian processing center in Nauru continued in 2017. The asylum seekers suffer from grossly

inadequate housing; denial of health care for life-threatening conditions; and a high rate of self-harm attempts among residents who wait, at times for years, for their asylum applications to be processed.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 14 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4

People in Nauru are free to move around the island, and no restriction hampers people's ability to choose their place of residence, employment, or education. Asylum seekers were granted freedom of movement across the island in 2015.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 4 / 4

The constitution protects the right to own property and people in Nauru are able to freely establish businesses. However, as of 2014, foreigners must pay approximately \$4,500 a year for a business visa, up from \$300.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

Domestic violence, which mostly affects women, remains a serious problem, and children are also vulnerable to violence. However, authorities have taken some efforts to address these problems, notably by approving the new protections within the 2017 Domestic Violence and Family Protection Bill, and the 2016 Child Protection and Welfare Act. Marital rape was also made a criminal offense in 2016. Same-sex marriage is not recognized by law. Abortion is only allowed when the mother's life is in danger, but not in cases of rape; the ban on abortion in cases of rape sparked controversy in 2016, with regard to the treatment of a pregnant asylum seeker who said she was raped at the Australian run processing center.

In 2016, the government decriminalized homosexuality, which had previously been punishable by up to 14 years of hard labor.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

With the exception of asylum seekers, individuals generally enjoy equal economic opportunities. However, economic opportunities are limited to sectors such as phosphate mining and the government.

There are no health and safety laws to protect workers outside the public sector and issues have been raised in regards to dust exposure for phosphate miners. According to the U.S. State Department, there have been no reports of human trafficking in Nauru in recent years.

↑ Nepal

Population: 28,400,000

Capital: Kathmandu

Political Rights Rating: 3

Civil Liberties Rating: 4

Freedom Rating: 3.5

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Trend Arrow: Nepal received an upward trend arrow due to the first national, regional, and local elections held under a new constitution, with high voter turnout despite some reports of violence.

Overview: Since the end of a decade-long civil war in 2006, Nepal has held a series of competitive elections and adopted a permanent constitution. As politics have stabilized, pressure on journalists has decreased, and authorities have been somewhat more tolerant of peaceful assembly. However, political protests are still sometimes marred by violence, and corruption remains endemic in politics, government, and the judicial system. Other problems include gender-based violence, underage marriage, and bonded labor. Transitional justice bodies have struggled to fulfill their mandates.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Local, provincial, and national elections were held during the year. While there were sporadic outbreaks of election-related violence, the polls saw high turnout and were generally well-conducted, and stakeholders accepted their results.
- The parliament rejected a bill designed to address contentious constitutional provisions on provincial demarcation and citizenship, which many marginalized communities argue maintain an unacceptable status quo.
- Nepal's two key transitional justice bodies, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the Commission of Investigation on Enforced Disappeared Persons (CIEDP), continued struggling to carry out investigations. Their mandates were extended in February, even as authorities failed to implement reforms demanded by both Supreme Court rulings and the United Nations.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 25 / 40 (+1)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 10 / 12 (+1)

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

The president is the head of state and is elected to up to two five-year terms by a parliamentary electoral college and state assemblies. The prime minister is elected by the parliament. Thus, the legitimacy of executive office holders is largely determined by the conduct of legislative and provincial elections.

Sher Bahadur Deuba was elected prime minister in June 2017 after Pushpa Kamal Dahal, also known as Prachanda, had stepped down from that position in May as part of a power-sharing deal between their two parties. Deuba is the tenth prime minister since the

end of the civil war in 2006. National elections took place in late 2017, and a new government will be formed based on those results in January 2018.

The current president, Bidhya Devi Bhandari, was elected in 2015.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4 (+1)

Local elections—the first since 1997—were held in several stages in 2017, and national and provincial elections were held in November and December. The polls were generally well conducted and saw healthy turnout, and their results were accepted by the participating parties. However, the Rastriya Janata Party-Nepal (RJP-N), an umbrella group representing ethnic Madhesis, boycotted several rounds of local polls due to grievances related to provisions in the 2015 constitution.

While more peaceful than the 2013 election period, there were occasional incidents of election-related violence in 2017. Police killed three people during a Communist Party of Nepal–Unified Marxist-Leninist (CPN–UML) campaign rally in March. There was sporadic violence in the lead-up to the national elections held late in the year, in which one temporary police officer was killed. There was a significant uptick in violent incidents before elections held in the south in December; those clashes were related to interparty tensions and separatist opposition.

Score Change: The score improved from 3 to 4 because the provincial and national elections took place in a climate of relative peace and their results were accepted by stakeholders, and because local elections were held for the first time since 1997.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4

Nepal's parliament has yet to address the grievances that many have with the 2015 constitution, which are related to province demarcation, proportional representation based on population, and provisions in the citizenship law. In an attempt to placate the RJP-N, which had boycotted the early rounds of the 2017 local elections, parliament introduced a constitutional amendment bill intended to allay some of their concerns, but it failed to secure a two-thirds majority needed to pass.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 10 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 3 / 4

Political parties are generally free to form and operate, though the risk of political violence represents an effective restriction on free political participation. Numerous political figures and party supporters were arrested in 2017 in connection with late-year unrest. Separately, in February, the leader of the separatist Alliance for Independent Madhesh (AIM) was arrested on sedition charges after he addressed a mass demonstration, prompting an outcry among his Madhesi supporters.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 3 / 4

The three main opposition parties—the Nepali Congress, CPN–UML, and Communist Party of Nepal–Maoist (UCPN–M)—are relatively competitive, but smaller opposition parties have difficulty gaining representation.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 2 / 4

People's ability to freely exercise their political choices is limited by sporadic outbursts of political violence, as well as by heavy-handed security agents who at times have cracked down on political demonstrations. There were reports of vote-buying during the 2017 campaign period.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 2 / 4

While the constitution has requirements for the participation of women and minorities in the legislature, discrimination against them makes meaningful political participation difficult. A limited definition of citizenship has resulted in the disenfranchisement of stateless people. Few women hold senior positions in politics. Bhandari is Nepal's first female president.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 5 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 3 / 4

Nepal ratified its first democratic constitution in 2015, establishing a bicameral parliament with the prime minister as chief executive, and organizing the state into seven new provinces. Successful legislative elections were held in 2017, with new lawmakers expected to be seated in 2018. However, despite democratic improvements and political stabilization in recent years, representative rule has yet to be consolidated.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

Corruption is endemic in Nepali politics and government and often goes unpunished. Corruption by officials continued to obstruct the delivery of foreign aid that poured into the country after a devastating 2015 earthquake.

The Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority initiated its largest case to date in July 2017, when it filed charges against three members of the Tax Settlement Commission for alleged embezzlement and improper granting of tax exemptions to large businesses.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 1 / 4

The government generally operates with opacity. The Election Commission, as well as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and Commission of Investigation on Enforced Disappeared Persons (CIEDP) are among bodies that have been criticized for a lack of transparency. Mechanisms for utilizing the 2007 Right to Information Act are poorly defined, and the law is inconsistently enforced.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 30 / 60 (+2)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 10 / 16 (+1)

D1. Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4 (+1)

The 2015 constitution provides for freedom of expression and prohibits prior restraints on press freedom, though these rules can be suspended in cases of a national emergency. The constitution also states that the prohibition against prior restraint does not forbid restraints placed on the press in the interest of national security.

Arrests and assaults of journalists continued in 2017, particularly during periods close to elections. Nevertheless, pressure on the media eased somewhat in recent years,

and substantial investigative pieces on topics including government corruption are becoming more common.

Score Change: The score improved from 2 to 3 because pressure on media has eased, and investigative journalism is becoming more common.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 2 / 4

Like the interim constitution before it, the 2015 constitution identifies Nepal as a secular state, signaling a break with the Hindu monarchy that was toppled as part of the resolution of the civil war in 2006 (it was formally abolished in 2008). Religious freedom is protected under the new constitution, and tolerance is broadly practiced, but members of some religious minorities occasionally report official harassment. Christian groups face considerable difficulty registering as religious organizations, leaving them unable to own land. Proselytizing is prohibited.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 2 / 4

The government does not restrict academic freedom, and much scholarly activity takes place freely, including on political topics. However, Maoist strikes have repeatedly threatened the school system. Minorities, including Hindi- and Urdu-speaking Madhesi groups, have complained that Nepali is enforced as the language of education in government schools.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4

The freedom to engage in private discussions on sensitive topics has expanded alongside Nepal's political stabilization. However, the heavy presence of the army in Madhesi regions during the 2017 campaign and election period prompted some anxieties among residents of those areas.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 6 / 12 (+1)

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 2 / 4 (+1)

While security force crackdowns on public assemblies led to three deaths in March, in general, public assembly was better tolerated in 2017—particularly in the context of elections—than it has been in previous years. However, crackdowns do still take place, disproportionately so in the southern regions, where there is a large Madhesi population.

Score Change: The score improved from 1 to 2 because authorities better tolerated peaceful public assemblies during the 2017 election period.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 2 / 4

Although the new constitution allows nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to form and operate within the country, legal restrictions have made this difficult in practice. The District Administration Office (DAO), which is in charge of registering NGOs and associations, is often understaffed and lacks essential resources. Foreign NGOs must enter project-specific agreements with the Nepalese government.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

The 2015 constitution provides for the right to form trade unions. Labor laws protect the freedom to bargain collectively, and unions generally operate without state interference. Workers in a broad range of “essential” industries cannot stage strikes. Several unions linked to the Maoists have been accused of using violence to threaten employers and government officials to comply with union demands during bargaining processes.

F. RULE OF LAW: 6 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 2 / 4**

The 2015 constitution provides for an independent judiciary. However, most courts suffer from endemic corruption, and in practice many Nepalese have only limited access to justice.

The state has generally ignored local court verdicts, Nepalese Supreme Court decisions, and National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) recommendations addressing crimes committed during the 1996–2006 civil war.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

Constitutional guarantees of due process are poorly upheld in practice. Reports of arbitrary arrests continue. Due to heavy case backlogs and a slow appeals process, suspects are frequently kept in pretrial detention for periods longer than the sentences they would face if tried and convicted. The government provides legal counsel to those who cannot afford their own, but only at a defendant’s request. Therefore, those unaware of their right to a public defender often end up representing themselves.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 2 / 4

Rights advocates continue to criticize Nepal for failing to punish abuses and war crimes committed during the civil war, which lasted from 1996 to 2006. Moreover, there has been no institutional reform of the security forces, which stand accused of carrying out torture, murder, and forced disappearances during the conflict. Some alleged perpetrators of wartime abuses serve in government.

Due to a lack of will on the part of the security forces and political parties, neither the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) nor the Commission of Investigation on Enforced Disappeared Persons (CIEDP), two key transitional justice bodies, have implemented reforms demanded by the United Nations and two Nepali Supreme Court rulings. The mandates of both bodies were extended by one year in February 2017; the government extended the mandates without requiring implementation of the reforms, which are meant to address deficiencies that permit impunity.

Separately, the state has yet to address allegations of violent repression of the 2015–16 Terai protests.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

The 2015 constitution enshrines rights for sexual minorities. The first passport on which the holder was permitted to select a third gender was issued in 2015. However, LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people reportedly face harassment by the authorities and other citizens, particularly in rural areas.

Although the new constitution outlines implementation of major international human rights provisions, and includes civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, the

language of the constitution frames these rights for Nepali citizens only. This potentially leaves equal rights of noncitizens, including migrants and people who cannot prove citizenship, unprotected.

Tibetans in Nepal face difficulty achieving formal refugee status due to Chinese pressure on the Nepalese government.

Women rarely receive the same educational and employment opportunities as men.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 8 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4

Citizens are generally enjoy freedom to travel throughout Nepal. There are legal limits on the rights of refugees to move freely, but restrictions are inconsistently enforced. Citizens generally enjoy choice of residence, though bribery is common in the housing market, as well as to gain admittance to universities.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

Although citizens have the right to own private businesses, starting a business in Nepal often requires bribes to a wide range of local and national-level officials. Licensing and other red tape can be extremely onerous. Women face widespread discrimination when starting businesses, and customs and border police are notoriously corrupt in dealing with cross-border trade.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Gender-based violence against women remains a major problem. The 2009 Domestic Violence Act provides for monetary compensation and psychological treatment for victims, but authorities generally do not prosecute domestic violence cases. Underage marriage of girls is widespread.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

Trafficking of children and women from Nepal for prostitution in India is common, and police rarely intervene. Bonded labor is illegal but remains a serious problem throughout Nepal. Child labor also remains a problem, and children can be found working in the brick-making, service, and other industries, as well as engaged in forced begging and sex work.

The 2015 earthquake left millions of people homeless. Many of those affected lack opportunities for social mobility, as they struggle to recover from the disaster.

Netherlands

Population: 17,000,000

Capital: Amsterdam

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 1

Freedom Rating: 1.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: The Netherlands is a parliamentary democracy with a strong record of safeguarding political rights and civil liberties. Nevertheless, wariness of immigration and Muslim minorities has grown in recent years, and harsh policies toward irregular migrants and asylum seekers have been a source of controversy.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- The Netherlands held parliamentary elections in March 2017. Prime Minister Mark Rutte's center-right People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) won the most seats, giving Rutte a third term. The far-right Party for Freedom (PVV), led by Geert Wilders, won 20 seats, the second highest total, but all other parties refused to form a coalition with the PVV, effectively shutting it out of government. It took a record 225 days to form a governing coalition, reflecting the fragmentation of Dutch politics.
- Civil society leaders criticized the new Intelligence and Security Services Act, which includes a dragnet approach for surveilling private communications, for threatening the right to privacy and potentially compromising journalists' sources.
- Harsh policies toward irregular migrants and asylum seekers, including prolonged detentions in prison-like facilities, continued to be a point of controversy.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 40 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The Netherlands is a parliamentary constitutional monarchy. The role of the monarch is largely ceremonial. The prime minister is the head of government and is appointed by the monarch after elections. The incumbent prime minister, Mark Rutte, won a third term following parliamentary elections held in March 2017. He formed a coalition government consisting of his own center-right People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) alongside the Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA), Democrats 66 (D66), and the Christian Union. It took a record 225 days for the coalition to form, reflecting the fragmentation in Dutch politics.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The Netherlands has a bicameral parliament that consists of the 75-seat First Chamber, which is elected indirectly to four-year terms in a proportional vote by the 12 provincial council members; and the 150-seat Second Chamber, which is elected to terms of four years by proportional representation. The parliamentary elections in March 2017 were generally well administered, and all parties accepted the results. Parliament now has thirteen parties, the most since 1972. Geert Wilders's far-right PVV won 20 seats, the second-highest total, but all other parties refused to form a coalition with the PVV, effectively shutting it out of government.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

Elections are administered by the Electoral Council, which works impartially and professionally to carry out Dutch elections.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 16 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4

Political parties operate freely and regularly rotate in and out of power. The Elections Law does not impose any undue restrictions on the creation of political parties. In the 2017 parliamentary elections, the ruling VVD lost eight seats. Government funding extends to all parties that have participated in the most recent parliamentary elections and have gained at least one seat.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

Opposition parties have a realistic opportunity to increase support or gain power, as evidenced by the 2017 election results in which the PVV, CDA, and D66 all gained seats, with the latter two joining the governing coalition after being in the opposition during the second Rutte cabinet.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

The people are generally free to make their own political choices without pressure from groups that are not democratically accountable.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 4 / 4

Minority groups participate freely in the political process, and political parties represent their interests. The DENK (THINK) party, which seeks to represent a broad spectrum of ethnic and religious minorities, and voters with migrant backgrounds, won three seats in the 2017 parliamentary elections. The party has been controversial and centrist parties have accused it of enflaming discontent among migrant communities. In March 2017, Dutch LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) activists launched a "Rainbow Agreement" to enhance LGBT rights. Seven of the parties that won parliamentary representation signed the pledge.

While most major parties addressed gender issues in their party manifestos, the PVV's does not mention women. An active debate in the media ensued when the prime minister appointed a cabinet with fewer women than in the previous government and no minorities.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 12 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4

Government policies reflect the choices of freely elected members of parliament.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 4 / 4

The Netherlands has low levels of corruption and anticorruption mechanisms are generally effective.

In October 2017, the chairman of the House for Whistleblowers, a government agency created to support those reporting abuse and corruption, resigned due to the organization's failure to conclude a single investigation since its inception a year earlier.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 4 / 4

Laws are in place recognizing the right to access information, and they are generally enforced. However, these laws do not apply to legislative and judicial bodies.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 59 / 60**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 16 / 16****D1. Are there free and independent media? 4 / 4**

A free and independent press thrives in the Netherlands. The Dutch Association of Journalists has criticized the passage of the Intelligence and Security Services Act in July 2017, because the law's dragnet approach to collecting information may compromise the ability of journalists to protect their sources.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

The constitution guarantees freedom of religion, which is generally respected in practice.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is largely respected in the Netherlands.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

There are no restrictions on the freedom of speech or expression, apart from the criminalization of hate speech. The Intelligence and Security Services Act, which critics fear may lead to dragnet surveillance of private communications, caused a public outcry and led to a campaign for a referendum.

The Netherlands has had *lèse majesté* laws, which forbid insulting the monarch, in place since 1881. Although rarely enforced, these laws do occasionally result in sanctions. Although a parliamentary majority expressed its support for repealing the law in September 2016, the legal situation remained unchanged at the end of 2017.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 12 / 12**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4**

Freedom of assembly is constitutionally guaranteed and respected in practice.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operate freely and without interference from the government or nonstate actors.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

Workers' rights to organize, bargain collectively, and strike are protected.

F. RULE OF LAW: 15 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 4 / 4**

The judiciary is independent, and the rule of law generally prevails in civil and criminal matters.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 4 / 4

The right to a fair trial is constitutionally guaranteed and respected in practice. Defendants have access to legal counsel, and counsel is provided for them if they cannot afford an attorney.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 4 / 4

The police are under civilian control, and prison conditions mostly meet international standards. However, people suspected or convicted of terrorism often experienced treatment that NGOs have called inhumane, including constant surveillance and regular full-body searches.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

The Netherlands has antidiscrimination laws and hate speech laws on the books. While Dutch society is known for its tolerance, rising anti-immigrant sentiment in recent years has been accompanied by more open expression of anti-Islamic views. In 2016, Geert Wilders was found guilty of inciting hatred and insulting a group after he had made anti-Moroccan remarks during a campaign rally in 2014, but no penalties were imposed. In the run up to the 2017 parliamentary elections, Wilders called for the “de-Islamicization” of the Netherlands. Perceived discrimination against Muslims is higher in the Netherlands than in many other European countries. Muslims and immigrants experience harassment and intimidation.

Dutch asylum policies have long drawn criticism for being unduly harsh. Asylum seekers and irregular migrants often experience prolonged detentions in prison-like facilities before deportation. Asylum policy remains politically divisive.

The government enforces legal protections for women, including in employment and family law.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 16 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4

Residents generally enjoy freedom of movement and choice of residence, employment, and institution of higher education. A counterterrorism law passed in March 2017 allows the government to restrict the movement of people suspected of terrorist links. Human rights advocates have complained that the law is vulnerable to abuse.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or non-state actors? 4 / 4

Property rights are legally protected and generally upheld in practice.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 4 / 4

Personal social freedoms are largely respected. Although the government generally does not restrict individuals’ choice of dress, religious dress and symbols are prohibited for police officers in order to safeguard their impartiality. In October 2017, one police officer submitted a complaint to the College for Human Rights because she is not allowed to wear a headscarf.

Female genital mutilation, although illegal, still occurs in some immigrant communities. The Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Sport runs a project to prevent the practice.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 4 / 4

While the Netherlands is a source, destination, and transit point for human trafficking, the government makes strong efforts to combat it, vigorously investigating and prosecuting suspected traffickers. In 2017, the government continued to implement its National Program against Child Pornography and Child Sex Tourism.

New Zealand

Population: 4,700,000

Capital: Wellington

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 1

Freedom Rating: 1.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: New Zealand has a record of free and fair elections, and of guaranteeing political rights and civil liberties. Concerns include discrimination against the Māori and other minority populations, and reports of foreign influence in politics and the educational sector.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Despite winning fewer seats than the center-right National Party in September's parliamentary elections, the center-left Labour Party formed a coalition government with the New Zealand First party and the Green Party. Jacinda Ardern of the Labour Party became prime minister.
- The new government has prioritized reducing child poverty, which nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have identified as a significant problem in the country.
- Foreign influence in political affairs was a growing concern during the year, especially in the wake of reports of large political donations from Chinese sources, and attempts by China to monitor Chinese students.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 40 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

New Zealand is a parliamentary democracy under a constitutional monarchy, with British monarch Elizabeth II acting as head of state. A governor general, appointed by the Queen on advice from the prime minister, represents the British monarch. The prime minister is the head of government and is appointed by the governor general, and is usually the leader of the popularly elected majority party or coalition. Jacinda Ardern, leader of the Labour Party, was appointed prime minister in October 2017 following the year's legislative elections.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The 120 members of the unicameral House of Representatives serve three-year terms. A mixed-member electoral system combines voting in geographic districts with proportional representation balloting. September 2017 parliamentary elections resulted in no single party

winning the required 61 votes to form a government. Although the National Party took 56 seats, the Labour Party, which won 46 seats, formed a coalition with two smaller parties: New Zealand First, a populist and anti-immigration party that claimed 9 seats, and the Green Party, which took 8 seats. Elections in New Zealand are generally well administered, and their results considered credible.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

The independent New Zealand Electoral Commission administers elections and referenda, promotes compliance with electoral laws, and provides public education on electoral issues.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 16 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4

New Zealanders are able to organize political parties without undue legal restrictions or influence, and political parties are free to campaign for support.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

Opposition parties can potentially change with each parliamentary election. Power has traditionally fluctuated between the center-left Labour Party and the center-right National Party. Currently, the National Party represents a strong opposition, holding 56 seats in Parliament.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

People are generally able to express their political preferences without undue influence from powerful groups. However, several studies in recent years have claimed that some lawmakers and parties have accepted sizable political donations from Chinese businesspeople and other Chinese figures, raising the possibility that such donations might influence their politics.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 4 / 4

Political rights and electoral opportunities are granted to all New Zealand citizens, and permanent residents have the right to vote. Seven of Parliament's constituency seats are reserved for representatives of the Māori population, though Māori may also vote or run in general electoral districts. In the 2017 parliamentary elections, Golriz Ghahraman, from Iran, became the first refugee to be elected as a member of Parliament.

Women are relatively well represented in politics, and the government has taken steps to encourage their participation. Ardern is the third woman to serve as the country's prime minister.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 12 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4

The prime minister and cabinet ministers—who are selected from the House of Representatives by the governing party or coalition—determine the government’s policy agenda.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 4 / 4

Government corruption is not considered a significant problem in New Zealand, and cases of corruption and misuse of office are routinely investigated and prosecuted.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 4 / 4

The government operates with a high level of transparency, and political affairs are openly discussed in Parliament and the media. Parliamentary records, government policies, and commissioned reports are published online and readily available as required by law. The government upholds transparency in budgetary procedures, and members of Parliament must submit annual financial disclosure statements.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 58 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 16 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 4 / 4

New Zealand has a free and robust independent media sector, including a Māori-language public network and radio station.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Religious freedom is protected by law and generally respected in practice. Only religious organizations that collect donations need to register with the government.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom usually prevails at all levels of instruction. However, foreign influence in New Zealand’s higher education sector was a concern in 2017, with reports of Chinese attempts to influence student groups and monitor Chinese students.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

New Zealanders freely discuss personal views on sensitive topics. However, in March 2017, new intelligence and security legislation was approved by Parliament. The legislation allows law enforcement to access private communications under certain conditions in order to protect national security. Separately, state security officials warned the government in December that Beijing may have attempted to “unduly influence expatriate communities.”

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 12 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4

The government generally respects freedoms of assembly. Large antiwar, environmental, and women’s rights protests took place in 2017.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

NGOs are free to form, function, and solicit funds.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

Workers may freely organize and bargain collectively, and trade unions actively engage in political debates and campaigns. Workers may strike, with the exception of uniformed police personnel.

F. RULE OF LAW: 15 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 4 / 4

The New Zealand judiciary is generally independent.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 4 / 4

Law enforcement practices and court procedures provide for due process protections in civil and criminal matters. Defendants and detainees are presumed innocent until proven guilty and by law must immediately be notified of the charges against them.

Pretrial detention durations have increased in recent years, as authorities have relaxed the time limit in which cases must be concluded, and tightened bail requirements.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 4 / 4

Citizens and noncitizen residents have legal recourse to seek redress for physical harm. Prison conditions generally meet international standards, though some are poorly equipped to house detainees with disabilities or mental health problems.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

The 1993 Human Rights Act protects all people in New Zealand from discrimination on the basis of gender, religion, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, among others, and this right is generally respected in practice. However, Māori—who account for approximately 16 percent of the population—and Pacific Islanders experience some discrimination in schools, the workplace, and the healthcare system. Indigenous people are also disproportionately represented in the penal system, accounting for just over half of the prison population as of December 2017. Recent campaigns to recruit more officers of Māori, Pacific Islander, and Asian descent aim to improve cultural and ethnic sensitivity within the police force, and to combat profiling and discrimination.

The government enforces strong legislation protecting the rights of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) individuals.

In 2016, the government agreed to increase the number of refugees accepted annually from 750 to 1,000, which will go into permanent effect in 2018. The number of refugees the country was permitted to accept was temporarily increased in 2017 in order to assist more Syrian refugees.

According to the Child Poverty Monitor 2017 Technical Report, nearly 30 percent of children lived in poverty in 2016, with children of Māori and Pacific Islander descent being particularly vulnerable. The Ardern government has specifically identified reducing child poverty as a priority.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 15 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4

The government respects the freedom of movement, and neither state nor nonstate actors interfere with people's ability to choose their place of residence or employment, or institution of higher education.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 4 / 4

New Zealand's legal and regulatory frameworks provide strong protections and mechanisms for the establishment and operation of private businesses and the protection of property rights.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 4 / 4

New Zealanders have extensive personal freedoms and protections, including choice of marriage partner and family size. However, violence against women and children remains a critical problem in many communities. A 2016 government paper reported that one in three women has been a victim of sexual violence in their lifetime. Abortion is legal only under certain conditions, including when the mental or physical health of a women is at risk. Same-sex marriage was legalized in 2013, and same-sex couples may jointly adopt children.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

Citizens have access to a wide variety of economic opportunities, but the Māori and Pacific Islander populations have disproportionately high rates of unemployment, impacting their economic and social mobility.

Migrant workers can be found engaging in forced labor in a number of industries, including fishing, agriculture, construction, and hospitality, and as domestic workers. The government has taken action to combat forced labor, but penalties for some abuses associated with it, such as delays in paying wages, are often light.

Nicaragua

Population: 6,300,000

Capital: Managua

Political Rights Rating: 5

Civil Liberties Rating: 4

Freedom Rating: 4.5

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: The election of Sandinista leader Daniel Ortega in 2006 began a period of democratic deterioration in Nicaragua that continues today. President Ortega has consolidated all branches of government under his party's control, limited fundamental freedoms, and allowed unchecked corruption to pervade the government. In 2014, the National Assembly approved constitutional amendments that paved the way for Ortega to win a third consecutive term in November 2016.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Municipal elections in November were marred by postelection violence between supporters of the government and the opposition, in which seven people were killed.

- There were reports that the ruling party, Ortega's Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), ran its preferred candidates in the elections over those chosen in local primary surveys. The FSLN won 135 of 153 mayorships contested.
- Reforms approved in June increased the centralization of criminal justice procedures, including by allowing judges, rather than juries, to preside over cases involving allegations of serious crimes, as well as the transfer of judicial proceedings from regional courts to courts in the capital.
- The government pressed forward with controversial plans to dig an interoceanic canal across Nicaragua. Authorities have generally failed to consult with or inform the public about the project, including the tens of thousands of people whose lives will be affected by its construction. Demonstrations against the planned canal were frequently suppressed.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 12 / 40 (-2)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 3 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4

The constitution provides for a directly elected president, and elections are held every five years. Constitutional reforms in 2014 eliminated term limits—paving the way for Ortega to run for a third consecutive term—and required the winner of the presidential ballot to secure a simple plurality of votes.

President Ortega was reelected in November 2016 with over 72 percent of the vote in a severely flawed election that was preceded by the Supreme Court's move to expel the main opposition candidate, Eduardo Montealegre, from his Independent Liberation Party (PLI). The decision crippled the PRI, while Montealegre withdrew from the election. Ortega's closest competitor, Maximino Rodríguez of the Constitutionalist Liberal Party (PLC), received just 15 percent of the vote, with no other candidate reaching 5 percent, including the replacement PLI candidate, an Ortega ally. Ortega's wife, Rosario Murillo, ran as the vice presidential candidate despite opposition voices decrying this as further evidence of the Ortega administration's consolidation of power.

The FSLN won 135 of 153 mayorships contested in November 2017 municipal elections. There were reports ahead of the polls that the FSLN had ignored local primary surveys in order to put its preferred candidates up for election. Seven people were killed in postelection clashes between government and opposition supporters, according to the Nicaraguan Center of Human Rights.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4

The constitution provides for a 92-member unicameral National Assembly. Two seats in the legislature are reserved for the previous president and the runner-up in the most recent presidential election. Legislative elections are held every five years.

In November 2016 legislative elections, Ortega's FSLN increased its majority to 70 seats in the National Assembly, followed by the PLC with 13 seats. The PLI won just 2 seats, in contrast to the 26 seats it won in the 2011 election. Ortega refused to allow international election monitoring. Montealegre was expelled from the PRI ahead a few months ahead of the polls, severely damaging the PRI's competitiveness.

Nicaragua's North Atlantic Autonomous Region (RAAN) and South Atlantic Autonomous Region (RAAS) have regional councils, for which elections were last held in 2014;

the FSLN won the largest share of the vote in each, prompting protests by the majority-indigenous YATAMA party.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 1 / 4

The Supreme Electoral Council (CSE) generally serves the interests of the FSLN. In 2016, it pushed 16 opposition members of the National Assembly from their seats in response to their failure to recognize the Supreme Court's move to expel Montealegre from the PRI; later that year it certified Ortega's reelection following a severely flawed electoral process. CSE head Roberto Rivas in December 2017 was sanctioned by the United States for offenses including having "perpetrated electoral fraud undermining Nicaragua's electoral institutions." The judiciary has interpreted Nicaragua's electoral laws in the FSLN's favor.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 6 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 1 / 4

Political parties face legal and practical obstacles to formation and operations. Party leaders are easily co-opted or disqualified by Ortega-aligned institutions. Membership to the FSLN is often required in order to hold civil service positions, discouraging people from registering as members of other parties. Under 2014 constitutional reforms, legislators effectively have to follow the party vote or risk losing their seats.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 1 / 4

The heavy concentration of media into progovernment hands severely limits the ability of the opposition to increase popular support. Opposition parties are also impeded by the FSLN's ability to harness public resources to fund political activities.

In 2014, the PLI and PLC signed a pact in hopes of launching a unified opposition for the 2016 elections. Their efforts were undermined by the Nicaraguan Supreme Court, which in June 2016 disqualified the leader of the PLI from his party. In July of the same year, the CSE removed 16 legislators who refused to recognize the new leadership from the National Assembly. The FSLN then won enough support in the 2016 elections to pass legislation without support from other parties.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 1 / 4

President Ortega has consolidated all branches of government and most public institutions, as well as the country's media, under his party's control. This allows him and the FSLN great influence over people's political choices. Nevertheless, Ortega retains significant popular support, thanks to his adept management of a booming economy and support for social programs.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

Minority groups, especially the indigenous inhabitants of Nicaragua's eastern and Caribbean regions, frequently complain that they are politically underrepresented and that the government and the FSLN largely ignore their grievances.

As per a new municipal electoral law approved in 2012, half of each party's candidates for mayoralties and council seats must be women.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 3 / 12 (-2)

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 1 / 4

The FSLN dominates most public institutions, working closely with labor and private business in a tripartite alliance (COSEP) that is recognized in Article 98 of the constitution. The manipulation of the 2016 election and the expulsion of 16 opposition politicians from the legislature prevented elected representatives from determining government policies.

Ortega has a wide degree of discretionary powers to set policy. The constitutional reforms of 2014 included provisions allowing the president to issue binding decrees and direct changes in tax policy without legislative approval.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4 (-1)

Because the justice system and other public bodies are generally subservient to Ortega and the FSLN, there is little chance that allegations of corruption against government officials will see a thorough investigation or prosecution. Indeed, corruption charges against high-ranking government officials are rare, while corruption cases against opposition figures are often criticized for being politically motivated.

Ortega's sons and daughters have been appointed to prominent positions such as ambassador and presidential adviser.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 because the FSLN's domination of the judiciary and public agencies precludes corruption investigations against government and government-allied figures.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 1 / 4 (-1)

Government operations and policymaking are generally opaque. The 2007 Law on Access to Public Information requires public entities and private companies doing business with the state to disclose certain information. However, it preserves the government's right to protect information related to state security. Government agencies at all levels generally ignore the law. Meanwhile, Ortega has not held a press conference since 2007.

The Communications and Citizenry Council, which oversees the government's press relations, is directed by First Lady Rosario Murillo and has been accused of limiting access to information. Murillo became vice president following the 2016 presidential election.

A wide range of civil society groups, including Amnesty International, have raised concerns over the lack of transparency surrounding the project to dig an interoceanic canal across Nicaragua. Authorities have largely failed to consult or even communicate with the roughly 120,000 people who live in areas that will be affected by the project, and related environmental studies have been kept from the public. Laws facilitating construction of the project have been passed rapidly, with a similar lack of debate or public consultation.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 due to opaque processes surrounding the construction of an interoceanic canal, as well as a general lack of government transparency.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 32 / 60 (-1)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 11 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4

The press has faced increased political and judicial harassment since 2007, when Ortega returned to power; with the administration engaging in systematic efforts to obstruct and discredit media critics. Journalists have received death threats and been detained covering protests and demonstrations, as well as the canal project.

According to the Nicaraguan Center of Human Rights, in 2017, over 80 percent of the country's television channels, radio stations, newspapers, and online media outlets were effectively under the control of the FSLN, mainly because they were owned by party allies.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Religious freedom is generally respected. However, some Catholic and evangelical church leaders have reported retaliation by the government for criticism of the Ortega administration, including the confiscation or delay of imported goods and donations, and the selective application of legal restrictions on foreign missionaries.

Faith leaders have also criticized the Ortega administration's attempt to co-opt religious belief for political ends. The government has required public employees to attend government-sponsored religious festivals, making them miss official Catholic Church events.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 3 / 4

Academic freedoms are generally respected, although some university-level academics refrain from open criticism of the government. In the public primary and secondary school system, there have been reports of students being required to attend progovernment rallies, and of pro-FSLN materials displayed in school buildings.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4

Private discussion is usually free, although prominent individuals increasingly self-censor for fear of retribution. Ernesto Cardenal, a prominent public intellectual, and former Sandinista turned critic of Ortega, was threatened with an \$800,000 property fine in February 2017, though it was later annulled; nevertheless, at the time Cardenal described himself as being "politically persecuted."

Access to the internet remains unrestricted, and many people speak their minds freely on social networks.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 5 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 2 / 4

Nicaraguan law recognizes freedoms of assembly and association, but in practice respect for these rights has been inconsistent. While public demonstrations are generally permitted, members of the opposition have accused the police of failing to protect demonstrators and of engaging in partisan behavior. In a report in August 2017, Amnesty International stated that *campesino* (small-scale farmer or farmworker) groups demonstrating against the planned canal have been subject to violence, and have seen protest actions obstructed by the police. In November, police temporarily detained people who were traveling to Managua to participate in a march to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, delaying the event.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 1 / 4

Although nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are active, groups critical of the government or which focus on issues like corruption face significant administrative hurdles. NGOs must receive formal recognition from the state in order to receive donations, and critical groups say the government harnesses this law to choke off foreign funding. Authorities also harassed critical groups by conducting unannounced audits, which are permitted by law but are disruptive and frequently serve to intimidate NGO workers.

NGO workers can face aggressive rhetoric when questioning government officials about corruption. Organizations representing the interests of indigenous groups affected by the canal project have been marginalized.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

The FSLN controls many of the country's labor unions, and the legal rights of non-FSLN unions are not fully guaranteed in practice. Although the law recognizes the right to strike, approval from the Ministry of Labor is almost never granted. Employers sometimes form their own unions to avoid recognizing legitimate organizations. Employees have reportedly been dismissed for union activities, and citizens have no effective recourse when those in power violate labor laws.

F. RULE OF LAW: 6 / 16 (-1)

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4

The judiciary remains dominated by FSLN and PLC appointees, and the Supreme Court is a largely politicized body controlled by Sandinista judges. The court system also suffers from corruption and long delays. Access to justice is especially deficient in rural areas and on the Caribbean coast.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4 (-1)

Due process is not guaranteed and arbitrary arrests and detentions continue to be reported. Reforms to the penal code and to judicial processes approved in June 2017 increased the centralization of criminal justice procedures in ways damaging to due process rights; authorities said the reforms were intended to increase convictions in serious cases involving violence. They include measures that allow "technical" judges to preside over many cases, instead of juries, as well as provisions that allow the transfer of certain kinds of cases from regional courts to the central public ministry. Former judicial officials and legal experts have described the changes as unconstitutional. Other observers have expressed concern that the reforms will increase politicization of the criminal justice system by empowering the country's largely FSLN-aligned judges.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 due to reforms that further centralized criminal justice procedures at the expense of due process rights.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 2 / 4

Nicaragua has generally been spared the high rates of crime and gang violence that plague its neighbors to the north, and the police have been active in combating drug trafficking and organized crime. Generally considered to be the most professionalized in the region, the police nevertheless remain understaffed and poorly funded, and have come under criticism for skirmishes with civilians.

Changes to the military code and national police passed in 2014 give the president power to deploy the army for internal security purposes and appoint the national police

chief, and permitted the police to engage in political activity. The 2015 sovereign security law has been criticized for militarizing civilian agencies.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

The constitution and laws nominally recognize the rights of indigenous communities, but those rights have not been respected in practice. Approximately 5 percent of the population is indigenous and lives mostly in the RAAN and the RAAS. The country's LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) population is subject to intermittent threats and discriminatory treatment.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 10 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4

Governmental and nonstate actors generally respect travel, residence, and employment choices. However, indigenous communities are limited in their employment and movement by poor infrastructure and reduced economic development opportunities.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 3 / 4

Property rights are protected on paper but can be tenuous in practice. Titles are often contested, and individuals with connections to the FSLN sometimes enjoy an advantage during property disputes. Individuals and communities in the construction zone for the new canal continue to report intimidation by surveyors and anonymous actors. Conflict over land in the RAAN between Miskito residents and settlers continued in 2017.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Violence against women and children remains widespread and underreported; few cases are ever prosecuted. The 2012 Comprehensive Law against Violence toward Women addresses both physical and structural forms of violence, and recognizes violence against women as a matter of public health and safety. The legislation codified femicide and establishes sentencing guidelines for physical and psychological abuses against women. However, 2017 reforms to the penal code narrowed the definition of femicide, stipulating that in order for a woman's murder to be considered femicide (thus triggering additional penalties for convictions), the victim must have had an intimate relationship with the perpetrator.

A 2013 reform to the law allows mediation between the victim and accuser, despite concerns from rights groups. The family code includes protections for pregnant minors, the elderly, and ethnic minorities; establishes equal duties of mothers and fathers; and prohibits physical punishment of children. It defines marriage as a union between a man and a woman and, as such, deprives same-sex couples the right to adopt children or the ability to receive fertility treatment.

Abortion is illegal and punishable by imprisonment, even when performed to save the mother's life or in cases of rape or incest. The criminalization of abortion may prompt women to seek out risky illegal abortions that can jeopardize their health.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Human trafficking is a significant issue in Nicaragua, which serves as a source country for women and children forced into prostitution; adults and children are also vulnerable to

forced labor in the agriculture, mining, and other sectors, and as domestic servants. While recognizing the government's "significant efforts" to tackle human trafficking, the 2017 U.S. State Department's *Trafficking in Persons Report* stated that promised funds to be put aside for antitrafficking initiatives had failed to materialize, and that the Atlantic coast continued to be disproportionately affected due to weaker institutions there.

Niger

Population: 19,700,000

Capital: Niamey

Political Rights Rating: 4

Civil Liberties Rating: 4

Freedom Rating: 4.0

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: The current regime in Niger was democratically elected in 2011, and reelected in 2016 in a polling process plagued by serious irregularities. The struggle to meet security challenges posed by active militant groups has served as an alibi for the government to restrict civil liberties. Security, transparency, economic prosperity, and gender equality are limited.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In March, a court sentenced opposition leader Hama Amadou *in absentia* to one year in prison on charges of involvement in a baby trafficking scandal. The opposition has maintained that the charges are politically motivated. Other opposition leaders were imprisoned based on comments they made during meetings and in the media.
- The government extended a state of emergency in the Diffa Region several times, and in March declared a state of emergency in Tillabéri and Tahoua Regions, in response to jihadist attacks.
- In April, police responded violently to a protest by students in Niamey in response to new restrictions on stipends. One student was killed by a tear gas canister fired into her back.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 20 / 40 (-1)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 6 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4

The president is directly elected to up to two five-year terms. President Mahamadou Issoufou was reelected for a second in 2016. The elections took place in a context of political tension, as opposition leader Hama Amadou, Issoufou's most significant challenger for the presidency, was jailed during the entire electoral process, accused of involvement in a baby-trafficking scandal; he was eventually convicted of the charges in 2017. The elections themselves were plagued with irregularities including vote buying, underage voting, and rigging of election results.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4

There are 171 seats in the unicameral National Assembly, 158 of which are directly elected from 8 multimember constituencies; 8 which are reserved for minority representatives who are elected directly from special single-seat constituencies; and 5 that are reserved for Nigeriens living abroad (one for each continent).

In the 2016 polls, Issoufou's Party for Democracy and Socialism (PNDS) won 75 seats in the 171-seat legislature, while Amadou's Nigerien Democratic Movement for an African Federation (MODEN/FA) won 25 seats, and former prime minister Seini Oumarou's National Movement for a Developing Society (MNSD) took 20 seats. Thirteen smaller parties divided the remaining seats. The elections took place as several opposition candidates were held in prison after being accused of involvement in a foiled coup attempt, or participation in unauthorized protests. The polls, held concurrently with the year's presidential election, were plagued by similar irregularities.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 2 / 4

The electoral code offers a framework for fair elections. However, the opposition, pointing to reports of widespread irregularities in the 2016 polls, among other issues, has cast doubt over the impartiality and capacity of the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI), which with the Constitutional Court approves the list of candidates and validates the election results.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 8 / 16 (-1)**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 2 / 4 (-1)**

By law, political parties may freely organize and conduct their activities. However, the PNDS-led government has employed a variety of tactics to interfere in the operation of opposition parties, including persecution of opposition leaders, and the cooptation of key opposition figures. In 2017, opposition leader Hama Amadou, while in exile in France, was sentenced to one year in prison for alleged involvement in a baby trafficking operation. Other opposition leaders were imprisoned based on comments they made during meetings and in the media; these included remarks simply appealing for supporters to attend an anti-government demonstration.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 because the operation of opposition parties is hampered by government persecution of party leaders.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 2 / 4

In theory, the opposition can mobilize support and increase its membership. However, because Amadou, the main opposition leader, is in exile in France, and members of his political party are regularly persecuted, the opposition's ability to mobilize its base and gain power through elections is limited.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 2 / 4

Niger has experienced a number of military coups, the most recent in 2010, and the influence of the military still looms over the political sphere. The government claimed to have foiled another coup attempt in 2015, though it did not produce evidence.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 2 / 4

The law provides for equal opportunity for all Nigeriens to seek political office and participate in political processes. However, in practice women have been underrepresented both in elected and cabinet positions. A parity law calls for women to hold 10 percent of parliamentary seats and 25 percent of cabinet positions. While the law has improved women's representation, the quota has not been respected, nor does it guarantee that women may participate equally once elected or installed in cabinet positions. Two ethnic groups, the Hausa and the Djerma, still dominate many government positions.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 6 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 2 / 4

Elected representatives were duly installed into office following the 2016 polls. However, the harassment of the opposition during the 2016 presidential and legislative election campaigns, as well as irregularities in the elections themselves, damage the government's legitimacy.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

Corruption remains a problem in Niger, and anticorruption laws are underdeveloped. In 2017, the press revealed a number of corruption scandals. The so-called Uraniumgate scandal, which came to light in February, involved reports that Finance Minister Hassoumi Massaoudou, who served previously as President Issoufou's chief of staff, had in 2011 illegally certified a \$320 million uranium transaction, and that the national treasury never received the money. After conducting an investigation, Parliament in April cleared officials of any wrongdoing, although opposition figures criticized the report.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

In November 2017, Niger, a global leader in uranium production, withdrew from the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI). The development came a month after EITI had suspended the country, citing its failure to meet standards for transparent licensing allocation and contract disclosure, lacking a comprehensive public license register, and other concerns.

Implementation and enforcement of the 2011 Charter on Access to Public Information and Administrative Documents has been uneven.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 29 / 60 (+1)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 11 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4

In 2010, Niger adopted a press law that eliminated prison terms for media offenses and reduced the threat of libel cases. However, journalists continue to face difficulties, include occasional police violence while covering protests, and detention or prosecution in response to critical or controversial reporting. In 2017, Ali Soumana, of the newspaper *Le Courier*, was detained for two months on charges of violating judicial confidentiality in connection with an article describing an arrest warrant issued against a person involved in a dispute

with the state. Journalists have also faced harassment and obstruction by officials who cite security grounds to justify their actions.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4

Freedom of religion is generally respected in this overwhelmingly Muslim country. However, the government, citing security concerns, bans full face veils and large outdoor proselytizing events.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 3 / 4

Academic freedom is generally upheld, but universities are underfunded and poorly equipped. Frequent protests and strikes by students and faculty inhibit normal academic activities at universities.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4

Freedom of expression is generally upheld in Niger. However, the government has shown some intolerance of criticism, and has prosecuted people over remarks posted to social media platforms.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 6 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 2 / 4

Freedom of assembly is constitutionally guaranteed, but authorities do not always respect this right in practice, and police have at times used force to break up demonstrations. In January 2017, the government announced the prohibition of public protests on “business days.” The government also refused to authorize several public protests in 2017, citing security concerns.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 2 / 4

The government does not generally restrict the operations of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), though a lack of security in certain regions impedes their functioning. However, citing a need to “clean up” the NGO sector, Minister of Community Development Amani Abdou in June 2017 announced plans for a new regulatory system that would, among other things, define “collaboration” with foreign NGOs, and require groups to submit more stringent reporting. Some activists have faced harassment from authorities who cite security grounds as justification for their actions.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

While the constitution and other laws guarantee workers the right to join unions and bargain for wages, a large portion of the workforce is employed informally and thus lacks access to union representation. The legal definition of “essential” workers not permitted to strike is broad, and the government has the option of invoking mandatory arbitration processes to settle strikes.

In April 2017, police responded violently to a protest by students in Niamey in response to new restrictions on stipends. One student was killed after being shot in the back with a tear gas container. A number of senior members of the Niger Union of Students were arrested on charges of disrupting traffic, along with scores of other demonstrators.

F. RULE OF LAW: 6 / 16 (+1)

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4

The constitution provides for an independent judiciary, and courts have shown some level of independence, though the judicial system is subject to executive interference. In 2017, a series of cases in which opposition leaders and civil society activists were given prison sentences further undermined the perception of the independence of the judiciary.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 2 / 4

Arbitrary arrests and imprisonments are frequent. In March 2017, over a dozen civilian prisoners accused of taking part in plotting a coup against Issoufou's regime in late 2015 were freed as a result of lack of evidence in their cases, but only after they had spent 15 months in pretrial detention.

States of emergency declared in several regions allow the army to engage in mass arrests and detain those suspected of links with terrorist organizations.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 1 / 4

Insecurity continues to plague many parts of the country. In 2017, the militant group Boko Haram continued its attacks against the military and civilians in Diffa Region. Another jihadist group, the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), carried out attacks in Tillabéri and Tahoua Regions. Hundreds of civilians, dozens of Nigerien military, and four US soldiers were killed in various attacks during the year, and the violence has caused widespread internal displacement. The government extended a state of emergency in the Diffa Region several times, and in March declared a state of emergency in Tillabéri and Tahoua Regions in response to the ongoing attacks.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4 (+1)

The rights of ethnic minority groups are protected by law, though the Hausa and the Djerma dominate parts of the economy. Same-sex sexual activity is not illegal in Niger, but same-sex relationships are highly stigmatized, and there is no protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation.

Niger has made efforts to welcome Malian and Nigerian refugees and other forcibly displaced populations.

Score Change: The score improved from 1 to 2 due to the country's open-door policy toward refugees from Mali and Nigeria.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 6 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 2 / 4

The constitution guarantees freedom of movement, but in practice free movement is hampered by militant activity and bribery by security officials who guard checkpoints.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

A number of complications undermine legal guarantees of the right to own property. Few people hold formal ownership documents for their land, though customary law provides some protection. However, the enforcement of both state and customary law gives

way to tensions and confusion. Women have less access to land ownership than men due to inheritance practices and inferior status in property disputes.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 1 / 4

Although the 2010 constitution prohibits gender discrimination, women suffer widespread discrimination in practice. Family law gives women inferior status in divorce. Female genital mutilation was criminalized in 2003 and has declined, but it continues among a small percentage of the population.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

Although slavery was criminalized in 2003 and banned in the 2010 constitution, it remains a problem in Niger, with up to 44,000 individuals still in slavery. Niger remains a source, transit point, and destination for human trafficking. Extreme poverty and food insecurity precludes upward socioeconomic mobility for many people.

Nigeria

Population: 186,500,000

Capital: Abuja

Political Rights Rating: 3

Civil Liberties Rating: 5

Freedom Rating: 4.0

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: Nigeria has made significant improvements in the competitiveness and quality of national elections in recent years, though political corruption remains endemic. Militant groups and security officials consistently violate the human rights of Nigerians. Civil liberties are also undermined by religious and ethnic bias as well as discrimination against women and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Counterinsurgency efforts continued to weaken the militant group Boko Haram, though it was able to mount small-scale attacks on civilian and military targets in the northeast. Humanitarian conditions in the region remained dire, and advocacy groups reported that government forces had engaged in human rights violations with impunity, including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, illegal detentions, and torture.
- Security conditions worsened elsewhere, with increased sectarian and communal clashes in and around the country's Middle Belt and agitation for the independence of Biafra, a region that comprises several states in the southeast. In September, the government outlawed the separatist group Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) as a terrorist organization.
- President Muhammadu Buhari continued his drive to reduce graft, particularly in the energy sector, though this and other policy initiatives were hampered by

his undisclosed medical problems and prolonged absences from the country for treatment.

- Both houses of the National Assembly passed bills to amend the 1999 constitution, and at year's end the proposed changes were being debated by state legislatures. Among other provisions, the bills would allow electoral candidates to run as independents and lower the minimum ages for the presidency and other offices.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 25 / 40**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 9 / 12****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4**

The president is elected by popular vote for no more than two four-year terms. Local and international observer organizations assessed the 2015 presidential election as competitive and generally well conducted, with improvements in voter identification and reductions in election-related violence compared with 2011. However, hundreds of thousands of Nigerians were still prevented from voting, either because they were internally displaced by the Boko Haram insurgency or because they failed to receive their permanent voter cards in time. Buhari, the candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), defeated incumbent president Goodluck Jonathan of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), 54 percent to 45 percent. Jonathan quickly conceded defeat, helping to ensure a peaceful and orderly rotation of power.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

Members of the bicameral National Assembly, consisting of the 109-seat Senate and the 360-seat House of Representatives, are elected for four-year terms. The 2015 elections, held concurrently with the presidential vote, were similarly considered credible by local and international observer organizations. In the House of Representatives, the APC took 212 seats, while the PDP won 140, and smaller parties captured the remaining 8. In the Senate, the APC won 60 seats, while the PDP secured 49.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4

The 2015 parliamentary and presidential elections were postponed by about six weeks, due mainly to security concerns, but the INEC was widely lauded for its professionalism and impartiality. The commission has also been praised for its handling of gubernatorial polls and by-elections since 2015. In 2017, observers noted a number of potential obstacles in the INEC's preparations for the 2019 national elections, including delays in filling vacancies among the states' resident electoral commissioners, who must be appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate.

Both houses of the National Assembly passed a series of proposed amendments to the 1999 constitution during 2017, including provisions to give the INEC the power to deregister political parties under certain conditions and conduct local government elections. The constitutional amendment process was still ongoing at year's end, as two-thirds of the state legislatures must approve the proposed amendments before they can be incorporated into the constitution. In December, several state assemblies began deliberations on the draft changes.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 10 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 3 / 4**

Nigerians generally have the right to organize in different political parties, though this is occasionally hindered in practice. The proposed amendments to the 1999 constitution include provisions for candidates to run as independents and a reduction in the minimum age thresholds for various public offices, both of which aim to increasing political participation, especially among young people.

A 14-month standoff between two factions vying for control of the PDP was resolved in July 2017, when the Supreme Court declared Senator Ahmed Makarfi to be the party's rightful chairman. Makarfi then yielded the chairmanship to Uche Secondus after a party convention elected him in December.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 3 / 4

Nigeria's multiparty system provides an opportunity for opposition parties to gain power through elections, as demonstrated by the APC's sweeping victory in 2015, which marked the first democratic transfer of power between rival parties in the country's history. The vote appeared to reflect the ethnic and religious divisions in the country, with Buhari, a northern Muslim, winning primarily in the northern states, and Jonathan, a Christian from the southern Niger Delta region, gaining an overwhelming majority in the south. However, Buhari's ability to gain support from many non-northern and non-Muslim voters was a significant factor in his success.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 2 / 4

Despite the improved elections and peaceful rotation of power, citizens' political choices remain impaired or undermined to some degree by vote buying and intimidation, the influence of powerful domestic and international economic interests, and the local domination of either the Nigerian military or illegal armed groups in certain regions of the country.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 2 / 4

The legal framework generally provides for equal participation in political life by the country's various cultural, religious, and ethnic groups. However, politicians and parties still often rely on voters' ethnic loyalties, and the interests of a given group may be poorly addressed in areas where it forms a minority or when affiliated parties are not in power.

Women enjoy formal political equality, but restrictive societal norms limit their participation in practice. Women maintained 8 of 109 Senate seats in the 2015 elections, and their share of the 360 seats in the House of Representatives fell from 24 to 18. The criminalization of same-sex sexual activity and a ban on gay advocacy organizations deter LGBT people from openly running for office or working to advance their political interests.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 6 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 2 / 4**

Elected officials generally make and implement policy in Nigeria, but their ability to do so is impaired by factors including corruption, poor control over areas of the country where militant groups are active, and the president's undisclosed health problems. Buhari spent about five months abroad during 2017, mostly seeking medical treatment in Britain. Although Vice President Yemi Osinbajo served as acting president during his absences, they may have caused delays in key executive functions.

The federal budget process suffered from a second consecutive year of dysfunction in 2017. The National Assembly passed the annual budget bill in May, and Osinbajo signed it in June, six months after it was supposed to have taken effect.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

Corruption remains pervasive, particularly in the oil and security sectors. The Buhari administration continued its efforts to reduce graft and improve transparency during 2017. The Senate passed the Petroleum Industry Governance Bill—the first of several measures designed to increase transparency and reduce corruption in Nigeria's oil and gas industries—in May, but the House of Representatives was still considering it at year's end. Meanwhile, following the December 2016 introduction of a new whistle-blower policy to reward Nigerians who provide information on government corruption, by October 2017 the government had reportedly recovered more than N30 billion (\$83 million) in stolen funds thanks to tips from whistle-blowers. In July, the Senate passed legislation to provide statutory protection to whistle-blowers; the bill was before the lower house at year's end.

In September, the chief justice ordered the designation of special courts in each state to handle corruption cases, largely to avoid undue delays in adjudication. The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) opened new investigations into several high-level current and former officials during the year. While institutional safeguards against corruption at the federal level have increased, the culture of corruption at the state and local level persists. Moreover, the opposition PDP has accused the federal government of political bias in its anticorruption efforts.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

The 2011 Freedom of Information Act guarantees the right to access public records, but nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have criticized government agencies for routinely refusing to release information sought through the law.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 25 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 9 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4

Freedoms of speech, expression, and the press are constitutionally guaranteed. However, these rights are limited by laws on sedition, criminal defamation, and publication of false news. Sharia (Islamic law) statutes in 12 northern states impose severe penalties for alleged press offenses. Government officials also restrict press freedom by publicly criticizing, harassing, and arresting journalists, especially when they cover corruption scandals, human rights violations, or separatist and communal violence. In September 2017, soldiers participating in a military exercise dubbed Operation Python Dance in Umuahia, Abia State, allegedly entered the offices of the Nigerian Union of Journalists, assaulted journalists, and destroyed their equipment; the soldiers accused the journalists of taking pictures of the exercise without authorization. Journalists and media entities have also been attacked and intimidated by nonstate actors, including Boko Haram.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 1 / 4

Religious freedom is constitutionally and legally protected and is generally respected by the federal government in practice. Nevertheless, in some instances state and local governments have placed limits on religious activities and endorsed a dominant faith. In September 2017, the Sokoto State government barred the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN), the country's largest Shiite organization, from staging any public processions in the state, citing the possibility of disorder. Authorities in Kaduna State had banned the group in 2016 after a procession led to deadly clashes with Sunni Muslim mobs and police.

Nonstate actors have also attempted to limit religious freedom. Boko Haram has deliberately attacked Christians and moderate Muslims, and their respective houses of worship. Periodic communal clashes between Muslims and Christians have broken out for decades in and around the states of Kaduna and Plateau, often killing hundreds of people and displacing thousands at a time.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 3 / 4

The federal government generally respects academic freedom. However, some state governments mandate religious instruction in elementary and secondary curriculums, and student admission and faculty hiring policies are subject to political interference. Boko Haram's assault on secular education has included the closure or destruction of primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions. In May 2017, negotiations between the government and Boko Haram led to the release of 82 girls whom Boko Haram had abducted from a school in the town of Chibok in 2014. However, about 100 of the girls originally abducted from the Chibok school remained unaccounted for at year's end, and were thought to be in the custody of Boko Haram. UNICEF estimated that the insurgency had left some 3 million children in northern Nigeria without access to a school.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4

Nigerians are generally free to engage in discussions on politics and other topics, though expression of critical views on political leaders or sensitive subjects like the military, religion, and ethnicity occasionally leads to arrests or violent reprisals. In August 2017, the military said it had begun monitoring social media for content that amounted to hate speech or undermined the government, the military, or national security.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 7 / 12**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 2 / 4**

The right to peaceful assembly is constitutionally guaranteed. However, federal and state governments frequently ban public events perceived as threats to national security, including those that could incite political, ethnic, or religious tension. Rights groups have criticized federal and state governments for prohibiting or dispersing protests that are critical of authorities or associated with controversial groups like the IMN and IPOB.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 2 / 4

Nigeria has a broad and vibrant civil society sector. Members of some organizations face intimidation and physical harm for speaking out against Boko Haram, or encounter obstacles when investigating alleged human rights abuses committed by the military against

Boko Haram suspects. Groups operating in the restive Niger Delta region face similar impediments. At a hearing in December 2017, domestic rights organizations argued against a draft bill before the National Assembly that would impose intrusive state regulations on NGOs' funding and operations on national security grounds. Sponsors of the bill claimed, without providing evidence, that NGOs had diverted funds to militant groups.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

Under the constitution, workers have the right to form and join trade unions, engage in collective bargaining, and conduct strikes. Nevertheless, the government forbids strike action in a number of essential services, including public transportation and security.

F. RULE OF LAW: 4 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 2 / 4

Judicial independence is constitutionally and legally enshrined. The judiciary has achieved some degree of independence and professionalism in practice, but political interference, corruption, and a lack of funding, equipment, and training remain important problems. In October 2017, the National Judicial Council, headed by the chief justice, announced that it was investigating 15 judges for alleged malfeasance.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

There have been numerous allegations of extortion and bribe taking within the police force. Federal and state authorities have been criticized for disregarding due process, with prolonged pretrial detention of suspects even after courts ordered their release on bail. IMN leader Ibrahim el-Zakzaky and his wife, who were arrested in December 2015, remained in incommunicado detention throughout 2017 even though a federal court ordered their release in December 2016. In October, authorities began mass arraignment and trials of more than 2,300 Boko Haram suspects, some of whom had already been detained for years. Rights groups raised concerns about due process given the closed proceedings and compressed timetable.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 0 / 4

The military has been repeatedly criticized by local and international human rights groups for extrajudicial killings, torture, and other abuses, including during counterinsurgency efforts in the northeast and operations against separatist movements in the southeast.

In September 2017, soldiers participating in the military exercise Operation Python Dance in Abia State allegedly clashed with members of the IPOB, leaving many wounded and others possibly killed. Some accounts said the confrontation featured a raid on the home of IPOB leader Nnamdi Kanu, who went missing after the incident; the authorities denied having him in custody. The government then formally designated the IPOB as an illegal terrorist organization. Domestic rights groups and some international actors, including the United States, questioned the validity of the classification.

The offensive against Boko Haram continued during 2017, but the group maintained its ability to wage asymmetric warfare, including the use of women and children in suicide attacks against civilian targets in the northeast. More than 1,800 people were killed in incidents involving Boko Haram in 2017. Separately, hundreds of people were killed in sectarian and communal clashes between herders and farmers in the Middle Belt region in the absence of adequate intervention by federal or state authorities.

Violent crime is a serious problem in certain areas of Nigeria, as is the trafficking of drugs and small arms. Abductions are common in the Niger Delta and the southeastern states of Abia, Imo, and Anambra. Various vigilante groups are active, and a bill that would officially recognize the security role of a national organization, the Vigilante Group of Nigeria, passed the two chambers of the National Assembly in October and December. The president had yet to sign it at year's end.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

Despite constitutional safeguards against ethnic discrimination, many ethnic minorities experience bias by state governments and other societal groups in areas including employment, education, and housing.

Women are subject to widespread societal discrimination regarding matters such as education and employment. Many families choose to send sons to school while daughters become street vendors or domestic workers. Women also face significant legal disadvantages in states governed by Sharia statutes.

The government and society continue to discriminate against LGBT people. Same-sex sexual activity can be punished with prison terms under the penal code, and with death under Sharia statutes in some states. The 2014 Same Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act outlaws LGBT advocacy organizations and activities as well as any public display of same-sex relationships. Dozens of people were arrested in connection with these laws during 2017, including attendees at a gay wedding and participants in an HIV awareness event.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 5 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 1 / 4

Freedoms of internal movement and foreign travel are legally guaranteed. However, security officials frequently impose dusk-to-dawn curfews and other movement restrictions in areas affected by communal violence or the Islamist insurgency. About 1.7 million people remained displaced by the conflict in northeastern Nigeria as of late 2017.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

Nigeria's largely unregulated property rights system hinders citizens and private businesses from engaging in the efficient and legal purchase or sale of land and other types of property. Bribery is a common practice when starting a business and registering property. According to the World Bank's Doing Business Report for 2018, Nigeria's ranking improved to 145 out of 190 countries, from 169 the previous year; the country showed improvements in credit accessibility, ease of starting a business, ease of paying taxes, and property registration.

Women belonging to certain ethnic groups are often denied equal rights to inherit property due to customary laws and practices.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 1 / 4

Despite the existence of strict laws against rape, domestic violence, female genital mutilation, and child marriage, these offenses remain widespread, with low rates of reporting and prosecution. Women and girls in camps for displaced persons have reported sexual abuse by members of the military and other authorities.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

Nigerian organized crime groups are heavily involved in human trafficking. Boko Haram has subjected children to forced labor and sex slavery. Both Boko Haram and a civilian vigilante group that opposes the militants have forcibly recruited child soldiers, according to the U.S. State Department. Meanwhile, several of Nigeria's states have not implemented the 2003 Child Rights Act, which protects children from sexual exploitation and other abuses. The National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAP-TIP) continues to rescue trafficking victims and prosecute some suspected traffickers, but its funding is reportedly inadequate, and there have been few prosecutions against labor traffickers.

North Korea

Population: 25,100,000

Capital: Pyongyang

Political Rights Rating: 7

Civil Liberties Rating: 7

Freedom Rating: 7.0

Freedom Status: Not Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: North Korea is a one-party state led by a dynastic totalitarian dictatorship. Surveillance is pervasive, arbitrary arrests and detention are common, and punishments for political offenses are severe. The state maintains a system of camps for political prisoners where torture, forced labor, starvation, and other atrocities take place. While some social and economic changes have been observed in recent years, including a growth in small-scale private business activity, human rights violations are still widespread, grave, and systematic.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- The North Korean military conducted its sixth test of a nuclear weapon and about a dozen rounds of missile tests during the year, drawing condemnation and a series of harsher economic sanctions from the UN Security Council and individual states.
 - Kim Jong-nam, the estranged half-brother of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, was assassinated with VX nerve agent at a Malaysian airport in February, allegedly on orders from the North Korean government. A group of Malaysian citizens were detained in North Korea until the end of March, when the Malaysian authorities agreed to repatriate Kim Jong-nam's body and belongings.
 - In June, North Korean authorities released U.S. citizen Otto Warmbier, who had been arrested while visiting the country in 2016 and sentenced to 15 years of hard labor for allegedly stealing a propaganda poster. Warmbier had suffered severe brain damage while in custody and died six days after his release. With three Americans still detained in North Korea, the United States banned U.S. citizens from further travel to the country.
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POLITICAL RIGHTS: 0 / 40**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 0 / 12****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4**

Kim Jong-un became the country's supreme leader after the death of his father, Kim Jong-il, in December 2011. The elder Kim had led North Korea since the 1994 death of his own father, Kim Il-sung, to whom the office of president was permanently dedicated in a 1998 constitutional revision. In June 2016, the Supreme People's Assembly established the State Affairs Commission as the country's top ruling organ and elected Kim Jong-un as chairman. Kim already held a variety of other titles, including first chairman of the National Defense Commission—previously the highest state body—and supreme commander of the Korean People's Army.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

The 687-seat Supreme People's Assembly, North Korea's unicameral legislature, is elected to five-year terms. All candidates are preselected by the Democratic Front for the Reunification of the Fatherland—a coalition dominated by the ruling Korean Workers' Party (KWP) with representation from a handful of subordinate parties and organizations. Each candidate then runs unopposed. All citizens aged 17 and older are eligible to vote, and voting rates are reported at close to 100 percent. In the last elections in 2014, the official voter turnout figure was 99.97 percent.

Elections were held in July 2015 for 28,452 provincial, city, and county people's assembly members. Voter turnout was again reported to be 99.97 percent, with all candidates preselected and running unopposed.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 0 / 4

Although there is a clear framework for conducting elections, including official election monitors, the system's structure denies voters any choice and rules out any opposition to the incumbent leadership. The government uses the mandatory elections as an unofficial census, keeping track of whether and how people voted, and interprets any rejection of the preselected candidates as treason.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 0 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 0 / 4**

North Korea is effectively a one-party state. Although a small number of minor parties and organizations legally exist, all are members of the KWP-led Democratic Front for the Reunification of the Fatherland.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 0 / 4

Any political dissent or opposition is prohibited and harshly punished. The country has been ruled by the KWP since its founding, and the party itself has always been controlled by the Kim family. Kim Jong-il was dubbed the "eternal general secretary" of the party after his death. At the KWP's tightly controlled seventh party congress in 2016, Kim Jong-un, previously the party's "first secretary," was elected to the newly created position of chairman.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 0 / 4

The general public has no opportunity for political participation, and even KWP elites operate under the threat of extreme penalties for perceived dissent or disloyalty. The party is subject to regular purges aimed at reinforcing the leader's personal authority. Executions of dismissed senior officials continued to be reported in 2017, though such accounts are often difficult to confirm.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 0 / 4

North Korea is ethnically homogeneous, with only a small Chinese population and few non-Chinese foreign residents. Foreigners are not allowed to join the KWP or serve in the military or government. Religious groups are harshly suppressed and unable to organize politically. Women hold few leadership positions in the ruling party and about 16 percent of the seats in the Supreme People's Assembly; the system does not allow such representatives to independently address the interests of women. The government typically denies the existence of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people in North Korea.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 0 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 0 / 4**

North Korea has no freely elected officials. Kim Jong-un and his inner circle determine the policies of the government, and the Supreme People's Assembly gathers for brief sessions once or twice a year to unanimously approve all decisions.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 0 / 4

Corruption is believed to be endemic at every level of the state and economy, and bribery is pervasive. There are no independent or impartial anticorruption mechanisms.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 0 / 4

The government is neither transparent in its operations nor accountable to the public. Information about the functioning of state institutions is tightly controlled for both domestic and external audiences.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 3 / 60**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 0 / 16****D1. Are there free and independent media? 0 / 4**

All domestic media outlets are run by the state. Televisions and radios are permanently fixed to state channels, and all publications are subject to strict supervision and censorship.

In recent years, several foreign news agencies have established bureau offices in Pyongyang. However, access is still tightly controlled for these organizations, and the government has been known to expel media crews in retaliation for their work. In August 2017, a North Korean court sentenced two South Korean journalists and their publishers to death in absentia for reviewing the book *North Korea Confidential* and interviewing its authors, who describe recent economic and social changes in the country.

Voice of America, Radio Free Asia, and a number of South Korean outlets broadcast shortwave and medium-wave radio programming into North Korea. In September 2017, the British Broadcasting Corporation also launched a Korean-language radio service aimed

largely at a North Korean audience. Campaigns to send information into the country via USB and SD cards are also common, though North Koreans' consumption of either foreign radio broadcasts or these contraband devices is subject to severe punishment if detected by authorities.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 0 / 4

Although freedom of religion is guaranteed by the constitution, it does not exist in practice. State-sanctioned churches maintain a token presence in Pyongyang, and some North Koreans who live near the Chinese border are known to practice their faiths furtively. However, intense state indoctrination and repression preclude free exercise of religion. North Korean citizens caught practicing a religious faith are arrested and face harsh punishments, including imprisonment in labor camps. Foreigners caught proselytizing also risk arrest and detention.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 0 / 4

There is no academic freedom. The state must approve all curriculums, including those of educational programs led by foreigners. Although some North Koreans are permitted to study abroad, at both universities and short-term educational training programs, those granted such opportunities are subject to monitoring and reprisals for perceived disloyalty.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 0 / 4

Nearly all forms of private communication are monitored by a huge network of informants. Domestic mobile-phone service has been available since 2008, though the phones are also hardwired to record and transmit calls and text messages back to state security agencies for surveillance purposes. Domestic and international mobile services are kept strictly separate, and crackdowns on users of Chinese-origin phones have been reported.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 0 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 0 / 4

Freedom of assembly is not recognized, and participants in any unauthorized gatherings are subject to severe punishment, including prison sentences.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 0 / 4

There are no legal associations or organizations other than those created by the state and ruling party.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 0 / 4

Strikes, collective bargaining, and other organized labor activities are illegal and can draw severe punishment for participants, including prison sentences.

F. RULE OF LAW: 0 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 0 / 4

North Korea's judiciary is subordinate to the political leadership in law and in practice. According to the constitution, the Central Court, the country's highest court, is accountable

to the Supreme People's Assembly, and its duties include protecting "state power and the socialist system."

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 0 / 4

It is estimated that 80,000 to 120,000 political prisoners are held in detention camps in the country.

Detention of foreigners for allegedly breaking North Korean laws has become a recurring problem. In June 2017, U.S. citizen Otto Warmbier was released after being charged, tried, and sentenced for a "hostile act" against North Korea in early 2016. He was accused of stealing a propaganda poster. Warmbier had apparently been in a coma for over a year at the time of his release, and he died six days after returning home. Three other U.S. citizens remained in detention. In August, North Korea released Canadian pastor Lim Hyeon-soo, who had been serving a life sentence of hard labor since late 2015 for alleged crimes against the state.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 0 / 4

Documented North Korean human rights violations include widespread torture, public executions, forced labor by detainees, and death sentences for political offenses.

Ignoring international objections, the Chinese government continues to return refugees and defectors to North Korea, where they are subject to torture, harsh imprisonment, or execution.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 0 / 4

The most prevalent form of discrimination is based on perceived political and ideological nonconformity rather than ethnicity. All citizens are classified according to their family's level of loyalty and proximity to the leadership under a semihereditary caste-like system known as *songbun*.

Women have legal equality, but they face rigid discrimination in practice and are poorly represented in public employment and the military. Although they have fewer opportunities in the formal sector, women are economically active outside the socialist system, exposing them to arbitrary state restrictions.

The law does not prohibit same-sex sexual activity, but the government maintains that the practice does not exist in North Korea.

In May 2017, authorities allowed the UN special rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, Catalina Devandas-Aguilar, to tour the country. She noted that North Korea's Federation for the Protection of the Disabled promotes the creation of associations for people with disabilities, including deaf and blind people, but said "there is still a long way to go" to realize their rights.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 3 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 0 / 4

Citizens have no freedom of movement, and forced internal resettlement is routine. Emigration is illegal. A person's *songbun* classification affects his or her place of residence as well as employment and educational opportunities, access to medical facilities, and even access to stores. All foreign travel—whether for work, trade, or educational opportunities—is strictly controlled by the government.

Freedom of movement for foreigners in North Korea is also limited and subject to arbitrary constraints. In March 2017, when the Malaysian government refused to return the body of Kim Jong-nam to North Korea, the North Korean government prevented Malaysian citizens in the country from leaving. They were released only when Kim Jong-nam's body and possessions were turned over to North Korea later than month.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 1 / 4

The formal economy remains both centrally planned and grossly mismanaged. Business activity is also hobbled by a lack of infrastructure, a scarcity of energy and raw materials, an inability to borrow on world markets or from multilateral banks because of sanctions, lingering foreign debt, and ideological isolationism. However, expanding informal and government-approved private markets and service industries have provided many North Koreans with a growing field of activity that is relatively free from government control. Local officials have had some authority in the management of special economic zones and over small-scale experiments with market-oriented economic policies.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 1 / 4

Men and women have formal equality in personal status matters such as marriage and divorce. However, sexual and physical violence against women—in the home, in prisons and labor camps, and in other situations—is common, and victims have little legal recourse. There are no specific legal penalties for domestic violence. UN bodies have noted the use of forced abortions and infanticide against pregnant women who are forcibly repatriated from China.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

Forced labor is common in prison camps, mass mobilization programs, and state-run contracting arrangements in which North Korean workers are sent abroad. There have been widespread reports of trafficked women and girls among the tens of thousands of North Koreans who have crossed into China. Due to changing economic conditions, prostitution has reportedly become common in North Korea itself in recent years.

Economic opportunity has been affected by escalating international sanctions in response to North Korea's weapons tests and threats of military aggression. New sanctions imposed during 2017 targeted a variety of civilian industries such as textiles and seafood, and tightened banking restrictions to limit North Korea's access to international financial institutions. Nevertheless, markets and quasi-private businesses have expanded over time. Agricultural reforms have allowed larger percentages of crop yields to be kept by households, presumably to either consume or sell in the markets.

Norway

Population: 5,200,000

Capital: Oslo

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 1

Freedom Rating: 1.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Norway is one of the most robust democracies in the world. Elections are free and fair, and power regularly rotates between parties. Civil liberties are upheld, and media and civil society actors hold the government to account. Societal discrimination against Roma populations remains a problem.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- The center-right coalition of the Conservative Party (Høyre) and Progress Party (FrP) maintained power in September's general elections, and became the first conservative government to win a second consecutive term since 1985.
- Far-right extremist groups continued to hold occasional public demonstrations. One such demonstration was banned on security grounds, after receiving initial approval from authorities. The group subsequently held a march in another location, and police faced criticism for allowing that event to take place.
- In March, an appeals court overturned a 2016 ruling that the rights of Anders Behring Breivik, a convicted mass murderer and right-wing terrorist, had been violated in connection with his placement in solitary confinement.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 40 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The constitutional monarch, currently King Harald V, appoints the prime minister, who is the leader of the majority party or coalition in Norway's unicameral parliament. While the monarch is officially the head of state and commander in chief of the armed forces, his duties are largely ceremonial. Conservative leader Erna Solberg continued on as prime minister following the victory of her center-right coalition in the 2017 general elections.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

Norway's unicameral parliament, the Storting, has 169 members who are directly elected for four-year terms through a system of proportional representation.

The center-right coalition of Høyre and FrP maintained power in the September 2017 general elections, marking the first time a conservative government won a second consecutive term since 1985. At the end of 2017, the Liberal Party (Venstre) had agreed to enter into negotiations with Høyre and FrP on joining their coalition government.

An election monitoring mission from the Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE) concluded that the elections were well conducted, offering notable

praise for the country's early voting mechanisms. However, the mission noted that visually impaired voters experience some difficulties.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

Elections are regulated by the constitution and the Representation of the People Act of 2002. The king elects members of the National Electoral Committee, which oversees the conduct of elections with the support of county-level committees. The 2017 OSCE election monitoring mission noted a high degree of public confidence in the country's electoral infrastructure.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 16 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4

A range of political parties operate freely in Norway.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

Generally, political power has alternated between the Labor Party and Conservative-led coalitions. Norway has a long history of democratic and peaceful power transfers after elections.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

Voters are generally free from undue interference in their political choices, and no military, foreign, or religious entities exert undemocratic influence over the vote. However, the 2017 OSCE election monitoring mission noted a sharp increase in private donations to political candidates ahead of the 2017 polls, and expressed concern that wealthy donors may be exerting outsized influence over Norwegian politics.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 4 / 4

Women and minority groups enjoy full political rights and electoral opportunities. The indigenous Sami population, in addition to participating in the national political process, has its own legislature, the Sameting, which has worked to protect the group's language and cultural rights and to influence the national government's decisions about Sami land and resources. The national government has a deputy minister charged specifically with handling Sami issues.

Women are well represented in Norwegian politics. The posts of prime minister, foreign minister, and defense minister were all held by women in 2017. The political representation of minorities and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people is reflected in robust antidiscrimination laws and various protections for same-sex couples.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 12 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4

The freely elected government is able to develop and implement policy without undue influence from actors who are not democratically accountable.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 4 / 4

Provisions of the penal code criminalizing corrupt activity are generally upheld. Official corruption is not viewed as a significant problem in Norway.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 4 / 4

The government generally operates with transparency. Several audits of public grants and other government spending were conducted in 2017, with auditors turning up some evidence of inadequate management; the findings were duly reported by officials. The 2006 Freedom of Information Act provides for access to government documents, though it contains exemptions for some information pertaining to national security and foreign policy. Investigative journalists have in the past complained that senior government officials use various tactics to avoid or delay inquiries that would expose negligence or wrongdoing.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 60 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 16 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 4 / 4

Freedom of the press is constitutionally guaranteed and generally respected in practice. However, in recent years the courts have grappled with legal questions related to the protection of journalists' sources in criminal cases. In 2017, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruled that the Norwegian government could not compel a journalist to reveal their source, even if the source had come forward independently. The ECHR case was filed by a journalist who was fined in 2012 for defying a legal order to discuss contacts with a source who had passed along information about problems at the Norwegian Oil Company.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Freedom of religion is protected by the constitution and is generally respected in practice. However, in June 2017, the Norwegian government proposed a bill that would ban face coverings, including the niqab and burqa, in nurseries, schools, and universities. The bill was under consideration at year's end.

According to the U.S. State Department's most recent statistics, there was an increase in reports of religiously motivated hate crimes in Norway in 2016, when 97 such reports were counted, compared to 2015, when 79 were registered; most such crimes targeted Muslims.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is generally respected.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

Private discussion in Norway is free and vibrant.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 12 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4

The right to freedom of assembly is respected in the majority of cases. There have been tensions in recent years over demonstrations by extremist groups, and about risks to public

security that could result from them. For example, in July, a neo-Nazi group was given permission by authorities to march in Fredrikstad. However, due to security concerns, including those involving a counterprotest by left-wing groups, the event was later prohibited. The Neo-Nazi group subsequently held a march in Kristiansand. Police permitted that march to go forward, prompting some public criticism.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Norwegian nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are able to form and operate without undue restrictions.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

The right to strike is legally guaranteed—except for members of the military and senior civil servants—and is generally respected in practice. All workers have the right to engage in collective bargaining.

F. RULE OF LAW: 16 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 4 / 4

The judiciary is generally considered independent, and the court system, headed by the Supreme Court, operates fairly at the local and national levels. The king appoints judges on the advice of the Judicial Appointments Board, which is composed of legal and judicial professionals as well as representatives of the public.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 4 / 4

The police are under civilian control, and human rights abuses by law enforcement authorities are rare.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 4 / 4

Prison conditions generally meet international standards and, in many cases, exceed them.

In March 2017, a Norwegian appeals court overturned a 2016 ruling that the rights of Anders Behring Breivik, a convicted mass murderer and right-wing terrorist, had been violated in connection with his placement in solitary confinement. The Norwegian Supreme Court in June declined to hear Breivik's appeal.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 4 / 4

The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombudsman is responsible for enforcing the country's Gender Equality Act, the Anti-Discrimination Act, and other laws against discrimination. The national government supports Sami-language instruction, broadcast programs, and subsidized newspapers in Sami regions.

However, the Council of Europe has encouraged Norwegian authorities to address widespread discriminatory attitudes towards Roma communities, and to ensure that Roma people have equal access to education and employment.

While the number of people seeking refuge in Norway declined dramatically in 2017 compared to the previous years, concerns about the refoulement of refugees continued, notably of Afghan nationals. In November, the parliament approved legislation that would allow asylum seekers who came to Norway as minors, but were due to be deported following their

18th birthdays, to file new asylum applications. Many of those affected by the law had fled to Norway from Afghanistan.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 16 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4

Freedom of movement in Norway is generally respected. People have the ability to change their place of residence, employment, and education.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 4 / 4

The right to own property and to establish private business is established in Norwegian law and upheld in practice.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 4 / 4

The government generally does not restrict social freedoms. The Gender Equality Act provides equal rights for men and women.

Domestic violence is a problem, though the government has worked to uphold criminal penalties for offenders and provide services to victims.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 4 / 4

In principle, equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation is upheld, however there are cases of discrimination, mainly concerning Roma communities.

The government proactively works to provide services to victims of labor and sex trafficking, but the number of criminal trafficking convictions is relatively low. The U.S. State Department has recommended that Norwegian authorities implement trainings for police, prosecutors, and others on identifying and handling trafficking cases.

Oman

Population: 4,400,000

Capital: Muscat

Political Rights Rating: 6

Civil Liberties Rating: 5

Freedom Rating: 5.5

Freedom Status: Not Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Note: Due to a methodological change affecting certain monarchies, Oman's aggregate score for political rights declined by two points; for more information see the report methodology.

Overview: Oman is a hereditary monarchy, and power is concentrated in the hands of Sultan Qaboos bin Said al-Said, who has ruled since 1970. The regime restricts virtually all political rights and civil liberties, and imposes criminal penalties for criticism and dissent.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In March, the Appeal Court postponed its review of the three-year prison sentence against Abdullah Habib, a well-known writer and activist, for Facebook posts in which he discussed human rights issues; the court cited the need to gather further documentation on the case, which remained unresolved at year's end.
- Mansour bin Nasser al-Mahrazi, a writer and researcher, was sentenced in May to three years in prison for offenses including "insulting the sultan," having published two books in 2014 and 2016 that dealt with corruption and other sensitive topics.
- In October, the Supreme Court issued a final ruling that permanently closed the newspaper *Al-Zaman*, which had published articles in 2016 on allegations of corruption and judicial interference by high-ranking officials.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 6 / 40 (-2)**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 2 / 12****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4**

Sultan Qaboos has ruled Oman since seizing power from his father, Sultan Said bin Taimur, in 1970. The sultan, who issues laws by decree, also serves as prime minister; heads the ministries of defense, foreign affairs, and finance; and is the governor of Oman's central bank. Despite his age and uncertain health, plans for a successor to Sultan Qaboos and the transfer of political power in Oman remain secret.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4

The 1996 basic law, promulgated by decree, created a bicameral body consisting of an appointed Council of State (Majlis al-Dawla) and a wholly elected Consultative Council (Majlis al-Shura). Citizens elect the Consultative Council for four-year terms, but the chamber has no legislative powers and can only recommend changes to new laws.

Consultative Council elections were held in October 2015, with 590 nonpartisan candidates competing for the council's 85 seats. Voter turnout was 57 percent. In November 2015, the sultan appointed the 85 members of the Council of State for a new four-year term.

Oman held its first-ever municipal council elections in 2012. In the most recent elections in 2016, voters chose among 731 nonpartisan candidates to fill 202 seats on the 11 councils, which correspond to Oman's 11 governorates. Turnout was about 49 percent.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 1 / 4

The electoral framework allows all citizens over the age of 21 to vote, unless they are in the military or security forces. However, it applies only to the Consultative Council and municipal councils, which serve largely as advisory bodies. Elections are administered by the Interior Ministry rather than an independent commission.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 2 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 0 / 4**

Political parties are not permitted, and the authorities do not tolerate other forms of organized political opposition. A 2014 law allows the revocation of citizenship for Omanis who join organizations deemed harmful to national interests.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 0 / 4

The sultan maintains a monopoly on political power. The structure of the system excludes the possibility of a change in government through elections.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 1 / 4

The nonpartisan nature of Oman's limited elections, the overwhelming dominance of the sultan in Omani society, and the authorities' suppression of dissent leave voters and candidates with little autonomy in their political choices.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 1 / 4

Noncitizens, who make up about 46 percent of the population, have no political rights or electoral opportunities. Citizenship is generally transmitted from Omani fathers. Foreign residents must live legally in the country for 20 years to qualify for citizenship, or 15 and 10 years for foreign husbands and wives of Omani citizens, respectively, if they have a son. These and other conditions make naturalizations relatively rare.

Omani women can legally vote and run for office, but they have few practical opportunities to organize independently and advance their interests in the political system. Just one woman was elected to the Consultative Council in 2015, and seven women won seats on municipal councils in 2016, up from four in 2012. Fourteen women serve on the appointed Council of State.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 2 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 0 / 4

Government policy is set by the sultan and an inner circle of advisers and senior ministers. The Council of State and the Consultative Council are advisory bodies with no lawmaking powers.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

Oman's legal code does not provide an effective framework for the prevention, exposure, and impartial prosecution of corruption. However, government officials are required to declare their assets and sources of wealth, and several high-profile corruption cases involving government officials and executives from Oman's oil industry have resulted in convictions and prison terms in recent years.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 0 / 4

The law does not provide freedom of information guarantees. Openness and transparency are limited in practice by the concentration of power and authority in a small inner circle around the sultan. The State Audit Institution monitors ministerial spending, conflicts of interest, and state-owned companies, but its findings are not released to the public, and it does not cover the sultan's court or the military.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 17 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 5 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4

Freedom of expression is limited, and criticism of the sultan is prohibited. There are private media outlets in addition to those run by the state, but they typically accept government subsidies, practice self-censorship, and face punishment if they cross political redlines. The government has broad authority to close outlets, block websites, revoke licenses, and prosecute journalists for content violations.

In May 2017, the authorities blocked the website of the independent online magazine *Mowaten* after it relocated to Britain to avoid government harassment in Oman; a travel ban had reportedly been imposed on the chief editor's family earlier in the year. In October 2017, the Supreme Court issued a final ruling that permanently closed the newspaper *Al-Zaman*, whose publication was suspended in 2016 following an article that examined allegations of corruption among senior officials and interference in the judiciary. The article also led to the arrest of the paper's top editors, though one was ultimately acquitted and the other two completed their sentences during 2017 for vague offenses like disturbing public order.

The government's efforts to suppress critical news and commentary extends to books and social media. In March 2017, the Appeal Court postponed its review of the case of Abdullah Habib, a well-known writer and activist who had been sentenced to three years in prison in 2016 for a series of Facebook posts addressing political and human rights issues. The court cited the need to gather further documentation on the case, which remained unresolved at year's end. In May, writer and researcher Mansour bin Nasser al-Mahrazi was sentenced to three years in prison for offenses including "insulting the sultan," having published two books in 2014 and 2016 that dealt with corruption and other sensitive topics.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 2 / 4

Islam is the state religion. Non-Muslims have the right to worship, but they are banned from proselytizing. Religious organizations must register with the government. The Ministry of Awqaf (religious charitable bequests) and Religious Affairs distributes standardized texts for mosque sermons, and imams are expected to stay within the outlines of these texts.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 1 / 4

The government restricts academic freedom by preventing the publication of material on politically sensitive topics. In 2016 the government closed the Muscat office of Amideast, a U.S. nonprofit organization that prepared students for study abroad and facilitated cultural exchanges.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 1 / 4

The authorities reportedly monitor personal communications, and the growing number of arrests, interrogations, and jail terms related to criticism of the government on social media has encouraged self-censorship among ordinary citizens in recent years.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 3 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 0 / 4

A limited right to peaceful assembly is provided for in Oman's basic law. However, all public gatherings require official permission, and the government has the authority to prevent organized public meetings without any appeals process.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 1 / 4

The basic law allows the formation of nongovernmental organizations, but civic life remains limited in practice. The government has not permitted the establishment of independent human rights organizations and generally uses the registration and licensing process to block the formation of groups seen as a threat to stability. Individual activists focused on issues including labor rights and internet freedom continued to face arrest during 2017.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

Omani workers are legally able to organize unions, bargain collectively, and strike. However, there is only one authorized trade union federation, and neither government employees nor household workers are permitted to join unions. Strikes, which are banned in the oil and gas industry, are rare in practice, partly because disputes are often resolved through employer concessions or government mediation.

F. RULE OF LAW: 4 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 0 / 4**

The judiciary is not independent and remains subordinate to the sultan, who is empowered to appoint and remove senior judges. The sultan also chairs the Supreme Judicial Council, which nominates judges and oversees the judicial system, though a 2012 reform replaced the justice minister with the head of the Supreme Court as the council's deputy chair.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

Arbitrary arrest is formally prohibited, but suspects in vaguely defined security cases can be held for up to 30 days before being charged, and security forces do not always adhere to other rules on arrest and pretrial detention. Ordinary detainees are generally provided with access to legal representation.

Defendants in politically sensitive cases may face harsher treatment from the justice system. For example, prior to his trial in May 2017, al-Mahrazi spent at least two months in incommunicado detention, and the judge refused to hear defense witnesses.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 2 / 4

Prisons are not accessible in practice to independent monitors, but former detainees have reported beatings and other abuse.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

The 1996 basic law banned discrimination on the basis of sex, religion, ethnicity, and social class, but noncitizens are not protected from discrimination in practice, while women face disparate treatment under personal status laws and de facto bias in employment and other matters. Same-sex sexual activity is punishable with up to three years in prison, and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people face societal discrimination.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 5 / 16**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 1 / 4**

Most Omani citizens enjoy freedom of movement, but travel bans are often imposed on political dissidents. Foreign workers cannot leave the country without permission from their

employer and risk deportation if they change employers without documentation releasing them from their previous contract.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

State-owned companies and the ruling family are dominant forces in the economy, limiting the role and autonomy of small and other private businesses. In March 2017, the Supreme Council for Planning and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry unveiled plans to streamline the laborious process of opening a business, aiming to shorten it from over 200 days in some cases to under 30.

Women generally receive less property than men under inheritance laws.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 1 / 4

Omani citizens require permission from the Ministry of Interior to marry noncitizens from countries outside the Gulf Cooperation Council. Omani women who marry foreigners cannot transmit citizenship to their spouses or children. Omani law does not specifically address domestic violence and sexual harassment or criminalize spousal rape, while extra-marital sex is criminalized. Women are at disadvantage under laws governing matters such as divorce and child custody.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

Oman's labor policies put migrant workers at a severe disadvantage and effectively encourage exploitation. Household workers, who are not covered by the labor law, are especially at risk of abuse by employers. The government has pursued an "Omanization" process to replace foreign workers with native Omanis. Among other tactics, temporary visa bans for foreign workers in various professions have been issued or extended since 2013. Despite a 2008 antitrafficking law, the authorities do not actively identify or protect human trafficking victims, and prosecutions are relatively rare.

Pakistan

Population: 203,400,000

Capital: Islamabad

Political Rights Rating: 4

Civil Liberties Rating: 5

Freedom Rating: 4.5

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Note: The numerical ratings and status listed above do not reflect conditions in Pakistani-controlled Kashmir, which is examined in a separate report.

Overview: Pakistan holds regular elections under a competitive multiparty political system. However, the military exerts enormous influence over security and other policy issues, intimidates the media, and enjoys impunity for indiscriminate or extralegal use of force. The

authorities impose selective restrictions on civil liberties, and Islamist militants carry out attacks on religious minorities and other perceived opponents.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In July, the Supreme Court disqualified Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif from public office on the grounds of “dishonesty.” The ruling was based on a corruption inquiry triggered by the so-called Panama Papers—leaked documents from a Panama-based law firm detailing hidden wealth around the world—but it was also seen as part of an effort by the military to weaken Sharif and his party.
- The National Assembly approved Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, a Sharif ally from the ruling party, as the new prime minister.
- In November, the military brokered the resignation of the government’s law minister as a concession to hard-line Islamist protesters who had blockaded the capital and accused the minister of blasphemy.
- Terrorism-related violence continued to decline during the year, but individuals accused of blasphemy and other proscribed speech were subject to censorship, harsh criminal penalties, and physical attacks.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 19 / 40 (-2)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 6 / 12 (-1)

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4 (-1)

A prime minister responsible to the bicameral parliament holds most executive power under the constitution. The president, who plays a more symbolic role, is elected for up to two five-year terms by an electoral college comprising the two chambers of parliament and the provincial assemblies. The president as of 2017, Mamnoon Hussain, was nominated by the ruling Pakistan Muslim League–Nawaz (PML-N) and elected in 2013.

Nawaz Sharif became prime minister after the PML-N won relatively free and fair elections in 2013. However, the Supreme Court ruled in July 2017 that he had violated a vague constitutional clause requiring parliament members to be “honest” by failing to disclose certain assets in his nomination papers, and he was forced to step down. Sharif was replaced as prime minister by his party’s nominee, Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, then the minister of petroleum and natural resources. Critics of the ruling noted that the court had accepted, without a trial, the findings of an ad hoc investigative panel that included military members, and many observers tied Sharif’s ouster to his long-standing rivalry with the military over control of foreign policy and national security matters.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 because the elected prime minister was removed from office through an irregular judicial process amid suspicions of interference by the military.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4

The parliament consists of a 342-member National Assembly (NA) and a 104-member Senate. Members of the NA are elected for five years. Of the 342 seats, 272 are filled through direct elections in single-member districts, 60 are reserved for women, and 10 are reserved for non-Muslim minorities. The reserved seats are filled through a proportional representation system with closed party lists.

In the Senate, each provincial assembly chooses 23 members, NA members representing the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) elect 8, and 4 are chosen by the NA to represent the Islamabad capital territory. Senators serve six-year terms, with half of the seats up for election every three years.

International and domestic election observers judged the 2013 elections favorably, citing active competition and campaigning. Voter turnout was 55 percent. The PML-N overtook the incumbent Pakistan People's Party (PPP) at the federal level, winning 126 of the directly elected seats in the NA. The PPP won 31 seats, and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) took 28. Various smaller parties won fewer than 20 directly elected seats each. The PML-N formed a governing majority with the help of allied independents.

Provincial assembly elections were also held in 2013, leaving a different party in government in each of the four provinces: PML-N in Punjab, PPP in Sindh, a PTI-led coalition in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), and a National Party/PML-N coalition in Baluchistan.

In September 2017, Sharif's wife won a by-election for his vacant NA seat in Lahore.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 2 / 4

Elections are administered by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), whose members are current or retired senior judges nominated through a consultative process that includes the government and the parliamentary opposition. The electoral laws are largely fair and impartially implemented, and candidates have extensive access to the courts in electoral disputes. However, ongoing problems include lower rates of voter registration among women, a requirement that members of the Ahmadi religious minority register as non-Muslims despite considering themselves Muslims, vague moral requirements for candidate nomination, and the ECP's lack of direct authority over local returning officers responsible for candidate registration.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 8 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 3 / 4

Pakistan has a thriving and competitive multiparty system. Several major parties and numerous smaller parties and independents are represented in the parliament and provincial legislatures, though established parties like the PML-N and PPP maintain patronage networks and other advantages of incumbency that hamper competition in their respective provincial strongholds.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 3 / 4

Opposition parties are free to campaign and contest elections, and the two main opposition groups head provincial governments. The 2013 elections resulted in a rare democratic transfer of power from the PPP to the PML-N at the national level. Most recent complaints of political repression have concerned alleged attempts by the military and reputedly allied groups like the PTI to weaken the ruling party. The PPP made little headway during 2017 in its efforts to rebuild support, though the main obstacle seemed to be lack of popular appeal rather than official interference.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 1 / 4

Civilian politics are subject to attempted manipulation by religious extremists and the powerful military. Security forces cracked down on the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) in 2016 after its London-based leader gave a speech that was deemed treasonous, closing party offices in Karachi and allegedly backing the emergence of rival party factions. Separately, new radical Islamist parties with links to extralegal violence gained prominence during 2017, including Tehreek-e-Labaik and the Milli Muslim League, whose candidates together took 11 percent of the vote in the by-election for Nawaz Sharif's NA seat. Tehreek-e-Labaik went on to mount the aggressive protests that led to the ouster of the law minister in November.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 1 / 4

Since 2002, a joint electorate system has allowed members of non-Muslim minorities to participate in the general vote while also being represented by reserved seats in the national and provincial assemblies through the party-list system. However, the participation of non-Muslims in the political system continues to be marginal. Political parties nominate members to legislative seats reserved for non-Muslim minorities, leaving non-Muslim voters with little say in selecting the parliamentarians who supposedly represent them. Ahmadis, members of a heterodox Muslim sect, face political discrimination and are registered on a separate voter roll.

Political parties maintain women's wings that are active during elections, but women face practical restrictions on voting, especially in KPK, the FATA, and Baluchistan, where militant groups and traditional societal constraints are more prevalent. Women rarely achieve leadership positions in parties or the government.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 5 / 12 (-1)**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 1 / 4 (-1)**

Formally, the elected prime minister and cabinet make policy in consultation with the parliament, which holds full legislative powers. However, the perennial struggle between these civilian structures and the military establishment for control of national security policy intensified during 2017. The military has asserted primacy on relations with India, Afghanistan, China, and the United States, as well as on counterterrorism policy within Pakistan, balking at Prime Minister Sharif's attempts to take the lead and change direction on such topics.

A senior foreign affairs adviser to the prime minister, Tariq Fatemi, was removed from his post in April for alleged involvement in leaks behind a 2016 news report describing a meeting at which the government was said to have pressed the military to take action against militant groups. Sharif's subsequent ouster by the Supreme Court through an irregular process in July and the removal of the PML-N law minister in November added to suspicions that the military was using indirect means to weaken the civilian government and bolster its control over foreign and security policy. The military notably played a role in the inquiry behind the Supreme Court ruling and brokered the resolution of the Islamist protests in November, which amounted to a humiliating defeat for the civilian government. Regardless of the military's actual intentions in these incidents, the weakened government was less able to exert policy influence in their aftermath.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 due to a shift in policymaking influence from the civilian government to the military establishment following the ouster of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif by the Supreme Court in July and other forced removals of civilian officials during the year.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

There are numerous formal safeguards against official corruption, including a dedicated agency, the National Accountability Bureau (NAB). The military and judiciary have their own disciplinary systems. However, corruption is believed to remain endemic in practice. In April 2017, the Supreme Court formed an ad hoc Joint Investigation Team (JIT)—consisting of a senior law enforcement officer, the NAB director, two military intelligence officers, and two top financial regulators—to probe allegations that Sharif had undeclared assets. Its findings resulted in the court’s removal of Sharif from office in July. The case appeared to address long-standing concerns that the political elite used their positions to amass private wealth and flout relevant regulations, but the unusual procedures and political context reinforced the impression that enforcement of anticorruption laws is selective and discriminatory. Criminal corruption charges were filed against Sharif and members of his family later in the year.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 3 / 4

Accessing official information remains difficult, and existing provisions for obtaining public records are ineffective. At the federal level a 2002 ordinance on access to information remains in force and is widely considered to be weaker than current international standards. Think tanks, civil society organizations, and universities all contribute to lively debate on many aspects of public policy. However, debate on certain aspects of national security policy, such as the insurgency in Baluchistan and the military’s alleged support for militant groups targeting Afghanistan and Indian-controlled Kashmir, have in effect remained taboo.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 24 / 60 (+2)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 7 / 16 (+1)

D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4 (+1)

Pakistan has a vibrant media sector that presents a range of news and opinions. In 2017, the media were able to cover political and legal controversies involving Sharif and his government with relative freedom—particularly English-language outlets whose smaller audiences afforded them more leeway to challenge powerful interests.

However, state agencies can curb media content through a variety of laws and regulations when they deem it necessary. For example, the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) awards radio and television licenses, maintains a code of conduct, and exercises the power to suspend operators. There is also a history of violence and intimidation selectively directed against media figures by military intelligence agencies and violent extremist groups. Several journalists were shot and killed during the year, and the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists confirmed that at least one was murdered in connection with his work. The perpetrators of such violence typically enjoy impunity. In Baluchistan, local journalists are often caught between authorities who order them not to cover separatist rebel activity and rebel groups that threaten them for siding with the government.

Score Change: The score improved from 1 to 2 due to the media’s ability to cover the prime minister’s corruption case and other politically sensitive matters during the year.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 1 / 4

Constitutional guarantees of religious freedom have not provided effective safeguards against discriminatory legislation, social prejudice, and sectarian violence. There was an increase in sectarian violence in 2017 after a drop the previous year, with 231 people reported killed—mainly Shiite Muslims—compared with 137 in 2016. Hindus have complained of vulnerability to kidnapping and forced conversions, and some continue to migrate to India. High-profile blasphemy cases and mob violence have affected the Christian community and others. The most specific discriminatory legislation has been directed at the Ahmadi community, who are prohibited from calling themselves Muslims. A 2017 initiative to tone down the anti-Ahmadi declaration required of candidates in the electoral law backfired, triggering the Islamist protest movement that led to the law minister's ouster in November.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 2 / 4

Pakistani authorities have a long history of using education to portray Hindus and other non-Muslims negatively and to rationalize enmity between Pakistan and India, among other ideological aims. Past attempts to modernize education and introduce tolerance into school textbooks have made little progress. In 2017, Tehreek-e-Laibak demanded a role in supervising Pakistani textbooks so as to strengthen their Islamic content and perspective. Some space has opened for scholars to discuss sensitive issues involving the military in recent years.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 2 / 4

Pakistanis are free in practice to discuss many topics both online and off, but the 2016 Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECB) gives the executive-controlled Pakistan Telecommunications Authority (PTA) unchecked powers to censor material on the internet, and law enforcement agencies have cracked down on allegedly blasphemous content in particular. In June 2017, a Shiite man convicted of blasphemy became the first person to receive a death sentence for a social media posting. In September, a Christian man was similarly sentenced to death for sharing allegedly blasphemous material on the messaging application WhatsApp.

Extralegal violence also serves as a deterrent to unfettered speech. In January 2017, five bloggers who had criticized Islamist militant groups and the military were forcibly disappeared, allegedly by military intelligence personnel; four were later released, but the fifth apparently remained disappeared at year's end. In April, a student at a university in KPK was shot and beaten to death by a mob after being accused of blasphemy.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 6 / 12**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 3 / 4**

The constitution guarantees the right to assemble peacefully, though the government sometimes imposes arbitrary restrictions to temporarily ban gatherings or any activity designated a threat to public order, for instance by invoking Section 144 of the penal code. In 2017, the authorities generally allowed multiple opposition groups, ranging from the mainstream PTI to chronic agitators such as Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri's Pakistan Awami Tehreek (PAT) and the newly formed radical group Tehreek-e-Laibak, to carry out aggressive antigovernment demonstrations in the capital and other cities. Six people were

reportedly killed when police tried unsuccessfully to disperse the Tehreek-e-Laibak protest in November, and the group then secured concessions from the government before agreeing to end the standoff.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 1 / 4

The government has continued a crackdown on civil society organizations, enforcing rigid regulations and subjecting organizations to intrusive vetting by military intelligence. Officials can demand that civil society organizations obtain a “no-objection certificate” (NOC) before undertaking even the most innocuous activity. In September and November 2017, the authorities ordered Doctors Without Borders (MSF) to cease its activities in the tribal areas of Kurram and Bajaur. In December, the government reportedly denied the reregistration applications of nearly 30 international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), out of 139 which had applied under a process that began in 2015. Those refused registration included women’s rights and human rights groups such as the Open Society Foundations.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

The rights of workers to organize and form trade unions are recognized in law, and the constitution grants unions the rights to collective bargaining and to strike. However, many categories of workers are excluded from these protections, which are not strongly enforced. Roughly 70 percent of the workforce is employed in the informal sector, where unionization and legal protections are minimal. The procedures that need to be followed for a strike to be legal are onerous. Strikes and labor protests are organized regularly, though they often lead to clashes with police and dismissals by employers.

F. RULE OF LAW: 5 / 16 (+1)

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 2 / 4

The removal of Prime Minister Sharif in 2017 demonstrated the Supreme Court’s independence from the civilian executive, but critics accused the court of making a politicized decision based on a narrow technicality after a flawed process, and of acting in concert with the wishes of the military.

The broader court system is marred by endemic problems including corruption, intimidation, insecurity, a large backlog of cases, and low conviction rates for serious crimes.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

Police have long been accused of biased or arbitrary handling of initial criminal complaints, and both the police and the prosecution service have been criticized for a chronic failure to prosecute terrorism cases. The government responded in 2015 by allowing for some civilians to be tried in military courts. Despite concerns that the military courts lacked transparency and due process guarantees, such as access to a competent defense, the government extended their mandate through 2017, and they continued to issue death sentences.

The FATA, which lie outside the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court and are subject to the colonial-era Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR), are effectively exempted from most due process provisions and basic human rights guarantees. The FCR authorizes the government’s political agents and tribal leaders to apply customary law, and provides for collective punishment. The government has agreed to repeal the FCR and integrate the FATA into KPK, but the necessary legislation had yet to pass through parliament at the end of 2017.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 1 / 4 (+1)

A multiyear decline in terrorist violence continued in 2017, with a total of 1,260 people killed in terrorist incidents during the year, compared with 1,803 in 2016 and a peak of over 11,700 in 2009. The reduction is due in large part to the military's suppression of an Islamist insurgency in KPK and the FATA and the pacification of unrest in Karachi. Nevertheless, a separatist insurgency continued in Baluchistan, and Islamist militants were still able to stage high-profile attacks elsewhere in the country.

Civilians also face the threat of extralegal violence by state actors, including enforced disappearances. The number of pending cases of people registered as missing by an official commission of inquiry on enforced disappearances exceeded 1,500 at the end of 2017. Most victims were from KPK and typically had been held incommunicado by security and intelligence agencies on suspicion of terrorism, rebellion, or espionage. Although the commission tracks cases, it has refrained from attributing responsibility. In October, despite a stay order, the authorities secretly arrested and forcibly deported to Turkey a Turkish citizen and his family; the man had been an official at a chain of private schools that the Turkish government accused of links to the banned movement of U.S.-based preacher Fethullah Gülen.

The National Commission for Human Rights submitted a critical report on conditions in Pakistan as part of the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review mechanism in 2017, but the commission lacks enforcement powers, and its work remains constrained by state interference and limited ability to monitor security and intelligence agencies.

Score Change: The score improved from 0 to 1 due to a steady decline in terrorism-related violence.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

Women face discrimination in employment despite legal protections, and they are placed at a disadvantage under personal status laws. Women are also subject to a number of harmful traditional practices and societal abuses, the perpetrators of which often enjoy impunity.

Other segments of the population that suffer legal or de facto discrimination and violence include ethnic and religious minorities, Afghan refugees, and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people. The penal code prescribes prison terms for consensual sex "against the order of nature," deterring LGBT people from acknowledging their identity or reporting abuses. Members of the transgender and intersex community are authorized to register for official documents under a "third gender" classification recognized by the Supreme Court since 2009, and some transgender people were recognized in the 2017 census. However, transgender and intersex people continue to face targeted violence as well as discrimination in housing and employment.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 6 / 16**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 2 / 4**

There are few legal limitations on citizens' travel or their choice of residence, employment, or institution of higher learning. The authorities routinely hinder internal movement in some parts of the country for security reasons. The main tool for restricting foreign travel is the Exit Control List, which blocks named individuals from using official exit points from the country. It is meant to include those who pose a security threat and those facing court

proceedings, though periodically it has been used as a way to control dissent. The list is currently shorter than before an overhaul in 2015, but it continued to provoke controversy when used against political figures during 2017.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or non-state actors? 2 / 4

In principle, Pakistan's constitution, legal system, and social and religious values all guarantee private property and free enterprise. In reality, however, organized crime, corruption, a weak regulatory environment, and subversion of the legal system often render property rights precarious. Powerful and organized groups continue to engage in land grabbing, particularly in Karachi and Punjab.

Inheritance laws discriminate against women, and women are often denied their legal share of inherited property through social or familial pressure.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 1 / 4

In some parts of urban Pakistan, men and women enjoy personal social freedoms and have recourse to the law in case of infringements. However, traditional practices in much of the country subject individuals to social control over personal behavior and especially choice of marriage partner. "Honor killing," the murder of men or women accused of breaking social and especially sexual taboos, remains common, with more than 400 cases documented during 2017. Most incidents go unreported. Successive attempts to abolish the practice, most recently in a 2016 law, have not been fully implemented.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

Extreme forms of labor exploitation remain common. Bonded labor was formally abolished in 1992, and there have been long-standing efforts to enforce the ban and related laws against child labor. Gradual social change has also eroded the power of wealthy landowning families involved in such exploitation. Nevertheless, employers continue to use chronic indebtedness to restrict laborers' freedom of movement and hold actual earnings well below prescribed levels, particularly among sharecroppers and in the brick-kiln industry.

Palau

Population: 20,000

Capital: Ngerulmud

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 1

Freedom Rating: 1.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Palau's presidential system of government is maintained through regular democratic elections. The judiciary and the media are independent, and civil liberties are generally upheld. A Compact of Free Association with the United States provides defense guarantees and financial assistance. The government has sought to combat official corruption in recent

years. Many in the country's large population of foreign workers remain vulnerable to exploitation.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Incumbent president Tommy Remengesau was sworn in for a second consecutive term in January, having won reelection in November 2016. He had previously served as president from 2001 to 2009.
- In December, the United States finally approved legislation implementing an agreement to update Palau's Compact of Free Association. The bilateral agreement had originally been negotiated and signed in 2010.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 37 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The president, who serves as both head of state and head of government, is directly elected for up to two consecutive four-year terms using a two-round system, with a runoff vote if no candidate wins an absolute majority in the first round. President Remengesau won reelection in November 2016, defeating his brother-in-law, Senator Surangel Whipps, with 51.3 percent of the vote.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The bicameral National Congress consists of a 13-member Senate and a 16-member House of Delegates. The Senate is directly elected by block vote in one national constituency. Members of the House of Delegates are elected from single-member constituencies corresponding to the country's 16 states, which vary in population. All members of the National Congress are elected for four-year terms. In the November 2016 elections, held concurrently with the presidential vote, 13 incumbents were returned to the House and 8 to the Senate.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

Electoral administration is widely considered to be fair and impartial. A review of the Senate's size and electoral system is undertaken every eight years by a Reapportionment Commission. In June 2016 the commission recommended that the Senate be maintained in its current form. In response to a citizen petition, the Supreme Court initially ruled that because the population had decreased, the number of senators should be reduced from 13 to 11, but the court restored the original plan after an appeal in October of that year.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 15 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4

There are no laws restricting the formation of political parties, but in practice all candidates run and compete freely as independents. Politicians tend to organize in loose political alliances, often based on clan or family relationships.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

Although there are no political parties, lawmakers do organize into informal progovernment and opposition camps, and no single political force has control of the legislature. Power is transferred democratically between rival politicians. Remengesau returned to the presidency in 2013 by defeating the incumbent, Johnson Toribiong, in the 2012 election.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

Palau receives financial assistance from the United States under its Compact of Free Association, but the U.S. government does not exert improper influence over the country's internal politics. While the political views of traditional chiefs are respected, they do not have authoritative control over the choices of voters.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

Women generally have equal political rights in law and in practice. Some legislative seats at the state level are reserved for traditionally male chiefs, though chiefs in turn are customarily chosen by councils of female elders. In the last national elections, women won two seats in the House and two in the Senate.

About a third of the population consists of foreign nationals who do not have political rights in Palau. Citizenship must be inherited from at least one parent, as there are no provisions for naturalization.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 10 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4**

Palau's democratically elected government determines and implements policy without undue interference.

Traditional chiefs formally play an advisory role regarding customary matters through the national Council of Chiefs. While they also exercise informal influence over government policy, this is widely seen as a positive check on potential mismanagement or abuse of power by elected officials.

The Compact of Free Association with the United States, in effect since Palau became independent in 1994, ensures self-government in the country but also provides for close military and economic relations with the United States, including U.S. responsibility for Palau's defense. A scheduled 15-year review of the compact resulted in a 2010 bilateral agreement on development aid and other benefits to last until the next review in 2024, but legislation to implement that agreement remained stalled in the U.S. Congress for several years, during which time Congress continued to appropriate basic aid funds on an annual basis. In December 2017, U.S. president Donald Trump signed a defense bill that included implementing provisions for the compact review agreement. Also during the year, the two countries advanced plans to install new radar systems in Palau.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4

High-ranking public officials have faced corruption charges in recent years, and several have been convicted. The government and lawmakers have deliberated on strategies to deal with corruption more effectively, and in April 2017 the finance minister issued a statement

to reiterate the government's ethics rules and a whistle-blower protection policy. The Office of the Ombudsman has asked for a clearer legal mandate with greater independence, as it currently operates as part of the president's office under an executive order.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 3 / 4

A 2014 Open Government Act provides for public access to official documents and hearings, and government officials are obliged to submit annual financial disclosures that are available to the public. However, authorities have sometimes resisted disclosing requested information, particularly at the subnational level.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 55 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 16 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 4 / 4

Freedom of the press is respected. There are several independent news outlets, including newspapers and broadcasters, but they have often struggled financially. Regional and international news services are also available. Internet access has been hampered by high costs and lack of connectivity outside the main islands.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Constitutional guarantees of religious freedom are upheld in practice. Although religious organizations are required to register as nonprofit organizations, the process is not onerous or restrictive. Foreign missionaries are also required to obtain a permit.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

There have been no reports of restrictions on academic freedom.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

There are no constraints on political discussion, and the government does not monitor personal communications.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 11 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4

Freedom of assembly is protected by the constitution and respected in practice.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations operate freely, with various groups focusing on issues such as environmental conservation, youth development, public health, and women's rights.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

Workers can freely organize unions and bargain collectively, but there are no laws specifically regulating trade unions or strikes or prohibiting antiunion discrimination. Union membership and activity are low in practice, as the private-sector economy consists mostly of small, family-run businesses.

F. RULE OF LAW: 15 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 4 / 4**

The judiciary has a reputation for a high degree of independence and integrity. The president appoints judges for life terms based on recommendations from an independent Judicial Nominating Commission, which is made up of three presidential appointees, three jurists named by their peers, and the chief justice.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 4 / 4

The authorities generally uphold legal safeguards against arbitrary arrest and detention, and trial proceedings ensure due process.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 4 / 4

Law enforcement agencies maintain internal order, and instances of abuse or impunity are rare, though overcrowding in the country's limited detention facilities is a problem.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

The legal system prohibits discrimination based on gender, race, place of origin, and other categories. Sexual orientation and gender identity are not protected categories, but Palau repealed legal provisions that criminalized consensual same-sex sexual activity in 2014. Women generally enjoy equal treatment in practice. Foreign nationals sometimes face discrimination regarding employment, education, and other matters. Growing tourism from China in particular has created jobs but also raised the cost of living, and some locals regard the presence of Chinese businesses and residents with hostility.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 13 / 16**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4**

There are no significant restrictions on freedom of movement, including internal and international travel.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 3 / 4

The legal framework generally supports property rights and private businesses activity, and the government has undertaken reforms to improve conditions in recent years, though some bureaucratic obstacles and corruption-related impediments persist.

Noncitizens cannot purchase land, which is inherited matrilineally among Palauans.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

Personal social freedoms are largely respected, and women have equal rights regarding marriage, child custody, and other personal status matters. Rape, including spousal rape, and domestic violence are criminal offenses, though victims of domestic abuse are often unwilling to report it to police.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

Residents generally have access to economic opportunity, and the law provides some protections against exploitative labor practices. However, enforcement of such safeguards

is inadequate, and foreign workers remain vulnerable to sexual exploitation, forced labor, or otherwise abusive working conditions in sectors including domestic service and fisheries. The minimum wage law does not apply to foreign workers. Some officials have been accused of complicity in human trafficking.

Panama

Population: 4,000,000
Capital: Panama City
Political Rights Rating: 2
Civil Liberties Rating: 2
Freedom Rating: 2.0
Freedom Status: Free
Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Panama's political institutions are democratic, with competitive elections and orderly rotations of power. Freedoms of expression and association are generally respected. However, corruption and impunity are serious challenges, affecting the justice system and the highest levels of government. Discrimination against racial minorities is common, and indigenous groups have struggled to uphold their legal rights with respect to land and development projects.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Electoral reforms were adopted in April with the aim of improving the regulation and transparency of party financing.
- Indigenous communities staged protests during the year to call attention to grievances including poor government services and inadequate consultation on development projects in their regions.
- Former president Ricardo Martinelli, who faced corruption and wiretapping charges in Panama, was arrested in the United States in June. A U.S. court ruling on Panama's extradition request was pending at year's end.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 35 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The president is elected by popular vote for a single five-year term. In 2014, incumbent vice president Juan Carlos Varela of the Panameñista Party (PP) won the presidency with 39 percent of the national vote. Former housing minister José Domingo Arias of Democratic Change (CD) won 31 percent, and former Panama City mayor Juan Carlos Navarro of the Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD) won 28 percent, with four other candidates splitting the remaining votes. International observers considered the elections generally free and fair, though the Organization of American States and the International Republican Institute criticized executive interference in the electoral process, including through the misuse of public resources, and noted that campaign financing was poorly regulated.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

Members of the 71-seat unicameral legislature, the National Assembly, are elected for five-year terms. The 2014 elections were held concurrently with the presidential vote, drawing the same assessment from international monitors. The United for Change alliance—formed by the CD and the Nationalist Republican Liberal Movement (MOLIRENA)—won 32 seats, followed by the PRD with 25, the PP with 10, and the Popular Party with 3; one independent candidate also won a seat.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

The country's electoral framework is generally fair and impartially implemented. The Electoral Tribunal of Panama (TE) is responsible for reviewing the electoral code after each election and submitting any reforms to the National Assembly. In April 2017, the legislature adopted reforms proposed by the TE in 2016 that included tighter regulation of campaign donations, spending, and advertising. For example, the legislation imposed a cap on private funding for presidential and National Assembly campaigns and reduced the length of the campaign periods for primary and general elections. President Varela signed the changes into law in May.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 15 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4**

Political parties are free to form and compete in Panama's multiparty system, and since the 2014 elections, candidates have also been able to register as independents.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

Elections are competitive in practice, and orderly transfers of power between rival parties have been the norm since the end of de facto military rule in 1989.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

Voters and candidates are generally free from undue interference by groups outside the political system, though the threat that improper donations by drug traffickers and other powerful interests could influence the political process remains a concern, even after the campaign finance reforms introduced in 2017.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

Women are free to participate in politics, and women's advocacy organizations have campaigned to improve their representation in elected offices. The electoral code requires gender parity in internal party primary systems, but in practice this has not led to more women winning general elections. Less than 20 percent of National Assembly seats went to women in the 2014 elections.

The country's racial minorities and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) community continue to face obstacles to the full exercise of their political rights, which are

equal under the law. In May 2017, activists created a new progressive party with a platform that included legalization of same-sex marriage. The constitution establishes five indigenous territories—three at the provincial level and two at the municipal level—and these are duly represented in the system of constituencies for the National Assembly, but the interests of indigenous people remain inadequately addressed by the political system as a whole.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 8 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4**

The elected government and legislature generally determine and implement laws and policies, though evidence of official corruption has raised concerns about the possibility that unelected entities could unduly influence governance.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

Safeguards against official corruption are relatively weak and ineffective, and investigations have revealed extensive corruption in previous administrations. The current government has been criticized for inaction on this issue, though the president remains publicly supportive of anticorruption efforts. During 2017, the legislature held up several proposed reforms designed to strengthen protections against official malfeasance and money laundering.

Two ministers from the administration of former president Martinelli were arrested in September 2017 for alleged money laundering in connection with the Odebrecht case, a massive corruption scandal centered on a Brazilian construction firm that has affected much of Latin America. Martinelli, who has faced multiple investigations himself, was arrested in the United States in June and was awaiting possible extradition at year's end.

A number of officials from the current administration and members of the National Assembly have resigned after being implicated in corruption and other wrongdoing. In November, President Varela admitted to receiving donations for his 2009 vice-presidential campaign from an individual with ties to Odebrecht, but said the funds were received legally and reported to the TE.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

The law provides mechanisms for public access to government information, but the government often does not operate with transparency in practice. The National Authority for Transparency and Access to Public Information (ANTAI) reported in September 2017 that just over 50 percent of state institutions do not act in accordance with a 2002 transparency law. Journalists also report difficulties in accessing public information.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 48 / 60**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 15 / 16****D1. Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4**

News consumers have access to a wide variety of private media outlets that present a range of views, but the constitutional guarantee of freedom of the press is not consistently upheld. Libel is both a civil and a criminal offense, and cases are filed against journalists in practice. Independent, critical journalists and outlets reportedly face editorial pressure from the government, and Varela publicly complained of negative coverage during 2017.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

The constitution recognizes Roman Catholicism as the majority religion and requires general “respect for Christian morality and public order,” but freedom of religion is otherwise guaranteed and broadly upheld in practice.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

The government generally honors academic freedom, and the schools are free from political indoctrination.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

Private discussion is free and vibrant, and use of social media platforms for the expression of personal views is not restricted. Former president Martinelli has been accused of illegally wiretapping more than 150 perceived opponents, but the operation was apparently dismantled at the end of his term.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 11 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4

Freedom of assembly is generally respected, and peaceful demonstrations are common, though protests that block roads and highways often result in arrests and altercations with police.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations operate freely, but some activists—particularly those focused on environmental issues and indigenous rights—have complained of harassment and intimidation, including through lawsuits by private companies.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

The law generally protects workers’ rights to unionize, bargain collectively, and engage in legal strikes. However, enforcement of labor protections is inadequate, and labor-related protests frequently feature clashes with police.

F. RULE OF LAW: 10 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 2 / 4

The country’s judicial system is plagued by corruption and inefficiency. Public disagreements between the attorney general’s office and judges over rulings that impeded major corruption cases during 2017 raised doubts about whether such cases would be heard impartially.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 2 / 4

In August 2017, the attorney general claimed that prosecutors working on corruption investigations had received threats and pressure from powerful elites. Police and other security forces are themselves prone to corruption and other abuses. Officers were implicated during the year in cases involving drug trafficking and organized crime. The justice system features extensive use of lengthy pretrial detention, with pretrial detainees accounting for a majority of prison inmates.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 3 / 4

Police have been accused of beatings and other forms of excessive force, including while dispersing protests. The prison system is marked by overcrowding, lack of security, and poor health conditions.

The illegal drug trade and related criminal violence remain problems, though the homicide rate is well below those of most countries in the region. The number of homicides declined slightly to 412 in 2017, from 416 in 2016 and 493 in 2015, according to statistics from the attorney general's office.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

Discrimination based on gender, race, and other such categories is prohibited by law, but sexual orientation and gender identity are not covered, and racial minorities—including indigenous people, Panamanians of African descent, and certain immigrant groups—face some discrimination in practice. Indigenous communities enjoy a significant degree of autonomy and self-government, but many live in poverty and lack equal access to basic services.

During 2017, the government took several steps to curb illegal immigration, tightening restrictions on the length and renewal of tourist visas for some countries and stepping up the deportation of migrants without documentation. An influx of migrants and asylum seekers from Venezuela, Cuba, and other troubled countries in the region has stoked anti-immigrant sentiment in recent years.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 12 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4

The government generally respects freedom of internal movement and foreign travel.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 3 / 4

Individuals can own private property and establish businesses freely, but there are some practical impediments to defending property rights and operating businesses, including corruption and interference from organized crime.

Although indigenous groups have substantial land rights under the law, implementation has been problematic. Such groups have long protested the encroachment of illegal settlers on their lands, government delays in the formal demarcation of collective land, and large-scale development projects that proceed despite dissent within indigenous communities.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

Personal social freedoms are largely unrestricted. However, domestic violence is a concern; according to official statistics, 7 percent of reported crimes are related to domestic violence, and 3,967 domestic violence cases were registered in 2017. Abortion is permitted in cases of rape or incest or to preserve the life or health of the woman, though there are significant procedural obstacles as well as potential penalties for abortions that do not meet the legal standard.

In October 2017, the Supreme Court rejected a constitutional challenge to provisions of the family code that ban same-sex marriage, but the ruling left open the possibility that the National Assembly could ease the ban through legislation.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Human trafficking for sexual exploitation and forced labor remains a serious problem despite some government efforts to combat it. Both Panamanian and migrant workers in certain sectors—including the agricultural sector, where many workers are indigenous people—are subject to exploitative working conditions. Enforcement of basic labor protections is weak in rural areas and among informal workers.

Papua New Guinea

Population: 8,200,000

Capital: Port Moresby

Political Rights Rating: 3

Civil Liberties Rating: 3

Freedom Rating: 3.0

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Papua New Guinea is a democracy in which regular elections are held, but polls have been marred by irregularities and violence. Party allegiances are fickle and only two governments have survived for a full term since independence in 1975. However, since the turn of the century, a mineral resources boom has helped successive incumbent governments to consolidate control. The judiciary retains some independence and the media is free to criticize government. Corruption remains a serious problem.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- The general election held in June and July was marred by violence and irregularities, particularly in the Highlands Region.
- Peter O'Neill was reelected prime minister in August, in a parliamentary vote of 60 to 46.
- The Australian-run detention center for asylum seekers closed in October, but many of the people housed there remained on the site, and had poor access to food, water, and electricity.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 25 / 40 (-1)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 8 / 12 (-1)

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

The governor general—who represents the United Kingdom's monarch as head of state—formally appoints the prime minister, who is the head of government. A law provides that the largest political party emerging from a general election has the first right to nominate a prime minister. While the prime minister's legitimacy is partially rooted in the conduct of the legislative elections, the election of the prime minister by members of parliament is a highly competitive process. Following the victory of the People's National Congress Party (PNC) in the 2017 elections, held in June and July, Peter O'Neill was reelected prime minister in August, in a parliamentary vote of 60 to 46.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4 (-1)

Voters elect members of a unicameral, 111-member National Parliament to five-year terms. A limited preferential voting system allows voters to choose up to three preferred candidates on their ballots.

Serious flaws, including bribery and voter fraud, were reported in the 2017 election. Some areas, notably the Highlands Region, saw election-related violence that resulted in dozens of deaths, as well as severe property damage. Due to irregularities, election results in the Southern Highlands were released several months late, and sparked renewed violence in the town of Mendi once made public. The electoral process was smoother in coastal areas, but those regions too were not completely free from irregularities and violence. Allegations of deliberate manipulation of voter rolls to favor the incumbent government were widespread, but most clear abuses were localized in the Highlands. Election observers expressed disappointment that past recommendations to clean up voter rolls had been disregarded.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 due to election-related violence and serious electoral irregularities in the Highlands Region.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4

The electoral law, which mandates a preferential ballot, is fair although complex to administer. The voter rolls are poorly maintained. At the local level, election management bodies are chronically lacking in independence, particularly in all parts of the Highlands.

An Elections Advisory Committee resigned in July 2017, claiming that it was not obtaining the information necessary to carry out its work.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 13 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4**

Political parties in Papua New Guinea are able to form and operate freely, but electoral loyalties are driven by local and personal factors at the constituency level. Many candidates run as independents, and align with parties only after they are elected. Lawmakers frequently switch affiliations and alliances.

The law allowing the largest party first opportunity to form a government creates an incentive for parties to register with the Registrar of Political Parties, as does government funding for parties.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

The opposition has a reasonable chance of dislodging the government in elections or through a confidence vote on the floor of Parliament. Since independence in 1975, only two governments have served out a full five-year term: Sir Michael Somare's 2002–07 administration, and then Peter O'Neill's from 2012 to 2017. Immediately after the 2017 election, the opposition benches were stronger than under the previous government. However, most members of parliament (MPs) from the major opposition party, Pangu, defected to join O'Neill's government.

The frequency of no-confidence votes on the floor of Parliament has been diminished somewhat by a provision which grants an incoming prime minister an eighteen-month “grace period.”

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 2 / 4

Most citizens and candidates are generally free to exercise political choices. However, local leaders, politicians, and candidate agents control the balloting process in the Highlands, and bulk complete the ballot papers. As a result, some citizens are effectively denied the right to vote.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

Women are underrepresented in elected offices. The 2017 elections saw the highest number of women candidates ever, but none won legislative seats, and there are currently no women in the 111-seat parliament. LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people face societal discrimination that impedes their ability to advocate for their interests in the political sphere.

A 2005 agreement ended a civil war in Bougainville, and provided for an independence referendum to be held between 2015 and 2020. While the Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG) has been building its own civil service in preparation for the possibility of becoming an independent nation, and laying groundwork for a 2019 referendum, authorities on the mainland have expressed opposition to the island's possible secession. This dispute is reflected in an ongoing controversy involving the distribution of shares of the Panguna copper mine in Bougainville, which is not currently in operation. O'Neill has directed some of the shares to Bougainville landowners, rather than the ABG, a move ABG leaders say violate the agreement that established Bougainville's autonomy. The referendum on independence, scheduled for 2019, is not legally binding on Papua New Guinea's government.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 4 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 2 / 4

The prime minister controls the government, but cabinet ministers often exert considerable control over their portfolios without necessarily being answerable to cabinet.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

Corruption is pervasive and is the biggest hindrance to development. Anticorruption bureaucracies have been subject to political interference. Task Force Sweep was established in 2011 to root out corruption, and carried out a variety of investigations against politicians, civil servants, and businessmen. However, when Task Force Sweep turned its attentions to millions of dollars' worth of fraudulent payments to local law firm Paraka Lawyers that were allegedly authorized by O'Neill, the prime minister responded by disbanding the outfit, and when courts ordered its resurrection, the government cut its funding. While courts continued to insist that O'Neill turn up to answer police questions about his role in the Paraka Affair, a court voided the warrant against him in December 2017, citing mistakes by arresting officers.

Separately, in February, O'Neill suspended Minister of Public Enterprise and State Investment William Duma and then-Minister of Defence Fabian Pok over claims that they

had profited from a multimillion dollar land deal associated with plans to relocate the Port Moresby naval base. However, Duma and Pok were reelected to Parliament later in the year, and their United Resources Party became a key player in O'Neill's new coalition government. Pok assumed the powerful petroleum and energy portfolio, and Duma took his previous position as Minister of Public Enterprise and State Investment.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 1 / 4

Government operations are generally opaque, and the government does not frequently release information about public expenditures, procurement processes, or officials' assets. Papua New Guinea does not have an access to information law.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 38 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 13 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4

Freedom of the press is generally respected. Local media provide independent coverage of the political opposition, as well as controversial issues such as alleged police abuse and official corruption. Politicians have been known to harass media professionals over negative stories. An NBC broadcaster was assaulted by police during student protests in 2016.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4

Religious freedom is generally upheld. However, there have been reports of larger churches criticizing newer and smaller groups, as well as of anti-Muslim rhetoric that has accompanied the arrival of Muslim refugees.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 3 / 4

Academic freedom is generally respected. However, a violent 2016 incident at the University of Papua New Guinea cast doubt upon students' ability to organize against the government on university grounds. Police had fired on student protesters as they prepared to march to the parliament to call for Prime Minister O'Neill's resignation. Police said 23 people were injured.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

There are no constraints on expression of personal views. Internet use is growing, but high costs and lack of infrastructure limit its spread outside urban centers. The Office of Censorship was established by the 1989 Classification of Publication (Censorship) Act, and is tasked with monitoring and regulating information traffic. In 2016, lawmakers praised a newly approved cybercrimes law for allowing the prosecution of people who use social media groups to incite violence; civil society groups cautioned that it could be misused to punish critical speech.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 9 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 3 / 4

The constitution provides for freedoms of assembly. However, marches and demonstrations require 14 days' notice and police approval, and authorities sometimes deny permits. In June 2016, police opened fire on students at the University of Papua New Guinea who were protesting against government corruption.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 3 / 4

A number of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operate in the country, including those focused on human rights and environmental causes, as well as some that provide social services. However, most are small and lack resources.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

The government recognizes workers' rights to strike, organize, and engage in collective bargaining. The government has frequently imposed arbitration in labor disputes to avert strikes. Most workers are employed in the informal sector, and lack access to union protections.

F. RULE OF LAW: 7 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 2 / 4**

The judiciary is generally independent, but successive governments have exerted political pressure on the court system. The Supreme Court is the final court of appeal and has jurisdiction on constitutional matters. A shortage of trained judicial personnel is a key cause of lengthy detentions and trial delays. Laypeople sit on village courts to adjudicate minor offenses under customary and statutory law.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

Constitutional guarantees of due process are poorly upheld. Arbitrary detention is relatively common, and in practice, opportunities to challenge arbitrary detention are limited. Delays in the criminal justice system contribute to lengthy pretrial detention.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 2 / 4

Law enforcement officials have been implicated in corruption, unlawful killings, extortion, rape, theft, and brutality. Prison conditions are poor, and the correctional service is understaffed. Prison breaks are common. Lack of economic opportunities exacerbates urban unrest, frequently resulting in violent clashes, injuries, and deaths.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

Same-sex sexual relations are a criminal offense, but the relevant laws are rarely enforced. No laws protect against discrimination or hate crimes. There is some discrimination against people of Chinese origin, which is mainly linked to resentment toward a growing Chinese business presence viewed as disadvantaging other groups.

Australia pays the Papua New Guinean government for detainment on Manus Island of asylum seekers who arrived in Australian waters by boat, and require application processing and resettlement. Those who are not granted refugee status or do not agree to settle in Papua New Guinea are left in limbo, with Papua New Guinea's government claiming that these people are Australia's responsibility. Papua New Guinea's Supreme Court ruled Australia's Manus Island center unconstitutional in April 2016, and the facility officially closed on October 31, 2017. However, by mid-November, 350 detainees who refused to vacate remained on the site without regular access to water, food, or power.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 9 / 16**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4**

There are no constraints on freedom of movement for citizens. The freedom of movement of those who were detained at the Australian-run detention center on Manus Island was highly restricted.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

In Papua New Guinea, 97 percent of the land area is theoretically under customary tenure, but Special Agriculture and Business Leases (SABLs) have been used to facilitate land grabs by unscrupulous investors. In March 2017, O'Neill claimed that all SABLs had been cancelled, but the incoming Lands and Physical Planning Minister Justin Tkatchenko acknowledged in August that action still needed to be taken on SABLs.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Laws to fight family violence and protect victims are poorly enforced. Discrimination and violence against women and children are widespread, with about two-thirds of partnered women experiencing physical abuse, according to multiple studies. Allegations of sorcery have been used to target women for violence.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

The government does not actively prosecute human traffickers, and efforts to identify victims are inadequate. The United States Department of Labor has assembled evidence of child labor in the coffee, cocoa, palm oil and rubber sectors, as well as in commercial sexual exploitation. The US State Department describes bride price payments as exploitative.

Paraguay

Population: 7,000,000

Capital: Asunción

Political Rights Rating: 3

Civil Liberties Rating: 3

Freedom Rating: 3.0

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Paraguay's democracy is dominated by the conservative Colorado Party, which won the 2013 elections after a brief spell out of power. Corruption is decreasing but remains widespread, while organized crime and environmental destruction damage the rights of rural and indigenous populations. Poverty and discrimination also limit the rights of women and children in particular.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- A secretive, unconstitutional attempt by Cartes and his allies to permit presidential reelection sparked produced major protests in March and April. Cartes ultimately
-

abandoned the initiative. A number of participants in the protests were arrested, with some reporting abuse by police.

- During the protests, in early April killed a member of the opposition Authentic Radical Liberal Party (PLRA) in a raid on its headquarters. The interior minister and police chief were removed over the matter, and an investigation was initiated.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 27 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 10 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

The president is directly elected to no more than one five-year term. The 2013 presidential election, which was won by Horacio Cartes of the conservative Colorado Party with 46 percent of the vote, was viewed as largely free and fair. However, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the European Union (EU), and the Organization of American States (OAS) were among those calling for greater transparency in electoral processes.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The bicameral Congress consists of a 45-member Senate and an 80-member Chamber of Deputies, all elected for five-year terms. The 2013 legislative elections, while largely free, were marred by allegations of vote buying, as well claims of limitations placed on the movement of indigenous voters ahead of the election— an effort described by the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs as intended to prevent them from selling their votes. The next elections were scheduled to take place in April 2018, and the OSCE reported in 2015 that there had been “significant progress” on transparency-minded reforms.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4

The Superior Electoral Court of Justice (SCEJ) regulates electoral processes. The OAS, following the 2013 elections, expressed concern about the professionalism of some SCEJ members, but noted improvements after the 2015 municipal polls.

A secretive attempt by president Cartes to introduce presidential reelection sparked protests in March and April 2017, and he ultimately abandoned the effort in the face of public pressure.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 12 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 3 / 4

The system is open to the rise of different political parties, although before President Lugo and the Patriotic Alliance for Change (APC) came to power in 2008, the center-right Colorado Party had ruled Paraguay for over 60 years. Lugo was controversially impeached in 2012. While the vote was constitutional, his swift ouster raised questions about the absence of due process.

The national scene is currently dominated by the Colorado Party and opposition Authentic Radical Liberal Party (PLRA). However, factions and smaller parties regularly depart and build different coalitions.

During the 2017 protests over efforts to amend the constitution to allow presidential reelection, police in early April killed a member of the PLRA in a raid on its headquarters. The interior minister and police chief were removed over the matter, and an investigation was initiated.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

Lugo was able to come to power in 2008 due to a split in the Colorado Party. A liberal-left coalition made major gains in municipal elections in 2015, and was expected to contest the 2018 elections.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 3 / 4

The Catholic Church has some political influence. There is concern over the growing influence of Brazilian landowners in border regions. Media outlets are concentrated among a few families, including that of President Cartes, granting owners a platform from which they may attempt to define the political sphere. The constitution bars military personnel from politics.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 2 / 4

Very few indigenous people and ethnic minorities occupy high office or congressional seats, and no Afro-Paraguayans or indigenous people held legislative office in 2017. Women are generally underrepresented in politics, and particularly in leadership positions.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 5 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 2 / 4

While elected officials determine government policy, the making and implementation of decisions is often influenced or hampered by organized crime and corruption.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

Corruption cases languish for years in the courts without resolution, and offenses often go unpunished due to political influence in the judiciary. A number of anticorruption initiatives have been launched in recent years. NGOs and the media work to expose corruption and provide some accountability.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

A secretive attempt by the Cartes government and allied sectors of opposition parties to change the constitution to allow presidential reelection, which is currently prohibited by the constitution, became public in March 2017, when the Senate voted to amend the constitution. The effort provoked major protests in March and April, which subsided after Cartes announced that “in no event” would he run in 2018. Later that month, the Chamber of Deputies rejected the amendment. The events reflected an ability by the government to craft major pieces of legislation without having to inform the public.

Nevertheless, government transparency, especially in public administration, is gradually improving, and the effective implementation of access to information laws has bolstered investigative journalism.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 37 / 60**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 12 / 16****D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4**

Constitutional rights of freedom of expression and the press are unevenly upheld practice. Direct pressure, including threats by criminal groups and corrupt authorities, encourages self-censorship, and violent attacks against journalists take place occasionally.

Reporters who covered the protests against Cartes's attempt to allow presidential reelection faced harassment and attacks by police. Later in the year, police took some steps aimed at better protecting journalists working dangerous assignments. Separately, Cartes threatened to have authorities arrest two journalists he accused of inciting violence that took place at one of the protests.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Paraguay is home to diverse religious groups that are generally able to worship freely. However, atheists report discrimination.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 3 / 4

Although academia is generally independent, primary and secondary schools teach a pro-Colorado version of history. University politics are dominated by the Colorado Party and the PLRA, with student elections and professional advancement often dependent on party affiliation.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4

Citizens can for the most part engage in free and open private discussion, though the presence of armed groups in some areas may serve as a deterrent.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 8 / 12**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 3 / 4**

Demonstrations and protests are common, but are sometimes repressed or marred by violence. An opposition activist was killed by police during the March and April 2017 demonstrations against the move to allow presidential reelection. Scores were arrested during the protests, with some reportedly suffering abuse by security forces while detained. Additionally, several protesters set fire to the parliament building.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 3 / 4

Paraguay has a strong culture of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) working in the field of human rights and governance, and these are largely free from government interference. However, the government is generally unresponsive to the concerns of NGOs that scrutinize it, and does not take significant efforts to include NGOs in discussions on human rights policies.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

Registration procedures for trade unions are cumbersome and employees are often unprotected from employer retaliation, and the Cartes administration had been generally hostile toward labor activism. Campesino unions, however, secured some concessions

in 2017, including emergency funds approved in October to cover losses resulting from adverse weather.

F. RULE OF LAW: 7 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 2 / 4

The judiciary is nominally independent, but money laundering, drug trafficking and other criminal operations have been able to co-opt or otherwise assert control over local judicial authorities, particularly in regions adjacent to Brazil. Politicians commonly attempt to influence judges and prosecutors.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

Constitutional guarantees of due process are poorly upheld, largely due to corruption that permeates the judicial system. Individuals with political or societal influence or access to money are frequently able to obtain favorable treatment in the justice system.

In May 2017, an appeals court upheld the 2016 prison sentences against 11 campesinos involved in the deadly 2012 clash between farmers and police in Curuguaty, after landless farmers occupied private land; six officers and 11 campesinos were killed. In August, the controversial rulings, which activists say were handed down following flawed legal procedures, were brought before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR). Meanwhile, evictions of campesino communities continued during the year.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 2 / 4

Paraguay is one of the region's safer countries. However, the Paraguayan People's Army (EPP), a radical socialist guerilla group, kidnapped at least two people in 2017. Gang warfare takes place along the Brazilian border. Illegal detention by police and torture during incarceration still occur. Overcrowding, unsanitary conditions, and mistreatment are serious problems in the country's prisons.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

Paraguay lacks legislation protecting against all forms of discrimination. While same-sex sexual activity is legal, members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community face endemic discrimination. Indigenous people similarly face discrimination, as well as a lack of access to adequate health care. Rampant deforestation in the Chaco region and forced evictions threaten the welfare of the last indigenous Ayoreo groups in voluntary isolation; indigenous Guarani settlements are also threatened.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 10 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4

Freedoms of movement and travel are generally respected, though the presence of armed or criminal groups can discourage travel in some areas.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 3 / 4

Although there are few formal restrictions on private business activity and property rights, land disputes remain a problem. Overlaps in legal titles, frequently believed to be linked to the misappropriation of public land in past years, complicate the ability of

individuals to start businesses. Additionally, organized crime groups exert pressure, and the EPP has threatened, kidnapped, extorted and damaged the property of ranchers in its areas of operations. Evictions of indigenous populations from their ancestral lands are commonplace.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Women and children continue to suffer from high levels of domestic and sexual abuse. Criadazgo, or temporary adoption—in which children, generally from poor families, work without pay for families of higher income who have agreed to provide care for them—often involves the mistreatment of minors. Abortion remains illegal, as do same-sex marriage and civil unions.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Ten percent of Paraguay's population suffers from acute hunger, and around 70 percent of the country's productive land is owned by the wealthiest 3 percent of people. Social mobility is extremely limited for those born in indigenous and campesino communities, who are exposed to exploitation by landlords, employers, and political authorities. According to government figures, 76 percent of the 100,000-strong indigenous population lives in extreme poverty.

The ongoing practice of criadazgo severely limits the freedom of some 45,000 children across the country.

Peru

Population: 31,500,000

Capital: Lima

Political Rights Rating: 2

Civil Liberties Rating: 3

Freedom Rating: 2.5

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Peru has established democratic political institutions and undergone multiple peaceful transfers of power, though recent polarization has hampered normal political operations somewhat. Corruption continues to be a serious concern. Indigenous groups suffer from inadequate political representation and exclusion, though the government has taken positive steps to address this in recent years. Protests related to land use have sometimes led to violence and the use of lethal force by police.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski narrowly survived a December impeachment vote initiated over allegations that his investment firm had improperly accepted payments from the Brazilian construction firm Odebrecht. Kuczynski's pardon days earlier of former president Alberto Fujimori, who had been serving a 25-year sentence for human rights abuses committed while in office, prompted speculation

that Kuczynski had granted the pardon as part of a backroom deal to escape impeachment.

- The Popular Force party used its legislative majority to censure or dismiss top-level ministers, and in September won a no-confidence vote against Prime Minister Fernando Zavala.
- Former presidents Alejandro Toledo and Ollanta Humala were each accused of accepting large bribes from Odebrecht, and Humala was also implicated in conflict-era rights abuses. Humala was detained at year's end; Toledo remained free in the United States, though Peru was attempting to extradite him.
- Severe floods in the first months of the year left hundreds dead and thousands displaced.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 31 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 11 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The president is directly elected to a five-year term and may serve nonconsecutive terms. The 2016 election was closely contested, with Pedro Pablo Kuczynski winning by a historically small margin of just 0.2 percent over Keiko Fujimori, a legislator and daughter of former president Alberto Fujimori. The elections took place peacefully, and stakeholders accepted the close result.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

Members of the 130-member unicameral Congress are elected for five-year terms. Congressional balloting employs an open-list, region-based system of proportional representation, with a 5-percent vote hurdle for a party to enter the legislature.

Legislative elections were held concurrently with presidential election in 2016. Keiko Fujimori's Popular Force party captured 73 of the 130 seats, followed by the Broad Front with 20 seats and Kuczynski's Peruvians for Change with 18 seats. The elections were generally considered free and fair.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4

While the National Board of Elections (JNE) was applauded for its efforts to improve transparency surrounding electoral processes in 2016, inadequate enforcement mechanisms led to the perception that abuse of campaign finance laws was widespread. Observers criticized the enactment of a 2015 reform to the Political Parties Law after elections had already been called, which caused confusion about which laws were in effect. However, the reform proved to be a useful tool for protecting electoral integrity, as the JNE effectively applied it in disqualifying two candidates, one of them for vote buying.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 13 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4

Peruvian parties, while competitive, are both highly fragmented and extremely personalized. Though there are limits on individual donations, there are no constraints on spending by political parties, offering an outsized advantage to parties able to secure abundant funds.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

Opposition political parties operate freely and without undue restriction. In 2017, the opposition Popular Force party used its legislative majority as a strong counterweight to the executive, while Kuczynski's Peruvians for Change party, with just 18 seats in Congress, struggled to pass legislation.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 3 / 4

While voters and candidates are generally able to exercise their political choices without influence from forces that are not democratically accountable, the many avenues for corruption can allow business and other powerful interests some influence over candidates' political positions. The Roman Catholic Church receives preferential treatment from the state, and is politically influential.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 2 / 4

The concerns of ethnic and cultural minorities, especially in remote mountain and Amazonian areas, remain inadequately addressed among parties with national scope. The 2011 Law of Prior Consultation, which guaranteed consultation with indigenous groups before mining and other projects affecting them or their land were undertaken, has fostered increased recognition of indigenous participation.

Women hold just under 30 percent of seats in Congress, and while the political participation of women has increased over recent years, they hold few leadership roles in local and regional governments.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 7 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 3 / 4**

Elected leaders and representatives are seated promptly, and are the key agents in creating and implementing policy. However, partisan polarization in the wake of the closely contested 2016 election posed an obstacle to legislative and political progress in 2017. President Kuczynski was defied at every turn by the Popular Force party, which censured top-level ministers, and in September won a no-confidence vote against Prime Minister Fernando Zavala, leading to his resignation. Also in September, as many as 15 ministers appointed by Kuczynski were dismissed or reassigned under pressure from the legislature. In December, Congress voted overwhelmingly to initiate impeachment proceedings against Kuczynski following revelations that his investment firm had received payments from the construction company Odebrecht. Ultimately, the measure did not secure the 87 required votes; however, the legislature's swift decision to initiate impeachment, rather than an official investigation, reflected the polarization of the legislature.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

Government corruption remains a critical problem in Peru, and leaders at the highest level of politics were implicated in scandals in 2017. However, law enforcement authorities frequently investigate and prosecute corruption allegations.

Two former presidents were accused of corruption during the year. Ollanta Humala, who had been under investigation since 2016, was arrested with his wife in July on suspicion

of money laundering, and both were awaiting trial at year's end. In February, the attorney general accused Alejandro Toledo of accepting \$20 million in bribes from Odebrecht, and issued a warrant for his arrest. The Peruvian government that month requested that the United States extradite Toledo, but he remained in the United States at year's end.

The emergence of corruption allegations against Kuczynski threatened to bring down his administration in 2017. Opposing legislators in December introduced documents showing Kuczynski's investment banking firm had received nearly \$800,000 in payments from Odebrecht, including while Kuczynski was serving as economy minister and prime minister. Kuczynski denied wrongdoing, and was nearly impeached over the matter.

According to the 2016–17 Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) survey, nearly 76 percent of Peruvians think corruption is “somewhat” or “very” widespread.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

Some government agencies have made progress on transparency, but much information related to defense and security policies remains classified under a 2012 law. In January 2017, the Peruvian Congress established a National Authority for Transparency and Access to Public Information within the Ministry of Justice to ensure compliance with existing law and resolve citizens' appeals. Some observers have expressed concern that the new institution lacks enforcement authority.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 42 / 60 (+1)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 15 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4

Peru's dynamic press is mostly privately owned, and ownership is highly concentrated. Defamation is criminalized, and journalists are regularly convicted under such charges, though their sentences are usually suspended. Verbal and physical attacks against journalists are reported each year. Photojournalist Marco Antonio Ramón was injured in January 2017 after being shot with rubber bullets by police from close range while covering a demonstration. The following month, broadcast journalist Marco Bonifacio Sánchez, known for his sharp criticism of local authorities in Cajamarca, was attacked by unidentified assailants who attempted to cut out his tongue. Journalists José Yactayo and Julio Moisés Mesco were murdered in February, though it was unclear whether the killings were in direct relation to their work.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

The Peruvian constitution guarantees freedom of religion and belief, and these rights are generally respected.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is unrestricted.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

People are generally free to discuss politics and sensitive topics without fear of retribution or surveillance.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 8 / 12**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 3 / 4**

The authorities generally recognize the constitutionally guaranteed right to peaceful assembly. However, the government has frequently resorted to declarations of states of emergency in response to unrest and has done little to prevent excessive use of force by security personnel confronting protests, despite substantial efforts by the state ombudsman and the National Office of Dialogue. Local disputes and protests—often related to extractive industries, land rights, and resource allocation among marginalized populations—have resulted in deaths and injuries.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 3 / 4

Freedom of association is generally respected. However, efforts by environmental activists to discourage land development have been met with intimidation. In September 2017, six farmers were killed in the Amazon in an incident that appeared related to efforts by community activists to impede oil palm growers from using their lands.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

Peruvian law recognizes the right of workers to organize and bargain collectively. Strikes are legal with advance notification to the Ministry of Labor, but few strikers abide by this regulation. Lengthy processes involved in registering a new union create a window in which labor leaders and activists can be easily dismissed from their jobs. Short-term contracts in many industries makes unionization difficult. Less than 10 percent of the formal workforce is unionized.

F. RULE OF LAW: 8 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 2 / 4**

The judiciary is perceived as among the most corrupt institutions in the country, and long-running efforts to institute reforms have yet to produce notable results. NGOs, media reports, activists, and others argue that judges are susceptible to bribery and pressure from powerful interests. However, in 2017, the courts demonstrated a willingness to support corruption investigations, and ordered the detention of several high profile individuals under investigation.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 2 / 4

Constitutional guarantees of due process are unevenly upheld. Lawyers provided to indigent defendants are often poorly trained, and translation services are often not provided for defendants from highland or Amazonian regions who do not speak Spanish. Impunity for violence against environmental activists who challenge land development remains a problem.

Kuczynski's December 2017 decision to pardon former authoritarian president Alberto Fujimori, who was serving a 25-year sentence for human rights abuses committed while in office, sparked popular protests. The pardon came three days after Kuczynski narrowly escaped impeachment over the allegations that his firm improperly accepted payments from Odebrecht, and prompted speculation that it was granted in exchange for the anti-impeachment vote of Kenji Fujimori, a lawmaker and the son of the former president. Separately, 2017 saw the emergence of new allegations that former president Humala had ordered or was complicit in gross rights abuses during the armed conflict that took place from 1980 to 2000, and the claims were being investigated at year's end.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 2 / 4

According to the 2016–17 LAPOP survey, Peru has one of the highest crime victimization rates in the Americas, with over 30 percent of Peruvians reporting that they were victims of a crime in the last twelve months, though many of these were nonviolent robberies and other offenses.

The situation in Peruvian jails is extremely poor. The average prison population is more than 200 percent of capacity; 40 percent of detainees are in pretrial detention.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

Discrimination against indigenous populations and Afro-Peruvians is pervasive. Environmental regulations in remote lands are not always respected, and this has, for example, resulting in the pollution of water sources used by indigenous populations. LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people face discrimination, hostility, and violence.

The Peruvian government was widely applauded in 2017 for its treatment of Venezuelan refugees. In February, it offered special year-long visas to Venezuelans already in the country. In July, it also granted visas to thousands of Venezuelan refugees who had entered the country since.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 11 / 16 (+1)**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4 (+1)**

Peru does not place formal restrictions on movement, and movement around the country has become easier in recent years due to a decrease in protest actions that involved road blockages.

Score Change: The score improved from 3 to 4 due to a decrease in protest activities that involved the disruption of travel.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 3 / 4

The right to own property and establish business are mostly respected, though tensions persist between extractive industries and indigenous communities who oppose land development. The Prior Consultation Law, instituted under former president Humala's government, is designed in part to better protect indigenous rights to land. Its implementation has resulted in positive outcomes for communities that have taken part in consultation processes—though prior consultation still does not always take place.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Gender-based violence is widespread in Peru, with more than half of Peruvian women reporting instances of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse. Proposals to recognize civil unions for same-sex partners have been repeatedly introduced and rejected in Congress. In 2017, there was some backlash among conservatives against what they perceived as efforts to influence Peruvian institutions and laws toward more socially liberal policies.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Peruvian women and girls—especially from the indigenous community—fall victim to sex trafficking. Men, women, and children are subject to forced labor in mines and the informal economy. According to the U.S. State Department’s 2017 *Trafficking in Persons Report*, the Peruvian government has made “significant efforts” to combat trafficking; however, it does not report sufficient data, fails to offer adequate protection to victims, and is at times complicit in impeding investigations.

Severe floods in the first months of the year left hundreds dead and thousands displaced, seriously affecting the livelihoods of survivors.

Philippines

Population: 102,600,000

Capital: Manila

Political Rights Rating: 3

Civil Liberties Rating: 3

Freedom Rating: 3.0

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Governing institutions are well developed in the Philippines, but the rule of law and application of justice are haphazard and heavily favor ruling elites. Long-term violent insurgencies have continued for decades. Impunity remains the norm for crimes against activists and journalists, and President Rodrigo Duterte’s war on drugs since 2016 has led to more than 12,000 extrajudicial killings as well as vigilante justice.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In May, a group of Islamic State (IS)–linked foreign fighters and local militants attacked the city of Marawi in the southern province of Mindanao, sparking months of fighting that led to 1,200 deaths and hundreds of thousands of displaced persons.
- As a result of the Marawi fighting, President Duterte declared martial law across Mindanao, a region comprising a fifth of the population.
- By year’s end, the total number of extrajudicial killings at the hands of both police and vigilantes in President Duterte’s ongoing war on drugs exceeded 12,000.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 27 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 9 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

Rodrigo Duterte won the 2016 presidential election with 39 percent of the vote, followed by Manuel Roxas II with 23 percent. Observers considered the elections to be open and competitive. While they were marked by dozens of violent episodes, including a number of killings, there were fewer such incidents compared to previous election years. Other persistent problems included media bias and vote buying, offers for which affected nearly 20 percent of voters in 2016. The Philippines’ president is directly elected to a single six-year term.

The vice president is directly elected on a separate ticket and may serve up to two successive six-year terms. Maria Leonor “Leni” Robredo won the closely contested vice

presidency in 2016 with 35 percent of the vote. Several other candidates competed for both offices that year.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

Elections for the bicameral Congress took place concurrently with the presidential vote and suffered from the same limitations. No single party won an outright majority in either house, but President Duterte's PDP-Laban Party secured unprecedented majority alliances in both. The 24 members of the Senate are elected on a nationwide ballot and serve six-year terms, with half of the seats up for election every three years. The 297 members of the House of Representatives also serve three-year terms, with 238 elected in single-member constituencies and the remainder elected through party-list voting.

After President Duterte initially postponed local elections by a year to October 2017 citing concerns about the influence of drug lords, they were further delayed on October 2 until May 2018.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4

The president appoints the Commission on Elections (Comelec), whose performance was generally praised in 2016. However, frequent litigation complicates the interpretation of electoral laws and makes the already complex framework even less accessible to the public.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 11 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 3 / 4

The Philippines has a strong record of open competition among multiple parties, though candidates and political parties typically have weak ideological identities. Legislative coalitions are exceptionally fluid, and members of Congress often change party affiliation.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 3 / 4

The Philippines has seen a regular rotation of power, but the political system is not without restrictions. For example, in February, armed police arrested Senator Leila de Lima, one of the most outspoken critics of President Duterte's war on drugs, on charges that many suspected to be politically motivated; she remained in jail at year's end.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 2 / 4

Distribution of power is heavily affected by kinship networks. Political dynasties are prevalent at the provincial and municipal levels, with implications at the national level as politicians there often draw on a regional base of support. The nature of election-related funding contributes to the concentration of power: there are no limits on individuals' or companies' contributions to candidates, and a significant portion of political donations come from a relatively small number of donors.

The Roman Catholic Church has historically played a significant role in politics. The activities of armed rebel groups and martial law also continue to affect politics in the south of the country and on part of the main island of Luzon.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

While women make up about a quarter of the legislature, political life is male-dominated and few women are elected without following in the footsteps of a male relative. Muslims and indigenous groups are not well represented; perceptions of relative socioeconomic deprivation and political disenfranchisement, along with resentment toward Christian settlements in traditionally Muslim areas, have played a central role in the Philippines' Muslim separatist movements. In 2013, the Supreme Court ruled that the party-list portion of the electoral framework for the House of Representatives, traditionally meant to represent marginalized or underrepresented demographic groups, could also be open to other groups, including national political parties, provided that they do not stand in the single-member constituency contests. A number of party-list groups gained seats in 2016 not by representing national sectors or interests as intended, but through substantial support from kinship networks in single geographic regions.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 7 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 3 / 4**

Elected government officials and legislative representatives determine state policies, but corruption and cronyism are rife, including in business. A few dozen families continue to hold a disproportionate share of political authority. Local "bosses" often control their respective areas, limiting accountability and committing abuses of power.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

A culture of impunity, stemming in part from backlogs in the judicial system, hampers the fight against corruption. In a nod to his campaign promises, President Duterte has fired tens of officials due to corruption, including the interior minister. The country's official anticorruption agencies, the Office of the Ombudsman and the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission (PAGC), have mixed records. The PAGC lacks enforcement capabilities. The current ombudsman has focused on major cases against senior government officials and those involving large sums of money, but some cases have languished for years in the special anticorruption court (Sandiganbayan). As of year-end 2017, the court had a backlog of 5,493 cases, compared to 4,214 at the end of 2016.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

Governmental transparency remains limited despite some positive initiatives. Local governments have been required to post procurement and budget data on their websites, and in 2012 the national government began participatory budgeting at various levels. Duterte issued an order establishing the country's first freedom of information directive in 2016, but it mandates public disclosure only by the executive branch and allows major exemptions.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 35 / 60 (-1)**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 14 / 16****D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4**

The constitution provides for freedoms of expression and the press. The private media are vibrant and outspoken, although content often lacks fact-based claims or substantive investigative reporting. The country's many state-owned television and radio stations cover controversial topics and criticize the government, but they too lack strict journalistic ethics.

While the censorship board has broad powers to edit or ban content, government censorship is generally not a serious problem in practice.

However, the Philippines remains one of the most dangerous places in the world for journalists, and the president's hostile rhetoric toward members of the media continued to exacerbate an already perilous situation in 2017. Two reporters were murdered in 2017 according to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). An investigation by the newly formed Presidential Task Force on Violations of the Right to Life, Liberty, and Security of the Members of the Media had yet to bear fruit.

Other obstacles to press freedom include Executive Order 608, which established a National Security Clearance System to protect classified information, and the Human Security Act, which allows journalists to be wiretapped based on suspicion of involvement in terrorism. Libel is a criminal offense, and libel cases have been used frequently to quiet criticism of public officials.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Freedom of religion is guaranteed under the constitution and generally respected in practice.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is generally respected.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

There are no significant impediments to free and open private discussion. The internet is widely available. Rights groups have expressed concern about threats against and censorship of anonymous online criticism and the criminalization of libelous posts, but this has yet to have a major impact on private discussion.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 8 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 3 / 4

Citizen activism and public discussion are robust, and demonstrations are common. However, permits are required for rallies, and police sometimes use violence to disperse antigovernment protests.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 2 / 3

Assassination of civil society activists is a serious problem in the Philippines, and President Duterte's public threats against activists who oppose his policies have exacerbated an already dangerous atmosphere of impunity. Within 48 hours in December, 10 activists were killed in three separate incidents, nine by police or soldiers. Despite the danger, the Philippines hosts many active human rights and social welfare groups.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

Trade unions are independent, though less than 10 percent of the labor force is unionized. Among them, collective bargaining is common, and strikes may be called as long as unions provide notice and obtain majority approval from their members. Violence against labor leaders has been part of the broader trend of extrajudicial killings over the past decade.

F. RULE OF LAW: 3 / 16 (-1)**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 2 / 4**

Judicial independence has traditionally been strong, particularly in the Supreme Court. The efforts of the judiciary are stymied, however, by inefficiency, low pay, intimidation, corruption, and high vacancy rates. Judges and lawyers often depend on local power holders for basic resources and salaries, which can lead to compromised verdicts. In October, the Supreme Court ruled that Senator de Lima's case would be heard by Department of Justice prosecutors; this raise suspicion of bias as the secretary of justice is an outspoken critic of de Lima.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 0 / 4

Due process is seriously comprised. Arbitrary detention, disappearances, kidnappings, and abuse of suspects continue. The police and military have been implicated in corruption, extortion, and involvement in local rackets. In the drug war, police have used watch lists to identify targets for extrajudicial execution. In May in the southern province of Mindanao, President Duterte declared martial law and suspended habeas corpus for the 21 million people there. In December, Congress approved extension of martial law for another year.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 0 / 4 (-1)

The police and military torture detainees. Lack of effective witness protection has been a key obstacle to investigations against members of the security forces.

President Duterte's war on drugs led to the extrajudicial killing of more than 12,000 people from July 2016 to December 2017, including deaths of innocent civilians and deliberate targeting of children. Convictions for extrajudicial killings and other such crimes are rare, and Duterte has appeared to encourage the actions, boasting in December 2016 that he had killed suspected drug dealers and users himself during his time as mayor of Davao. With drug users fearfully turning themselves in to police en masse, prisons have become dangerously overcrowded.

Conflict in Mindanao has caused severe hardship, more than 120,000 deaths, and the displacement of tens of thousands of people since it erupted in 1972. Both government and rebel forces have committed summary killings and other human rights abuses. In May, a group of Islamic State (IS)-linked foreign fighters and local militants attacked the city of Marawi in Mindanao. More than 1,200 people, mostly militants, were killed in a five-month siege of the city, and hundreds of thousands of residents fled their homes. Martial law authorizes the military to suppress violence in the province.

The Philippine Congress continued to stall on new drafts of a law that would create a self-governing region, Bangsamoro, to replace and add territory to the current Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. The law was the next crucial step outlined in a landmark 2014 peace treaty between the previous administration and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), the country's largest rebel group. However, despite President Duterte's public support for the law and for a comprehensive peace settlement, in addition to new trust-building campaigns between the Philippine Armed Forces and the MILF, a formal agreement remained elusive through 2017.

In August 2016, the Duterte government engaged in a second official round of peace negotiations with the Communist Party of the Philippines–New People's Army–National Democratic Front of the Philippines (CPP-NPA-NDFP), restoring hope that the nearly 50-year violent insurgency could see a peaceful end. Deadly clashes between the leftist

group's militarized wing, the NPA, and the Philippine army continue to occur regularly throughout the country, though the violence has declined over recent years.

Score Change: The score declined from 1 to 0 due to the continuation of violence related to the war on drugs, as well as the declaration of martial law in Mindanao and open warfare in Marawi.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

Equal treatment is severely limited. Indigenous rights are generally upheld, but land disputes and local development projects regularly cause friction and sometimes lead to violence. Indigenous people often live in conflict areas and are targeted by combatants for their perceived loyalties.

LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people face bias in employment, education, and other services, as well as societal discrimination. In a landmark unanimous vote in September, the House of Representatives passed the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and Expression Equality (SOGIE) bill, which if passed by the Senate would formally protect the rights of the LGBT community against gender-based discrimination.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 10 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4

Citizens enjoy freedom of travel and choice of residence, with the exception of the conflict zones. Martial law in Mindanao includes enabling the military to set up roadblocks and checkpoints.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

Private business activity is often dependent on the support of local power brokers in the complex patronage system that extends throughout the country. Outside of conflict zones, individuals are generally able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors, notwithstanding the domination and corruption of the economic dynasties.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

Most individuals enjoy personal social freedoms. Although more women than men now enter high schools and universities, women face some discrimination in private-sector employment, and those in Mindanao enjoy considerably fewer rights in practice. Divorce is illegal in the Philippines, though annulments are allowed under specified circumstances, and Muslims may divorce via Sharia (Islamic law) courts. Violence against women continues to be a significant problem, and while spousal rape is a crime, very few cases are prosecuted. President Duterte's public statements on women's rights have evoked misogyny.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Income inequality in the Philippines is increasing and there is uneven urban-rural wealth distribution. Manila's metro area accounts for just 12.5 percent of the population but is responsible for 36.5 percent of national GDP.

The Philippines is a source country for human trafficking, with some Filipinos taken abroad and forced to work in the fishing, shipping, construction, or other industries, or forced to engage in sex work. The country's various insurgent groups have been accused of using child soldiers.

Poland

Population: 38,400,000

Capital: Warsaw

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 2

Freedom Rating: 1.5

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Poland's democratic institutions took root at the start of its transition from communist rule in 1989. Rapid economic growth and other societal changes have benefited some segments of the population more than others, contributing to a deep divide between liberal, pro-European parties and those purporting to defend national interests and "traditional" Polish Catholic values. Since taking power in late 2015, the populist, socially conservative Law and Justice (PiS) party has enacted numerous measures that increase political influence over state institutions and threaten to reverse Poland's democratic progress.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In July, President Andrzej Duda vetoed two of three highly controversial judicial reform bills put forward by PiS. The third bill, which he did sign, allowed the justice minister to appoint and dismiss the heads of district, regional, and appellate courts. In November, the justice minister used his new powers to remove 10 court officials in southern Poland.
- In December, new versions of the two vetoed bills were signed into law, effectively giving the PiS-dominated parliament control over the National Council of the Judiciary (KRS) and the Supreme Court, and forcing about 40 percent of incumbent Supreme Court justices into retirement.
- Duda signed a law in March that imposed new restrictions on public gatherings, and another in October to create an agency attached to the prime minister's office that would centralize control over public and European Union (EU) funding for nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).
- In late December, the European Commission launched proceedings against Poland under Article 7.1 of the Lisbon Treaty, declaring that the year's judicial reforms constituted a "clear risk of a serious breach of the rule of law in Poland." The process could theoretically lead to the suspension of Poland's voting rights within the EU.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 36 / 40 (-1)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The president of Poland is directly elected for up to two five-year terms. The president's appointment of a prime minister must be confirmed by the Sejm, the lower house of parliament. While the prime minister holds most executive power under the constitution, the president is also meant to have influence, particularly over defense and foreign policy matters.

Duda, the candidate of PiS, won the second round of Poland's May 2015 presidential election with 52 percent of the vote, defeating incumbent Bronisław Komorowski. The latter was supported by the center-right Civic Platform (PO), which had led the government since 2007.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

Members of the bicameral National Assembly are elected for four-year terms. The 460-seat Sejm is elected by proportional representation and holds most legislative authority. The 100 members of the Senate, the upper house, are elected in single-member constituencies. The Senate can delay and amend legislation, but has few other powers.

PiS won 37.5 percent of the vote in the October 2015 parliamentary elections, increasing its representation in the Sejm to 235 seats. This made it the first party in postcommunist Poland to win an outright parliamentary majority, allowing it to rule without coalition partners. Beata Szydło was elected prime minister, though her role was soon eclipsed in practice by that of PiS's chairman, former prime minister Jarosław Kaczyński. PO came in second with slightly more than 24 percent of the vote and 138 seats. Third and fourth place both went to new parties: Kukiz'15, a right-wing, antiestablishment party led by former rock musician Paweł Kukiz, which took 42 seats; and the probusiness party Modern, led by economist Ryszard Petru, which won 28. The agrarian Polish People's Party (PSL) won 5 percent of the vote and 16 seats. A representative of the ethnic German minority received the remaining seat. In the Senate, PiS took 61 seats, PO 34, and PSL 1.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

Poland's electoral framework and its implementation have generally ensured free and fair elections, though pending legal changes in 2017 threatened to increase political control over election administration. In December, the Senate approved PiS-authored legislation that would transfer oversight of the 2018 local elections from local authorities to the National Electoral Commission (PKW) and prevent reelection of any mayors or city council members who had already served two terms. The proposed law would also force all members of the PKW to stand down prematurely after the 2019 parliamentary elections, and change the way new members are selected. Currently, the commission is made up of active or retired judges nominated by the Constitutional Tribunal (TK), the Supreme Court, and the Supreme Administrative Court. The proposed law would empower the Sejm to nominate seven of the PKW's nine members, while the TK and the Supreme Administrative Court would nominate just one member each. The Supreme Court, which emphatically protested against the politicization of the judiciary during 2017, would lose any representation on the commission.

The proposed legislation, which was expected to pass through the Sejm in early 2018, also scrapped mail-in voting in local elections, banned candidates from simultaneously running for a mayoralty and a district council seat, and required video monitoring of polling stations.

Separately, a proposal to expand the boundaries of Warsaw, which PiS consistently loses in local elections, to incorporate more suburban municipalities was withdrawn in April due to a public outcry, though its PiS sponsors said they would continue to refine the measure.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 16 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4

Poland's political parties are able to organize and operate freely. PiS won a narrow parliamentary majority in 2015, so it requires the support of other parties to obtain the two-thirds supermajority needed for any constitutional changes. Following the United Left (ZL) alliance's failure to cross the 8 percent vote threshold for electoral coalitions in 2015, there are now no left-leaning parties in the parliament. (The threshold for individual parties is 5 percent.)

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

There have been multiple rotations of power among rival parties since the transition from communist rule, and the PiS victory in the last national elections ended a lengthy period of rule by the PO, now in opposition. However, opposition parties are currently weak and divided, and they face potential long-term obstacles including propaganda by PiS-controlled public media and legal changes related to electoral administration and public gatherings.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

Voters and politicians are generally free from undue interference by outside groups, though there are some concerns that the personnel changes associated with the PiS government's assertion of control over various state institutions could be exploited to mobilize political support among public employees ahead of future local and national elections. In February 2017, a group of 10 schoolteachers who wore black to work in a sign of solidarity with October 2016 protests against PiS-proposed restrictions on abortion were investigated by a disciplinary committee, but they were eventually cleared of wrongdoing.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 4 / 4

Women have equal political rights and hold senior positions in government, including about 28 percent of the seats in the Sejm. Both PO and PiS fielded female candidates for the position of prime minister in the 2015 elections.

Ethnic, religious, and other minority groups enjoy full political rights and electoral opportunities. Electoral lists representing recognized national minorities are not subject to the minimum vote threshold for parliamentary representation.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 8 / 12 (-1)

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 3 / 4 (-1)

Freely elected officials generally determine and implement laws and policies without interference, though there have been some irregularities in recent years. In December 2016,

the two centrist opposition parties, PO and Modern, mounted a sit-in protest in the Sejm over media access to the parliament, prompting the chamber's PiS leadership to move the session to a separate room—from which opposition members and journalists were allegedly excluded—and pass the 2017 budget bill in a procedure that the opposition said was illegal. The opposition parties ended their protest in mid-January 2017, and President Duda signed the contested budget measure.

Also during the year, PiS chairman and Sejm member Jarosław Kaczyński continued to play a dominant role in the government despite his lack of any official executive position. He was seen as the driving force behind a December 2017 government shuffle that included the replacement of Prime Minister Beata Szydło with Mateusz Morawiecki. He also met with foreign leaders, gave authoritative media interviews, and appeared to drive the formulation of new legislative proposals.

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 due to the irregular adoption of the 2017 budget and the informal government influence exercised by PiS chairman and parliamentary deputy Jarosław Kaczyński.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4

Cronyism, a problem under all previous Polish governments, appears widespread under PiS. The government has altered, lowered, or simply removed many criteria for staffing of public institutions, allowing for appointments based on party loyalty and personal connections. In response to a related scandal in 2016, anticorruption investigators had initiated probes into many state-owned enterprises. Nevertheless, an old friend of the prime minister's was appointed in May 2017 to the board of Pekao, Poland's second-largest bank, though her only significant professional experience involved running a small-town health clinic.

It was reported in September that the government had diverted public funds earmarked for promoting Polish interests abroad into a domestic campaign supporting the ruling party's judicial reforms. A public relations company founded by two former employees of the prime minister's office was awarded a contract for the campaign through a nontransparent tender process.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

The right to public information is guaranteed by the constitution and by the 2001 Act on Access to Public Information, but obtaining records and data from public institutions can be slow and difficult.

The current government avoids consulting outside experts or civil society organizations on policy ideas, and tends to introduce and pass legislation rapidly, with little opportunity for debate or amendment. The PiS government is also openly hostile to critical or independent media outlets and engages almost exclusively with state-run and progovernment outlets. Reporters from *Gazeta Wyborcza*, the country's largest daily, have difficulty gaining access to officials. Nevertheless, reporting on government activities and corruption remains fairly robust.

The courts' ability to uphold government transparency has been uneven. In November 2017, the Warsaw regional administrative court overturned a lower court verdict that had required the military counterintelligence service to reveal statistics on its domestic surveillance activities.

Following a hastily implemented reform of the education system in late 2016, a regional court in September 2017 ordered the Education Ministry to reveal the names of those who

were paid for “expert advice” on new curriculums. The education minister refused and filed an appeal, citing the need to protect the experts from public ridicule.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 49 / 60 (-3)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 14 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4

The constitution guarantees freedom of expression and forbids censorship. Libel remains a criminal offense, though a 2009 amendment to the criminal code eased penalties. A person may be found guilty of blasphemy, punishable by a fine of 5,000 zloty (\$1,350) or up to two years in prison, even if the offense was unintentional. The state does not restrict internet access.

Poland’s media are pluralistic and mostly privately owned. However, the public media and their governing bodies have been purged of dissenting voices since PiS came to power in 2015. TVP, the public television broadcaster, toes the government line on topics ranging from peaceful antigovernment protests, which it depicts as attempted coups, to critical NGOs, which are portrayed as agents of the opposition.

Since 2015, state-controlled companies have shifted their advertising to private media outlets that support the PiS government. More critical outlets have suffered a corresponding drop in advertising revenue, as well as a sharp decline in subscriptions from government ministries. According to the National Court Register, the publisher of the right-wing *Gazeta Polska* saw its revenue increase by 70 percent in 2016 thanks to gains in advertising, despite falling sales.

Independent private media have also faced regulatory pressure. In December 2017, the National Broadcasting Council (KRRiT) imposed a fine of nearly 1.5 million zloty (\$415,000) on the private television station TVN24 for “promoting illegal activities and inciting violence” through its coverage of the previous year’s antigovernment protests. The station’s parent company was also contesting the government’s claim that it owed 110 million zloty (\$30 million) in unpaid taxes.

For some time, the PiS leadership has been threatening to “deconcentrate” private media ownership, especially by foreign companies. The government often blames the presence of German and other foreign owners in the Polish media market for negative coverage of its activities.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

The state respects freedom of religion. The PiS government is aligned with the Roman Catholic Church, which wields significant influence in the country. Some prominent clergy members have distanced themselves from the ruling party, especially on its strong opposition to the settlement of Muslim refugees in Poland. However, others endorse the government’s nativist and socially conservative policies, particularly its ongoing efforts to further restrict abortion. Conservative media outlets and related institutions founded by Father Tadeusz Rydzyk continue to receive special treatment and funding from the government.

Religious groups are not required to register with the authorities but receive tax benefits if they do. Minority faiths are generally able to obtain registration in practice. There is a formal ban on state funding for church construction, but a church can obtain Culture Ministry funding in practice if, like the Temple of Divine Providence in Warsaw, it includes a museum.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 3 / 4

The ruling party has sought to discredit academics who challenge its preferred historical narrative, particularly with regard to the events of World War II. In January 2017, the Supreme Administrative Court approved the government's decision to merge a new, internationally respected World War II museum in Gdansk with another, yet-to-be-built museum, allowing the culture minister to change the facility's management and content.

Educational reforms that took effect in 2017 abolished middle schools and integrated them into elementary schools, putting thousands of principals out of work and allowing the Education Ministry to appoint new administrators. In addition to staffing changes, new history curriculums focused on the Polish state, military history, and Polish heroism. Sexual education no longer included information on contraception.

Under other legislation passed in December 2016, directors and deputy directors of state research institutes can be appointed without a competitive hiring process.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

People are free to engage in private discussions on political and other matters without fear of harassment or detention by the authorities.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 10 / 12 (-2)

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 3 / 4 (-1)

Freedom of assembly is generally respected in law and in practice. Public demonstrations are held with some regularity, though local authorities can limit demonstrations in their districts on grounds of maintaining public order.

In December 2016, the Sejm passed controversial legislation that requires separate public gatherings to keep a distance of at least 100 meters from each other and gives priority to "cyclical" rallies organized in the same place on predictable dates. PiS, which sponsored the bill, said its intention was to prevent conflicts between demonstrators, but critics said it would allow the authorities to amplify some forms of public speech and suppress others. In March 2017, the TK deemed the legislation constitutional, though four judges appointed by the previous parliament were excluded from the decision; Duda then signed the bill into law.

There were several major antigovernment protests in 2017, but the largest episode—with tens of thousands of participants and lasting over a week in July—was triggered by PiS's plans to overhaul the judicial system. A report by Amnesty International alleged excessive police tactics in response to the July protests, including physical containment of groups of demonstrators, heavy-handed surveillance and requests for identification, summonses to police stations, and the pursuit of criminal charges against some participants.

Authorities also continued to pursue participants in December 2016 protests during 2017. In January, Warsaw police published photos of 21 unidentified protesters from December in an effort to track them down. Separately, at an October demonstration for reproductive rights in Wrocław, several participants were reportedly questioned by police and charged with disrupting a counterdemonstration.

The government was criticized for its handling of ultranationalist marches in November that featured racist, antisemitic, and xenophobic slogans as well as cases of violence against counterprotesters. Government figures were accused of being slow or reluctant to condemn the marchers' speech and actions, and some observers said police failed to prevent assaults.

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 due to new legal restrictions on public gatherings, disproportionate police tactics against antigovernment protesters, and intimidation of counterprotesters at ultranationalist marches.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 3 / 4 (-1)

Although NGOs have generally operated without government interference in Poland, public media and top government officials began systematically undermining the credibility of such groups in 2016, accusing many of lacking financial transparency and pursuing an opposition-led political agenda. The smear campaign continued in 2017, and in October the president signed a new law that would centralize distribution of public NGO funding, including money from the EU and non-EU countries like Norway, through a new National Freedom Institute attached to the prime minister's office. Critics of the new funding mechanism warned that it could be used to muzzle criticism of PiS and starve projects that do not match the ruling party's perspective and priorities. The NGO law was widely condemned by domestic and international NGOs, as well as by Poland's human rights ombudsman.

Also in October, a day after the national protest in defense of reproductive rights, police raided the offices of two women's rights organizations in four cities, seizing equipment and documents as part of an investigation into grants paid by the Justice Ministry under the previous government.

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 due to a new law that centralizes government control over public NGO funding and an ongoing smear campaign against NGOs by pro-government media outlets.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

Poland has a robust labor movement, though certain groups—including the self-employed, private contractors, and those in essential services—cannot join unions. Complicated legal procedures hinder workers' ability to strike.

F. RULE OF LAW: 11 / 16 (-1)

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4 (-1)

Since taking power in 2015, the PiS government has moved aggressively to assert control over the judiciary. One of its first steps was to pass legislation designed to curb the powers of the TK, and it subsequently refused to publish TK decisions that it considered invalid. By the end of 2016, after a lengthy dispute over the tribunal's membership and authority, the TK was dominated by progovernment judges. In its March 2017 ruling on the law on public gatherings, the 15-member TK excluded three judges based on a complaint from the justice minister, and a fourth was sent on compulsory leave, allowing the law to win approval with a seven-to-four vote.

In July, the parliament adopted three sweeping government-backed judicial reform laws. President Duda signed one of them, granting the justice minister the power to appoint and dismiss the presidents and deputy presidents of district, regional, and appellate courts; the justice minister used this authority in November, removing 10 court officials in southern Poland.

Faced with sustained demonstrations and international objections, Duda broke with the PiS leadership and vetoed the other two bills, which focused on the Supreme Court and the KRS. However, he signed slightly revised versions of those measures in late December. The KRS law allows the Sejm to elect a majority of the council, which plays a key role in

judicial appointments and dismissals. A majority of KRS members had previously been chosen by fellow judges. The Supreme Court law lowered the mandatory retirement age for the court's judges from 70 to 65, obliging some 40 percent of sitting members—including the court's president, a vocal defender of its independence—to retire. Among other problematic provisions, the law created an extraordinary chamber of the Supreme Court to hear special appeals of final judgments, allowing such judgements to be overturned based on vague criteria including “social justice,” and gave the state president expanded influence over the appointment of the Supreme Court president as well as the court's rules and structure. The extraordinary chamber and a disciplinary chamber would both include lay members chosen by the Senate, and the two chambers' heads would be appointed by the state president.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 due to legal changes that dramatically increased elected officials' influence over the Supreme Court, the National Council of the Judiciary, and lower courts across the country.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 3 / 4

Defendants generally enjoy due process protections in Poland, though the law allows for extended pretrial detention, which can be lengthy in practice, and there is a large backlog of cases.

Legislation signed in February 2016 gave law enforcement agencies broad authority to monitor citizens' communications activity, including the ability to access metadata without a court order. A counterterrorism law signed in June of that year empowered authorities to monitor the movements of foreign citizens without prior court approval, and permitted terrorism suspects to be held without charges for up to two weeks. It also contained ambiguous provisions on collecting individuals' data, arresting civilians, prohibiting demonstrations, and blocking internet access.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 4 / 4

Civilians are largely free from extralegal violence, though some incidents of abuse by police have been alleged in the context of antigovernment demonstrations. Human rights groups have reported inadequate medical care in prison facilities.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

Women and ethnic minorities generally enjoy equality before the law. Some groups, particularly the Roma, experience discrimination in employment and housing, racially motivated insults, and occasional physical attacks. Members of the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) community continue to face discrimination. Hate crimes, particularly against Muslims or people believed to be Muslim by their attackers, have risen significantly over the last two years. Protests and small-scale riots broke out in early January 2017 after a Polish citizen was allegedly stabbed to death by a Tunisian national in the town of Elk. The unrest included vandalism, clashes with police, and violent attacks on perceived foreigners in other Polish cities.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 14 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4

People in Poland typically enjoy freedom of travel and choice of residence, employment, and institution of higher education.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 4 / 4

Citizens have the right to own property and establish private businesses. However, a 2016 law imposed onerous restrictions on sale and ownership of agricultural land, ostensibly to protect small-scale farmers. State and religious institutions are not bound by the new restrictions. Separately, state-owned entities such as the insurance company PZU have been acquiring stakes in Polish banks in recent years, raising concerns that the government is effectively renationalizing the financial industry.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

Under Polish law, abortion is permissible through the 12th week of pregnancy if a woman's health or life is in danger, if the pregnancy is a result of a criminal act such as rape, or if the fetus is severely damaged. A bill that would have removed most of these exceptions and imposed five-year prison terms for illegal abortions triggered mass protests and failed to pass in 2016. However, a law enacted in November of that year introduced financial incentives for women to carry fetuses with severe disabilities or terminal illnesses to term.

Domestic violence remains a serious concern. In 2016, the government withdrew funding from the Women's Rights Center (CPK), an NGO that has provided support to victims of domestic violence for over 20 years. The state's justification was that the center offers help only to women, rather than to all victims of abuse. The CPK was one of the women's rights groups whose offices were raided in October 2017.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

The law provides meaningful protections against abusive working conditions and child labor, especially in the formal sector. The authorities work to combat human trafficking, but women and children are still subjected to trafficking for sexual exploitation, Romany children in particular are used for forced begging, and foreign migrant workers are vulnerable to conditions amounting to forced labor.

Portugal

Population: 10,300,000

Capital: Lisbon

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 1

Freedom Rating: 1.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Portugal is a stable parliamentary democracy with a multiparty political system and regular transfers of power between the two largest parties. Civil liberties are generally protected. Ongoing concerns include corruption, certain legal constraints on journalism, and

poor or abusive conditions for prisoners. Prosecutors have pursued corruption cases against top officials in recent years.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In January, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) ruled that Portuguese courts had failed to protect the rights of a journalist who was ordered to pay damages to the then president of the Supreme Court in a defamation suit stemming from a 2006 editorial. The ECtHR has repeatedly ruled against Portugal regarding defamation cases over the past decade.
- Prosecutors announced in February that Angolan vice president Manuel Vicente had been charged for allegedly bribing a Portuguese magistrate to suspend an investigation of his financial activities in the country. In June, a judge confirmed that Vicente—who completed his term in office in September—must stand trial in Portugal; the Angolan government had sought to have the case transferred to Angola. The trial was set to begin in 2018.
- In October, former prime minister José Sócrates was indicted on corruption charges as part of a wide-ranging investigation that also implicated former Banco Espírito Santo chief executive Ricardo Salgado.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 39 / 40**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4**

In Portugal's parliamentary system, most executive power lies with the prime minister, though the directly elected president can delay legislation through a veto and dissolve the parliament to trigger early elections. The president serves up to two five-year terms. In the 2016 presidential election, a center-right candidate supported by the opposition Social Democratic Party (PSD) and its allies, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, won with 52 percent of the vote, easily defeating a leftist candidate backed by the ruling Socialist Party (PS), António Sampaio da Nóvoa, who took less than 23 percent.

Prime Minister António Costa of the PS took office in November 2015 as the head of a new government consisting of the PS, the Left Bloc (BE), the Communist Party (PCP), and the Greens (PEV). A minority government headed by the PSD had formed after the previous month's parliamentary elections, but it quickly collapsed when the leftist parties blocked its legislative program.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The 230 members of the unicameral Assembly of the Republic are directly elected every four years using a system of proportional representation in 22 multimember constituencies. In the October 2015 elections, the incumbent Portugal Ahead coalition, comprising the PSD and the Democratic Social Center–People's Party (CDS-PP), won 107 of the 230 seats. It remained the largest single force, but suffered losses compared with the 2011 elections, in which it took 132 seats. The PS, then in opposition, won 86 seats; the BE took 19; the Democratic Unity Coalition, composed of the PCP and PEV, took 17; and the Party for People, Animals, and Nature (PAN) captured 1.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

Elections in Portugal are generally free and fair. The constitution was amended in 1997 to allow Portuguese citizens living abroad to vote in presidential and legislative elections, as well as in national referendums.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 16 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4**

Political parties operate freely. The main parties are the center-left PS, the center-right PSD, and the Christian democratic CDS-PP. There is no legal vote threshold for representation in the parliament, meaning smaller parties can win a seat with little more than 1 percent of the overall vote in practice.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

Portugal has established a strong pattern of peaceful power transfers through elections since it returned to democracy in the late 1970s. The PS and PSD have rotated in and out of government several times in recent decades, most recently in 2015.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

Both voters and politicians are free from undue interference by forces outside the political system.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 4 / 4

Women and minority groups enjoy full political rights and are able to participate in the political process in practice. Women hold more than a third of the seats in the parliament. The autonomous regions of Azores and Madeira—two island groups in the Atlantic—have their own political structures with legislative and executive powers.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 11 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4**

Elected officials are free to determine and implement laws and policies without improper interference by unelected groups.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4

The country has struggled with major corruption scandals in recent years. While high-ranking politicians, officials, and businesspeople have been duly prosecuted, international monitors including the Council of Europe have urged Portugal to strengthen mechanisms that would help prevent corruption.

One ongoing case involved Manuel Vicente, who served as Angola's vice president from 2012 until September 2017 and was previously the head of the African country's state oil company. Documents leaked during 2017 named Vicente's relatives along with other Angolan and Brazilian figures who may have used the proceeds of corruption to obtain permanent residency in Portugal through an investor visa program. In February, prosecutors announced that Vicente had been charged for allegedly bribing a Portuguese magistrate to

suspend an investigation of his financial activities. In June, a judge confirmed that Vicente must stand trial in Portugal rather than have the case transferred to Angola. The trial was scheduled to start in 2018.

In October, former prime minister José Sócrates was formally indicted on corruption charges as part of a wide-ranging investigation that began in 2013. The case overlapped with that of Ricardo Salgado, former head of the defunct Banco Espírito Santo, who was accused of bribing Sócrates through middlemen to secure favorable decisions and commercial benefits. Both investigations were ongoing at year's end.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 4 / 4

Portuguese law provides for public access to government information, and state agencies generally respect this right.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 58 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 16 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 4 / 4

Freedom of the press is constitutionally guaranteed. Public broadcasting channels are poorly funded and face strong competition from commercial television outlets, which provide a wide range of information and viewpoints. Internet access is not restricted.

Portugal remains one of the few countries in Europe where defamation is still a criminal offense, and although prosecutions are uncommon, the ECtHR has repeatedly ruled against Portuguese authorities for their handling of both civil and criminal defamation cases. In January 2017, the European court ordered compensation for journalist José Manuel Fernandes, whom the Portuguese courts had ordered to pay €60,000 (\$68,000) for defamation over a 2006 editorial that criticized the president of the Supreme Court at the time.

Also in January, the Supreme Court upheld a 2016 decision by an appellate court to overturn a large defamation award against former police inspector Gonçalo Amaral, who claimed in a book that the parents of a missing British child were involved in her disappearance. He had originally been ordered to pay over €500,000 (\$570,000) in damages to the parents of Madeleine McCann, who went missing from a Portuguese resort town in 2007 and became the subject of intense media attention.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Portugal is overwhelmingly Roman Catholic, but the constitution guarantees freedom of religion and forbids religious discrimination. The Religious Freedom Act provides benefits for religions that have been established in the country for at least 30 years or recognized internationally for at least 60 years, including subsidies and legal recognition of religious marriages. However, other groups are free to register as religious corporations and receive benefits such as tax-exempt status, or to practice their faith without registering.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is respected. Schools and universities operate without undue political or other interference.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

There are no significant restrictions on private discussion or the expression of personal views.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 12 / 12**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4**

Freedom of assembly is upheld by the authorities, and demonstrations have often been organized to protest austerity measures over the past decade. In October 2017, protesters gathered to criticize the government's handling of deadly forest fires that year.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Freedom of association is respected. National and international nongovernmental organizations, including human rights groups, operate in the country without interference.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

Workers enjoy the right to organize, bargain collectively, and strike, though there are some limits on the right to strike in a wide range of sectors and industries that are deemed essential.

F. RULE OF LAW: 15 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 4 / 4**

The judiciary is independent, but staff shortages and inefficiency have contributed to a considerable backlog of pending trials.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 4 / 4

The authorities generally observe legal safeguards against arbitrary arrest and detention, though court backlogs result in lengthy pretrial detention for some defendants. Due process rights are guaranteed during trial.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 3 / 4

Human rights groups have expressed concern over unlawful police conduct, particularly abuse of detainees and excessive use of force. Overcrowding in prisons remains a problem, as do poor health and safety conditions. In July 2017, prosecutors charged 18 police officers with physically abusing six men of African descent in 2015. The case was ongoing at year's end.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 4 / 4

Equal treatment under the law is guaranteed by the constitution. Various laws prohibit discrimination based on factors including sex, race, disability, gender identity, and sexual orientation. Nevertheless, some problems persist with respect to gender bias in employment and societal discrimination against certain minority groups, including Roma and people of African descent.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 15 / 16**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4**

Freedom of movement and associated rights are protected by the constitution and laws, and the government respects these rights in practice.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 4 / 4

The government does not interfere with the rights to own property, establish private businesses, and engage in commercial activity.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 4 / 4

There are no major restrictions on personal social freedoms. Portugal legalized same-sex marriage in 2010 and extended adoption rights to same-sex couples in 2015. Domestic violence remains a problem despite government efforts aimed at prevention, education, and victim protection.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

Portugal is a destination and transit point for victims of human trafficking, particularly women from Eastern Europe and former Portuguese colonies in South America and Africa. Although forced labor is prohibited by law, there have been some reports of the practice, especially in the agriculture, hospitality, and construction sectors. Immigrant workers are especially vulnerable to economic exploitation.

Qatar

Population: 2,500,000

Capital: Doha

Political Rights Rating: 6

Civil Liberties Rating: 5

Freedom Rating: 5.5

Freedom Status: Not Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Note: Due to a methodological change affecting certain monarchies, Qatar's aggregate score for political rights declined by two points; for more information see the report methodology.

Overview: Qatar's hereditary emir holds all executive and legislative authority, and ultimately controls the judiciary as well. Political parties are not permitted, and the only elections are for an advisory municipal council. While Qatari citizens are among the wealthiest in the world, more than four-fifths of the population are noncitizens with no political rights, few civil liberties, and limited access to economic opportunity.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In June, Bahrain, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) cut diplomatic ties with Qatar and imposed trade and transportation sanctions on the country, accusing it of supporting terrorist groups—which they defined to include Islamist political organizations like the Muslim Brotherhood—and pursuing other policies that antagonized its Arab neighbors.

- Allegations of corruption related to soccer's 2022 World Cup continued to overshadow Qatar's preparations to host the event, though the government pledged to adopt a series of labor reforms in response to criticism of conditions for migrant workers involved in the project.
- In November, the emir appointed a number of new members to Qatar's Advisory Council, including four who became the first women to serve on the council. The move was seen as part of the government's broader efforts to pursue reforms that would bolster international support amid the diplomatic clash with its neighbors.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 7 / 40 (-2)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 2 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

The emir appoints the prime minister and cabinet, and selects an heir-apparent after consulting with the ruling family and other notables. In 2013, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani abdicated as emir, handing power to his fourth-born son, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani. Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser al-Thani, a member of the ruling family, became prime minister as well as interior minister.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4

The 2003 constitution stipulated that 30 of the 45 seats on the Advisory Council (Majlis al-Shura) should be filled through elections every four years, with the emir appointing the other 15 members. However, elections have been repeatedly postponed, so all members are still appointed. In November 2017, the emir renewed the membership of some members and appointed 28 new members.

Nonpartisan elections have been held since 1999 for the 29-member Central Municipal Council, a body designed to advise the minister for municipal affairs. Members serve four-year terms. In the most recent elections, held in 2015, turnout rose substantially to 70 percent of registered voters, from 43 percent in 2011, but the actual number registered fell by 40 percent to a record low of 21,735, out of roughly 150,000 eligible voters.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 1 / 4

Electoral laws currently in force cover only the Central Municipal Council elections, and the absence of a legal framework for Advisory Council elections has been a factor in their repeated postponement. Qatari citizens over the age of 18 are eligible to vote, except those in the military or working for the Interior Ministry.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 2 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 0 / 4

The government does not permit the existence of political parties or other political groupings. All candidates for the municipal council elections run as independents.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 0 / 4

The ruling family maintains a monopoly on political power, and the system excludes the possibility of a change in government through elections.

As part of the diplomatic clash between Qatar and Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt that began in June 2017, dissident members of the Qatari ruling family based in Saudi Arabia and Europe emerged to advocate political change in Qatar, though they did not appear to have any organized public support within the country.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 1 / 4

Public participation in the political arena is extremely limited. Voters and candidates who do take part in the municipal elections are often influenced by tribal and family ties.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 1 / 4

Up to 90 percent of Qatar's population is composed of noncitizens, including expatriates and migrant workers, who have no political rights or electoral opportunities. Citizenship is inherited exclusively from a Qatari father; residents can apply for citizenship after 25 years in the country, but this is rarely granted.

Qatari women enjoy some political rights, though they have little opportunity to organize independently and advocate for their interests. In the 2015 municipal council elections, five of the 130 candidates were women, and two of them won seats, up from one in the previous council. Four women were among the new Advisory Council members appointed in 2017, becoming the first women to serve on the council.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 3 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 0 / 4

Decision-making authority is concentrated in the hands of the emir and his family, and there is no elected legislature to offset executive power.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

The authorities regularly punish lower-level public officials for bribery and embezzlement, but corruption remains a concern, and the country lacks genuinely independent anticorruption mechanisms that can hold senior officials and members of the ruling family publicly accountable for the allocation of state resources. Qatar has been accused of employing corrupt tactics in its successful bid to host soccer's 2022 World Cup, and allegations of bribery surrounding the 2010 decision continued to emerge during 2017.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 1 / 4

Official information is tightly controlled, and critics complain of a lack of transparency in state procurement. Although the State Audit Bureau prepares budgets and accounts for government institutions, it does not share their full details with the public or the appointed Advisory Council. A 2016 law empowered the bureau to make some aspects of its findings public, but the security ministries remained exempt from its oversight.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 17 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 7 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4

Both print and broadcast media are influenced by leading families and subject to state censorship. The international television network Al-Jazeera is privately held, but the government has reportedly paid to support its operating costs since its inception in 1996. All journalists in Qatar practice a degree of self-censorship and face possible jail sentences for defamation and other press offenses. Access to the independent English-language website Doha News has been blocked in Qatar since late 2016 on the grounds that it did not have the required operating permit.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 2 / 4

Islam is the official religion, though the constitution explicitly provides for freedom of worship. The Ministry of Islamic Affairs oversees the construction of mosques, the hiring of imams, and guidance for sermons. Churches have been built for Qatar's growing Christian community, but non-Muslims are not allowed to proselytize or worship in public.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 2 / 4

The constitution guarantees academic freedom, but scholars often self-censor on politically sensitive topics. Foreign universities have established branches in Qatar under a program to strengthen the country's educational institutions.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 2 / 4

While residents enjoy some freedom of private discussion, security forces reportedly monitor personal communications, and noncitizens often self-censor to avoid jeopardizing their work and residency status. Social media users can face criminal penalties for posting politically sensitive content. After Saudi Arabia and its allies imposed their diplomatic and trade sanctions on Qatar in June 2017, citizens and residents became more active in debating current affairs and regional developments, without apparent retribution.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 2 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 1 / 4

The constitutional right to freedom of assembly is limited by restrictive laws and does not apply to noncitizens. Organizers of public events must obtain a permit from the Interior Ministry, and protests are rare in practice.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 0 / 4

All nongovernmental organizations need state permission to operate, and the government closely monitors their activities. There are no independent human rights organizations, though a government-appointed National Human Rights Committee investigates alleged abuses. Independent activists are subject to state harassment. The authorities imposed a travel ban on human rights lawyer Najeeb al-Nuaimi in January 2017, and it remained in place at year's end.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 1 / 4

A 2005 labor law expanded worker protections, but the rights to form unions and to strike remain restricted. The only trade union allowed to operate is the General Union of

Workers of Qatar, and the law prohibits membership for noncitizens, government employees, and household workers. Foreign workers who engage in labor protests risk deportation.

F. RULE OF LAW: 4 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4

Despite constitutional guarantees, the judiciary is not independent in practice. Many judges are foreign nationals serving under temporary contracts that are renewed annually. The Supreme Council of the Judiciary, composed of senior judges, administers the courts and plays a role in nominating judges for appointment by the emir.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

Certain laws allow lengthy detentions without charge or access to a lawyer for suspects in cases involving national security or terrorism. Even under normal criminal procedure, judges can extend pretrial detention for up to half of the maximum prison term allowed for the alleged crime. Many laws contain ill-defined offenses and other language that gives prosecutors and judges broad discretion to determine guilt. For example, a 2014 law on cybercrimes has been criticized for the vague wording of offenses that carry prison sentences of up to three years, including online dissemination of “false news” or content that undermines “general order.”

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 2 / 4

There have been some allegations of torture and other mistreatment of detainees in recent years, but legal bans on such abuse are generally respected. Prison conditions reportedly meet international standards. Corporal punishment in the form of flogging can be imposed on Muslim defendants for certain offenses under Sharia (Islamic law), including alcohol consumption and extramarital sex.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 0 / 4

Noncitizens reportedly face discrimination in the courts and from police. While the constitution bars gender-based discrimination, women do not receive equal treatment under a number of laws, and their testimony is worth less than that of men in certain types of cases. LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people are subject to legal and societal discrimination; vague wording in the penal code can be interpreted to criminalize same-sex sexual activity, and Sharia prohibits any sexual acts outside of heterosexual marriage. Same-sex relationships must be hidden in practice.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 4 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 1 / 4

Qataris face no major restrictions on freedom of movement within the country or on type or place of employment. Such freedoms, however, are not extended to noncitizens and foreign workers, who face a variety of constraints. A reform law that took effect in December 2016 eased foreign workers’ ability to change employers at the end of a contract and leave the country without an employer’s permission, but an amendment in early 2017 effectively meant that employers could still hamper workers’ attempts to obtain exit visas.

As part of the diplomatic clash that began in June 2017, Saudi Arabia and its allies closed Qatar's only land border, closed their airspace to Qatari flights, expelled Qatari nationals, and banned their nationals from visiting Qatar.

In August, the cabinet approved a draft law that, if enacted, would allow children of Qatari mothers and foreign fathers to obtain permanent residency. It would also grant permanent residency to foreigners who "provide outstanding services to Qatar," which could include citizens of Saudi Arabia and allied countries who chose to remain despite the diplomatic crisis. Permanent residents would have access free state education and health care, and enjoy greater rights to own property and run businesses. The law had yet to be ratified by the emir at year's end.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 1 / 4

Qataris are permitted to own property and start private businesses, although the process of obtaining necessary commercial permits can be cumbersome. Noncitizens are generally barred from owning property and require Qatari partners to own and operate businesses.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 1 / 4

There are a number of legal constraints on marriage, and women are typically at a disadvantage to men under laws on personal status matters. Marriage contracts require the consent of the woman's male guardian, and citizens must obtain government permission to marry foreigners. The foreign wives of Qatari men can obtain citizenship, but foreign husbands of Qatari women are eligible only for residency. Domestic violence and spousal rape are not specifically criminalized. Extramarital sex is illegal.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

Many foreign nationals face economic abuses including the withholding of salaries, contract manipulation, poor living conditions, and excessive working hours. However, fear of job loss and deportation often prevents them from asserting their limited rights. Female household workers are particularly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. International organizations have drawn attention to the harsh working conditions of migrants building the infrastructure for the 2022 World Cup.

The government undertook a number of reforms in 2017 to address some of these problems. In August, the emir ratified a new law that provided labor rights to household workers, guaranteeing a maximum 10-hour working day, one rest day a week, three weeks of annual leave, and an end-of-service payment, among other provisions, though it failed to set out enforcement mechanisms to ensure compliance. Its standards are also weaker than those in the main labor law. In October, the government pledged to make a series of sweeping legal improvements for migrant workers, including a minimum wage; further development of those initial commitments was expected in 2018.

Romania

Population: 19,800,000

Capital: Bucharest

Political Rights Rating: 2

Civil Liberties Rating: 2

Freedom Rating: 2.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Romania's multiparty system has ensured regular rotations of power. Civil liberties are generally respected, though ongoing concerns include corruption in the police force, discrimination against Roma and other vulnerable groups, and interference in the judiciary. Key media outlets are controlled by businessmen with political interests. Political corruption is an entrenched problem that continues to prompt public protests.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In January and February, Romanians across the country took to the streets in historic numbers to protest against a package of emergency ordinances that would have reversed past anticorruption efforts.
- A watchdog group in May issued a report warning that media outlets had played a key role in spreading misinformation and propaganda during the anticorruption protests.
- Liviu Dragnea, the powerful chairman of the ruling Social Democratic Party (PSD), initiated a successful no-confidence vote in June against the newly seated, PSD-led government of Prime Minister Sorin Grindeanu. Grindeanu was replaced by Mihai Tudose.
- The National Anticorruption Directorate (DNA) opened separate corruption investigations against key PSD figures: Dragnea, and Deputy Prime Minister Sevil Shhaideh.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 35 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 11 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The president is chief of state and is directly elected to up to two five-year terms. The prime minister is the head of government, and is appointed by the president with the approval of the parliament; thus the prime minister's legitimacy is dependent in part on the conduct of parliamentary elections. Both presidential and parliamentary elections since 1991 have been generally free and fair.

After the December 2016 parliamentary elections, a majority comprised of the PSD and the Alliance of Democrats and Liberals (ALDE) proposed Sorin Grindeanu of the PSD to be prime minister. President Klaus Iohannis designated Grindeanu, and the new cabinet was sworn into office in January 2017. In June, Grindeanu was ousted in a vote of no confidence filed by the PSD and initiated by party chair Liviu Dragnea. Grindeanu was replaced late in the month by Mihai Tudose of the PSD.

Iohannis, Romania's centrist president, was elected in 2014.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

Under the 2015 electoral law, members of the bicameral Parliament, consisting of a 136-seat Senate and a 330-seat Chamber of Deputies, are elected to four-year terms in a closed party-list proportional system. The PSD took a plurality of seats in both houses in the December 2016 parliamentary elections. International election monitors assessed the poll positively, and stakeholders accepted the results.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4

The electoral law adopted in 2015 regulated the 2016 elections. The number of MPs decreased from 588 to 465, and the uninominal system was replaced by a closed party-list proportional system. A 5 percent electoral threshold for parties was maintained, while a new threshold of 8 to 10 percent was introduced for alliances.

The 2016 parliamentary elections revealed some gaps in the new electoral code, such as flawed procedures for vetting candidate eligibility, registering as an observer, and conducting ballot recounts. Analysts also noted a scarcity of regulations on party financing. The law also allowed mail-in voting for citizens living abroad, though participation was limited; fewer than 9,000 people registered to vote by mail, and some 4,000 ballots were cast by mail. New technological measures were introduced to help prevent fraud, including video cameras to record the ballot count.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 14 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4**

Under the electoral law adopted in 2015, the number of members needed to create a new party decreased from 25,000 to 3, leading to the registration of many new parties. However, watchdogs have raised concerns about a provision stating that newly created parties can be eliminated if they skip two consecutive elections.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

Romania's multiparty system features healthy competition between rival blocs. No single force has been able to dominate both the executive and legislative branches since 2012. The mainstream parties display little ideological consistency and tend to seek coalitions that advance their leaders' personal or business interests. Watchdogs have expressed concern about the large number of signatures required to place candidates on ballots for local and parliamentary elections, which can disadvantage small parties.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 3 / 4

People are generally free to express their political choices without undue influence from nondemocratic actors. However, clientelism in local politics remains a problem, and undermines political accountability. Watchdogs have expressed concern over the increasing presence of disinformation and propaganda in the media, which could influence people's political choices and views.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

Ethnic, religious, and other minority groups enjoy full political rights under the law. Romania's constitution grants one lower house seat to each national minority whose representative party or organization fails to win any seats under the normal rules, and 17 such seats were allotted to minority representatives following the 2016 elections. President Iohannis, an ethnic German and a Lutheran, is the country's first president from either minority group.

Roma, who make up over 3 percent of the population, are underrepresented in politics. A number of women hold cabinet-level positions, but women are underrepresented in the Chamber of Deputies, where they hold 21 percent of seats, and in regional assemblies, where they hold 17 percent of seats. None of the major political parties are led by a woman. Social discrimination against LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people discourages political advocacy for LGBT rights.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 10 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4**

Elections are held without delays, and elected officials are duly seated and generally able to craft policy. In 2017, intraparty disputes in the PSD hampered policymaking activities. PSD chairman Liviu Dragnea, who sits in the parliament but is not eligible for the prime minister's seat due to his 2015 conviction on electoral fraud charges, successfully forced out Prime Minister Grindeanu, also of PSD, through his efforts to bring a June no-confidence vote.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4

High levels of corruption, bribery, and the abuse of power remain a problem. In spite of intense political interference and media pressure, the National Anticorruption Directorate (DNA) remains independent and powerful, and fairly investigates corruption cases across the political spectrum. In September, the DNA opened an investigation of Deputy Prime Minister Sevil Shhaideh of the PSD for abuse of power in a case that dates back to 2013, when she was in the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration. In November, the DNA announced that Dragnea was being investigated on allegations of abusing power for personal gain, and defrauding the European Union (EU) through the misappropriation of EU funds. Allegations of high-level corruption are typically given a substantive airing in the media.

In November, the European Commission raised concerns over the lack of political support for the implementation of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy (NAS) that was introduced by the government in 2016, and noted a resistance by politicians to lift the immunity of lawmakers so that corruption claims could be investigated and prosecuted.

In February, the government cancelled a pair of emergency ordinance that would have decriminalized some kinds of corruption, in the wake of massive public protests. A draft law that would offer amnesty for some corruption convictions was introduced in April and sparked more protests, and had not been adopted at year's end.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 3 / 4

Citizens have the legal right to obtain public information and can petition government agencies for it. In 2016, a new computer system, known as PREVENT, was established

under the National Integrity Agency in order to prevent conflicts of interests in public procurements.⁸ The system entered into operation in June 2017.

However, apparent efforts by lawmakers to keep various government operations shrouded in secrecy continued in 2017. January's emergency ordinances that decriminalized some forms of corruption (and were later repealed) had not been debated extensively by the newly seated government, and were published unexpectedly, and late at night. Lawmakers also sought in 2017 to exempt a number of state-owned companies from corporate governance rules, and the government replaced the leaders of a number of state owned companies with loyalists.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 49 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 14 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4

Although the media environment is pluralistic, key media outlets are controlled by businessmen with political interests, and coverage is highly distorted by the interests of owners. The watchdog group ActiveWatch in a May 2017 report warned that the media played a key role in spreading misinformation during the January and February antigovernment protests, and that many outlets had served as platforms for political actors to disseminate propaganda. It further accused the National Audiovisual Council of turning a blind eye to unprofessional behavior by media outlets as well as to intimidation of journalists by political figures, police, and members of the public. There were reports of police forcing journalists to delete footage of the protests.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4

Religious freedom is generally respected. While the Romanian Orthodox Church remains dominant and politically powerful, the government formally recognizes 18 religions, each of which is eligible for proportional state support. There have been reports of discrimination and harassment against religions minorities. In October, a performance at the Cluj-Napoca Opera House was interrupted by self-described anti-Muslim activists. In 2017 there were reports of hate speech on social media against Jewish people, as well as vandalism of Jewish cemeteries.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

The government does not restrict academic freedom, though the education system is weakened by widespread corruption and by the power of local and national government officials in electing and approving heads of schools and academic institutions.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

People are generally free to express their opinions without fear of retribution. However, watchdogs reported that during the massive protests in January and February 2017, the Interior Ministry produced a list with names of journalists and politicians who has endorsed the street movements.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 11 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4

⁸ <http://lbhn-1602388572.eu-west-1.elb.amazonaws.com/stire/18276083>

Romania's constitution guarantees freedom of assembly, and the government generally respects this rights in practice. Numerous public demonstrations were held throughout 2017, including a two-month-long anticorruption street movement that at times attracted as many as 500,000 protesters across the country.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operate freely and play a role in informing and educating the public. Nevertheless, many groups focusing on human rights- or governance-related work suffer from funding shortages, and often face hostility and smears from politicians and other actors.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

Workers have the right to form unions and a limited right to strike and bargain collectively. There are legal limits on the ability of unions to participate in political activity, and the International Labor Organization has expressed concern about the level of government supervision of unions' finances.

F. RULE OF LAW: 12 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 3 / 4

The judiciary is generally independent, but faces pressure from the executive and legislative branches. Many judges and prosecutors denounced proposed changes to the legal system in 2017, including a measure that would ban public statements about investigations and trials, and would allow suspects to attend court sessions when witnesses are giving testimony, the latter of which could contribute to witness intimidation.

A Code of Conduct adopted in October by Parliament acknowledges the respect of lawmakers for the principle of separation of powers.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 3 / 4

The country's courts and law enforcement authorities continue to suffer from problems including corruption, political influence, staffing shortages, and inefficient resource allocation. Dozens of law enforcement officials were arrested and prosecuted during the year for bribery, abuse of power, and corruption.

Separately, in November 2017, the European Commission warned that the lack of an independent and powerful process for appointing top prosecutors threatened the rule of law.

Many officials and lawmakers retain their positions despite criminal indictments or convictions.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 3 / 4

Romania is free from war and insurgencies. Conditions in prisons, however, are harsh. In April, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) sanctioned Romania for poor prison conditions, and ordered it to take immediate measures to improve the conditions of inmates and come up with a timetable for resolving the problems within six months. In response, the government in October passed legislation reducing the sentences of some prisoners; under it, about 530 inmates were initially released early and some 3,500 more became eligible for release the next month. Civil society groups and others expressed concern that the release of inmates as a measure to reduce overcrowding in the prisons was not a proper response to

the ECHR's criticisms, and warned that the measure could be used to grant parole to officials convicted for corruption.

Abuse of detainees by police remains a problem.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

People with disabilities, LGBT people, the Roma community, and HIV-positive children and adults continue to face discrimination in education, employment, and other areas. The Constitution guarantees women equal rights, but gender discrimination remains a problem. According to the European Commission's 2017 Report on Equality between Men and Women in the EU, Romanian women are paid more than 5 percent less on average than their male counterparts.

While the number of recently arrived refugees and migrants is low in Romania compared to other countries in the region, some media outlets have carried harsh rhetoric aiming to stoke fears about a "migrant influx." Residents of refugee centers are subject to curfews.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 12 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4

Citizens face no significant restrictions on the freedom of movement, whether for internal or external travel, and are free to change residence and employment.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

Bureaucracy, corruption, and fiscal unpredictability hamper business development and investments.

The right to property is protected by law. Although significant progress has been made to support the property restitution process after the fall of Communism, Romania's government has not yet ensured the full restitution of religious properties.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

Domestic violence against women remains a serious problem. Same-sex marriages are not permitted under Romanian law, and the rights of same-sex couples married elsewhere are not protected. In 2016, activists collected some 3 million signatures calling for marriage to be defined as between a man and a woman. The Constitutional Court accepted the validity of the proposal, paving the way for an expected referendum on the topic.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

Human trafficking for the purpose of forced labor and prostitution remains a serious problem in Romania. Women and children from the Roma minority are particularly susceptible to forced begging. The government has worked to increase prosecutions, and has taken some action aimed at bolstering victim identification efforts.

Russia

Population: 144,300,000

Capital: Moscow

Political Rights Rating: 7

Civil Liberties Rating: 6

Freedom Rating: 6.5

Freedom Status: Not Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: Power in Russia's authoritarian political system is concentrated in the hands of President Vladimir Putin. With loyalist security forces, a subservient judiciary, a controlled media environment, and a legislature consisting of a ruling party and pliable opposition groups, the Kremlin is able to manipulate elections and inhibit genuine opposition. The country's rampant corruption is one notable threat to state power, as it facilitates shifting links among bureaucrats and organized crime groups.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Kremlin-approved candidates dominated regional elections held in September, which the independent monitoring group Golos described as controlled and marked by low turnout. In December, the Central Election Commission banned opposition leader Aleksey Navalny from challenging Putin in the 2018 presidential election, removing from the contest the only credible opposition figure to have announced a campaign.
- Investigative journalist and *Novy Peterburg* cofounder Nikolay Andrushchenko died in April, weeks after he was severely beaten, and Dmitriy Popkov, editor of the investigative online outlet *Ton-M*, was shot to death in May. Andrushchenko's killing marked the first murder of a journalist in Russia since 2013, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ).
- The authorities banned the activities of the Jehovah's Witnesses, which was deemed an extremist group.
- The independent newspaper *Novaya Gazeta* reported that dozens of men suspected of being gay had been detained and tortured by security forces in Chechnya.

Executive Summary

President Putin retained a tight grip on power in 2017, and Kremlin-approved candidates dominated regional elections held in September. Golos described the elections as "administratively controlled," noting politicized registration processes and the misuse of public resources to benefit candidates from the ruling United Russia party. The monitoring group attributed the low turnout to a lack of genuine competition in most races and voters' general disillusionment with Russian elections and electoral institutions. Meanwhile, authorities continued to crack down on Navalny, who was jailed several times during the year on various charges, including organizing an unauthorized gathering. Days after Navalny announced his intention to challenge Putin for the presidency in 2018, the Central Election Commission barred him from running, explaining that a past conviction on embezzlement charges rendered him ineligible. Navalny and his supporters said the conviction had been politically motivated, an assessment echoed by observers including the Council of Europe's committee of ministers, which had called the prosecution "arbitrary and unfair."

Though opinion polls suggest that Navalny would have a difficult time defeating Putin were he permitted to run, his disqualification removed from the contest the only credible opposition figure to have announced a campaign.

Civil liberties in Russia are tightly circumscribed. Two independent investigative reporters were killed during the year. Nikolay Andrushchenko, a cofounder of the *Novy Peterburg* weekly who was known for reporting on corruption and police brutality, died in April in a St. Petersburg hospital, weeks after he was beaten by unidentified assailants. His death was the first killing of a journalist recorded by CPJ since 2013. Dmitriy Popkov, editor of the online investigative news outlet *Ton-M*, was shot to death in the eastern Siberian city of Minusinsk in May; he was similarly known for investigations of government officials and criticism of the ruling party, United Russia. Investigative journalist Yuliya Latynina, who wrote for *Novaya Gazeta* and hosted a radio program on Ekho Moskvy, fled the country in September after a series of threats and an arson attack at her home. Meanwhile, RBC, a respected news service that had published articles critical of business owners close to Putin, was sold to a Putin ally in June, a development that prompted the resignation of a number of its journalists.

Separately, in April, the Supreme Court upheld the Justice Ministry's decision to deem the Jehovah's Witnesses an extremist organization and ordered the confiscation of the group's property; by year's end a number of its facilities had been seized. In March, the authorities revoked the teaching license of the European University at St. Petersburg, a liberal center of postgraduate studies in diverse fields, preventing the school from holding classes in the fall term and putting its future at risk.

LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people remained subject to considerable discrimination. In April, *Novaya Gazeta* published reports that police in Chechnya had detained and tortured dozens of men suspected of being gay. The federal authorities did not take significant action in response to the allegations. In June, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruled that a 2013 federal law that effectively made it illegal to talk about homosexuality in public was discriminatory and violated freedom of expression.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 5 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 0 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

The 1993 constitution established a strong presidency with the power to dismiss and appoint, pending parliamentary confirmation, the prime minister. Putin served two four-year presidential terms from 2000 to 2008, and remained the de facto paramount leader while working as prime minister until 2012, violating the spirit if not the letter of the constitution's two-term limit. In the 2012 presidential election, Putin benefited from advantages including preferential media treatment, numerous abuses of incumbency, and procedural irregularities during the vote count. He won an official 63.6 percent of the vote against a field of weak, hand-chosen opponents. Communist Party leader Gennadiy Zyuganov took second place with 17.2 percent. Under a 2008 constitutional amendment, Putin is now serving a six-year term. In December 2017, he announced his decision to run for another term in the presidential election set for March 18, 2018, the fourth anniversary of the annexation of Crimea.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

The Federal Assembly consists of the 450-seat State Duma and an upper chamber, the 170-seat Federation Council. Half the members of the upper chamber are appointed by

governors and half by regional legislatures, usually with strong federal input. Since 2011, only locally elected politicians have been eligible to serve in the Federation Council; the change was designed to benefit the pro-Kremlin United Russia, as most local officeholders are party members.

The 2008 constitutional amendment extended Duma terms from four to five years. Following the 2011 State Duma elections, when United Russia scored just less than 50 percent of the vote in flawed elections that sparked street protests, the Kremlin rewrote the electoral law; authorities restored the mixed system abandoned after the 2003 elections, under which half of Duma members are elected by proportional representation and half in single-member districts. The reform also moved elections from December to September.

The changes had the desired effect in September 2016, when United Russia won 343 seats in the 450-seat State Duma, gaining a supermajority that allows it to change the constitution without the support of other parties. Kremlin-approved parties won the bulk of all remaining seats. The Central Electoral Commission reported a turnout of 48 percent, the lowest in Russia's post-Soviet history. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the election monitoring group Golos cited numerous violations, including ballot stuffing, pressure on voters, and illegal campaigning. A number of opposition candidates were simply not permitted to register, so the outcome of many races was clear even before election day.

Regional and local elections are typically manipulated to ensure that the regime's favored candidates win. Pro-Kremlin candidates swept the 2017 gubernatorial races, in polls Golos described as "administratively controlled."

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 0 / 4

Russia's electoral system is designed to maintain the dominance of United Russia. The authorities make frequent changes in the laws and the timing of elections in order to ensure that their preferred candidates will have maximum advantage. Opposition candidates have little chance of success in appealing these decisions, or securing a level playing field.

In its assessment of the 2017 regional elections, Golos noted that the membership of the electoral commissions in 22 districts did "not sufficiently take into account the interests of the nonparliamentary parties and civil society."

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 3 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 1 / 4

Legislation enacted in 2012 liberalized party registration rules, allowing the creation of hundreds of new parties. However, none posed a significant threat to the authorities, and many seemed designed to encourage division and confusion among the opposition.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 0 / 4

Opposition politicians and activists are frequently targeted with fabricated criminal cases and other forms of administrative harassment apparently designed to prevent their participation in the political process. Navalny, head of the technocratic Progress Party, was jailed several times in 2017 on various charges, including organizing an unauthorized gathering, and was ultimately barred from participating in the 2018 presidential election in connection with a past embezzlement conviction widely considered politically motivated.

Authorities have also harassed Navalny's supporters, including by arresting them ahead of rallies. Navalny's brother was sentenced to three and a half years in prison on trumped-up fraud charges in 2014, and he remained behind bars in 2017, in an apparent attempt to limit Navalny's activities.

In Moscow's 2017 municipal elections, opposition candidates from various parties won just over 15 percent of seats, providing a symbolic shakeup on an otherwise predictable election day.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 1 / 4

Russia's leadership is closely intertwined with powerful economic oligarchs who control the most lucrative parts of the economy, and frequently benefit from exclusive access to government procurement contracts. The Russian Orthodox Church has established a mutually beneficial alliance with Putin, and works to support the status quo.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 1 / 4

The formation of parties based on ethnicity or religion is not permitted by law. In practice, many ethnic minority regions are carefully monitored and controlled by federal authorities. Most republics in the restive North Caucasus area and some autonomous districts in energy-rich western Siberia have opted out of direct gubernatorial elections; instead, their legislatures choose a governor from candidates proposed by the president. Women are underrepresented in politics and government. They hold less than a fifth of seats in the State Duma and the Federation Council. Only 3 of 32 cabinet members are women.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 2 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 0 / 4

Russia's authoritarian president dominates the political system, along with powerful allies in the security services and in business. These groups effectively control the output of the parliament, which is not freely elected. The federal authorities have limited ability to impose policy decisions in Chechnya, where Chechen president Ramzan Kadyrov has gained unchecked power in exchange for keeping Chechnya within the Russian Federation.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

Corruption in the government and business world is pervasive, and a growing lack of accountability enables bureaucrats to act with impunity. Many analysts have argued that the political system is essentially a kleptocracy, in which ruling elites plunder public wealth to enrich themselves.

In March 2017, Navalny posted to YouTube a video implicating Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev in an extensive corruption scheme involving the use of companies and purported charitable foundations to accept over \$1 billion in illicit payments. Oligarch Alisher Usmanov sued, claiming that Navalny's charge that he had given Medvedev a \$50 million mansion as a gift was not true. A court ruled in favor of Usmanov in May, and ordered removal of the video, though at year's end it remained online and had more than 25 million views.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 1 / 4

There is little transparency and accountability in the day-to-day workings of the government. Decisions are adopted behind closed doors by a small group of individuals whose identities are often unclear, and announced to the population after the fact.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 15 / 60**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 3 / 16****D1. Are there free and independent media? 0 / 4**

Although the constitution provides for freedom of speech, vague laws on extremism grant the authorities great discretion to crack down on any speech, organization, or activity that lacks official support. The government controls, directly or through state-owned companies and friendly business magnates, all of the national television networks and many radio and print outlets, as well as most of the media advertising market.

Attacks, arrests, and threats against journalists are common. Two investigative reporters were killed in 2017. Andrushchenko of the *Novy Peterburg* weekly, who was known for reporting on corruption and police brutality, died in April in a St. Petersburg hospital, weeks after he was beaten by unidentified assailants. His death was the first killing of a journalist recorded by CPJ since 2013. Popkov, editor of the online investigative news outlet *Ton-M*, was shot to death in the eastern Siberian city of Minusinsk in May; he was similarly known for investigations of government officials and criticism of United Russia. CPJ classified the killings of both Andrushchenko and Popov as having been carried out in connection with their work. Investigative journalist Yuliya Latynina, who wrote for *Novaya Gazeta* and hosted a radio program on Ekho Moskvyy, fled the country in September after a series of threats and an arson attack at her home.

Meanwhile, RBC, a respected news service that had published articles critical of business owners close to Putin, was sold to a Putin ally in June, a development that prompted the resignation of a number of its journalists. Later, in August, RBC special correspondent Aleksandr Sokolov was convicted of extremism and sentenced to three-and-a-half years in prison on claims he was involved with a banned nationalist group, though there was widespread speculation that he was in fact jailed in connection with his research and reports on mismanagement in Russia's state corporations. In November, Putin signed legislation allowing Russia to designate media outlets as "foreign agents," and soon afterward, the Justice Ministry declared Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty to be foreign agents. The move came after the Russian outlet RT, which promotes the Kremlin's views and interests, registered under the U.S. Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) after coming under pressure to do so from the U.S. Justice Department.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 1 / 4

Freedom of religion is respected unevenly. A 1997 law on religion gives the state extensive control and makes it difficult for new or independent groups to operate. The Russian Orthodox Church has a privileged position, working closely with the government on foreign and domestic policy priorities. In 2009, the president authorized religious instruction in public schools.

Regional authorities continue to harass nontraditional groups, such as Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons. The so-called Yarovaya Law, approved in 2016, ostensibly targets terrorism but includes powers that the authorities can use to repress religious groups on the grounds of fighting extremism. In April 2017, the Supreme Court upheld the Justice Ministry's decision to deem the Jehovah's Witnesses an extremist organization and ordered the

confiscation of the group's property; by year's end a number of its facilities had been seized. There are an estimated 175,000 members of the group in Russia.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 1 / 4

The education system is marred by bureaucratic interference, international isolation, and increasing pressure to toe the Kremlin line on politically sensitive topics, though some academics continue to express dissenting views. In March 2017, authorities revoked the education license granted to European University in St. Petersburg, which has about 250 students and is considered to be among the best universities in Russia in the social sciences and humanities. The decision forced the university to cancel classes for the fall term and put the institution's future in doubt. The university was also forced to move from its building.

Separately, schools in the Tatarstan region were compelled to reduce Tatar language instruction under federal pressure in 2017, from a mandatory six hours a week to an optional two hours.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 1 / 4

Pervasive, hyperpatriotic propaganda and political repression since 2014 have had a cumulative impact on open and free private discussion, and the chilling effect is exacerbated by growing state efforts to control expression on the internet.

The government's surveillance capabilities have increased significantly in recent years, and authorities are thought to monitor the activities of activists, journalists, and opposition members, according to the human rights organization Agora. The monitoring includes domestic and foreign travel, telephone conversations and messaging, covert recordings of activities, capturing online communications, and collecting biometrical data. In July 2017, Putin signed a law forcing all instant messaging service providers to keep records connecting users with their telephone numbers, effectively prohibiting anonymous use of the services. A separate law approved around the same time blocked the use of internet proxy services, such as virtual private networks (VPNs). Like many legal measures permitting surveillance, the new regulations were justified on security-related grounds.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 3 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 1 / 4

The government restricts freedoms of assembly and association. Overwhelming police responses, the use of force, routine arrests, and harsh fines and prison sentences have discouraged unsanctioned protests, though pro-Kremlin groups are able to demonstrate freely. Despite an inability to secure permits for high-visibility locations and frequent police harassment, Navalny and his team organized a number of demonstrations during 2017, mobilizing tens of thousands of people across Russia—notably, large numbers of young people. Over a thousand people were detained at a March protest in Moscow, while at least nine people were charged with attacking the police during simultaneous protests in other cities. By year's end, eight of the nine were convicted and handed sentences ranging from roughly one-and-a-half to three-and-a-half years in prison.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 0 / 4

The government continued its relentless campaign against nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in 2017. One way authorities impede their activities is by requiring groups

that receive foreign funding and which are deemed to engage in political activity to register as “foreign agents.” This designation, which is interpreted by much of the Russian public as denoting a foreign spying operation, mandates onerous registration requirements, mandates that groups tag their material with a “foreign agents” label, and generally makes it extremely difficult for them to pursue their objectives. In 2017, authorities removed the “foreign agent” designation from a number of groups that stopped accepting funding from abroad after being deemed as such.

Separately, at year’s end, there were 11 groups that had been deemed “undesirable organizations” on grounds that they threaten national security; the designation gives authorities power to issue a range of sanctions against such groups. In April, the general prosecutor’s office ruled Open Russia, an online foundation launched by opposition figure Mikhail Khodorkovsky, an undesirable organization. Additionally, the state telecommunications agency, Roskomnadzor, forbid Russian media from including any hyperlinks to material posted by these organizations. Since early 2016, it has filed charges against 11 organizations that have linked to material on the undesirable organizations’ websites.

Legal harassment also hinders groups’ activities. Olga Romanova, head of Jailed Russia, which provides assistance inmates and their families, fled the country in 2017 after police raided her office and later filed embezzlement charges against her.

Like journalists, activists also risk being the targets of violence. In December, Andrey Rudomakha, head of the Environmental Watch of the North Caucasus, suffered severe injuries at the hands of unknown assailants, who beat him after he had filmed an allegedly illegal construction project on the Black Sea coast, which the group suspected of being constructed for the use of a senior government official.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

While trade union rights are legally protected, they are limited in practice. Strikes and worker protests have occurred in prominent industries, such as automobile manufacturing, but antiunion discrimination and reprisals for strikes are not uncommon, and employers often ignore collective-bargaining rights. The largest labor federation works in close cooperation with the Kremlin, though independent unions are active in some industrial sectors and regions.

F. RULE OF LAW: 2 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4

The judiciary lacks independence from the executive branch, and career advancement is effectively tied to compliance with Kremlin preferences. In April 2016, a Russian court ruling on a dispute over prisoners’ voting rights was the first to use a 2015 law that allows the Russian judiciary to reject international court decisions; in this case, the international ruling had come from the ECHR.

In November 2016, Putin withdrew Russia from the International Criminal Court (ICC) after the body issued a report of preliminary findings calling the fighting in Crimea and eastern Ukraine an “international armed conflict” between Ukraine and Russia.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

Russian courts are subordinate to the political authorities, and access to due process is not guaranteed, particularly for those who oppose or are perceived as threatening to authorities. In December 2017, a Moscow court sentenced former economy minister Alexey Ulyukayev to prison for eight years for allegedly trying to solicit a \$2 million bribe from Igor Sechin, the head of the state-owned oil company, Rosneft. The case was widely seen

as a way for Sechin to remove Ulyukayev, who, in contrast with Sechin, was among figures advocating for less state involvement in Russia's economy, as well as to send a warning to other economic liberals not to interfere with his activities. Sechin ignored court summons to testify in the trial on several occasions, despite being central to the alleged crime.

In June, a court in Moscow found Natalya Sharina, the former director of Moscow's Ukrainian Literature Library, guilty of inciting hatred and embezzlement, and issued a four-year suspended sentence against her. The charges were based on the finding that her library contained books considered extremist by Russian law, including works by Ukrainian ultranationalist Dmitry Korchinskiy. The human rights group Memorial considers her a political prisoner because she was under house arrest during the trial, while Amnesty International argued that the case reflected "utter contempt for the rule of law."

In 2017, the Constitutional Court rejected a decision by the ECHR ordering Russia to pay \$1.9 billion to the owners of the Yukos oil company, the assets of which were expropriated in the 2000s. The Russian court, invoking the relevant 2015 legislation, said the ECHR decision violated Russian law.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 0 / 4

Use of excessive force by police is widespread, and rights groups have reported that law enforcement agents who carry out such abuses have consciously employed electric shocks, suffocation, and the stretching of a detainee's body, so that the abuse is less likely to leave visible wounds. Prisons are overcrowded and unsanitary, and inmates lack access to health care and are subject to abuse by guards.

Parts of the country, especially the North Caucasus area, suffer from high levels of violence; victims include officials, insurgents, and civilians. In Chechnya, Kadyrov imposes tight control over his republic with the support of a militia and a flow of generous subsidies from Moscow. In December 2017, the U.S. government imposed sanctions on Kadyrov, saying he was "responsible for extrajudicial killing, torture, or other gross violations of internationally recognized human rights" against anticorruption and rights activists, among others.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 0 / 4

Immigrants and ethnic minorities—particularly those who appear to be from the Caucasus or Central Asia—face governmental and societal discrimination and harassment.

LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people remain subject to considerable discrimination. In April, *Novaya Gazeta* published reports that police in Chechnya had detained and tortured dozens of men suspected of being gay. The federal authorities did not take significant action in response to the allegations. In June, the ECHR ruled that a 2013 federal law that effectively made it illegal to talk about homosexuality in public was discriminatory and violated freedom of expression.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 7 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 2 / 4

The government places some restrictions on freedoms of movement and residence. Adults must carry internal passports while traveling and to obtain many government services. Some regional authorities impose registration rules that limit the right of citizens to choose their place of residence, typically targeting ethnic minorities and migrants from the

Caucasus and Central Asia. More than four million employees tied to the military and security services were banned from traveling abroad under rules issued during 2014.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 1 / 4

Power and property are intimately connected, with high office often making it possible to gain access to vast property holdings. State takeovers of key industries and large tax penalties imposed on select companies have illustrated the precarious nature of property rights in the country, especially when political interests are involved.

The city of Moscow is currently engaged in a redevelopment project in which it is forcing approximately one million residents to relocate from some five-story buildings into taller more modern ones.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Domestic violence is a problem, but receives little attention from the authorities. In February 2017, Putin signed a law that decriminalized violent acts that only caused pain, and did not result in permanent physical harm.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Migrant workers are often exposed to exploitative labor conditions. Both Russians facing economic hardship and migrants to Russia from other countries risk becoming subject to sex and labor trafficking.

Rwanda

Population: 11,900,000

Capital: Kigali

Political Rights Rating: 6

Civil Liberties Rating: 6

Freedom Rating: 6.0

Freedom Status: Not Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: The Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), led by President Paul Kagame, has ruled the country since 1994, when it ousted forces responsible for that year's genocide and ended a civil war. While the regime has maintained peace and economic growth, it has also suppressed political dissent through pervasive surveillance, intimidation, and suspected assassinations.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Kagame was credited with nearly 99 percent of the vote in the August presidential election, securing a third term amid allegations of fraud and intimidation.
- In September, outspoken opposition leader Diane Rwigara and members of her family were arrested and held on dubious charges of forgery and inciting insurrection.

- Other members of banned opposition groups reportedly faced arbitrary arrests, beatings, politicized prosecutions, and enforced disappearances during the year.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 8 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 2 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

Rwanda's 2003 constitution grants broad powers to the president, who has the authority to appoint the prime minister and dissolve the bicameral Parliament. Amendments passed in 2015 retained a two-term limit for the presidency and shortened the terms from seven to five years. The changes also explicitly stated, however, that the current president—Paul Kagame—was eligible for one additional seven-year term, after which he may run for two of the new five-year terms, which would extend Kagame's rule until 2034.

Kagame easily won the August 2017 presidential election, taking 98.8 percent of the vote, according to official results. Frank Habineza of the Democratic Green Party of Rwanda (DGPR) and the independent Philippe Mpayimana split the remainder. The electoral process was marred by numerous irregularities, including political intimidation, unfair registration practices, and alleged fraud during the balloting itself.

The National Electoral Commission (NEC) blocked the candidacies of other would-be challengers, including independent and Kagame critic Diane Rwigara, who was barred from running in July on the grounds that some of the required signatures she had collected were invalid. She claimed that her followers were harassed and jailed as they attempted to gather signatures. The government also orchestrated a campaign of media smears and intimidation against Rwigara, and in September she was arrested along with her mother and sister.

Local authorities impeded the electoral campaigns of opposition presidential candidates, and some citizens were coerced into attending RPF rallies and voting for Kagame. Rwandans were also made to attend "solidarity" camps and listen to RPF propaganda, while local authorities tasked traditional leaders with persuading their communities to vote for Kagame. Access to the media and the content of electoral coverage were both skewed in favor of the RPF.

On election day, observers reported ballot stuffing, poll workers showing favoritism toward the ruling party, and denial of access to the vote-counting process, among other violations. Ballot secrecy was not always respected.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4

The 26-seat Senate, the upper house, consists of 12 members elected by regional councils, 8 appointed by the president, 4 chosen by a forum of political parties, and 2 elected representatives of universities, all serving eight-year terms. The 80-seat Chamber of Deputies, the lower house, includes 53 directly elected members, 24 women chosen by local councils, 2 members from the National Youth Council, and 1 member from the Federation of Associations of the Disabled, all serving five-year terms.

The RPF dominated the most recent elections for the Chamber of Deputies in 2013, capturing 41 of the 53 elected seats. Two allied parties, the Social Democratic Party and the Liberal Party, won 7 and 5 seats, respectively. As with other elections in recent years, the government's repression of genuine opposition parties and strict control of the media helped to ensure victory for the RPF.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 1 / 4

The electoral laws are not impartially implemented by the NEC, whose members are proposed by the government and appointed by the RFP-dominated Senate. Elections in Rwanda routinely feature unfair barriers to registration, campaigning, poll monitoring, and media access for opposition parties and candidates, among other problems.

The 2015 constitutional amendments were adopted through a flawed petition and referendum process. Rights groups and news organizations cited reports that some signatures on the petition were not given voluntarily. The details of the amendments were not widely distributed or discussed ahead of the December 2015 referendum, in which 98 percent of voters signaled their approval, according to the NEC. The government limited the political activities of groups opposed to the amendments, and the referendum was not monitored by any independent international observer groups.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 1 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 0 / 4**

The government-controlled Rwanda Governance Board (RGB) is responsible for registering political parties. In practice it can deny registration at its discretion without proper justification. The government has a long history of repressing its political opponents. For example, the leader of the unregistered opposition party United Democratic Forces–Inkingi (FDU-Inkingi), Victoire Ingabire, has been behind bars since 2010, the year she challenged Kagame in a presidential election. She is serving a 15-year prison sentence for allegedly engaging in terrorist activities, a charge that was widely seen as politically motivated.

In 2017, the authorities targeted Rwigara, who sought to run against Kagame in that year's election. Days after she announced her candidacy in May, photos that supposedly depicted her nude, and which she said were fabricated, were published on social media. After the election, in late August, police harassed and interrogated Rwigara and members of her family, preventing them from leaving their home. Finally, in September, Rwigara was arrested along with her mother and sister for alleged offenses that included forgery of signatures to support her candidacy, tax evasion, and inciting insurrection. As part of a broader wave of postelection repression that month, members of the FDU-Inkingi and another unregistered opposition group, the Democratic Pact of the Imanzi People (PDP Imanzi), were reportedly subjected to arbitrary arrest, enforced disappearance, and physical abuse.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 0 / 4

The RPF has ruled Rwanda without interruption since 1994, banning and repressing any opposition group that could mount a serious challenge to its leadership. All registered parties currently belong to the National Consultative Forum for Political Organizations, which is meant to promote political consensus. No genuine opposition parties hold seats in Parliament or any other position of authority.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 0 / 4

Both voters and candidates face significant intimidation aimed at controlling their political choices. Even Rwandans living outside the country have been threatened, attacked,

forcibly disappeared, or killed, apparently in response to their public or suspected opposition to the regime.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 1 / 4

Although the constitution calls on the president to ensure “representation of historically marginalized communities” in the Senate through his appointees, asserting one’s ethnic identity in politics is banned, meaning the level of representation is unclear. The prohibition on discussion of ethnicity makes it nearly impossible for disadvantaged groups, including the indigenous Twa, to organize independently and advocate for their interests.

The 2003 constitution requires women to occupy at least 30 percent of the seats in each chamber of Parliament. They currently hold 10 of the 26 Senate seats and 49 of the 80 seats in the Chamber of Deputies, but women have little practical ability to engage in politics outside the RPF structure.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 5 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 1 / 4

Government policy is largely set and implemented by the executive, with the security and intelligence services playing a powerful role. Parliament generally lacks independence, merely endorsing presidential initiatives.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

The government takes some measures to limit corruption, including regular firings and prosecutions of low-level officials suspected of malfeasance. In February 2017, for example, the police dismissed 200 officers who had been implicated in corruption. However, graft remains a problem, and few independent organizations or media outlets are able to investigate or report on corruption issues due to fear of government reprisals.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

While a 2013 law provides for public access to government information, implementation has been weak. Data published on Sobanukirwa, a website created by the government to ease the process of requesting access to documents, suggest that only a small fraction of requests result in positive and timely responses.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 15 / 60 (-1)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 4 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 0 / 4

The government imposes legal restrictions and informal controls on freedom of the press, and most media outlets practice self-censorship. The few journalists in the country who engage in independent reporting are subject to criminal charges and intimidation. In 2016 and 2017, press activist Robert Mugabe, whose reporting has been critical of the government, was harassed and interrogated by the police, who reportedly accused him of treason and undermining the government. In September 2017, a group of journalists were harassed by security forces at Diane Rwigara’s home.

Many Rwandan journalists have fled the country and work in exile. Due in part to this phenomenon, the government has increasingly blocked access to news services and websites based abroad. The British Broadcasting Corporation’s Kinyarwanda-language service has been suspended in the country since 2014.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4

Religious freedom is generally respected. Relations between religious leaders and the government are sometimes tense, in part because of the involvement of clergy in the 1994 genocide. Jehovah's Witnesses face arrest for refusing to participate in security duties or oath-taking involving the national flag.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 1 / 4

The government restricts academic freedom by enforcing official views on the genocide and other sensitive topics. Scholars and students are subject to suspension for "divisionism" and engage in self-censorship to avoid such penalties.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 0 / 4

The space for free private discussion is limited in part by indications that the government monitors personal communications. Social media are widely believed to be monitored, and the law allows for government hacking of telecommunications networks. The authorities reportedly use informants to infiltrate civil society, further discouraging citizens from expressing dissent.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 2 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 0 / 4

Although the constitution guarantees freedom of assembly, this right is limited in practice. Fear of arrest serves as a deterrent to protests, and gatherings are sometimes disrupted even when organizers obtain official authorization.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 1 / 4

Registration and reporting requirements for both domestic and foreign nongovernmental organizations are onerous, and activities that the government defines as divisive are prohibited. Many organizations receive funds from the RGB, which challenges their independence. Several organizations have been banned in recent years, leading others to self-censor. The government has been accused of employing infiltration tactics against human rights organizations.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 1 / 4

The constitution provides for the rights to form trade unions, engage in collective bargaining, and strike, but free collective bargaining and strikes are limited by binding arbitration rules and rare in practice. Public workers and employees in broadly defined "essential services" are generally not allowed to strike. Enforcement of rules against antiunion discrimination is weak. The country's largest union confederation has close ties to the RPF, and the government allegedly interferes in union elections.

F. RULE OF LAW: 2 / 16 (-1)

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 0 / 4

The Rwandan judiciary lacks independence from the executive. Top judicial officials are appointed by the president and confirmed by the RPF-dominated Senate. Judges rarely rule against the government in politically sensitive cases.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4 (-1)

The police and military regularly engage in arbitrary arrests and detentions, targeting opposition figures and dissidents as well as homeless people, street vendors, and suspected petty criminals. This activity reportedly intensified ahead of the 2017 elections.

In October, Human Rights Watch (HRW) released a report detailing a system of secret unlawful detention at military facilities for suspected members of armed rebel groups or exiled opposition factions. Such detainees are allegedly denied basic due process rights, and many who are later brought to trial are convicted based on coerced confessions.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 due to further evidence of the authorities' use of arbitrary arrests and detentions as well as convictions based on coerced confessions.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 0 / 4

Both ordinary criminal suspects and political detainees are routinely subjected to torture and other ill-treatment in custody. An HRW report released in July 2017 documented more than three dozen extrajudicial executions of suspected criminals by security personnel over the previous year.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

Equal treatment for all citizens under the law is guaranteed, and there are legal protections against discrimination. However, the Tutsi minority group is often accused of receiving preferential treatment for high-ranking jobs and university scholarships under the pretext of an affirmative action program for "genocide survivors." Members of the Hutu majority often face unofficial discrimination when seeking public employment or scholarships. The indigenous Twa minority continues to suffer from de facto disadvantages in education, employment, and health care.

While women enjoy broad legal equality and have a significant presence in the economy as workers and business owners, gender-based discrimination persists in practice. Same-sex sexual activity is not criminalized in Rwanda, though social stigma still exists for LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people. No laws specifically provide protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 7 / 16**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 2 / 4**

An easily attainable national identity card is required to move within the country. However, all government officials must receive approval from the president or prime minister's office before traveling for personal or professional reasons; some current and former security officials have been arrested for unauthorized travel. Members of opposition groups have also reported restrictions on foreign travel or reentry to Rwanda.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

While the government is generally supportive of economic growth through private business activity, it has been criticized for seizing land for infrastructure and development projects without proper compensation, and for imposing agricultural and land-consolidation policies without adequate input from farmers.

The law grants the same property and inheritance rights to men and women, though women are not always able to assert their rights in practice.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

The law generally grants equal rights to men and women regarding marriage and divorce, but informal marriages under customary law, including polygamous unions, lack such protections. The penalties for spousal rape are much lighter than for other forms of rape. Domestic violence remains widespread and seldom reported despite government programs to combat it.

Abortion is a criminal offense that can draw significant prison terms. Legal abortions require a court order certifying that the pregnancy is the result of rape, incest, or forced marriage; cases justified by medical necessity require agreement by at least two doctors to avoid criminal liability. At year's end the government was considering legal amendments that would ease the requirement for a court order.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

Regulations governing wage levels and conditions of work in the formal sector are poorly enforced. Rwandan children are trafficked internally for domestic service under abusive conditions, or for commercial sex work. Many children work informally in the agricultural sector. Young Congolese and Burundian refugees are vulnerable to sexual exploitation and coerced recruitment into armed groups linked to Rwandan security forces.

Samoa

Population: 200,000

Capital: Apia

Political Rights Rating: 2

Civil Liberties Rating: 2

Freedom Rating: 2.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Samoa has a largely democratic political system with regular elections, though the same political party has been in government for decades, and only traditional heads of families can run as candidates. The judiciary is independent, and civil liberties are generally respected.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In July, the parliament elected Tuimalealiifano Vaaletoa Sualauvi II to serve a five-year term as the ceremonial head of state.
- The 72-year-old prime minister, Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, spent more than two weeks in New Zealand for medical treatment in October, spurring discussion about succession plans.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 30 / 40**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 9 / 12****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4**

The parliament elects a ceremonial head of state to serve five-year terms; there are no term limits. By custom rather than constitutional requirement, the position is given to one of the country's four paramount chiefs. In July 2017, the parliament elected Tuimalealiifano Vaaletoa Sualauvi II as head of state.

The head of government is the prime minister, who requires the parliament's support. Prime Minister Tuilaepa of the Human Rights Protection Party (HRPP) has been in office since 1998, having been reelected most recently in 2016. His medical visit to New Zealand for much of October 2017 reportedly led some HRPP figures to begin quietly jockeying for position as possible successors.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

The Legislative Assembly, or Fono, consists of 47 members elected in traditional village-based constituencies and 2 members elected by voters in "urban" constituencies—including citizens of mixed or non-Samoan heritage who lack village ties. Additional members can be added from among the unsuccessful candidates with the most votes in order to meet a minimum 10 percent quota of women members. All lawmakers serve five-year terms.

In the 2016 parliamentary elections, the HRPP won 35 of the 50 seats; one seat was added to meet the gender quota. Independents took 13 and the opposition Tautua Samoa Party (TSP) was left with just two. After the elections, 12 of the independents joined the HRPP, and the 13th joined the opposition.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4

The constitutional and legal framework for elections is largely democratic and fairly implemented. However, only citizens with *matai* status (chiefs or family heads) are allowed to stand as candidates. There are some 17,000 *matai*, but only about 10 percent are women. A 2015 amendment to the Electoral Act replaced two at-large parliament seats representing voters of non-Samoan heritage with two "urban" constituencies with defined boundaries, though they still overlapped with territorial constituencies and pertained to voters who either lacked or chose not to register according to traditional village ties.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 12 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 3 / 4**

There are no major constraints on the formation and operation of political parties, but parties must win a minimum of eight seats to qualify for formal recognition within the legislature. The TSP, which fell from 13 seats to just three after the 2016 elections, lost this status, leading opposition members to criticize the rule for producing a "one-party state."

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 3 / 4

The ruling HRPP has been in power without interruption since the 1980s, raising concerns about whether this is due to the party's popularity or features of the electoral system that may put the opposition at a disadvantage.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 3 / 4

While voters and candidates are largely free from undue interference with their political choices, traditional village councils consisting of local leaders with *matai* titles exercise considerable influence through candidate endorsements. Those who use the electoral laws to challenge the councils' preferred candidates in court have sometimes faced customary penalties such as banishment.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

Women and ethnic minorities have full voting rights, but the fact that candidates must be *matai* title holders means few women can run for office. The 2016 elections marked the first application of the gender quota ensuring that at least five seats in the parliament are held by women. If fewer than that number are elected in normal constituency contests, the unsuccessful women candidates with the most votes are awarded additional seats. One extra seat was consequently added to the 2016 parliament. Few women participate in village council meetings.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 9 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 3 / 4

The prime minister and cabinet determine and implement government policies without improper interference by outside groups, but the weak opposition presence in the parliament undermines its role as a check on the executive, and the democratic credentials of the government are tarnished somewhat by restrictive features of the electoral system.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4

Independent entities including the ombudsman's office, the Public Service Commission, and law enforcement agencies pursue allegations of corruption by public officials. However, corruption remains a problem and a cause of public discontent, and the government has at times resisted calls for a stronger response. In August 2017, the minister of agriculture, forestry, and fisheries resigned to face corruption charges related to his role as a director for a juice company.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 3 / 4

The government generally operates with transparency and received praise from the International Monetary Fund in 2017 for its efforts to make statistical data more accessible online. The effectiveness of the state auditing system was the subject of public debate during the year. The country lacks a freedom of information law, though a legal reform commission was reportedly considering such a measure.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 50 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 14 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4

While freedom of the press is generally respected, politicians and other powerful actors have used libel or defamation suits to respond to remarks or stories about them. In December 2017, the parliament passed legislation that reintroduced criminal libel, which had been abolished in 2013. Also during the year, police were accused of infringing on press freedom by executing a search warrant at a newspaper over a harassment complaint.

There are several public and privately owned print and broadcast news outlets in operation, and internet access has expanded rapidly in recent years.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4

Freedom of religion is mostly respected in practice. However, in June 2017 the parliament passed constitutional amendments that declared the country to be a “Christian nation,” and there is strong societal pressure at the village level—including from village councils—to participate in the activities of the main local church.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

There are no significant restrictions on academic freedom.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

There are no serious constraints on private discussion or the expression of personal views.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 10 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4

Freedom of assembly is protected by law and respected in practice.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 3 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations, including human rights groups, operate freely.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

Workers have the right to form and join trade unions, bargain collectively, and strike. Multiple unions exist, representing both public and private-sector employees.

F. RULE OF LAW: 14 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 4 / 4

The judiciary is independent. The head of state, on the recommendation of the prime minister, appoints the chief justice. Other Supreme Court judges are appointed by the Judicial Service Commission, which is chaired by the chief justice and includes the attorney general and a Justice Ministry appointee. Judges typically serve until they reach retirement age and cannot be removed arbitrarily.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 3 / 4

The authorities generally observe due process safeguards against arbitrary arrest and detention, and the courts provide defendants with the conditions necessary for a fair trial. However, village councils settle many disputes, and their adherence to due process standards

varies. They have the authority to impose penalties including fines and banishment, though council decisions can be appealed in the court system.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 4 / 4

Violent crime rates are relatively low. Police officers are occasionally accused of physical abuse, and prison conditions are poor. A new prison under construction during 2017 was expected to relieve overcrowding and other problems.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on descent, sex, religion, and other categories, but in practice women face some discrimination in employment and other aspects of life. Although the law offers protections against employment discrimination and hate crimes based on sexual orientation, same-sex sexual activity remains a criminal offense. Ethnic Chinese residents at times encounter societal bias and restrictions on the location of their businesses.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 12 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4

While there are few constraints on freedom of movement, village councils still occasionally banish individuals from their communities as a penalty for serious violations of their bylaws.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 3 / 4

Private business activity is encouraged, and property rights are generally protected, though roughly 80 percent of the country's land is communally owned, meaning it is overseen by *matai* title holders and other village leaders. The rest consists of freehold and state-owned land.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

While personal social freedoms are generally not restricted by law, domestic violence against women and children is a serious problem. The Crimes Act of 2013 made spousal rape a crime, and the Family Safety Act of 2013 empowers the police, public health officials, and educators to assist victims of domestic violence. Nevertheless, many victims do not report abuse due to strong social biases and fear of reprisal.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

Individuals generally enjoy equality of opportunity and fair working conditions. However, most adults engage in subsistence agriculture, and local custom obliges residents to perform some labor on behalf of the community; those who fail to do so can be compelled.

San Marino

Population: 30,000

Capital: San Marino

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 1

Freedom Rating: 1.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: San Marino is a parliamentary democracy in which political rights and civil liberties are generally upheld. Corruption is a problem, and while investigative journalists are active, heavy fines for defamation can encourage self-censorship. Women are underrepresented in politics.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In March, a popular initiative to legalize abortion triggered strong divisions between the newly elected center-left government and the conservative opposition, which draws support from Catholic movements.
- In June, a number of high-ranking former politicians were sentenced after being convicted of money laundering and other corruption charges, as part of the so-called Conto-Mazzini case.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 38 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

Executive power rests with the 10-member State Congress (cabinet), which is accountable to parliament and is headed by two captains regent. As the joint heads of state, the captains are elected every six months by members of the unicameral legislature, the Great and General Council, from among its own members. Although there is no official prime minister, the secretary of state for foreign and political affairs is regarded as the head of government; Nicola Renzi was elected to the post in 2016.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The 60 members of the unicameral Great and General Council are elected every five years. The November 2016 elections were considered credible and free, and their results were accepted by stakeholders and the public. After two rounds of elections, the center-left Adesso.sm coalition finished first with 35 seats, and unseated the ruling San Marino First coalition, which took the remaining 25 seats.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

The electoral laws provide a sound basis for the organization of free and fair elections. However, in 2016, the Council of Europe's Group of States against Corruption (GRECO)

urged San Marino to adopt legislation on the financing of political parties, noting that the current funding rules are insufficiently transparent.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 15 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4

Parties are free to form and operate in San Marino, and a great number of them contest elections. Since 2008, most parties are part of larger electoral coalitions.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

There are no restrictions preventing the opposition from increasing support through elections. Multiple opposition parties are represented in the Great and General Council.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

There are no powerful groups without democratic legitimacy that influence or limit people's political choices.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

About 18 percent of the population consists of noncitizens who do not have political rights. Under San Marino's strict naturalization criteria, one must live in the country for over 30 years to obtain citizenship.

Women comprised 55 percent of eligible voters in the 2016 polls, but are underrepresented in the Great and General Council, where they hold 23 percent of seats, and in politics generally. An Organization for Co-operation and Security in Europe (OSCE) assessment mission deployed ahead of the 2016 polls noted that gender quotas on candidate lists were undercut by the country's preferential voting system. Women are better represented in the country's Electoral Council and in polling administration.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 11 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4

The government and parliament exercise their powers without undue influence from unelected actors.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4

In response to a number of scandals involving high-ranking officials, San Marino has recently launched a series of programs to combat corruption and money laundering. In its July 2016 progress report, GRECO noted that significant progress has been made regarding the criminalization of corruption offences in the public sector.

In June 2017, a large number of former politicians were convicted for their involvement in bribery, corruption, money laundering, and vote buying. In this so-called Conto-Mazzini case, multiple former captains regent and ministers received prison sentences ranging from two to eight years, meaning that a large part of the former political elite will be imprisoned.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 4 / 4

Laws providing for the accessibility of government information are in place, and the government generally respected those laws.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 59 / 60**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 15 / 16****D1. Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4**

Freedom of speech and the press are generally upheld. Local media are pluralistic, and journalists investigate key issues including financial crimes. However, convictions under San Marino's strict defamation laws can carry hundreds of thousands of euros in damages, and reportedly prompt self-censorship among journalists.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Religious freedom is broadly upheld in San Marino. Religious discrimination is prohibited by law. There is no state religion, although Roman Catholicism is dominant, and Catholic religious instruction is offered in schools (though it is not mandatory).

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is respected.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

Freedom of expression is legally safeguarded, and people are free to express their views on politics and other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 12 / 12**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4**

Freedom of assembly is upheld in practice. Several demonstrations against an initiative by the new government to legalize abortion took place in 2017.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) may operate without restrictions, and several human rights groups are active in the country.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

Workers are free to strike, organize in trade unions, and bargain collectively, unless they work in military occupations. Approximately half of the workforce is unionized. The law prohibits antiunion discrimination and provides avenues for recourse for workers penalized for labor activity.

F. RULE OF LAW: 16 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 4 / 4**

The judiciary is independent. Lower court judges are required to be noncitizens to ensure impartiality; most are Italian nationals. The highest court is the Council of Twelve, a group of judges chosen for six-year terms from among the members of the Great and General Council.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 4 / 4

Due process rights are generally upheld. Arbitrary arrests and detentions are prohibited by law, and the government respected these laws in practice.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 4 / 4

Civilian authorities maintain effective control over the police and security forces. There is one prison in San Marino and the inmate population is small. Law enforcement agents generally operate with professionalism.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 4 / 4

The law prohibits the publication of ideas related to racial or ethnic superiority and discrimination.

Women face societal discrimination that affects their access to employment and economic opportunity. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has urged San Marino to strengthen its legal framework against discrimination, in particular gender discrimination.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 16 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4

There are no restrictions on the freedom of movement, and San Marino residents may freely choose their place of residence, employment, and education.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 4 / 4

The rights to own property and establish business are upheld.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 4 / 4

Personal freedoms are generally safeguarded in San Marino. However, there is no legal recognition of same-sex couples. In 2014, the government rejected a proposal to fully recognize the rights of same-sex couples who were legally married abroad.

Women are given legal protections from violence and spousal abuse. A popular 2017 initiative to legalize abortion met with fierce resistance.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 4 / 4

San Marino has no national minimum wage, though some sectors have set their own. The government generally upholds labor protections for workers, and provides assistance to low-income individuals. The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights in 2015 called on San Marino to continue with efforts to better protect foreign women employed as caregivers or domestic workers.

São Tomé and Príncipe

Population: 200,000

Capital: São Tomé

Political Rights Rating: 2

Civil Liberties Rating: 2

Freedom Rating: 2.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: São Tomé and Príncipe holds regular, competitive national elections and has undergone multiple transfers of power between rival parties. Civil liberties are generally respected, but poverty and corruption have weakened some institutions and contributed to dysfunction in the justice system. The opposition has accused the ruling party of using its control over the presidency and a strong parliamentary majority to consolidate power.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- China formally opened its embassy in the country in April, after São Tomé switched its diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to China in December 2016. Beijing promised an increase in development aid and investment.
- In August, President Evaristo Carvalho announced that elections for municipalities and for the regional government of Príncipe, which should have taken place in 2017, would be postponed to 2018 due to a lack of funds.
- Also in August, the parliament adopted legislation that reorganized the electoral commission over the objections of the opposition, which argued that it could enable the ruling party to manipulate future balloting.
- In December, the president promulgated legislation to create a new Constitutional Court despite a pending review of the measure by the Supreme Court, which attempted to block the promulgation. The dispute was unresolved at year's end.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 34 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 11 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The president is directly elected for up to two consecutive five-year terms. The prime minister, who holds most day-to-day executive authority, is appointed by the president based on the results of legislative elections. Executive elections are typically considered free and fair.

In the July 2016 presidential election, Carvalho, a former prime minister and member of the ruling Independent Democratic Action (ADI) party, led the first round with just under 50 percent of the vote; he was initially credited with over 50 percent, but the National Electoral Commission (CEN) revised the total downward, citing late results from certain areas. Carvalho's leading opponent, incumbent president and independent Manuel Pinto da Costa, was credited with nearly 25 percent, but he boycotted the August runoff vote, alleging irregularities in the first round. Carvalho was consequently elected unopposed. Despite this dispute, African Union observers generally praised the conduct of the election.

Patrice Trovoada has served as prime minister since 2014, when he was appointed following ADI's victory in that year's legislative elections.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

Members of the unicameral, 55-seat National Assembly are elected by popular vote to four-year terms. In the 2014 elections, ADI secured 33 seats, followed by the Movement for the Liberation of São Tomé and Príncipe–Social Democratic Party (MLSTP-PSD) with 16 seats, the Democratic Convergence Party–Reflection Group (PCD-GR) with 5, and the Union of Democrats for Citizenship and Development (UDD) with 1. International observers deemed the elections largely free and fair.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4

The electoral laws and framework are generally fair, but implementation suffers from a lack of resources and staff. Elections at the municipal level and in the autonomous region of Príncipe, last held in 2014, were due in 2017, but the president announced in August that they would be postponed to 2018, citing insufficient funds. The elections had been similarly postponed from 2013 to 2014.

Also in August, the ADI parliamentary majority adopted legislation that reorganized the CEN. While the previous commissions had nine members, including representatives of all parliamentary parties, serving four-year terms, the new body would have three members, with two nominated by the largest party and one by the second-largest party, serving seven-year terms. The opposition criticized the changes, saying they could allow the ADI to manipulate future elections.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 14 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4

The multiparty system features free and vigorous competition between ADI, MLSTP-PSD, PCD-GR, and a variety of other parties.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

Pinto da Costa and the MLSTP-PSD ruled São Tomé and Príncipe as a one-party state from independence in 1975 until 1991. Since then there have been multiple democratic transfers of power between rival parties. Individual governments have tended to be short-lived, partly due to the country's system of proportional representation, which encourages coalition or minority governments.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 3 / 4

Voters and politicians are generally free from undue interference with their decisions. The practice of vote buying by political parties and candidates remains a problem, but it is reported to be waning over time and was never considered a decisive factor in elections. While the country experienced military coups in 1995 and 2003, normal civilian rule was swiftly restored in both cases.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

Women and minority groups enjoy full political rights, though societal discrimination inhibits women's participation to some degree. Maria das Neves of the MLSTP-PSD, the country's first woman prime minister from 2002 to 2004, placed third in the 2016 presidential election. Women won 10 seats in the 2014 parliamentary elections.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 9 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4**

The prime minister and cabinet determine the policies of the government, under the supervision of the National Assembly and the president. They are able to implement laws and policies without improper interference from unelected entities.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

Corruption is a major problem. Oversight mechanisms, the opposition, and the media have repeatedly uncovered evidence of official malfeasance, sometimes resulting in dismissals and other repercussions, but on the whole anticorruption laws are poorly enforced.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 3 / 4

The government generally does not restrict access to information about its operations, and the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative has reported that authorities are making progress on implementing its recommendations as the country engages in offshore oil exploration. However, there is no specific law guaranteeing public access to government information, and officials rarely disclose their assets and income.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 48 / 60 (+1)**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 15 / 16****D1. Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4**

Freedom of the press is constitutionally guaranteed and largely respected in practice. Public media convey opposition views and grant some access to opposition leaders, but only a handful of private media outlets are available, and a degree of self-censorship is reported at both public and private outlets. There are no restrictions on online media, though the sector is poorly developed. Less than a third of the population has internet access.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

The constitution provides for freedom of religion. Religious groups are required to register with the Justice Ministry and can face penalties for failure to do so, but the process is not reported to be biased or restrictive.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

The constitution prohibits political indoctrination in education, and academic freedom is generally respected in practice.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

There are no restrictions on individuals' freedom of expression, which is guaranteed by the constitution. The government is not known to engage in improper surveillance of personal communications or monitoring of online content.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 10 / 12**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4**

The constitution protects freedom of assembly, which the government generally observes in practice. However, organizers are obliged to give authorities two days' notice before public gatherings.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights and governance-related work? 3 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are free to operate, and they often work with the government to address issues such as child labor and provide basic services. Nevertheless, the sector is relatively small, and NGO independence and activities are limited by a lack of funding.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

Workers have the legal rights to organize, strike, and bargain collectively, and these are mostly respected, though there are no provisions to regulate bargaining or punish antiunion practices by employers. Most union negotiations are conducted with the government, which remains the country's dominant formal-sector employer. Workers in the judicial system mounted a strike from March to June 2017, ending the action after they secured an agreement on pay and working conditions.

F. RULE OF LAW: 12 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 3 / 4**

The constitution provides for an independent judiciary, and the courts are relatively autonomous in practice, but they are susceptible to political influence and corruption. The system is also understaffed and underfunded.

In December 2017, the president promulgated legislation adopted in August that would create a separate Constitutional Court, as called for in the constitution. It would have ultimate authority over election results, and its members would be appointed by a simple parliamentary majority if an initial vote failed to reach a two-thirds majority. Opposition parties criticized the measure as undemocratic, noting that it had been promulgated while still under review by the Supreme Court, which has performed constitutional review functions in the absence of a separate tribunal. The Supreme Court ruled that the promulgation was null pending its verdict on the law, but the president claimed that the court could no longer act in its former capacity under the new legislation. The dispute had yet to be resolved at year's end.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 3 / 4

Law enforcement authorities generally observe legal safeguards against arbitrary arrest and detention as well as guarantees for a fair trial, but police corruption is a problem, and there were reports in 2017 that indigent defendants were denied access to a lawyer. The country's bar association said in October that the state had failed to provide funding for such defense attorneys.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 3 / 4

Police are sometimes accused of beating suspects during arrest, and prisons suffer from overcrowding and other harsh conditions. The country is relatively free of major violence or unrest. However, Rwandan troops arrived in May 2017 with a mission to train and advise local security forces amid growing ties between the two countries, and the opposition alleged that their presence was part of the government's antidemocratic agenda.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

Equal treatment is guaranteed by law, but a degree of societal discrimination against women persists, hampering their access to economic and educational opportunities. Although same-sex sexual activity is not criminalized, discrimination against LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people is sometimes reported, and the law does not specifically address such bias.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 11 / 16 (+1)**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4 (+1)**

The constitution establishes the freedom of internal movement, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation. The government has generally respected these rights.

Score Change: The score improved from 3 to 4 because there have been no recent reports of restrictions on the constitutional right to travel and relocate within the country or abroad.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 3 / 4

The legal framework and government policies are generally supportive of property rights and private business activity, though bureaucratic obstacles and corruption pose challenges in practice.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

There are few formal restrictions on personal social freedoms. However, domestic violence is reportedly common and rarely prosecuted. The minimum age for marriage with parental consent is 14 for girls and 16 for boys, as opposed to 18 without parental consent for both. Roughly a third of girls marry before age 18.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Forced labor is prohibited and child labor is restricted by law. There are also basic legal protections against exploitative or dangerous working conditions. However, the government lacks the capacity to enforce these rules effectively, particularly in the informal agricultural sector.

The economy depends in large part on foreign aid, and the government has sought assistance from a variety of sources. São Tomé and Príncipe switched its diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to China in late 2016 amid pledges of increased aid and investment from Beijing, and a Chinese embassy was opened in April 2017.

Saudi Arabia

Population: 31,700,000

Capital: Riyadh

Political Rights Rating: 7

Civil Liberties Rating: 7

Freedom Rating: 7.0

Freedom Status: Not Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Note: Due to a methodological change affecting certain monarchies, Saudi Arabia's aggregate score for political rights declined by two points, in addition to the one-point decline explained in the text; for more information see the report methodology.

Overview: Saudi Arabia's absolute monarchy restricts almost all political rights and civil liberties. No officials at the national level are elected. The regime relies on extensive surveillance, the criminalization of dissent, appeals to sectarianism, and public spending supported by oil revenues to maintain power. Women and religious minorities face extensive discrimination in law and in practice. Working conditions for the large expatriate labor force are often exploitative.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Deputy Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman, who held a number of official posts and was seen as the leading force in the government, continued to consolidate power during the year, replacing his cousin as crown prince and heir to the throne in June, launching a wave of arrests to suppress dissent in September, and detaining many of the kingdom's leading figures in November as part of an ostensible anticorruption campaign.
- Saudi authorities blocked Qatari news outlets in May amid a diplomatic feud with the emirate.
- The government announced that a ban on women driving would be lifted in 2018, as would a rule prohibiting women from attending public sporting events.

Executive Summary

Mohammad bin Salman, the son of King Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud, continued to fortify his personal authority during 2017. He had been deputy crown prince since 2015, while also serving as defense minister and holding a number of other official posts, but in June 2017 he engineered the ouster of Mohammad bin Nayef—a nephew of the king—as interior minister and replaced him as crown prince. Several months later, after agreeing to lead a committee charged with rooting out corruption in the kingdom, Mohammad bin Salman ordered the house arrest of scores of wealthy officials, businessmen, and rival members of the royal family. Those detained were forced to turn over billions of dollars in assets to the state.

The crown prince also ordered a crackdown on popular preachers and reform advocates in September. These arrests, which cut across the country's political spectrum, indicated that the kingdom's leaders had little interest in political change, despite the announcement of modest plans to ease some social controls, such as the ban on women driving.

Authorities continued to repress and discriminate against minority Shiite Muslim communities in 2017, and the kingdom escalated its aggressive foreign policy, leading a regional effort to isolate and blockade Qatar over its comparatively warm relations with Iran and the Muslim Brotherhood. Saudi Arabia also persisted in its almost three-year-old campaign against rebel forces in Yemen, which has had a devastating effect on Yemeni civilians.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 0 / 40 (-3)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 0 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

Saudi Arabia's king is chosen by internal agreement among the ruling al-Saud family. The king rules for life. In June 2017, Mohammad bin Nayef was replaced as crown prince and put under house arrest by his younger cousin, Mohammad bin Salman, until then the deputy crown prince. The cabinet, which is appointed by the king, passes legislation that becomes law once ratified by royal decree.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

The king appoints the 150 members of the Majlis al-Shura (Consultative Council), who serve in an advisory capacity, for four-year terms. The council has no legislative authority.

Limited nonpartisan elections for advisory councils at the municipal level were introduced in 2005. In the 2015 elections, two-thirds of the seats on the 284 councils were open to voting, while the minister of municipal and rural affairs held responsibility for filling the remainder through appointment. Women were allowed to vote and run as candidates for the first time.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 0 / 4

The electoral framework lacks constitutional protections, and the 2015 elections for municipal councils were subject to a number of onerous restrictions. The kingdom's rules on gender segregation were applied to campaigns, meaning no candidates could produce posters showing their faces or meet in person with voters of the opposite sex. Candidates were also barred from giving media interviews, leading many to campaign via social media. A number of candidates were disqualified for unclear reasons, though some were reinstated after appeals. Ultimately only a small fraction of the citizen population participated in the elections, reflecting doubts about the effectiveness of the advisory councils.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 0 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 0 / 4

Political parties are forbidden, and political dissent is effectively criminalized. In September 2017, the authorities carried out a wave of arrests targeting some of the country's most prominent political rights organizations and activists, including founding members of the banned Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association (ACPRA). Many other political activists continued to serve lengthy prison sentences during the year.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 0 / 4

The Muslim Brotherhood, a Sunni Islamist political organization, and Hezbollah, the Lebanon-based and Iranian-backed Shiite militia group, are designated as terrorist organizations in Saudi Arabia. Other groups and individuals that criticize the regime or call for political reform—whether Sunni or Shiite, Islamist or secularist—are subject to arbitrary detention. Many of those arrested in the crackdown that began in September 2017 had questioned or declined to vocally support the government’s campaign to isolate Qatar over its relations with the Muslim Brotherhood and Iran. These included prominent reformist clerics such as Salman al-Awdah and Awad al-Qarni.

B3. Are the people’s political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 0 / 4

The monarchy generally excludes the public from any meaningful political participation. In the absence of political parties, voters in Saudi Arabia’s limited municipal elections are heavily influenced by tribal and religious leaders, many of whom benefit from close ties to the ruling establishment.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 0 / 4

Although political rights are curtailed for all of the kingdom’s citizens, women, religious minorities, and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people face additional obstacles to participation given the kingdom’s strict laws on matters such as gender segregation and its intolerance of religious groups that deviate from Wahhabism, a highly conservative and literalist interpretation of Sunni Islam. Some 30 women serve on the appointed Majlis al-Shura, and women secured about 1 percent of the seats in the 2015 municipal council elections. Shiites reportedly hold a small number of seats on the Majlis al-Shura and many seats on municipal councils in Shiite-majority areas. Women and religious minorities are mostly excluded from leadership positions in the government.

Noncitizens, who make up roughly a third of the population in Saudi Arabia, have no political rights, and citizenship can only be directly transmitted by a citizen father whose marriage is recognized by the state.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 1 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 0 / 4

The kingdom’s only elected officials serve on local advisory councils and have little or no influence over national laws and policies.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

Corruption remains a significant problem. Although the government generates massive revenue from the sale of oil, which it redistributes through social welfare programs and as patronage, little is known about state accounting or the various direct ways in which public wealth becomes a source of private privilege for the royal family and its clients.

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman was appointed to lead a new anticorruption committee in November 2017, ostensibly tasked with investigating abuses by royal family members and high-ranking officials. However, he quickly ordered the detention of more than 200 people without any apparent due process, and many were coerced into turning over billions of dollars in assets to the state. The crown prince’s campaign coincided with a crackdown on dissent and targeted potential rivals such as Prince Mutaib bin Abdullah,

until then the head of the powerful National Guard, leading observers to suggest that the anticorruption drive was in fact part of a broader effort to consolidate the crown prince's political and economic control over the country.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 0 / 4

The functioning of government is largely opaque. There is no transparency on whether or how state funds are disbursed, or on the internal decision-making process that allocates them, and there is no public mechanism for holding senior decision-makers accountable. The state's oil revenues make up the vast majority of its financial resources, but these are tightly controlled by the royal family, which uses the same income to support itself.

ADDITIONAL DISCRETIONARY POLITICAL RIGHTS QUESTION

Is the government or occupying power deliberately changing the ethnic composition of a country or territory so as to destroy a culture or tip the political balance in favor of another group? -1 / 0 (-1)

The government has long sought to suppress Shiite religious and cultural identity, associating it with Iran and regarding it as a threat to the regime's official Sunni and Wahhabi underpinnings. Systemic discrimination has stoked periodic protests in Shiite-majority areas, and the authorities have responded with harsh and often arbitrary security measures. In 2017, this included a decision to demolish a historic neighborhood in the town of Awamiya, near the city of Qatif in Eastern Province. The effort, which began in May and entailed the eviction of thousands of residents, prompted armed resistance and an extended siege. An unknown number of security personnel, militants, and civilians were killed or injured in the clashes as demolitions proceeded.

Score Change: The score declined from 0 to -1 due to the physical destruction of a Shiite neighborhood as part of a broader government effort to suppress dissent and unrest among the marginalized Shiite minority.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 7 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 3 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 0 / 4

The government controls domestic media content and dominates regional print and satellite-television coverage. A 2011 royal decree amended the press law to criminalize, among other things, any criticism of the country's grand mufti, the Council of Senior Religious Scholars, or government officials; violations can result in fines and forced closure of media outlets. All blogs and websites, or anyone posting news or commentary online, must have a license from the Ministry of Information or face fines and possible closure of the website.

In January 2017, a criminal court sentenced journalist Nadhir al-Majid to seven years in prison, a subsequent seven-year travel ban, and a large fine for writing in support of the right to protest in 2011. Another journalist, Sami al-Thubaiti, was arrested in September and held without charge amid the authorities' larger spate of detentions. As part of the diplomatic confrontation with neighboring Qatar, Saudi authorities blocked Qatari news sites in May and demanded in June that Qatar shut down the television network Al-Jazeera and other Qatari-funded outlets, which have often been critical of Riyadh.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 0 / 4

The 1992 Basic Law declares that the Koran and the Sunna are the country's constitution. Islam is the official religion, and all Saudis are required by law to be Muslims. A 2014 royal decree punishes atheism with up to 20 years in prison. The government prohibits the public practice of any religion other than Islam and restricts the religious practices of the Shiite and Sufi Muslim minority sects. The construction of Shiite mosques is constrained through licensing rules and prohibited outside of Eastern Province, where most Shiites live. Although the government recognizes the right of non-Muslims to worship in private, it does not always respect this right in practice.

Online commentary that touches on religion can be harshly punished. In April 2017, an appeals court upheld a 2015 death sentence for Ahmad al-Shamri, who was charged with apostasy for renouncing Islam on social media.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 1 / 4

Academic freedom is restricted, and informers monitor classrooms for compliance with curriculum rules, including a ban on teaching secular philosophy and religions other than Islam. Despite changes to textbooks in recent years, intolerance in the classroom remains a significant problem, as some educators continue to espouse discriminatory and hateful views of non-Muslims and Muslim minority sects.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 2 / 4

Saudis are able to engage in some degree of private discussion on political and other topics, including criticism of certain aspects of government performance, both online and offline. However, severe criminal penalties deter more direct criticism of the regime and free discussion on topics like religion or the royal family.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 0 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 0 / 4

Freedom of assembly is not respected, and the government has imposed harsh punishments on those who lead or participate in public protests. Ali Mohammed al-Nimr, arrested at age 17 in 2012 for participating in protests in Eastern Province, faced execution in 2017, but his sentence had yet to be carried out at year's end. He was the nephew of Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr, a prominent Shiite cleric and political dissident who was also arrested in 2012 and then executed in 2016 for leading antigovernment demonstrations and calling for an end to sectarian discrimination.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 0 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations must obtain a license from the government to operate. Until the adoption of a law on the topic in 2015, officials had approved licenses only for charitable groups. Reformist organizations have reportedly been denied licenses in practice, in some cases through arbitrary delays. Human rights activists and other civil society representatives face regular harassment and detention by Saudi authorities; a number of prominent activists were serving lengthy prison sentences during 2017.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 0 / 4

No laws protect the rights to form independent labor unions, bargain collectively, or engage in strikes. Workers who engage in union activity are subject to dismissal or

detention. In January 2017, a court reportedly sentenced dozens of foreign construction workers who had protested over unpaid wages in 2016 to lashings and jail terms ranging from 45 days to four months.

F. RULE OF LAW: 2 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4

The judiciary has very little independence in practice. Judges are appointed by the king and overseen by the Supreme Judicial Council, whose chairman is also the justice minister. A special commission of judicial experts issues opinions that serve as guidelines for judges on the interpretation of Sharia (Islamic law), which forms the basis of Saudi law.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

Defendants' rights are poorly protected by law. Detainees are often denied access to legal counsel during interrogation, and lengthy pretrial detention and detention without charge are common.

An antiterrorism law that took effect in 2014 includes lengthy prison sentences for criticizing the monarchy or the government. Among other provisions, it expanded the power of police to conduct raids targeting suspected antigovernment activity without judicial approval.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 0 / 4

Allegations of torture by police and prison officials are common, and access to prisoners by independent human rights and legal organizations is limited. Corporal punishment, most often lashing, is common in criminal sentencing. Capital punishment is applied to a wide range of crimes other than murder; juvenile offenders are not exempt from the penalty. Saudi authorities typically carry out well over 100 executions each year.

Terrorism remains a serious threat. In January 2017, two pairs of fighters affiliated with the Islamic State (IS) militant group were killed in confrontations with security forces in Riyadh and Jeddah. Authorities also faced armed clashes with Shiite militants in Eastern Province and cross-border attacks by rebel forces in Yemen. Yemeni rebels fired ballistic missiles that fell near Riyadh in November and December, though they caused little damage.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 0 / 4

The courts engage in routine discrimination against various groups, citing their interpretations of Sharia. A woman's testimony is generally given half the weight of a man's, and the testimony of anyone other than observant Sunni Muslims can be disregarded by judges.

Shiites, who make up 10 to 15 percent of the population, face socioeconomic disadvantages, discrimination in employment, and underrepresentation in government positions and the security forces.

Education and economic rights for Saudi women have improved somewhat in recent years, but they are still subject to extensive legal and societal discrimination, most notably through the guardianship system, in which every woman must rely on a close male relative to approve basic activities. For example, employers often require women to obtain their guardians' permission to work.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 2 / 16**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 0 / 4**

The government punishes activists and critics by limiting their ability to travel outside the country, and reform advocates are routinely stripped of their passports.

Gender segregation restricts freedom of movement for both men and women, but male guardianship and other factors impose especially onerous constraints on women. In September 2017, the king announced that women would be permitted to drive by mid-2018, eliminating a long-standing ban. A month later, the government said that beginning in 2018, women would also be allowed to attend sporting events in stadiums.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 1 / 4

While a great deal of business activity in the kingdom is dominated by or connected to members of the government, the ruling family, or other elite families, officials have given assurances that special industrial and commercial zones are free from interference by the royal family.

Women require permission from a male guardian to obtain business licenses. Women also face legal discrimination regarding property rights, with daughters typically receiving half the inheritance awarded to sons.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 0 / 4

The religious police enforce rules governing gender segregation and personal attire. A 2016 government decree revoked their authority to arrest suspects or ask for their identification, but they were still empowered to report violations to the ordinary police.

There are a number of official restrictions on marriage. For example, Muslim women may not marry non-Muslims, citizens typically require permission to marry noncitizens, and men are barred from marrying women from certain countries. All sexual activity outside of marriage, including same-sex activity, is criminalized, and the death penalty can be applied in certain circumstances. Women face legal disadvantages in divorce and custody proceedings.

A 2013 law broadly defined and criminalized domestic abuse, prescribing fines and up to a year in prison for perpetrators. However, enforcement remains problematic, with some officials allegedly prioritizing privacy and family integrity over safety and justice for victims.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

A number of amendments to the labor law that went into effect in 2015 granted broader rights and protections to workers in the private sector. However, the labor law does not apply to household workers, who are governed by separate regulations that provide fewer safeguards against exploitative working conditions.

Foreign workers—who make up more than half of the active labor force—enjoy only limited legal protections and remain vulnerable to trafficking and forced labor, primarily through employers' exploitation of the *kafala* visa-sponsorship system. In 2014, the Ministry of Labor ruled that expatriate workers who are not paid their salaries for more than three consecutive months are free to switch their work sponsors without approval. In practice, foreign workers are subject to periodic mass deportations for visa violations or criminal activity, though due process is often lacking in such cases. Government programs

give preferential treatment to companies that hire certain percentages of Saudi citizens and penalize those that fail to meet such targets.

Senegal

Population: 14,800,000

Capital: Dakar

Political Rights Rating: 2

Civil Liberties Rating: 2

Freedom Rating: 2.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Senegal is one of Africa's most stable democracies and has undergone two peaceful transfers of power between rival parties since 2000. The government's respect for civil liberties has improved over time, and the country is known for its relatively independent media and public engagement in free expression and debate, though defamation laws and other legislation continue to constrain press freedom. Ongoing challenges include corruption in government, weaknesses in the rule of law, and inadequate protections for the rights of women and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Delays in the distribution of biometric voting cards caused confusion ahead of the July National Assembly elections and led to the disenfranchisement of some voters; international observer missions declared the elections transparent despite the organizational difficulties.
- In March, Khalifa Sall, the mayor of Dakar, was jailed on charges of fraud, criminal conspiracy, money laundering, and misappropriation of public funds after authorities alleged that \$2.9 million in spending by the mayor's office had been justified with false receipts; supporters denounced Sall's detention and the charges against him as politically motivated.
- In June, the National Assembly passed a new press code that disappointed press freedom advocates by increasing criminal punishments for defamation, removing judicial checks on the government's closure of press outlets, and giving the government wide latitude to block foreign news sources.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 31 / 40 (-1)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 10 / 12 (-1)

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The president is directly elected to a maximum of two consecutive terms; in 2016, referendum voters approved constitutional amendments that reduced the presidential term from seven years to five years, effective after President Macky Sall's current term ends in 2019. In the last presidential election, held in 2012, Abdoulaye Wade of the Senegalese Democratic Party (PDS) ran for a controversial third term in a campaign that was marred by violence and intimidation, but resulted in a peaceful transfer of power. After placing second in the first round, Sall—Wade's former prime minister and campaign director, who had also served

as president of the National Assembly—won a March runoff with 66 percent of the vote, representing the newly formed Alliance for the Republic (APR). The election was declared credible by international observers.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4 (-1)

Members of Senegal’s 165-seat National Assembly are elected to five-year terms—105 are directly elected in single-member districts, while 60 are elected by proportional representation. In the July 2017 parliamentary elections, the president’s APR-led Benno Bokk Yaakaar coalition won an overwhelming 125 seats, followed by Wade’s PDS-led Winning Coalition–Wattu Senegaal with 19 seats. Khalifa Sall’s Mankoo Taxawu Senegaal coalition took 7 seats, and 11 smaller groups divided the remainder. International observers, including the African Union, deemed the elections transparent despite some significant procedural errors and logistical challenges.

Biometric voting cards were to be distributed to eligible voters before the elections, but only 70 percent of voters received their cards. To address the problem, the president proposed and the Constitutional Council approved a plan to allow voters to use alternative forms of identification, including passports, driver’s licenses, national identity cards, or old voting cards. People with none of these forms of identification were allowed to bring their proof of registry for the biometric voting card. Opposition leaders, including former president Wade, criticized the handling of the biometric voting card delay and last-minute changes to voter identification procedures, which sowed further confusion. Some voters were allegedly disenfranchised because of difficulties related to the identification measures, which were approved just four days before the elections.

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 because some voters were allegedly disenfranchised during the 2017 National Assembly elections as a result of delays in the issuance of new biometric voting cards.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4

The National Autonomous Electoral Commission (CENA) administers elections. Although CENA is nominally independent, its members are appointed by the president. The opposition criticized the government for making important changes ahead of the 2017 legislative balloting, including the introduction of the new biometric voting system, without engaging in dialogue or building political consensus. The changes were approved in January 2017, only six months before the elections. According to the African Union (AU) observer mission, there was not enough time for logistical information about the new electoral framework to be disseminated in a coordinated fashion.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 13 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 3 / 4

New political parties can organize and operate without government interference, though the registration process for new parties can be long. Opposition candidates still face major financial inequities when competing with incumbents. There is no public financing for political parties, but the ruling group deploys a vast set of state resources to garner support, whereas opposition leaders must often rely on personal wealth to finance party operations.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

The opposition can increase its support or gain power through elections—the 2012 election marked the second victory by an opposition presidential candidate in 12 years. In the 2017 legislative elections, 47 candidate lists were submitted. Some opposition members have argued that the wide range of parties and coalitions has the effect of fragmenting the opposition's voter support and limiting its ability to gain power.

The authorities broke up several peaceful campaign-related events in 2017. In July, a peaceful protest organized by Wade supporters was dispersed with tear gas as the legislative elections approached.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 3 / 4

People's political choices are largely free from domination by groups that are not democratically accountable. Sufi Muslim marabouts exercise some influence on voters and politicians, particularly in regard to social issues such as homosexuality, marriage, and abortion rights; politicians take hard-line positions on these topics to avoid criticism from Muslim clerics.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

For the first time in 2017, 15 of 165 parliamentary seats were reserved for the Senegalese diaspora as a result of the 2016 constitutional referendum. Thanks to a 2010 law requiring gender parity on candidate lists, women were elected to 64 of 150 legislative seats in 2012 and 70 of 165 seats in 2017. However, women's overall rate of participation in politics, including voting and engaging in local political activities, is lower than men's. Citizens of all ethnicities and religions have political rights. Due to high levels of discrimination and social stigma, LGBT people have no meaningful political representation.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 8 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 3 / 4**

President Sall, his cabinet, and national legislative representatives determine government policies. However, power is concentrated in the executive branch, and the National Assembly is limited in its ability to act as a check on the president.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

Corruption remains a serious problem, and officials often act with impunity. Several anticorruption institutions are in place, including the National Anti-Corruption Commission (OFNAC), the Court of Repression of Illicit Enrichment (CREI), the Ministry for the Promotion of Good Governance, and the National Commission on the Restitution and Recovery of Ill-Gotten Assets. These entities enforce the law unevenly and are sometimes seen as politically motivated. The head of OFNAC was fired in 2016 following the publication of its first annual report, which included critiques of officials close to the president.

One of President Sall's foremost political opponents, Dakar mayor Khalifa Sall, was arrested in March 2017 on charges of fraud, criminal conspiracy, money laundering, and misappropriation of public funds after the government alleged that \$2.9 million in funding for his office was accounted for with false receipts. The mayor argued that such funds

are commonly used as political financing and that his arrest was politically motivated. In October, the public prosecutor asked the National Assembly to revoke Sall's parliamentary immunity—which he acquired after being elected to the legislature in July—and the body complied in November. Sall remained in jail at year's end.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 3 / 4

The government generally operates with openness, though there are reportedly problems with competition and transparency in the awarding of government contracts. The government frequently awards contracts without any formal tender process, in contradiction with Senegalese law. Public comment processes on proposed government measures are often organized on an ad hoc basis. A 2014 law requires asset disclosures to be made by the president, cabinet members, top National Assembly officials, and the managers of large public funds. All disclosures except the president's are confidential.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 44 / 60 (-2)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 13 / 16 (-2)

D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4 (-1)

The constitution guarantees freedom of speech, but defamation laws are occasionally enforced against journalists, which can lead to self-censorship. The media sector is vibrant and diverse; there are many well-known independent media entities, as well as state-controlled television, radio, and newspapers.

In June 2017, the National Assembly passed a new press code that had been debated for eight years. The move was met with concern from press freedom advocates. Under the code, criminal defamation laws remain in place, the punishments for violations were increased, the government can ban foreign news sources, and press outlets can be shut down without the approval of a judge. The new press code also allows the government to block access to internet content deemed “contrary to morality.”

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 because the 2017 press code increased criminal penalties for violations and removed judicial checks on government shutdowns of press outlets, among other restrictive provisions.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

There is no state religion, and freedom of worship is constitutionally protected and respected in practice. Muslims constitute 96 percent of the population.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is guaranteed by the constitution and generally respected in practice.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4 (-1)

Private discussion is generally open and free. However, in 2017 several people were arrested for social media posts that the government deemed offensive. In May, for example, journalist and cartoonist Ouleye Mané was arrested along with three other individuals for “publishing pictures which offend public morality” after sharing a cartoon about President Sall in a WhatsApp group. They were imprisoned for several weeks before being released on bail.

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 due to the detention of citizens for sharing online content that was critical of the president.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 10 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 3 / 4

The constitution guarantees freedom of assembly, which is generally respected in practice. However, the government banned several protests and violently dispersed a number of peaceful demonstrations in 2017. In June, police shot two women and attacked other protesters attending a demonstration against the abuse of a boy by religious authorities in Touba.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) generally operate without interference from state or nonstate actors. In September and October 2017, a number of human rights organizations, including the Senegal chapter of Amnesty International, were reportedly pressured by authorities to twice cancel planned press conferences with the Mauritanian antislavery activist Biram Dah Abeid. NGO leaders claimed that the cancellations were at the insistence of the Mauritanian government, which has arrested Abeid several times.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

Formal-sector workers, with the exception of security employees, have rights to organize, bargain collectively, and strike, though the right to strike is impinged by legal provisions that ban pickets and sit-down strikes, among other activities. Trade unions must be authorized by the Ministry of the Interior, and unions lack legal recourse if registration is denied.

F. RULE OF LAW: 10 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 2 / 4

The judiciary is formally independent, but the president controls appointments to the Constitutional Council, the Court of Appeal, and the Council of State. Judges are prone to pressure from the government on corruption cases and other matters involving high-level officials. The corruption case of Dakar mayor Khalifa Sall raised concerns about executive interference in the judiciary. Opposition leaders claimed that the charges against Sall were politically motivated and that the denial of bail revealed undue influence on the judges in the case.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 3 / 4

The law guarantees fair public trials and defendants' rights, but arbitrary arrest and detention remains a concern. Arbitrary arrest was common in the run-up to the 2017 legislative elections. Though the government is obligated to supply attorneys to felony defendants who cannot afford them, this representation is inconsistent in practice. Defendants frequently experienced long pretrial detentions. To address the issue, the government has introduced software that tracks detainees and notifies tribunals when the allowed pretrial detention period has been reached in a given case.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 3 / 4

Individuals are generally protected from the illegitimate use of physical force. However, Senegalese prisons are overcrowded, and human rights groups have documented incidents of excessive force and cruel treatment by prison authorities.

The low-level separatist conflict in the Casamance region has not been resolved. A de facto cease-fire has been in place for several years and led to a sharp drop in violence. Negotiations for a more permanent peace agreement have not yet begun.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

The caste system is still prevalent among many of Senegal's ethnic groups. Individuals of lower castes are subject to discrimination in employment. Discrimination against women is a problem that is particularly acute in rural areas. Women face persistent inequities in employment, access to health care, and access to education.

Same-sex sexual activity remains criminalized. While these laws are rarely enforced, violence, threats, and mob attacks against LGBT people are common. There are no hate crime laws that specifically protect LGBT people, who also face discrimination in housing, employment, and access to health care.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 11 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4

Citizens generally enjoy freedom of movement and can change their residence, employment, and educational institution without serious restrictions, though the threat of land mines and rebel activity has impaired travel through parts of the Casamance region.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 3 / 4

The civil code facilitates ownership of private property, and property rights are generally respected. According to the U.S. State Department's 2017 Investment Climate Statement on Senegal, commercial dispute resolution can be drawn out, and property title and land registration protocols are inconsistently applied, though the government has worked to ease property acquisition and registration. Traditional customs limit women's ability to purchase property, and local rules on inheritance make it difficult for women to become beneficiaries.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

Rates of female genital mutilation are thought to have declined due in part to campaigns to discourage the practice, but it remains a problem. The government launched a plan to reduce early marriage in June 2016, given that almost one in three Senegalese girls marries before age 18. Husbands are legally regarded as heads of their households. Rape and domestic abuse are common and rarely punished. The law allows abortion only to save a woman's life, and abortions for medical reasons are difficult to obtain in practice.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Child labor remains a problem, particularly in the informal economy, and laws restricting the practice are inadequately enforced. Forced begging by students at religious schools is common. A July 2017 report published by Human Rights Watch and Senegalese human rights groups assessed the first year of the government's program to reduce forced begging;

it found that several hundred children taken from such schools had been returned to their families, but that over 1,000 were returned to the same schools they were taken from and that teachers suspected of abuse were not investigated.

Sex trafficking remains a concern, although according to the U.S. State Department, the government has increased its efforts to prosecute perpetrators. However, it is difficult to discern how robust the law enforcement response has been, since the government does not publicize records on sex trafficking arrests and prosecutions.

↓ Serbia

Population: 7,100,000

Capital: Belgrade

Political Rights Rating: 3

Civil Liberties Rating: 2

Freedom Rating: 2.5

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Trend Arrow: Serbia received a downward trend arrow due to President Aleksandar Vučić's continued consolidation of power, including through opaque party financing methods, politicization of law enforcement, and attempts to undermine critical journalists with financial investigations and smears in government-friendly media.

Overview: Serbia is a parliamentary democracy with competitive multiparty elections, but in recent years the ruling Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) has steadily eroded political rights and civil liberties, putting pressure on independent media, the political opposition, and civil society organizations. Despite these trends, the country has continued to move toward membership in the European Union.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Incumbent prime minister Aleksandar Vučić won 55 percent of the vote in an April presidential election, securing a five-year term after a campaign marked by media bias and allegations of pressure on voters, misused public resources, and vote buying.
- In June, Vučić named Ana Brnabić to succeed him as prime minister, though he retained his post as head of the ruling party, and it was widely understood that he would remain the government's de facto leader despite the presidency's largely ceremonial role under the constitution.
- The Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia (NUNS) documented 92 attacks against journalists during the year, the highest total since 2008. Most of the incidents were either verbal threats or some other form of pressure short of a physical assault.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 28 / 40 (-1)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 9 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

In April 2017, Vučić secured a five-year term as president with 55 percent of the vote in a field of 11 candidates. The campaign was characterized by media bias and allegations of misuse of public resources and vote buying. Vučić remained prime minister throughout the election period, blurring the line between official and electoral activities.

Vučić named Ana Brnabić, then the minister for local government and public administration, to succeed him as prime minister in June, and she was confirmed in office by the parliament later that month. The rest of the cabinet remained largely unchanged.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

The Serbian National Assembly is a unicameral, 250-seat legislature, with deputies elected to four-year terms according to closed party lists in a proportional representation vote.

Vučić called snap parliamentary elections for April 2016, alongside previously scheduled local and regional elections, prompting speculation that he sought to use the national campaign effort to bolster the SNS in local races. Leaders of several opposition parties accused the SNS of rigging the polls, including by tampering with ballot boxes. Election observers from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) noted pressure on public-sector workers to vote for the ruling party. Media reports by private television outlets largely favored the SNS.

While the SNS and its coalition partners won the largest portion of the vote, enabling Vučić to remain prime minister, they lost 27 seats in the parliament, falling from 158 to 131. Foreign Minister Ivica Dačić's Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) and its allies took 29 seats, 15 fewer than they had held before the polls. The far-right Serbian Radical Party (SRS) placed third with 22 seats, returning to the parliament after a four-year absence. The conservative and Euroskeptic Dveri–Democratic Party of Serbia won 13 seats. The progressive Enough Is Enough movement took 16 seats. A coalition led by the Democratic Party (DS) won 16 seats, down from 19 in the previous parliament. The pro-EU Alliance for a Better Serbia bloc won 13 seats, down from 18. The remaining seats went to smaller parties representing ethnic minorities.

The SNS performed well in the local and regional elections, particularly in Vojvodina, where the DS had previously enjoyed broad support.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4

Electoral laws largely correspond to international standards, but aspects of the electoral process are poorly regulated, and implementation of existing rules is flawed in some respects. The Republic Electoral Commission's composition before the 2017 presidential election raised concerns about partisan influence. In its observation report, the Centre for Research, Transparency, and Accountability (CRTA) noted irregularities in 3 percent of polling stations. They included failure to check voters' personal documents and failure to mark voters' fingers to prevent multiple voting. A parliamentary oversight committee meant to monitor the campaign was never established, and the media regulator did not proactively track and punish biased media coverage.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 12 / 16 (-1)

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 3 / 4 (-1)

Political parties may be established freely and can typically operate without encountering formal restrictions. However, campaign finance regulations are weakly enforced and place no overall cap on the private funds raised and spent by parties and candidates. Following the 2017 presidential election, the OSCE reported that the Anti-Corruption Agency (ACA) had decreased the resources dedicated to proactively monitoring campaign funds and did not thoroughly investigate dubious donations. The Vučić campaign enjoyed a considerable financial advantage over its rivals and reportedly benefited from the misuse of public resources, including support from state media and use of public buses to transport loyalists to rallies. In October, the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) found that the SNS had orchestrated the use of thousands of proxy donors to bypass legal limits on individual donations and disguise the true source of funding.

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 due to observed irregularities in the financing of the ruling party and its presidential candidate ahead of the 2017 election, as well as the misuse of state-controlled media to support the government-backed candidate.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 3 / 4

There have been peaceful transfers of power between rival parties over the past two decades, and the political system remains competitive. However, in recent years the ruling party has used several tactics to reduce the opposition's prospects in elections. These include manipulating the timing of snap elections, smearing critical journalists to bolster the government's image and discredit its opponents, and mobilizing public resources and state institutions to support the SNS's campaigns.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 3 / 4

Voters are largely free to make political decisions without intimidation or coercion, though the ruling party and allied private businesses allegedly use patronage networks to influence political outcomes. During the 2017 election, there were widespread reports of employees at state or state-affiliated entities facing pressure to support Vučić and compel their friends and families to do the same. Various incentives have also been used to convince hundreds of local elected officials to form alliances with the SNS or change their party affiliation after elections.

Russia has been accused of attempting to influence Serbian politics through its state-owned media and an array of small pro-Russian parties, media outlets, and civil society groups in Serbia.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

The country's 5 percent electoral threshold for parliamentary representation does not apply to parties representing ethnic minorities. Groups centered on the ethnic Albanian, Bosniak, Slovak, and Hungarian communities won a total of 10 seats in the 2016 elections. Nevertheless, ethnic minorities have a relatively muted voice in Serbian politics in practice. No party representing the interests of the Romany minority ran in the 2016 elections.

Women enjoy equal political rights. According to electoral regulations, women must account for at least 33 percent of a party's candidate list, and women currently hold 34 percent of seats in the parliament. Ana Brnabić became Serbia's first woman and first openly

gay prime minister in June 2017, but critics argued that her appointment was a superficial bid to please the EU rather than a genuine sign of greater engagement on issues of importance to women or LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 7 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 3 / 4

Elected officials are generally able to set and implement laws and policies without interference, though Vučić's move to the presidency in 2017 raised new concerns about the personalization of governance and politicization of state institutions. Both Vučić and Brnabić made statements indicating that the president, who was also the SNS's leader, would remain the dominant figure in government despite the presidency's limited executive powers under the constitution.

Opposition members of parliament have accused the parliamentary leadership of using disciplinary measures—including fines for insulting or disruptive remarks—to undermine their role as a check on the ruling party. The EU has also criticized the extensive use of accelerated legislative procedures and late changes to the legislative agenda among other practices that weaken the lawmaking process.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

Although the number of arrests and prosecutions for corruption has risen, high-profile convictions are very rare. In August 2017, a court in Belgrade dismissed a corruption case focused on the defense minister's purchase of an apartment. The work of the ACA is undermined by the ambiguous division of responsibilities among other entities responsible for combating corruption, and it was further crippled by leadership vacancies for much of 2017. A new agency director, Majda Kršikapa, was chosen in September, but after launching numerous investigations and showing other signs of vigorous activity, she resigned without explanation in November. Among other steps, she had reportedly requested a probe into suspicious campaign donations to the SNS.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

Public officials are subject to asset disclosure rules overseen by the ACA, but penalties for violations are uncommon. While a 2004 freedom of information law empowers citizens and journalists to obtain information of public importance, authorities frequently obstruct requests in practice. In a prominent case involving illegal 2016 demolitions for a development project on Belgrade's waterfront, prosecutors repeatedly failed to pay fines imposed by the information commissioner in 2017 for refusing to respond to information requests about their investigation.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 45 / 60 (-2)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 13 / 16 (-1)

D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4

Despite a legal framework that guarantees freedom of the press and the 2012 decriminalization of defamation, media freedom is undermined by the threat of lawsuits or criminal charges against journalists under other legislation, lack of transparency in media ownership, editorial pressure from politicians and politically connected media owners, and high rates of self-censorship. The state and ruling party exercise influence over private media in part through advertising contracts and other indirect subsidies. While many outlets take a

progovernment line or avoid criticism of the leadership, some continue to produce independent coverage.

A number of critical journalists and outlets faced smear campaigns, punitive tax inspections, and other forms of pressure in 2017, and the weekly *Vranjske* closed in September, citing harassment from local officials and criminals. There were 92 attacks against journalists during the year, according to NUNS, the highest total recorded by the group since 2008. They included physical assaults, though most incidents involved aggressive rhetoric and other forms of pressure or intimidation.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

The constitution guarantees freedom of religion, which is generally respected in practice.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 3 / 4 (-1)

Academic freedom has largely been upheld. However, evidence that multiple politicians plagiarized academic papers with impunity to advance their careers has raised questions about the quality and integrity of the education system. In April 2017, the Ministry of Defense proposed a regulation requiring preapproval for any research that involves foreigners or foreign entities and is relevant to national security; the proposal was withdrawn amid objections from academics. A new Law on Higher Education adopted by the National Assembly in September increased the presence of state-appointed members on the National Council for Higher Education and a national accreditation body, and another education law adopted the same month gave the education minister centralized control over the appointment of school principals, adding to concerns about academic autonomy and political influence.

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 due to the approval of new laws that increase the central government's control over appointments at schools and universities.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

Private discussion is generally free and vibrant, though potential deterrents to open debate include a pattern in which progovernment tabloids have smeared individuals for criticizing government policies on social media.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 10 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4

Serbians enjoy freedom of assembly. However, in October 2017 two students accused of organizing a protest against Vučić following the presidential election were charged for doing so without a permit, despite the fact that the protest had no clear leaders.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 3 / 4

Foreign and domestic nongovernmental organizations generally operate freely, but those that have taken openly critical stances toward the government or address sensitive or controversial topics have faced threats and harassment in recent years. In January 2017, activists from the Youth Initiative for Human Rights were physically attacked at an event organized by the ruling party.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

Workers may legally join unions, engage in collective bargaining, and strike, but the International Confederation of Trade Unions has reported that organizing efforts and strikes are often restricted in practice.

F. RULE OF LAW: 9 / 16 (-1)**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 2 / 4**

The independence of the judiciary is compromised by political influence over judicial appointments, and many judges have reported facing external pressure regarding their rulings. Politicians regularly comment on judicial matters, including by discussing ongoing cases or investigations with the media.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 2 / 4 (-1)

Due process guarantees are upheld in some cases, but corruption, lack of capacity, and political influence often undermine these protections. Among other problems, rules on the random assignment of cases to judges and prosecutors are not consistently observed, and mechanisms for obtaining restitution in civil matters are ineffective. High-profile, politically sensitive cases are especially vulnerable to interference. The failure of police and prosecutors to make any visible progress on the investigation of illegal 2016 demolitions in the Savamala district on Belgrade's waterfront was widely seen as an effort to protect politically powerful perpetrators.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 due to signs of political interference in the work of police and prosecutors, most prominently in the case of illegal 2016 demolitions in the capital.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 3 / 4

Serbians are generally free from major threats to physical security, though some prison facilities suffer from overcrowding, abuse, and inadequate health care. Radical right-wing organizations and violent sports fans who target ethnic minorities and others also remain a concern.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

Legal safeguards for socially vulnerable groups are poorly enforced. For example, women are legally entitled to equal pay for equal work, but this rule is not widely respected. The Romany minority is especially vulnerable to discrimination in employment, housing, and education. LGBT people continue to face hate speech, threats, and even physical violence, and perpetrators are rarely punished despite laws addressing hate crimes and discrimination. However, the government has made some gestures of support for the rights of LGBT people; Brnabić attended the annual pride parade in Belgrade in September.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 13 / 16**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4**

There are no formal restrictions on freedom of movement. Serbians are free to change their place of employment and education, and have the right to travel. Citizens have been able to enter the Schengen area of the EU without a visa since 2010.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 3 / 4

In general, property rights are respected, but adjudication of disputes is slow, and problems such as illegal construction and fraud persist. Approximately 1.5 million buildings in Serbia are not registered. The irregular 2016 demolition of a number of homes and businesses in Belgrade's Savamala district was aimed at clearing the way for a government-backed private development project. While the perpetrators violated property rights guaranteed by law, the investigation into the incident remained stalled in 2017.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

A new law aimed at preventing domestic violence took effect in 2017, but such violence remains a problem. There were more than 20 deaths in 2017 as a consequence of domestic violence; in July, in two separate incidents, two women and one child were killed at social care centers. Early and forced marriage is reportedly more common among the Romany minority, with more than half of Romany girls marrying before the legal age of 18.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

Residents generally have access to economic opportunity, but factors such as weak macroeconomic growth and a relatively high rate of unemployment contribute to labor exploitation in some industries. Several reports in recent years have described poor conditions in factories, including low wages, unpaid overtime, and a hazardous working environment. Legal protections designed to prevent such abuses are not well enforced.

Seychelles

Population: 90,000

Capital: Victoria

Political Rights Rating: 3

Civil Liberties Rating: 3

Freedom Rating: 3.0

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: A single party dominated politics starting from independence, and for years after multiparty politics were introduced in the 1990s. In 2016, an opposition coalition won a majority of seats in the National Assembly, reflecting increasing political pluralism in practice. However, government corruption remains a problem, as does lengthy pretrial detention. Migrant workers remain vulnerable to abuse.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In October, a new anticorruption agency initiated its first awareness project, which included a public opinion survey on perceptions of corruption.
- Migrant workers lack certain legal protections and remained vulnerable to abuses, particularly in the Seychelles International Trade Zone.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 28 / 40**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 10 / 12****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4**

The president is chief of state and head of government, and is directly elected for up to two five-year terms. The president nominates cabinet ministers and a vice president, all of which require National Assembly approval.

President James Michel of Parti Lepep (PL) was narrowly reelected in 2015. International observers noted allegations of vote buying.

In October 2016, President Michel resigned. He gave no reason for his resignation, but it followed parliamentary elections in which the opposition coalition, Seychelles Democratic Alliance (LDS), took control of the legislature. Vice President Danny Faure became president, and is to complete Michel's five-year term.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

Members of the unicameral National Assembly are directly elected in 25 constituencies, while up to 10 additional seats are assigned by parties according to a proportional calculation of the vote.

The opposition coalition LDS won the majority of seats in the 2016 elections to the National Assembly, marking the first transfer of power between parties in the country's postindependence history. An African Union (AU) election monitoring mission generally praised the elections, but noted reports of attempted vote buying.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4

The Electoral Commission has faced some criticism from opposition parties and others for enforcing its mandates inconsistently. The 2016 AU election monitoring mission recommended that the Electoral Commission take steps to improve transparency, carefully scrutinize the voter rolls, and improve efforts to inform the public about voter registration processes and voting procedures.

In 2016, the National Assembly passed a change to the constitution that reduced presidential term limits from three terms to two.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 11 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 3 / 4**

There were no significant threats to or intimidation of political parties ahead of parliamentary elections in 2016. However, during the 2015 presidential election, several opposition parties claimed the government was engaged in systematic harassment and intimidation of candidates.

Legal challenges from the LDS blocked the registration of two parties and their candidates from competing in the 2016 National Assembly elections. LDS (known locally as Linyon Demokratik Seselwa) successfully argued that the parties' names—the Lafors Sosyal Demokratik (LSD) and the Linyon Sanzman, respectively—were too similar to its name and would mislead voters.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 3 / 4

The 2016 National Assembly elections changed the political scene significantly, as the LDS, a new alliance of opposition parties, became the first political grouping to defeat the PL and gain a majority of legislative seats. The PL for the first time became the minority party. The developments reflected increasing political pluralism in Seychelles.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 3 / 4

The people's political choices are generally free from domination by powerful groups that are not democratically accountable. However, there have been reports of vote buying and voter intimidation by political parties.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 2 / 4

No legal restrictions bar the political participation of certain groups. Early voting procedures are designed to encourage the participation of some groups, including pregnant women, elderly people, and those with disabilities. However, there are no mechanisms that allow citizens living abroad to vote. Few women hold senior political office, and the PL is the only party that typically includes high numbers of women among its political candidates. Political life is dominated by people of European and South Asian origin.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 7 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 3 / 4**

The head of government and national legislative representatives are generally able to determine the policies of the government, though widespread corruption can influence policymaking.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

Concerns over government corruption persist. In 2016, the National Assembly passed an anticorruption law that established the first independent anticorruption commission in the country, and strengthened the legal framework to fight corruption. However, few major investigations have followed. In October 2017, the commission started its first awareness project, which includes a public opinion survey on perceptions of corruption.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

Concerns about corruption tend to focus on a lack of transparency in the privatization and allocation of government-owned land, as well as in Seychelles' facilitation of international finance.

There are laws allowing public access to government information, but compliance is inconsistent. Some government officials are required to declare assets, but they do not always comply, and the declarations are not made public unless a legal challenge forces their release.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 43 / 60**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 12 / 16****D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4**

There are two privately owned newspapers, five political party weeklies, and the online news of the Seychelles News Agency. The government owns the only television station and two radio stations; there is one independent radio station. The law prohibits political parties and religious organizations from operating radio stations.

Media workers practice a degree of self-censorship to keep from endangering their earnings from advertising. At the same time, newspapers often take political sides, with the result that their reporting is generally biased. Although Seychelles has strict defamation laws, they have not been used for years. There are few reports of abuses against journalists.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Religious freedom is generally respected. The government grants larger religious groups programming time on state radio, subject in most cases to advance review and approval, but smaller religious groups do not have access to dedicated broadcast time.⁹ Non-Catholic students in public schools providing Catholic instruction have no access to alternative activities during those classes.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 3 / 4

Some activists have claimed that the government limits academic freedom by not allowing educators to reach senior positions in the academic bureaucracy without demonstrating at least nominal loyalty to the PL, which holds the presidency and dominated the parliament for years ahead of its defeat in the 2016 elections.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4

As the government seeks above all to protect the country's image as a tourist paradise, many sensitive subjects are considered off limits. Individuals who criticize the government publicly or privately sometimes suffer reprisals, such as harassment by police or the loss of jobs or contracts.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 9 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 3 / 4

The government passed a revised law in 2015 on public assembly, which several observers credited with permitting a more open and free political environment. However, the law still contains some restrictive provisions, including the need to give five days' notice to the police for assemblies. It also empowers the head of the police to disperse assemblies on grounds of preserving public health, morality, and safety, and set conditions on the timing and location of assemblies.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 3 / 4

Human rights groups and other nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operate without restriction. However, some groups lack the resources necessary to operate and advocate effectively.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

⁹ <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>

Unions are permitted, but only about 15 percent of the workforce is unionized, and collective bargaining is relatively rare. Workers have the right to strike, but only if all other arbitration procedures have been exhausted.

F. RULE OF LAW: 11 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 2 / 4**

The judiciary is generally independent, but judges sometimes face interference in cases involving major commercial or political interests. Due to the low number of legal professionals in Seychelles, the country brings in expatriate judges to serve fixed-term contracts on the Supreme Court. The government controls the negotiations and renewal of expatriate contracts, potentially allowing officials to compromise the impartiality of the non-Seychellois magistrates. The judiciary also lacks budget independence from the executive, and can be subject to external influence. The Supreme Court remains a target of political threats and intimidation.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 3 / 4

While constitutional rights to due process are generally respected, prolonged pretrial detention is common. The courts introduced new systems in 2016 intended to expedite the processing of cases, but their effect has been limited.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 3 / 4

Security forces have occasionally been accused of using excessive force, and impunity for such offenses remains a problem. Police corruption continues, particularly the solicitation of bribes. Prisons remain overcrowded.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

Same-sex sexual activity between men was decriminalized in 2016, though societal discrimination against LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) activists remains a problem. Prejudice against foreign workers has been reported.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 11 / 16**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4**

The government does not restrict domestic travel, but may deny passports for unspecified reasons based on “national interest.”

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 3 / 4

Individuals may generally exercise the right to own property and establish private business without undue interference from state or nonstate actors. An underdeveloped legal framework can hamper business activities, as can corruption.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Inheritance laws do not discriminate against women, and the government does not impose explicit restrictions on personal social freedoms. However, domestic violence against women remains a problem.¹⁰

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

Economic life is dominated by people of European and South Asian origin.

The government has made minimal progress in preventing or prosecuting instances of human trafficking and labor exploitation. Worker rights in the Seychelles International Trade Zone are different from the rest of the islands, and migrant laborers are vulnerable to abuse there.¹¹ There were some reports of employers seizing migrant workers' passports upon arrival, a practice that is not currently illegal under Seychelles law.

Sierra Leone

Population: 6,600,000

Capital: Freetown

Political Rights Rating: 3

Civil Liberties Rating: 3

Freedom Rating: 3.0

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: In 2018, Sierra Leone will hold its fourth national elections since the end of civil war in 2002. However, opposition parties have faced police violence and restrictions on assembly. Government corruption is pervasive, and the work of journalists is hampered by the threat of defamation charges. Other longstanding concerns include gender-based violence and female genital mutilation (FGM).

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In March, the police fired live ammunition into student protests in the city of Bo, resulting in one student's death.
- In November, President Ernest Bai Koroma of the All People's Congress (APC) faced criticism for unilaterally nominating his party's candidate to succeed him, Samura Kamara, rather than holding a party election. The next presidential and legislative elections are scheduled for March 2018.
- The government announced in September that it would monitor some social media during the upcoming elections, but would not set an outright ban, raising concerns about the curtailment of freedom of expression.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 28 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 10 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

The president is elected directly by popular vote for up to two five-year terms. President Koroma, of the APC, was reelected in 2012. The Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) filed a

¹⁰ https://www.upr-info.org/sites/default/files/document/seychelles/session_24_-_january_2016/a-hrc-32-13-e.pdf

¹¹ <http://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/countries/2016/258853.htm>

petition alleging numerous voting irregularities. Koroma and Julius Maada Bio, opposition candidate of the SLPP, later issued a joint statement recognizing the APC's victory. International observers determined that the election was credible. The next presidential election is scheduled for March 2018.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

In the unicameral Parliament, 132 members are chosen by popular vote, and 12 seats are reserved for indirectly elected paramount chiefs. Parliamentary elections are held concurrently with the presidential election every five years. Despite the complaints made by the SLPP and some procedural errors, observers determined that the last parliamentary elections in 2012 were credible.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

The electoral laws and framework are generally deemed to be fair, although restrictions that limit who can run for office have drawn criticism from international observers—non-African ethnic minorities and independent candidates cannot stand for election, for example. The National Electoral Commission (NEC), which administers elections, works impartially and independently.

In March 2017, Parliament passed the Provinces Act, which created additional districts, provinces, and localities, giving people greater electoral representation.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 11 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 2 / 4

Although people have the right to organize in different political parties, opposition parties and leaders have faced intimidation and harassment from the government and the ruling APC. The APC and SLPP are the main political parties, but 14 parties are officially registered.

Alie Kabba, a leader of the SLPP who was expected to run for the presidency, was arrested and charged with bigamy in 2015. Although critics alleged that his arrest was politically motivated, he was released on bail and was active with the SLPP during his trial, which took place in 2017. In 2016, 30 SLPP members were arrested for holding an unauthorized parade; police fired live ammunition and tear gas into the crowd. In August 2017 the Freetown headquarters of the Alliance Democratic Party (ADP) caught fire. Party chairman Mohammed Kamarainba Mansaray, who had been an outspoken critic of President Koroma and the APC, claimed that the APC was responsible for the blaze.

In September 2017, several high profile figures left the SLPP to form the National Grand Coalition (NGC). The NGC was officially registered in October after bureaucratic delays.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 3 / 4

Opposition parties can increase their support or gain power through elections, although the ruling APC used public resources to campaign in 2012, providing the party with an advantage. The APC won the last two presidential elections, in 2007 and 2012, and the SLPP lost one seat in the 2012 parliamentary elections.

The NEC announced in December 2017 that candidate nomination fees would be subsidized. Nomination fees were a point of contention during the 2012 campaign, as party leaders complained that the fees were excessively high compared to regional standards.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 3 / 4

Sierra Leoneans generally enjoy freedom in their political choices, although traditional and religious leaders are highly influential and have a significant impact on the political choices of voters. President Koroma was criticized by civil society leaders for choosing the APC presidential candidate, Foreign Minister Samura Kamara, unilaterally, rather than by a party election.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

Ethnic and religious minorities typically enjoy full political rights and electoral opportunities. Women's political participation remains a challenge, with only 14 of 124 parliament seats held by women in 2017, and only 4 of 23 ministries led by women. The husbands of women are known to influence their political choices.

Sierra Leoneans who are not of African descent are not granted citizenship at birth and must become naturalized citizens to be able to vote, and they are not allowed to run for elected office.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 7 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 3 / 4

The president and parliament generally determine the policies of the government, although most power lies in the executive branch. China has become a major donor, providing billions of dollars of aid since 2013, and has cultivated a close relationship with the Koroma administration. Civil society leaders have claimed that this closeness has allowed China to influence policymaking.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

Corruption remains a pervasive problem at every level of government. In recent years, the Sierra Leone Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) has made some progress toward uncovering corruption among high-level officials, but it has a poor prosecutorial record, especially in trials involving President Koroma's friends, family, and political allies. The ACC itself has been accused of corruption by a leading nongovernmental organization (NGO). The government has used defamation laws to prevent witness testimony in corruption trials.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 3 / 4

Sierra Leone has an uneven record on transparency. As of August 2017, 29 public entities had yet to give financial records to the Auditor General. Legislation passed in 2016 gives public institutions three months after the end of the fiscal year to submit financial information.

The Right to Access Information Commission was created in 2013 to facilitate transparency and openness in government, but its effectiveness has been hampered by lack of funding and limited public outreach.

Sierra Leone continues to review and make public all mining and lease agreements, retaining its Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) compliance designation. It is up for review in 2018.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 38 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 12 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4

Numerous independent newspapers circulate freely, and there are dozens of public and private radio and television outlets. However, public officials continue to employ the country's libel and sedition laws to target journalists, particularly those reporting on high-level corruption. In September 2017, three reporters from the *Salone Times* and *New Age* publications who had criticized a potential increase in telecommunications prices appeared in court after being charged with libel. In October, a journalist was reportedly stabbed by supporters of the SLPP during a march.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Freedom of religion is protected by the constitution and respected in practice.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 3 / 4

Academic freedom is generally upheld, but resource strains within the university system have led to strikes by professors. In March 2017, in the city of Bo, one student from Njala University was killed and several were injured during protests against a faculty strike over unpaid salaries and other benefits.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4

Private discussion remains largely open. In September 2017, the head of the National Telecommunications Commission (NATCOM), while speaking to the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists, announced that some monitoring of social media would be conducted during the 2018 elections, but no outright ban.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 7 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 2 / 4

While freedom of assembly is constitutionally guaranteed, the police violently cracked down on several protests and demonstrations in 2017. In March, police fired tear gas into a students' demonstration in front of President Koroma's home and arrested 16 students. In September, the Malen Land Owners and Users Association (MALOA) was denied permission by the police to hold a public gathering.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 3 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and civic groups operate freely, though a 2008 law requires NGOs to submit annual activity reports and renew registration every two years. In January 2017, Abdul Fatoma, a leader at the Campaign for Human Rights and

Development International, was arrested for criticizing the government and the ACC in a radio interview.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

While workers have the right to join independent trade unions, there are no laws preventing discrimination against union members or prohibiting employers from interfering in the formation of unions.

F. RULE OF LAW: 9 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 2 / 4

While the constitution provides for an independent judiciary, in practice the judiciary is prone to interference from the executive branch, particularly in corruption cases. A lack of clear procedures for appointing and dismissing judges makes these processes vulnerable to abuse. Corruption, poor salaries, and a lack of resources impede judicial effectiveness.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 2 / 4

Resource constraints and a lack of lawyers outside of Freetown hinder access to legal counsel. Although the constitution guarantees a fair trial, this right is sometimes limited in practice, largely due to corruption. Because of resource constraints, the average defendant spends between three and five years in detention awaiting trial. In May 2017, the judiciary developed new bail and sentencing guidelines to limit the amount of time prisoners spend in pretrial detention facilities.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 3 / 4

Detention facilities are under strain, with occupancy levels at 216 percent of official capacity as of September 2017. Prisons and detention facilities fail to meet basic standards of health and hygiene, and infectious disease is prevalent.

Extrajudicial killings by the police remained a problem in 2017, particularly against people peacefully engaged in protests. Police are rarely held accountable for abuses and killings. People can report abuse or ill treatment to the Police Complaints, Discipline, and Internal Investigations Department (CDIID) or the Independent Police Complaints Board (IPCB), although the effectiveness of these agencies is hindered by resource constraints.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

Members of the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) community face discrimination in employment and access to healthcare, and the population is vulnerable to violence. Discrimination against LGBT people is not explicitly prohibited by the constitution. During its Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in 2016 by the UN Human Rights Council, the government only noted, rather than accepted, recommendations to guarantee the rights of LGBT people. Women experience discrimination in employment, education, and access to credit. Employers frequently fire women who become pregnant during their first year on the job.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 10 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4

Sierra Leoneans generally enjoy freedom of movement after restrictions from the Ebola Virus epidemic were lifted in 2016. However, petty corruption is common and parents often have to pay bribes to register their children in primary and secondary school.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 3 / 4

Property rights are constitutionally guaranteed, but the laws on the books do not effectively protect those rights. Sierra Leone does not have a land titling system. Outside of Freetown, land falls under customary law and its use is determined by chiefs. The government has often failed to regulate the activities of international investors, exacerbating threats to property rights.

Laws passed in 2007 grant women the right to inherit property, but many women have little power to contest land issues within the customary legal system. In 2016, Sierra Leone reduced the cost of registering a new business.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

The law prohibits domestic violence, but gender-based violence remained a serious problem in 2017. Reports of rape and domestic violence rarely result in conviction, and the police unit responsible for investigating and prosecuting these crimes remains underfunded and understaffed. Women experience discrimination in marriage and divorce laws. Customary law guides many of these issues, and women are often conferred inferior status—women are often considered equal to children under customary law, and also considered the property of their husbands.

Female genital mutilation is not prohibited by law, and the practice remains widespread. The government's 2015 ban on "visibly pregnant" girls from attending school remained in effect in 2017. In 2016, President Koroma rejected a bill passed unanimously by Parliament that would have legalized abortion at up to 12 weeks of pregnancy under any circumstances and up to 24 weeks under special circumstances. Child marriage remains a problem, with almost half of all girls married before the age of 18.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Reports of economic exploitation of workers in the natural resource sector are common. Barriers to access remain for individuals who wish to seek redress for economic exploitation. While it is not common for individuals to take such cases to the formal legal system, there is little data on how such issues are handled.

Child trafficking remained a problem in 2017. Through August 2017, 698 cases of sexual exploitation of children were reported, and only 142 were referred for prosecution. Child labor is prevalent, despite laws limiting it.

Singapore

Population: 5,600,000

Capital: Singapore

Political Rights Rating: 4

Civil Liberties Rating: 4

Freedom Rating: 4.0

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: Singapore's parliamentary political system has been dominated by the ruling People's Action Party (PAP) and the family of current prime minister Lee Hsien Loong since 1959. The electoral and legal framework that the PAP has constructed allows for some political pluralism and considerable economic prosperity, but it constrains the growth of credible opposition parties and limits freedoms of expression, assembly, and association.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Halimah Yacob, a former PAP speaker of parliament, became president in September after new selection criteria adopted by the PAP-controlled Parliament left her as the only eligible candidate. Among other requirements, all candidates had to be ethnic Malays, drawing accusations that the rules were designed to exclude an ethnic Chinese contender who had narrowly lost the 2011 race.
- Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong's siblings accused him of abuse of power and state harassment in an ongoing dispute over the former residence of their late father, founding prime minister Lee Kuan Yew. A nephew of the prime minister's faced contempt of court charges for his Facebook comments in connection with the dispute.
- The authorities continued to restrict civil society activity, filing charges against one activist in November and placing several others under investigation for their participation in peaceful assemblies earlier in the year.
- The annual pro-LGBT Pink Dot rally drew over 20,000 participants in July despite new restrictions that barred foreigners from funding, attending, or even observing such events.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 19 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 4 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4

The government is led by a prime minister and cabinet formed by the party that controls the legislature. The current prime minister, Lee Hsien Loong, has been in power since 2004 and secured a new mandate after the 2015 parliamentary elections.

The president, whose role is largely ceremonial, is elected by popular vote for six-year terms, and a special committee is empowered to vet candidates. Government-backed constitutional amendments adopted by Parliament in 2016 tightened the eligibility rules for presidential candidates. One change established that none of Singapore's three main ethnic groupings—Malays, Chinese, and Indians or others—may be excluded from the presidency for more than five consecutive terms. Since the office had been held by ethnic

Indian or Chinese presidents for the past five terms, the next president would have to be a Malay. This excluded Tan Cheng Bock, a government critic who had narrowly lost the 2011 race. Another revision included in the package required that presidential candidates from the private sector—as opposed to senior officials with at least three years of service—have experience leading a company with at least S\$500 million (US\$370 million) in shareholder equity, up from S\$100 million in paid-up capital.

In September 2017, citing the new criteria, the Presidential Elections Committee declared that Halimah Yacob was the only would-be candidate eligible to contest that year's election, making her the winner by default.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4

The unicameral Parliament elected in 2015 includes 13 members from single-member constituencies and 76 members from Group Representation Constituencies (GRCs), a mechanism intended to foster ethnic minority representation. The top-polling party in each GRC wins all of its three to six seats, which has historically bolstered the majority of the dominant PAP. As many as nine additional, nonpartisan members can be appointed to Parliament by the president, and another nine can come from a national compensatory list meant to ensure a minimum of opposition representation. Members serve five-year terms, with the exception of appointed members, who serve for two and a half years.

In the 2015 elections, the PAP secured nearly 70 percent of the popular vote and 83 of the 89 elected seats. The largest opposition group, the Workers' Party (WP), retained the six elected seats it had won in 2011, but lost a seat it won in a 2013 by-election. Three compensatory seats were awarded to the opposition to achieve the minimum of nine.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 1 / 4

Singapore lacks an independent election commission; the country's Elections Department is a government body attached to the Prime Minister's Office. The electoral framework suffers from a number of other features—including the GRC system and the onerous eligibility rules for presidential candidates—that favor the PAP-dominated political establishment. The PAP has also altered electoral boundaries to ensure an incumbent advantage: The new electoral districts for 2015 were announced just seven weeks before the elections.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 8 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 2 / 4

Singapore has a multiparty political system, and a total of nine parties contested the last parliamentary elections in 2015. However, a variety of factors have helped to ensure the PAP's dominant position, including an electoral framework that favors the incumbents, restrictions on political films and television programs, the threat of defamation suits, the PAP's vastly superior financial resources, and its influence over the mass media and the courts.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 2 / 4

The opposition has made some progress in mounting stronger election campaigns over the last decade. Opposition factions collectively put forward candidates for all 89 directly

elected Parliament seats in 2015, a first since independence. However, the WP lost one seat compared with the outgoing Parliament, and the PAP managed to win a higher percentage of the popular vote than in 2011, indicating that the opposition is unlikely to secure a majority in the foreseeable future.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 2 / 4

The corporatist structure of the economy creates dense ties between business and political elites that have been criticized as oligarchic in nature. Many senior government officials formerly served as military officers, and the military has a close relationship with the PAP, but it does not directly engage in politics.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 2 / 4

Ethnic and religious minority groups have full voting rights, but critics—including civil society organizations—have questioned whether the GRC system is really achieving its ostensible aim of ensuring representation for minorities. Separately, the new rules for presidential candidacy have been criticized as blatantly racist, as they excluded non-Malays from the 2017 election.

Women remain underrepresented in senior government and political positions; women candidates won 21 of the directly elected Parliament seats in 2015. LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) groups operate openly but do not have vocal representation in Parliament.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 7 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 2 / 4

Elected officials determine the policies of the government, but the PAP's political and institutional dominance ensures its victory at the polls, and the party leadership maintains discipline among its members. The constitution stipulates that lawmakers lose their seats if they resign or are expelled from the party for which they stood in elections.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4

Singapore has been lauded for its lack of bribery and corruption. However, its corporatist economic structure entails close collaboration between the public and private sectors that may produce conflicts of interest. Lawmakers often serve on the boards of private companies, and the *Economist* has placed Singapore high on its “crony-capitalism index” for the degree to which accumulation of private wealth depends on political connections.

In December 2017, a unit of the partly state-owned Singaporean conglomerate Keppel Corporation agreed to a US\$422 million settlement with U.S., Singaporean, and Brazilian authorities after it was found to have paid bribes to win a series of contracts from Brazil's state oil company. A Singaporean state investment firm held a 20 percent stake in Keppel as of mid-2017.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

The government provides some transparency on its operations. The Singapore Public Sector Outcome Review is published every two years and provides extensive metrics on the functioning of the bureaucracy; regular audits of public-sector financial processes are

also made accessible to the public. However, other data, including key information on the status of the national reserves, are not made publicly available, and there is no freedom of information law giving citizens the right to obtain government records.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 33 / 60 (+1)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 10 / 16 (+1)

D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4 (+1)

All domestic newspapers, radio stations, and television channels are owned by companies linked to the government. Editorials and news coverage generally support state policies, and self-censorship is common, though newspapers occasionally publish critical content. The government uses racial or religious tensions and the threat of terrorism to justify restrictions on freedom of speech. Media outlets, bloggers, and public figures have been subjected to harsh civil and criminal penalties for speech deemed to be seditious, defamatory, or injurious to religious sensitivities. Major online news sites must obtain licenses and respond to regulators' requests to remove prohibited content. However, foreign media and a growing array of online domestic outlets—including news sites and blogs—are widely consumed and offer alternative views, frequently publishing articles that are critical of the government or supportive of independent activism.

Score Change: The score improved from 1 to 2 due to the growing prevalence and importance of alternative media, including international services and domestic online outlets, that cover a wide range of perspectives.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4

The constitution guarantees freedom of religion as long as its practice does not violate any other regulations, and most groups worship freely. However, religious actions perceived as threats to racial or religious harmony are not tolerated, and the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Unification Church are banned. Religious groups are required to register with the government under the 1966 Societies Act.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 2 / 4

All public universities and political research institutions have direct government links that enable at least some political influence and interference in hiring and firing. Academics engage in political debate, though self-censorship on Singapore-related topics is common. Public schools include a national education component that has been criticized for presenting a history of Singapore that focuses excessively on the role of the PAP.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4

Private discussion is generally open and free, though legal restrictions on topics that involve race and religion constrain dialogue. The threat of defamation suits and related charges are also deterrents to free speech, including on social media. A nephew of the prime minister's who resides in the United States was charged with contempt of court for a July 2017 Facebook post that criticized Singapore's court system and government in the context of a family dispute over the former home of late prime minister Lee Kuan Yew.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 4 / 12**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 2 / 4**

Public assemblies are subject to extensive restrictions. Police permits are required for assemblies that occur outdoors; limited restrictions apply to indoor gatherings. Speakers' Corner at Hong Lim Park is the designated site for open assembly, though events there can likewise be restricted if they are deemed disruptive. Non-Singaporeans are generally prohibited from participating in or attending public assemblies that are considered political or sensitive. An amendment to the Public Order Act adopted in April 2017 increased the authorities' discretion to ban public meetings and barred foreign nationals from organizing, funding, or even observing gatherings that could be used for a political purpose. In November, activist Jolovan Wham was charged with Public Order Act violations for organizing three small and peaceful assemblies earlier that year; several of his colleagues were placed under investigation.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 1 / 4

The Societies Act requires most organizations of more than 10 people to register with the government; the government enjoys full discretion to register or dissolve such groups. Only registered parties and associations may engage in organized political activity. Despite these restrictions, a number of nongovernmental organizations engage in human rights and governance-related work, advocating policy improvements and addressing the interests of constituencies including migrant workers and women.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 1 / 4

Unions are granted some rights under the Trade Unions Act, though restrictions include a ban on government employees joining unions. Union members are prohibited from voting on collective agreements negotiated by union representatives and employers. Strikes must be approved by a majority of members, as opposed to the internationally accepted standard of at least 50 percent of the members who vote. Workers in essential services are required to give 14 days' notice to an employer before striking. In practice, many restrictions are not applied. Nearly all unions are affiliated with the National Trade Union Congress, which is openly allied with the PAP.

F. RULE OF LAW: 7 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4**

The government's consistent success in court cases that have direct implications for its agenda has cast serious doubt on judicial independence. The problem is particularly evident in defamation cases and lawsuits against government opponents. However, the judiciary is perceived to act more professionally and impartially in business-related cases, which has helped to make the country an attractive venue for investment and commerce.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 2 / 4

Defendants in criminal cases enjoy most due process rights; political interference does not occur in a large majority of cases. However, the colonial-era Internal Security Act (ISA) allows warrantless searches and arrests to preserve national security. ISA detainees can be held without charge or trial for two-year periods that can be renewed indefinitely. In recent years it has primarily been used against suspected Islamist militants. The Criminal Law Act, which is mainly used against suspected members of organized crime groups, similarly allows warrantless arrest and preventive detention for renewable one-year periods. The

Misuse of Drugs Act empowers authorities to commit suspected drug users, without trial, to rehabilitation centers for up to three years.

The dispute over late prime minister Lee Kuan Yew's longtime home raised due process questions during 2017, as Lee's two younger children accused their brother, the current prime minister, of abusing his political power to subvert Lee's will, which called for the house to be demolished once his daughter, who still resides there, moves out. Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong's siblings also alleged that he was using state agencies to harass and monitor them, which he denied. He had established a ministerial committee to examine options for the house's future, but it had yet to issue its report at year's end.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 2 / 4

Singaporeans are largely protected against the illegitimate use of force, and are not directly exposed to war or insurgencies. Prisons generally meet international standards. However, the penal code mandates corporal punishment in the form of caning, in addition to imprisonment, for about 30 offenses, and it can also be used as a disciplinary measure in prisons. Singapore continues to impose the death penalty for crimes including drug trafficking.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

There is no racial discrimination under the law, although ethnic Malays reportedly face de facto discrimination in both private- and public-sector employment. Women enjoy the same legal rights as men on most issues, and many are well-educated professionals, but no laws protect against gender-based discrimination in employment.

The LGBT community in Singapore faces significant legal obstacles. The penal code criminalizes consensual sex between adult men, setting a penalty of up to two years in prison. The law is not actively enforced, but the Court of Appeal upheld its constitutionality in 2014. The Pink Dot parade, held annually in support of equal rights for LGBT people since 2009, drew a turnout of approximately 20,000 in July 2017, despite the ban on foreign funding and participation.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 12 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4

Citizens enjoy freedom of movement and the ability to change place of employment. Policies aimed at fostering ethnic balance in subsidized public housing, in which a majority of Singaporeans live, entail some restrictions on place of residence, but these do not apply to open-market housing.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 3 / 4

Individuals face no extensive restrictions on property ownership, though public housing units are technically issued on 99-year leases rather than owned outright. While the state is heavily involved in the economy through its investment funds and other assets, private business activity is generally facilitated by a supportive legal framework.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

Men and women generally have equal rights on personal status matters such as marriage and divorce, though same-sex marriage and civil unions are not recognized. Social pressures deter some interreligious marriages and exert influence on personal appearance. The government has generally barred Muslim women from wearing headscarves in public-sector jobs that require a uniform, but the issue remains a subject of public debate; President Yacob wears a headscarf. Women do not have legal protections against spousal rape except under special circumstances.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

Singapore's inhabitants generally benefit from considerable economic opportunity, but some types of workers face disadvantages. The country's roughly 200,000 household workers are excluded from the Employment Act and are regularly exploited. Several high-profile trials of employers in recent years have drawn public attention to the physical abuse of such workers. Laws governing their contracts have modestly increased formal protections over the past decade, but the guarantees remain inadequate. Foreign workers are also vulnerable to exploitation and debt bondage in the sex trade or industries including construction and manufacturing. Withholding of pay and passport confiscation are common methods of coercion.

Slovakia

Population: 5,400,000

Capital: Bratislava

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 1

Freedom Rating: 1.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Slovakia's parliamentary system features regular multiparty elections and peaceful transfers of power between rival parties. While civil liberties are generally protected, democratic institutions are hampered by political corruption, entrenched discrimination against the Romany minority, and growing political hostility toward potential migrants and refugees who could augment Slovakia's tiny Muslim population.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- The parliament adopted a constitutional amendment scrapping a series of controversial amnesties issued by former prime minister Vladimír Mečiar in 1998, paving the way for investigation of the alleged 1995 state-sponsored kidnapping of a Slovak citizen and subsequent 1996 murder of a friend of a witness to the crime.
 - Two former government ministers were sentenced to 12 and 9 years in prison for corruption in a public procurement case.
 - A district court awarded financial compensation to a Roma woman on the basis of her forced sterilization in the 1990s.
 - Parliament overrode a presidential veto of legislation that significantly increased the number of number of adherents required for a religious group to be officially
-

recognized and eligible for public subsidies. The measure was widely interpreted as a preemptive step against registration of Muslim religious societies.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 36 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

Slovakia is a parliamentary republic with government under the leadership of the prime minister. There is also a directly elected president with important but limited executive powers. President Andrej Kiska was elected in 2014; as an independent newcomer he gained 59 percent of the vote and defeated Prime Minister Robert Fico in a run-off.

Following elections, the president appoints the prime minister, who is usually the head of the majority party or coalition. Fico has served as prime minister since 2012.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The 150 members of the unicameral parliament are directly elected to four-year terms in a single national constituency by proportional representation vote. The last elections took place in 2016. The ruling party, Direction–Social Democracy (Smer-SD), lost its outright majority and formed a coalition with two other parties, including the nationalist Slovak People’s Party (SNS). The vote took place peacefully and its results were accepted by stakeholders and certified by the State Commission for Elections and the Control of Funding for Political Parties (State Commission).

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

The legal framework is generally fair, and 2014 legislation that addressed some gaps and inconsistencies in electoral laws was praised by a 2016 Organization for Co-operation and Security in Europe (OSCE) election monitoring mission. However, electoral legislation leaves ambiguous whether meetings of the State Commission—which is tasked with oversight of party funding, vote tabulation, and electoral preparations—should be open to the public. In 2016 OSCE monitors were permitted to attend meetings, but they called for explicit regulations allowing the attendance of citizen observers.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 15 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4

Citizens can freely organize in political parties and movements. In 2016, 23 parties competed in the year’s elections and 8 of them entered the parliament.

In May 2017, the prosecutor general filed a motion with the Supreme Court to dissolve the extreme right People’s Party–Our Slovakia (L’SNS) parliamentary party, led by Marián Kotleba, a neo-Nazi and the former regional governor of Banská Bystrica. The prosecutor general argued that the party’s activities violated the Constitution because it aimed to eliminate a democratic regime in Slovakia. L’SNS had entered the parliament in 2016, after taking an unexpected 8 percent of the vote.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

There have been regular alterations of parties in government in the last two decades. In November 2017, elections in eight regions led to the replacement of four out of six Smer-SD regional governors by politicians from the center-right opposition.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

There are few direct limitations on political choices of citizens in Slovakia. The Catholic Church is influential, as are conservative NGOs backed by it.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

Nearly all relevant political parties have expressed bias against LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people, who are poorly represented in politics. The Roma minority is poorly represented, and there have been reports of vote-buying in Roma settlements in local and regional elections.

Women hold one-fifth of seats in the parliament, and are underrepresented in politics generally. The government has worked to implement action plans aimed at achieving gender equality.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 9 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4

Democratically elected politicians are the key agents for determining public policy.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4

Corruption remains a significant problems, though in 2017 the conclusion of a case involving two former SNS construction ministers suggested courts' increasing capacity to address the issue. In October, the former ministers, Marián Janušek and Igor Štefanov, who had served in the center-right 2006–10 government, were sentenced to 12 and 9 years in prison, respectively; the court ruled that they had deliberately bypassed legal guidelines for public procurement in order to give contracts to a group of contractors close to the political leadership. It was the first instance of government ministers' imprisonment in Slovakia.

Separately, in an indication of increasing public confidence in anticorruption structures, results of a survey commissioned by the Slovak branch of Transparency International released in 2017 indicated that 40 percent of citizens indicated that they would report instances of corruption to authorities—the highest share ever recorded in the country.

However, senior officials continue to be implicated in corruption, and such claims sparked public demonstrations in 2017. In an effort to tackle increasing public concern over corruption, Fico in 2017 met representatives of several watchdog groups and floated the idea of establishing a new Protection of Public Interest Office to improve the protection of whistleblowers.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

The law obliges mandatory publication of all contracts in which a state or public institution is a party, but state institutions have at times refused to provide access to such documents. In late 2016, a former employee with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs came forward with allegations that ministry staff had sidestepped proper procurement procedures. In April 2017, the Public Procurement Office (ÚVO), following an inspection of the ministry,

concluded that it had not violated laws on public procurement. However, Transparency International Slovakia, which publicized the allegations, claimed the ÚVO inspection was narrow and did not encompass many relevant contracts.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 53 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 15 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4

Media in general are free and independent, despite substantial pressure on journalists exerted by both from the government and from outlets' owners. Prime Minister Fico in 2017 openly called upon Smer-SD lawmakers to replace the director of public broadcaster Radio and Television of Slovakia (RTVS), whose five-term was up for reinstatement, saying the broadcaster was biased and covered his administration unfairly. The International Press Institute (IPI) criticized the remarks as an "inappropriate and unwise" efforts to control the broadcaster. The incident took place as polling in 2017 showed that the public perceived greater independence at RTVS.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Religious freedom is guaranteed by the Constitution and generally upheld by state institutions. Registered churches and religious societies are eligible for tax exemptions and government subsidies. In 2016, the parliament passed a bill that increased the number of adherents required for a religious group to be officially recognized and eligible for public subsidies from to 50,000 members, from 20,000 previously. The amendment—which came into force in January 2017 after parliament overrode a presidential veto—was widely interpreted as a preemptive step against registration of Muslim religious societies. The government, for its part, argued that it sought to prevent the establishment of a new religious group that existed solely to access public funds.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is guaranteed by the Constitution and upheld by authorities.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

People may discuss sensitive or political topics without fear of retribution or surveillance.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 12 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4

Freedom of assembly is constitutionally guaranteed and upheld by state authorities, and peaceful demonstrations are common.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are free to operate and criticize the state authorities. However, in 2017 they came under pressure from Fico, who suggested in April that street demonstrations critical of his administration were organized by foreign-backed NGOs. Fico added that as a result, NGOs would have to disclose information about their

funding, though no such measures were implemented by year's end. On other occasions, Fico indicated his government's willingness to work with anticorruption watchdogs.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

Trade unions in Slovakia are pluralistic and operate freely.

F. RULE OF LAW: 12 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 3 / 4**

The constitution provides for an independent judiciary. However, there is a widespread perception of a lack of transparency and abundance of corruption in the functioning of the judicial system. Eurobarometer in 2017 issued findings showing that among respondents in all EU countries, those in Slovakia has the lowest confidence in the independence of their judiciary, and that respondents had cited interference or pressure from government and politicians to be the most serious problem. In May 2017 elections to the Judicial Council—a self-governing body overseeing the operation of Slovakia's courts—none of the nominees of an independent judiciary reform initiative known as For an Open Judiciary (ZOJ) were elected, prompting some concern among jurists.

Separately, to increase individual responsibility of judges, disciplinary powers of the bodies tasked with monitoring judicial decision making have increased since July 2017.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 3 / 4

Due process usually prevails in civil and criminal matters. Individual judicial panels, however, occasionally release controversial decisions that critics suggest reflect corruption or intimidation in the judiciary.

In an unprecedented move supported by 129 out of 150 parliamentarians, the parliament adopted in March 2017 a constitutional amendment aimed at scrapping amnesties issued by former Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar. The amnesties, granted in 1998, relate to the 1995 kidnapping of the son of then-president Michal Kováč, allegedly by the state secret service, and the murder of a friend of a key witness in the case. The move was approved by the Constitutional Court. Police had charged 13 people in 1998 but the prosecution stopped due to the amnesties. At year's end there was some speculation that Mečiar himself could face prosecution for issuing the amnesties.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 3 / 4

Police abuse of suspects is a persistent problem. However, some efforts have been made to tackle the issue, including attaching cameras to police uniforms, instituting changes to guidelines on the use of force, and implementing better psychological training for new police recruits.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

The Roma population faces persistent employment and other kinds of discrimination. Recent initiatives to increase policing of Roma settlements have prompted NGOs to express concern about racial profiling. Roma children in primary schools are regularly segregated into all-Roma classes, and many are educated in schools meant to serve children with mental disabilities. In May, a district court awarded financial compensation to a Roma woman on the basis of her forced sterilization in the 1990s, only the second such ruling by the Slovak courts. LGBT people face widespread discrimination.

Women enjoy the same legal rights as men, but are underrepresented in senior-level business and government positions.

A party led by the neo-Nazi Marián Kotleba, the L'SNS, sits in the national parliament as a result of the 2016 elections. The party's entry into the legislature raises concerns about increasing societal acceptance of aggressive and exclusionary nationalist rhetoric. However, the L'SNS performed poorly in regional elections in November 2017, and Kotleba lost his post as regional leader in Banská Bystrica.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 14 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4

The government respects the freedom of movement and the right of citizens to freely choose their residence, employment, and educational institution.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 4 / 4

In general, the government does not arbitrarily interfere with citizens' rights to own property and to establish private businesses.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

Personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, are guaranteed and upheld by the state authorities, but a 2014 constitutional amendment defines marriage as a "unique bond" between one man and one woman. LGBT partners do not have the right to conclude civil unions.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

Severe marginalization of the Roma harms their opportunities for social mobility.

Human trafficking is a problem, and mainly involves the transport of men, women, and children to countries in Western and Central Europe, where they are engaged in forced labor, sex work, and begging. The government had recently increased antitrafficking efforts, including by more frequently investigating and prosecuting organizers. However, sentences are sometimes light, and victim identification and services are inadequate.

Slovenia

Population: 2,100,000

Capital: Ljubljana

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 1

Freedom Rating: 1.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Slovenia is a parliamentary republic with a freely elected government, and political rights and civil liberties are generally respected. However, corruption remains a problem, and there are few convictions in high-profile corruption cases.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In January, lawmakers adopted amendments that can allow the parliament to expel foreigners from the country, without any opportunity for appeal, in instances where a national security threat is perceived. Rights activists criticized the changes as lacking appropriate guarantees against indirect refoulement.
- In July, a court ruled that key evidence in a corruption case against Ljubljana mayor Zoran Janković be thrown out, citing delays by prosecutors.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 39 / 40**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4**

The president holds the mostly ceremonial position of chief of state, and is directly elected for up to two five-year terms. The prime minister is head of government and is elected by the National Assembly. Pahor narrowly won a second term in November 2017 in a competitive and credible election. Miro Cerar became prime minister in 2014 following that year's National Assembly elections, which were similarly well administered.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The 2014 early parliamentary elections for the 90 seats in the National Assembly (Državni Zbor) were free and fair. Stranka Mira Cerarja (SMC) took 36 seats and the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) took 21 seats. The remaining 31 seats went to smaller parties, and two additional seats were allocated to representatives of ethnic minorities.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

The National Election Commission is an independent and impartial body that supervises the elections and ensures that electoral laws are properly implemented.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 16 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4**

The constitutional right to organize in different political parties is upheld in practice. Seventeen parties participated in the 2014 parliamentary elections, including several that had formed that year.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

Political power frequently rotates between center-left and center-right parties.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

People's political choices are free from domination by powerful groups that are not democratically accountable.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 4 / 4

Citizens generally enjoy full political rights and electoral opportunities. In the National Assembly, one seat each is reserved for Hungarian and Italian minorities. Roma are given seats on 20 municipal councils, but are not represented in the National Assembly. About 35 percent of National Assembly seats are held by women, and women's political interests are relatively well represented. There have been national initiatives to involve men and boys in campaigns aimed at guaranteeing the full political rights of women.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 11 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4**

Elected officials are free to set and implement government policy without undue interference.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4

Corruption in Slovenia primarily takes the form of conflicts of interest involving contracts between government officials and private businesses. Anticorruption bodies do not always operate efficiently. In September, a deputy president of the Commission for the Prevention of Corruption (CPC) resigned, citing infighting among its leadership, and called for a variety of reforms at the body as well as an independent audit. Separately, Ljubljana mayor Zoran Janković is facing a number of corruption charges, including money laundering and tax evasion, and at year's end some of the cases against him had been open for roughly three years.

Former prime minister Janez Janša's conviction on corruption charges was overturned by the Constitutional Court on a technicality in 2015, opening the door for him to return to politics.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 4 / 4

While the government usually operates with openness and transparency, recently, journalists' access to public information has been obstructed by financial fees. In response, the journalists' union and other associations in September 2017 called for reforms to the Access to Public Information Act.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 54 / 60 (+1)**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 14 / 16****D1. Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4**

Freedom of speech and freedom of the press are constitutionally guaranteed, but journalists can be legally compelled to reveal their sources. The government maintains stakes in a number of media outlets, and has been known to interfere in the operations of the public broadcaster, Radiotelevizija Slovenija. Defamation remains a criminal offense.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4

The Slovenian constitution guarantees freedom of religion and contains provisions that prohibit inciting religious intolerance or discrimination. After a decades-long struggle to build a mosque in Ljubljana, a groundbreaking ceremony was held in 2013, but its construction has been delayed. There are occasional instances of vandalism of religious buildings, and hate speech by high-profile figures.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is generally respected.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

Individuals are generally free to express their personal beliefs without fear of reprisal. Defamation remains a criminal offense, though a 2015 law amended the defamation statute so that officials may no longer bring defamation cases through the state prosecutor, and instead must pursue such claims as private citizens.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 12 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4

The rights to peaceful assembly and association are guaranteed by the constitution and respected in practice. Assemblies need to be registered with the authorities in advance, and in some instances permits are required.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Numerous nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operate freely and play a role in policymaking.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

Workers may establish and join trade unions, strike, and bargain collectively. The Association of Free Trade Unions of Slovenia controls the four trade union seats in the National Council.

F. RULE OF LAW: 14 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 3 / 4

The Constitution provides for an independent judiciary, but in practice the courts are susceptible to politicization, and there is widespread public skepticism about the judiciary's ability to rule impartially in high-profile cases. In 2017, one court handed down a questionable ruling that key evidence in one of the cases against Janković be thrown out, citing delays by prosecutors.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 4 / 4

The rule of law is respected in civil and criminal matters. Programs aimed at reducing court backlogs have seen some success in recent years.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 4 / 4

People in Slovenia are generally free from threats of physical force. Prison conditions meet international standards, though overcrowding has been reported.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

In January 2017, the National Assembly adopted legislative amendments to the Aliens Act, allowing the parliament to take extreme measures to prohibit foreigners from entering the country and to expel people who entered the country illegally without the effective

right of appeal, if a threat to national security or public order is perceived. Rights activists criticized the changes as lacking appropriate guarantees against indirect refoulement, and the Human Rights Ombudsman filed a request asking the Constitutional Court to rule on the constitutionality of the amendments.

The “erased” is a group of more than 25,000 non-Slovene citizens who remained in Slovenia after independence and were removed from official records after they failed to apply for citizenship or permanent residency in 1992. Legislation adopted in 2010 reinstated the legal status of the “erased,” and in 2014, the country began a national compensation scheme. Nevertheless, the court proceedings in individual cases in Slovenia continue, and the status of all the “erased” is still not resolved.

Roma face widespread poverty and societal marginalization. While there are legal protections against discrimination based on sexual orientation, discrimination against LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people is common.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 14 / 16 (+1)

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4

Citizens enjoy the right to choose their residence, employment, and place of education.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 4 / 4 (+1)

Individuals may exercise the right to own property and establish private business in practice. Expropriation is an extreme measure and is legally regulated. Improvements in transportation and communications technology and relative transparency surrounding business endeavors have helped foster a free environment for business and property ownership.

Score Change: The score improved from 3 to 4 due to the lack of any significant obstacles in individuals’ ability to engage in commercial activity or own property.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

Individuals generally enjoy personal social freedoms. The Marriage and Family Relations Act, which was passed in 2016 and took effect in February 2017, granted people entering same-sex partnerships most of the same rights conferred by marriage, but did not grant same-sex couples the right to adopt children or undergo in-vitro fertilization procedures. Marriage is still legally defined as a union between a man and a woman. Although domestic violence is illegal, it remains a concern in practice.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

Men from other countries in Central and Eastern Europe can be found engaged in forced begging, and women and children are subject to forced prostitution. However, authorities actively prosecute suspected human traffickers and work to identify victims.

Solomon Islands

Population: 700,000

Capital: Honiara

Political Rights Rating: 3

Civil Liberties Rating: 2

Freedom Rating: 2.5

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Political rights and civil liberties are generally respected in the Solomon Islands, though corruption remains a serious issue, and the government does not operate with openness and transparency. Violence against women is a significant problem.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Investigations by the anticorruption body Task Force Janus led to a number of high-profile arrests.
- Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare was ousted in a no-confidence vote in November, and replaced by former central bank governor Rick Hou.
- The Australian-led Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI), which was deployed in the aftermath of a violent conflict in 1999–2000, concluded its mission, and most associated officials had left the islands by year's end.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 28 / 40 (+1)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 9 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

Members of the 50-seat unicameral National Parliament elect the Solomon Islands prime minister, who is the head of government. Irregularities are frequent in the run-up to prime ministerial elections, known as the “second election.” Leading contenders usually separate into camps in Honiara’s major hotels, and bid for the support of other members of parliament (MPs) with promises of cash or ministerial portfolios.

A boat used to transport legislators to and from a neighboring island (to prevent defections) ahead of the 2014 prime ministerial vote was fired upon by unknown assailants, in an apparent effort to disrupt the second election. The MPs nevertheless were able to travel on the vessel to parliament, and participate in the election; Manasseh Sogavare won the vote.

In November 2017, Sogavare was ousted in a no-confidence vote. However, the opposition failed to hold together to elect an alternative leader. Instead, a group of opposition members crossed the floor to team up with Sogavare, and elected Rick Hou, a former central bank governor and World Bank employee, as the country’s new prime minister.

The National Parliament also selects a governor general for a five-year term. He represents the British monarch as head of state and appoints the cabinet on the advice of the prime minister. In 2014, Frank Kabui won a second term as governor general.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

The 50 members of the National Parliament are directly elected in single-seat constituencies by simple majority vote to serve 4-year terms. The parliamentary elections in 2014 were considered a significant improvement over previous elections. Independent candidates dominated the voting, taking a record 32 seats. The Democratic Alliance Party won 7, followed by the United Democratic Party with 5, the People's Alliance Party with 3, and three smaller parties with 1 each. A Commonwealth observer mission concluded that "the election was credible and the results reflected the wishes of the people."

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4

Electoral rolls are much improved in Solomon Islands since the introduction in late 2013 of a biometric voter registration system, which reduced the previous practice whereby many Honiara voters were registered twice, both in their urban residence and on their home islands. In 2014, the Solomon Islands Electoral Commission (SIEC) said it had identified about 5,000 instances of multiple registration; these were referred to police, who said that their limited resources would make the issue difficult to address. The introduction of a single ballot box system has also diminished incidents of electoral corruption and fraud.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 13 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4

There are no restrictions on rights to organize political parties, but alliances are driven more by personal ties and local allegiances than formal policy platforms or ideology, and party affiliations shift frequently, often as part of efforts to dislodge incumbent governments. In 2014, Parliament approved a Political Parties Integrity Act with the aim of encouraging a stronger party system through more formalized registration mechanisms. Many formerly party-aligned legislators responded by standing as independents in 2014 (including the prime minister), calculating that doing so left them with greater flexibility under the new law.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

Opposition parties and candidates may campaign freely, and power shifts frequently between groups. Since 1978, three governments have been ousted in opposition-led no-confidence votes, and prime ministers have resigned to fend off no-confidence challenges on two occasions. No incumbent prime minister has been able to win reelection, although both Sogavare and former prime minister Solomon Mamaloni were able to return to the prime minister's office after a period on the opposition benches.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 2 / 4

Political choices are generally unconstrained, but in some regions of the country church or tribal leaders exert strong influence. On the island of New Georgia, the Christian Fellowship Church secured reelection of its candidate, Job Dudley Tausinga, for decades, but schisms have since emerged on that island.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

Discrimination limits economic and political opportunities for women, and just one woman won a seat in the 2014 elections. Many lawmakers have voiced support for increasing women's participation in the National Parliament, including through reserved seats for women.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 6 / 12 (+1)**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 2 / 4**

Solomon Islands governments have been able to determine national policy, but the islands' fractious politics hamper efficient policymaking. Prime ministers have struggled to sustain control of fractious coalitions, and splits within cabinet are frequent. Ministries are often run as ministers' personal fiefdoms, and are not accountable to the prime minister. The exigencies of survival often lead prime ministers to abandon a focus on their policy agenda. Ministers often defect to the opposition where there is a strong possibility of forming an alternative government.

Former prime minister Manasseh Sogavare left the annual summit of the Pacific Islands Forum in Samoa early in September 2017, to return home in response to political maneuvering aimed at removing him from office. Sogavare was ultimately ousted in November and replaced by Rick Hou.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4 (+1)

Corruption and abuse of office are serious problems, and Sogavare in 2016 and 2017 struggled to win support for anticorruption legislation, largely due to resistance from within his government. However, in the meantime, a number of senior officials have been investigated or arrested in connection with corruption charges due to the efforts of Task Force Janus, a joint anticorruption effort by the police force and Finance Ministry established in 2016. Among those who faces charges under the effort are Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Infrastructure Development Henry Murray, and permanent secretary of the Ministry of Police Edmond Sikua.

The change of government in November 2017 brought many MPs who supported anti-corruption laws into the government.

Score Change: The score improved from 2 to 3 due to an anticorruption drive that has resulted in the arrest of a number of officials on corruption charges.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 1 / 4

Successive governments in Solomon Islands do not operate transparently. Dealings with Asian logging companies are not open to scrutiny. Efforts to improve accountability of funds spent by MPs in their constituencies have not been greatly successful. There is no law stipulating a formal process by which members of the public may request public information.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 44 / 60**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 14 / 16****D1. Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4**

Freedom of the press is usually respected, but politicians and elites sometimes use legal and extralegal means to intimidate journalists. There are several print newspapers. The

government operates a national radio station, and subnational and private radio stations are also available. Subscription television services offer some local content.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Freedom of religion is generally respected.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is generally respected.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4

While private discussion is generally unrestricted, taboos persist regarding the open discussion of some topics, including domestic violence, rape, and child abuse.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 9 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 3 / 4

The constitution guarantees freedom of assembly, and the government generally upholds this right in practice. However, peaceful demonstrations can give way to civil unrest, particularly during contentions parliamentary debate or large-scale labor actions.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 3 / 4

There are no constraints on nongovernment organizations (NGOs). However, many groups operate informally, and the government is not always receptive to the viewpoints of governance-focused groups. Locally based NGOs often lack resources, and there are reports that many such groups adopt platforms designed to win money from international donors, and that as a result, local knowledge bases are neglected.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

Workers are free to organize, and strikes are permitted with certain restrictions. Laws against antiunion discrimination by employers are reportedly ineffective. The country's main labor union, the Solomon Islands National Union of Workers, was disbanded by court order in late 2013 after lengthy litigation over an illegal strike by plantation workers. However, labor activists registered a new entity, the Workers Union of Solomon Islands (WUSI), in 2014.

F. RULE OF LAW: 9 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 3 / 4

The judiciary has a reputation for independence, though it is badly underresourced, and case backlogs persist. The Court of Appeal is mainly reliant on foreign judges.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 2 / 4

Deficiencies in due process are somewhat common, but are mainly a result of limited resources and capacity constraints. Due to case backlogs, the country's prisons house many inmates on remand awaiting trial.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 2 / 4

Rebuilding the police force has been the major focus of the Australian-led Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI), which was initially established in 2003 to maintain peace between the country's two dominant ethnic groups, the Gwale and Malaitans, following a conflict. The local police force was disarmed in 2003, and its paramilitary unit, the Police Field Force (which had participated in a coup in June 2000) was disbanded. Some two thirds of the police officers serving in the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force have resigned, retired or been dismissed since 2003, and an extensive training program has created a much more youthful force, with better representation of officers from across the country, and a better gender balance. In 2016, RAMSI undertook a limited rearmament of the Solomon Islands police force. RAMSI concluded its mission in the Solomon Islands in 2017, and almost all of its associated officials had left the islands by year's end.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

Same-sex sexual activity can be punished with up to 14 years in prison. While cases are reportedly rare, the government has resisted international pressure to decriminalize such activity. Discrimination limits economic opportunities for women.

The Guadalcanal Plains Palm Oil (GPPOL) operation on northern Guadalcanal, one of the country's biggest employers, avoids employing Malaitan labor, even on a casual basis picking loose fruit, for fear of antagonizing local Guadalcanal communities.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 12 / 16**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4**

Informal impediments on freedom of movement exist, particularly in rural Guadalcanal in areas where people from the island of Malaita were expelled during the unrest in 1999–2000. Hostility to Malaitan settlement persists also in parts of the Western Province.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 3 / 4

Property rights are frequently contested. GPPOL has had its administrative buildings attacked on several occasions. Logging concession have been contested by local groups, as have tourism operations.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

Domestic violence is a serious problem in Solomon Islands. A new Family Protection Act, formally criminalizing domestic violence and enabling victims to apply for protection orders, has been implemented, and police have received training on how to interact with victims and handle cases. However, domestic violence and rape are underreported, and there is a reluctance among many victims who do report it to take cases to court.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

Local and foreign women and children are vulnerable to sex trafficking and domestic servitude, including through forced marriages or "adoptions" to pay off debts. Migrant workers sometimes face forced labor in the mining, logging, and fishing industries. Authorities have taken efforts to update antitrafficking laws in recent years.

Somalia

Population: 11,100,000

Capital: Mogadishu

Political Rights Rating: 7

Civil Liberties Rating: 7

Freedom Rating: 7.0

Freedom Status: Not Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Note: The numerical ratings and status listed above do not reflect conditions in Somaliland, which is examined in a separate report.

Overview: Somalia has struggled to reestablish a functioning state since the collapse of an authoritarian regime in 1991. The country's territory is divided among an internationally supported national government, the Shabaab militant group, a semiautonomous government in the Puntland region, and a separatist government in the Somaliland region. No direct national elections have been held to date, and political affairs are dominated by clan divisions. Amid ongoing insecurity, impunity for human rights abuses by both state and nonstate actors is the norm. However, citizens have experienced modest gains in civil liberties in recent years as the government and international troops have reclaimed territory from the Shabaab.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Parliamentary elections that began in late 2016 were completed in February, with a limited electoral college chosen by clan elders casting the ballots.
- The new lawmakers chose former prime minister Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed, also known as "Farmaajo," to serve a four-year term as president.
- The ongoing civil conflict was punctuated in October by a pair of terrorist truck bombings in Mogadishu that killed more than 500 people.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 1 / 40 (+1)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 0 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

Under a 2012 provisional constitution, the president is elected by a two-thirds vote in the Federal Parliament to serve a four-year term. In February 2017, legislators who were not freely elected themselves chose Abdullahi as president after two rounds of voting, rejecting the candidacy of incumbent president Hassan Sheikh Mohamud. Abdullahi then nominated oil executive Hassan Ali Khayre as prime minister, and he was confirmed by Parliament in early March.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

Limited elections for the Federal Parliament were held between October 2016 and February 2017, as the security situation and other factors precluded direct national elections. Members of the 54-seat upper house were elected by state assemblies, while the lower house

was elected under a system in which 135 clan elders chose 275 electoral colleges, each of which comprised 51 people and elected one lawmaker. Corruption reportedly played a major role in the elections.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 0 / 4

The electoral framework in use for the 2016–17 elections did not provide for universal suffrage. The balloting was the result of an ad hoc process based on lengthy negotiations among the country’s main clans.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 1 / 16 (+1)

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 1 / 4 (+1)

Legislation signed in 2016 allowed the first formal registration of political parties since 1969. The National Independent Electoral Commission developed a registration process following the recent elections, and in December 2017 it announced the successful registration of seven parties.

Score Change: The score improved from 0 to 1 due to the formal registration of political parties for the first time in several decades.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 0 / 4

Although there was an orderly transfer of power between the outgoing and incoming presidents in February 2017, there has been no clear division between governing and opposition forces under the clan-based political system, and the lack of direct elections prevents any grouping from gaining power through democratic means.

B3. Are the people’s political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 0 / 4

Ordinary citizens are largely unable to participate in the political process as voters, and the clan-based electoral process in 2016–17 was reportedly distorted by vote buying and cases of intimidation and violence.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 0 / 4

The current political system is designed to ensure some representation for the country’s many clans, but the prevailing “4.5” formula gives the four largest groups eight out of every nine positions, marginalizing all other clans. The system is also dominated by clan leaders, who do not necessarily represent the interests of their respective groups.

Women’s political participation is limited by cultural constraints and hostility from incumbent elites. The 2016–17 electoral framework called for women to hold a minimum of 30 percent of the seats in Parliament, but the actual share after the elections was 24 percent in each house.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 0 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 0 / 4**

The government, which is not democratically elected, has little practical ability to implement its laws and policies even in parts of the country it nominally controls. Its basic operations remain heavily dependent on international bodies and donor governments.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 0 / 4

Corruption is rampant in Somalia, including in the security sector, and state agencies tasked with combatting it do not function effectively. Impunity is the norm for public officials accused of malfeasance.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 0 / 4

Government transparency is limited. Officials are not required to make public declarations of their income and assets, and oversight procedures for public contracts are not well enforced. There is no law guaranteeing public access to government information.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 6 / 60 (+1)**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 3 / 16****D1. Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4**

Somalis have access to relatively dynamic radio and online news outlets. However, while the provisional constitution calls for freedom of the press, journalists face harassment, arbitrary detention and fines, and violence from both state and nonstate actors in practice. At least two journalists were killed in separate suicide bombings in 2017, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists. Proposed reforms of a problematic media law signed in 2016 remained under discussion during the year.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 0 / 4

Nearly all Somalis are Sunni Muslims, though there is a very small Christian community. The provisional constitution recognizes Islam as the official religion, requires presidential candidates to be Muslims, and forbids the promotion of any other faith, but it also includes clauses promoting religious freedom and forbidding discrimination on the basis of religion. Blasphemy and “defamation of Islam” are offenses under the penal code. Religious minorities and dissenters generally keep their beliefs and practices out of public view. In areas under its control or influence, the Shabaab use violence to enforce their interpretation of Islam and a crude version of Sharia (Islamic law), including execution as a penalty for alleged apostasy.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 1 / 4

Limited funding and infrastructure, lack of qualified instructors, and unregulated private education all pose challenges to the country’s educational system. Nevertheless, there are functioning universities in Mogadishu, Garowe, and Bosaso that have improved over time as curriculums have become more developed. Academics reportedly practice self-censorship on sensitive topics. Islamic instruction is required in all schools except those operated by non-Muslim minorities. The Shabaab impose jihadist indoctrination in schools under their control, and children are forced to attend in some regions.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 1 / 4

Individuals enjoy some freedom of expression in more secure areas of the country, but criticism of powerful figures in the state and society can draw reprisals, and open debate is severely restricted in areas controlled or threatened by the Shabaab.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 2 / 12 (+1)**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 1 / 4 (+1)**

Although the provisional constitution guarantees freedom of assembly, security officials require approval for meetings and demonstrations and have used violence to suppress unauthorized protests. Among other incidents during 2017, police in Puntland killed at least one protester in November while using gunfire to disperse a demonstration against price increases related to a port management deal with a Dubai-owned company. Public protests are not tolerated in areas controlled by the Shabaab. Nevertheless, citizens do assemble in Mogadishu and other urban centers to mark important anniversaries, participate in human rights advocacy campaigns, or protest in the wake of terrorist attacks. While a number of political gatherings were reportedly suppressed during the 2016–2017 election period, conditions appeared to improve under the new government.

Score Change: The score improved from 0 to 1 due to the persistence of public assemblies despite police and terrorist violence, as well as reported improvements in the environment for political gatherings after the completion of elections.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 1 / 4

Local civil society groups, international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and UN agencies have been able to conduct a wide range of activities in some parts of the country, but they face difficult and often dangerous working conditions. Regional authorities and security forces have reportedly harassed, extorted, obstructed, and attempted to control NGOs and aid groups, and the Shabaab generally do not allow such organizations to operate in their territory.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 0 / 4

Although independent labor unions are active in Somalia and have worked to expand their operations and capacity, constitutional and legal protections for union activity are not respected. The Federation of Somali Trade Unions (FESTU) has reported threats, dismissals, attempts at co-optation, and other forms of repression and interference from both government officials and private employers, noting that perpetrators benefit from systemic impunity for such abuses.

F. RULE OF LAW: 0 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 0 / 4**

The judicial system in Somalia is fractured, understaffed, and rife with corruption. Its authority is not widely respected, with state officials ignoring court rulings and citizens often turning to customary law or interpretations of Sharia as alternatives. In recent years, the office of the president has removed judges and members of the Judicial Service Commission in contravention of the provisional constitution. President Abdullahi has promised to reform the judiciary, but the chief justice's September 2017 suspension of 18 judges—in what was seen as part of the reform effort—may have also been unconstitutional.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 0 / 4

Safeguards against arbitrary arrest and detention are not observed by the country's police, intelligence, and military services, whose performance is also undermined by corruption. Clan politics and other external factors often play a role in the outcome of court cases. Military courts routinely try civilians, including for terrorism-related offenses, and do not respect basic international standards for due process.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 0 / 4

The ongoing civil conflict featured numerous terrorist attacks on government, international, and civilian targets during 2017. In October, a coordinated pair of truck bombings in Mogadishu killed more than 500 people, making it the deadliest such attack in the conflict to date.

Government security services, international troops, and various local militias have also been implicated in indiscriminate lethal violence and the use of excessive force against civilians. Authorities carry out executions ordered by military courts after flawed proceedings. Detainees are at risk of torture in custody, and perpetrators generally enjoy impunity.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 0 / 4

While the provisional constitution and legal system offer some formal protections against discrimination based on sex, clan, and other categories, they have little force in practice. Women face widespread disadvantages in areas including housing, education, and employment, while members of marginalized clans suffer disproportionately from economic exclusion and violence, including gender-based violence.

LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people generally do not make their identity public. Same-sex sexual activity can be punished with up to three years in prison under the penal code, and individuals accused of such conduct are subject to execution in Shabaab-controlled areas.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 1 / 16**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 0 / 4**

Travel throughout Somalia is dangerous due to the numerous checkpoints across clan and regional territories and the presence of extremist groups in many parts of the country. Security forces and other armed groups commonly extract arbitrary fees and bribes from travelers. More than 2 million people were internally displaced as of 2017.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 1 / 4

The provisional constitution guarantees property rights, but securing ownership is complicated by a mixture of formal and informal or traditional systems governing land rights. Procedures for registering property and businesses are impeded by corruption and other barriers, and disputes can lead to intimidation and violence. Women do not enjoy equal rights to inherit property and are often denied the assets to which they are legally entitled due to discriminatory cultural norms.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 0 / 4

Sexual violence remains a major problem, especially for displaced persons, and the authorities' limited measures to combat it have not been effective. Perpetrators include government troops and militia members. Female genital mutilation is widespread in practice despite a formal ban. Early marriages are common, the Shaabab impose forced marriages with their fighters, and individuals can face strong societal pressure to marry or not marry within certain clans.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 0 / 4

Child labor and trafficking in persons for the purposes of sexual exploitation or forced labor are common, driven in part by widespread poverty, insecurity, and impunity for criminal activity. Refugees and displaced persons are particularly vulnerable. Children are abducted or recruited to serve as fighters by the Shabaab and to a lesser extent by government and militia forces.

South Africa

Capital: Pretoria

Population: 55,700,000

Political Rights Rating: 2

Civil Liberties Rating: 2

Freedom Rating: 2.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: South Africa is a constitutional democracy. Since the end of apartheid in 1994, it has been regarded globally as a proponent of human rights and a leader on the African continent. However, in recent years, the ruling African National Congress (ANC) has been accused of undermining state institutions in order to protect corrupt officials and preserve its power as its support base begins to wane.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Corruption and influence-peddling scandals continued to plague President Jacob Zuma. A series of leaked emails in May revealed additional details about the extent of “state capture”—or influence held over Zuma’s administration—by the Guptas, a wealthy family with close ties to the president. In October, the Supreme Court of Appeal (SCA) upheld a High Court ruling to reinstate 783 corruption charges that had been brought against Zuma before he became president.
- In August, Zuma narrowly survived the fourth no-confidence vote of his presidency. It was the first such vote to be conducted by secret ballot.
- In October, Sy Mamabolo—a highly regarded official—was appointed chief electoral officer at the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC). Mamabolo would lead the IEC in the run-up to the 2019 general elections.
- In December, Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa was elected president of the ANC, defeating Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma—President Zuma’s ex-wife and his preferred candidate—by a narrow margin.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 32 / 40 (-1)**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4**

The National Assembly, the lower house of South Africa's bicameral Parliament, elects the president to serve concurrently with its five-year term, and can vote to replace him or her at any time. Presidents can serve a maximum of two terms. The most recent national elections, held in 2014, were declared free and fair by domestic and international observers. The ANC won with 62.2 percent of the national vote, and the party's president, Jacob Zuma, was elected to a second term as the nation's president.

In August 2017, Zuma survived the fourth no-confidence vote of his presidency. The August vote, unlike the others, was conducted by secret ballot, allowing legislators freedom to vote their conscience. A total of 198 legislators voted against Zuma's removal from office, while 177 voted in favor; there were 9 abstentions.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The 400-seat National Assembly is elected by party-list proportional representation. The 90 members of the upper chamber, the National Council of Provinces, are selected by provincial legislatures. In the 2014 national elections, the ANC's 62.2 percent of the vote translated into 249 of 400 seats in the National Assembly, and clear majorities in eight of nine provinces. The Democratic Alliance (DA) remained the largest opposition party, winning 89 seats with 22.2 percent of the vote, up from 16.7 percent in the previous election, and maintained control over the Western Cape. The newly formed leftist Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) won 25 seats; the Inkhatha Freedom Party (IFP) took 10 seats; and nine smaller parties shared the remainder.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

The IEC is largely considered independent and the electoral framework fair. However, in recent years there have been questions raised concerning the integrity of the commission's leadership. The October 2017 appointment of Mamabolo to the position of chief electoral officer has given new hope that the IEC will be able to reinvigorate its perception of integrity. Mamabolo is well respected and has an excellent track record in his more than two decades of work with the IEC.

Mamabolo's first task will be to ensure that the IEC complies with a 2016 Constitutional Court directive that it accurately records the addresses of all voters on the roll. In October 2017, the IEC launched an online campaign to encourage South Africa's 26 million registered voters to check their details and update them accordingly.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 13 / 16 (-1)**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 3 / 4**

The ANC, which is part of a tripartite governing alliance with the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the South African Communist Party (SACP), has won every election since 1994. Nevertheless, opposition parties are able to compete in elections and have gained significant ground, especially in recent elections.

In 2017, there was increasing strain between COSATU and the ANC over political issues. In October, the tripartite alliance met at ANC headquarters, and both COSATU and the SACP called for Zuma to step down.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 3 / 4

The ANC won by a comfortable margin in the 2014 elections but with a smaller majority than in previous elections—a trend that has persisted for three consecutive elections. In the 2016 municipal elections, the ANC's support declined to its lowest level—53.9 percent—since it took power. The party also lost control of major municipalities, including Tshwane, the metropolitan area that includes Pretoria, the national capital. Opposition gains in local elections in South Africa are especially significant because of the taxation powers and autonomy afforded to municipalities, presenting opposition parties with an opportunity to demonstrate governance capacity.

Since January 2016, approximately 30 political murders have taken place in KwaZulu-Natal province. In April 2017, ANC deputy chairperson of Harry Gwala region, Khaya Thobela, died after being shot in his home. In July, former ANC Youth League leader Sindiso Magaqa was shot and later died in the hospital.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 3 / 4 (-1)

People's political choices in South Africa are largely free from domination from external actors, and the military is professional and generally stays out of politics. However, there is widespread corruption within the ANC, including vote buying from delegates to the party conference and bribes to influence political appointments. There have also been reports of individuals buying party membership cards in bulk in order to hold full control of specific branches of the party. The 2016 report on state capture and other investigations revealed that the Gupta family's close relationship with Zuma enabled it to exercise influence over a wide range of political and economic activities.

Despite fears that Zuma, and the Guptas, would use vote-buying tactics to engineer the election of their favored candidate as party president at the December 2017 ANC congress, Ramaphosa—a figure perceived to be opposed to the Zuma faction—nonetheless emerged victorious. Ramaphosa narrowly defeated Dlamini-Zuma, a former chair of the African Union Commission, after the results were delayed by almost 24 hours due to internal party disputes.

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 due to the influence of wealthy outside interests on the ruling African National Congress, including on the party leadership race and political appointments.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 4 / 4

The constitution prohibits discrimination and provides full political rights for all adult citizens. Women are well-represented in government, holding 42 percent of the seats in the National Assembly and two of nine provincial premierships. South Africa has one of the world's most liberal legal environments for LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 7 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 2 / 4**

Pervasive corruption and apparent interference by non-elected actors hampers the proper functioning of government. In 2017, details of the scope the Guptas' influence continued to emerge. A series of leaked emails revealed the extent to which the Gupta family and their companies have controlled affairs of the state. Among the revelations in the emails, it was shown that the Gupta family and its affiliates helped draft media responses for ANC Youth League president Collen Maine; received confidential information on cabinet meetings from Communications Minister Faith Muthambi; assisted with securing high-level appointments for their allies in state-owned companies such as Transnet; and helped Zuma and his family apply for residency in Dubai.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

Comprehensive anticorruption laws and several agencies tasked with combating corruption exist, but enforcement remains inadequate. Despite the former public protector's findings of massive corruption in the 2016 "state capture" report, no corrective legal action was taken in 2017 and Zuma continued to disparage the report's findings.

In October, the SCA upheld a 2016 High Court ruling to reinstate 783 corruption charges that had been brought against Zuma before he became president.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 3 / 4

Section 32(1) of the South African constitution states that everyone has the right to access "any information held by the state" and requires that private bodies must release any information necessary for the exercise and protection of rights. The 2000 Promotion of Access to Information Act created a framework for access to information procedures in both public and private entities. However, in practice the procedure of accessing information is laborious and bureaucratic.

State contracts worth hundreds of millions of rand were awarded to companies linked to the Gupta family without following proper procedures. A similar lack of transparency and competitive bidding affects the awarding of other government contracts.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 46 / 60 (+1)**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 15 / 16****D1. Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4**

Freedoms of expression and the press are protected in the constitution and generally respected in practice. South Africa features a vibrant and often adversarial media landscape, including independent civic groups that help counter government efforts to encroach on freedom of expression. In 2017, the media played a crucial role in exposing the corruption linked to the Gupta family and the involvement of British public relations firm Bell Pottinger in stirring up racial tensions in the country. Nonetheless, concerns about press freedom have grown in recent years amid increasing government pressure on both state-run and independent outlets.

In 2016, eight journalists at the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), the national broadcaster, were dismissed and subsequently reinstated for speaking out against the policies of then SABC chief operating officer Hlaudi Motsoeneng. In June 2017, one of the eight journalists, Suna Venter, died of a condition caused by prolonged and unnatural stress. Prior to her death, Venter had been harassed incessantly; the brakes on her car were cut, and she was shot in the face with a pellet gun.

In August 2017, Mzwanele Manyi, a Zuma ally, purchased the *New Age* newspaper and the television channel ANN7 from the Gupta-owned Oakbay Investments. The move was viewed as a cosmetic effort to distance the news outlets from the Gupta family.

In November 2017, the State Security Agency (SSA) attempted to block the publication of journalist Jacques Pauw's book *The President's Keepers*. The SSA served the publisher and author with cease and desist letters, demanding that they withdraw the book from stores and revise its content. The book was ultimately published in October 2017. Among other charges, it asserts that the SSA is actively protecting Zuma from prosecution.

Internet access is unrestricted and growing rapidly, reaching around 54 percent penetration in 2016. However, many South Africans cannot afford connectivity.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Freedom of religion is constitutionally guaranteed and actively protected by the government. Religious leaders are largely free to engage in discussions of a political nature without fear of adverse consequences.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom in South Africa is constitutionally guaranteed and actively protected by the government.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

South Africans are generally free to engage in private conversations of a political nature without harassment. However, a 2016 report from the UN Human Rights Committee expressed concern about the government's use of surveillance and the law governing it, the 2002 Regulation of Interception of Communications and Provision of Communication-Related Information Act. In April 2017, the amaBhungane Centre for Investigative Journalism launched a constitutional challenge to the act.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 12 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4 (+1)

The constitution guarantees freedoms of association and peaceful assembly. Freedom of assembly is generally respected, and South Africa has a vibrant protest culture. Demonstrators must notify police ahead of time but are rarely prohibited from gathering. Protests over the government's shortcomings in the provision of public services are common in South Africa, and sometimes turn violent. Police have faced accusations of provoking some protest violence.

Score Change: The score improved from 3 to 4 because the police response to student protests improved in 2017 in comparison to 2016.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

South Africa hosts a vibrant civil society. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) can register and operate freely, and lawmakers regularly accept input from NGOs on pending legislation. In October 2017, ANC legislator Bongani Bongo was sworn in as the new state security minister, amid concerns that he would continue the anti-civil society rhetoric used

by his predecessor, David Mahlobo. In parliamentary hearings to appoint a new public protector, Bongo raised concerns about NGOs acting against the state.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

South African workers are generally free to form, join, and participate in independent trade unions, and the country's labor laws offer unionized workers a litany of protections. Contract workers and those in the informal sector enjoy fewer safeguards. Strike activity is very common, and unionized workers often secure above-inflation wage increases. COSATU dominates the labor landscape but faces growing challenges from factionalism as well as independent unions. Union rivalries, especially in mining, sometimes result in the use of violent tactics to recruit and retain members and to attack opponents; violent and illegal strikes have also increased in recent years.

In March 2017, former COSATU general secretary Zwelinzima Vavi registered a new labor organization under the banner South African Federation of Trade Unions (SAFTU). Unlike COSATU, Vavi has explicitly stated that SAFTU will remain unaligned politically.

F. RULE OF LAW: 9 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 3 / 4

The constitution guarantees judicial independence, and courts operate with substantial autonomy. The Judicial Services Commission appoints Constitutional Court judges based on both merit and efforts to racially diversify the judiciary. A number of recent court judgments held the executive and legislative branches to account in such a manner as to suggest that the judiciary commands significant independence. In July 2017, the Constitutional Court ruled that the vote of no confidence for Zuma could be held by secret ballot, and left the decision on whether to use this method to the speaker of the national assembly. The SCA's October ruling allowing corruption charges against Zuma to be reinstated also demonstrated the independence of the judiciary.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 2 / 4

Prosecutorial independence in South Africa has been undermined in recent years. The National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) has experienced a string of politically motivated appointments and ousters. In December 2017, the High Court ruled that the appointment of the Shaun Abrahams, the director of public prosecutions, was invalid and should be set aside due to his lack of independence in cases involving Zuma. The court ordered that Ramaphosa, the deputy president, appoint a new director within 60 days.

Shortages of judicial staff and financial resources undermine defendants' procedural rights, including the right to a timely trial and state-funded legal counsel. According to the 2015–16 Department of Correctional Services report, detainees wait an average of nearly six months before trial, and some are held beyond the legal maximum of two years.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 2 / 4

According to a Judicial Inspectorate for Correctional Services (JICS) 2015–16 annual report, there is severe overcrowding in some prisons—in part due to delays in holding trials. During this period, 62 unnatural deaths were reported in prisons and there were 811 complaints of assault by prison officials on inmates.

Despite constitutional prohibitions, there are many reports of police torture and excessive force during arrest, interrogation, and detention. The Independent Police Investigative Directorate (IPID) is required by law to investigate allegations of police offenses or

misconduct. In its annual report for the 2016–17 fiscal year, the IPID recorded 696 reported deaths either in police custody or as a result of police action, 112 reported rapes by police officers, 173 reports of torture, and 3,827 reports of assault. Overall, there was a 27 percent increase in total reported incidents from the previous period.

South Africa has one of the highest rates of violent crime in the world. After a decline, murder, attempted murder, and armed robbery increased for the fifth consecutive fiscal year in 2016–17. In this period, an average of 52.1 people were murdered each day. Vigilantism and “community justice” remain problems in South Africa. In September 2017, 11 people were killed in Marikana, Western Cape, as a result of community vigilantism. The wave of killings is purportedly the result of community frustration toward a lack of policing and law enforcement in the area.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on a range of categories, including race, sexual orientation, and culture. State bodies such as the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) and the Office of the Public Protector are empowered to investigate and, in the case of SAHRC, prosecute discrimination cases. Affirmative-action legislation has benefited previously disadvantaged racial groups in public and private employment as well as in education but racial imbalances in the workforce persist. White people, constituting a small minority, still own a majority of the country’s business assets. The indigenous, nomadic Khoikhoi and Khomani San peoples suffer from social and legal discrimination.

The constitution guarantees equal rights for women, which are actively promoted by the Commission on Gender Equality. Nevertheless, women are subject to wage discrimination in the workplace and are not well represented in top management positions.

Xenophobic violence against immigrants from other African countries has broken out sporadically in recent years. In February 2017, South Africa experienced a resurgence of xenophobic violence in Johannesburg and Pretoria. South African citizens looted the homes and shops of foreign nationals, setting several buildings on fire. Political leadership on countering xenophobic violence has been lacking, and in some cases political leaders have blamed foreign nationals for their own failure to deliver on political promises.

There are frequent reports of physical attacks against LGBT people, including instances of so-called corrective rape, in which men rape lesbians, claiming that the action can change the victim’s sexual orientation.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 10 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4

While there are no official restrictions on housing, employment, or freedom of movement for most South Africans, travel and some other personal freedoms are inhibited by the country’s high crime rate. For many foreigners, the threat of xenophobic violence impedes freedom of movement as well. The legacy of apartheid continues to segregate the population and restrict nonwhite opportunity for employment and education.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 3 / 4

The state generally protects citizens from arbitrary deprivation of property. However, the vast majority of farmland remains in the hands of white South Africans, who make up some 9 percent of the population. Illegal squatting on white-owned farms is common, as

are attacks on white farm owners. The government has lagged far behind its own targets for land reform to address the legacy of apartheid. A bill tabled in Parliament in March 2017 would prevent foreigners from buying and owning land in South Africa. The bill, which had yet to pass by the end of 2017, proposed that land be leased on a long-term basis to prospective foreign buyers. Separately, an audit of the country's agricultural land is currently underway.

Despite constitutional protections, women suffer de facto discrimination with regard to inheritance and property rights, particularly in rural areas.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Despite a robust legal framework criminalizing domestic violence and rape, both are grave problems. Only a small percentage of rapes are reported. According to the 2016–17 South Africa Police Service report, an average of 109.1 rapes were recorded each day. Sexual harassment is common, and reports of forced marriages persist.

Same-sex couples have the same adoption rights as heterosexual married couples, and same-sex marriage is legal.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Inequality levels in South Africa are among the highest in the world. Only a small percentage of the population benefits from large state industries and the economy is controlled by a relatively small number of people belonging to the political and business elite.

South Africans, predominantly from rural regions, as well as foreign migrants are vulnerable to sex trafficking and forced labor. Organized criminal syndicates are responsible for the bulk of trafficking.

South Korea

Population: 50,800,000

Capital: Seoul

Political Rights Rating: 2

Civil Liberties Rating: 2

Freedom Rating: 2.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: South Korea's democratic system features regular rotations of power and robust political pluralism, with the largest parties representing conservative and liberal views. Personal freedoms are generally respected, though the country struggles with minority rights and social integration. Legal bans on pro-North Korean activity have sometimes affected legitimate political expression.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In March, the Constitutional Court formally removed President Park Geun-hye from office, upholding the National Assembly's decision in December 2016 to impeach her over an extensive corruption scandal.

- Park was indicted on charges including bribery and abuse of office in April, and her trial, which began in May, was ongoing at year's end.
- A snap presidential election in May resulted in a smooth transfer of power to Moon Jae-in of the liberal Minjoo Party, who ran on a platform of rooting out corruption and restoring civil and political rights.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 33 / 40 (+1)**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 11 / 12****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4**

The 1988 constitution vests executive power in a directly elected president, who is limited to a single five-year term. In March 2017, the eight justices of the Constitutional Court unanimously upheld the impeachment of President Park Geun-hye for “acts that violated the constitution and laws.” She was immediately removed from office, though Prime Minister Hwang Kyo-ahn had been serving as acting president since the National Assembly’s impeachment vote in December.

In keeping with constitutional procedure, a snap presidential election was held in May. Moon Jae-in of the liberal Minjoo Party won with 41 percent of the vote, followed by Hong Jun-pyo of the conservative Liberty Korea Party (formerly the Saenuri Party) with 24 percent and Ahn Cheol-soo of the centrist People’s Party with 21 percent. About 77 percent of registered voters turned out for the election.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The unicameral National Assembly is composed of 300 members serving four-year terms, with 253 elected in single-member constituencies and 47 through national party lists. In the April 2016 elections, the Minjoo Party won 123 seats, while the Saenuri Party won 122. The People’s Party took 38 seats, and minor parties and independents secured the remaining 17 seats.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4

Elections are managed by the National Election Commission, an independent nine-member body appointed for six-year terms. Three members are chosen by the president, three by the National Assembly, and three by the Supreme Court.

While elections are generally considered free and fair, National Assembly constituencies have historically been affected by malapportionment, giving outsized voting power to thinly populated rural areas. A revised map adopted for the 2016 elections mitigated the problem, in keeping with a 2014 Constitutional Court ruling, though the largest constituency population can still be twice the size of the smallest.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 13 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 3 / 4**

Political pluralism is robust, with multiple parties competing for power, though party structures and coalitions are rather fluid. In addition to the two main parties, several smaller groups are represented in the National Assembly, as are a handful of unaffiliated members. Only once has the Constitutional Court legally dissolved a political party—the United

Progressive Party in 2014—for violations of the National Security Law, which bans pro-North Korean activities.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

There have been multiple transfers of power between rival conservative and liberal parties since the early 1990s, and the orderly election and inauguration of President Moon in May 2017 reinforced this democratic pattern.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 3 / 4

Family-controlled business empires known as *chaebol* dominate the country's economy and have amassed significant political influence, which generally enables them to protect their interests despite calls for reform.

The National Intelligence Service (NIS) has been implicated in a series of scandals in recent years, including allegations that it sought to influence the 2012 presidential election and later conducted illegal surveillance targeting Park's opponents.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

Although ethnic minority citizens enjoy full political rights under the law, they rarely win political representation. Philippine-born Jasmine Lee of Saenuri lost her National Assembly seat in the 2016 elections, leaving no lawmakers of non-Korean ethnicity in the chamber. Women also enjoy legal equality but remain underrepresented, with just 17 percent of the seats in the National Assembly. Conservative Christian groups have used their political influence to prevent legislators from adopting stronger laws that would protect LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people from discrimination.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 9 / 12 (+1)

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4

Elected officials generally determine and implement state policy without undue interference from unelected entities and interests.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4 (+1)

Despite government anticorruption efforts, bribery, influence peddling, and extortion persist in politics, business, and everyday life. The Kim Young-ran Act, or Improper Solicitation and Graft Act, establishes stiff punishments for those convicted of accepting bribes. The law applies to government officials as well as their spouses, journalists, and educators. In a survey of 300 domestic companies released in October 2017, 74 percent said the business environment had improved since the law went into force in 2016.

Former president Park was arrested in March 2017 and formally indicted in April on charges including bribery, extortion, and abuse of office. Her trial began in May and was ongoing at year's end, though she refused to appear for hearings or cooperate with state-appointed defense lawyers after her detention was extended in October and her original legal team resigned in protest.

Choi Soon-sil, Park's friend and main conspirator, was sentenced in June to three years in prison for using her political influence to obtain special treatment for her daughter

from university officials; Choi was still facing additional charges. Several other people from Park's administration and its partners in the private sector have been convicted of related crimes. Lee Jae-young, heir to the Samsung conglomerate, was sentenced in August to five years in prison for paying \$7.8 million in bribes to secure Park's support for a business deal that strengthened his control over Samsung Electronics.

Score Change: The score improved from 2 to 3 due to the prosecution of corrupt acts committed under the Park administration.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

The investigations surrounding Park's impeachment illuminated extensive collusion between Park and Choi that also involved business conglomerates and the national pension fund, among other entities, affecting government decision-making on a variety of topics. In 2017, President Moon vowed greater transparency in his administration and pledged to reform the NIS, whose power was found to have been abused in many cases under the Lee Myung-bak and Park presidencies.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 51 / 60 (+1)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 14 / 16 (+1)

D1. Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4

The news media are generally free and competitive, reporting aggressively on government policies and allegations of official and corporate wrongdoing. News coverage or commentary that is deemed to favor North Korea can be censored and lead to prosecution under the National Security Law. A defamation law authorizes sentences of up to seven years in prison, encouraging a certain degree of self-censorship. Journalists at major news outlets have also faced political interference from managers or the government. Despite these constraints, the media have provided extensive coverage of Park's impeachment process and related corruption scandals.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Freedom of religion is guaranteed by the constitution and generally respected in practice.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 3 / 4

Academic freedom is mostly unrestricted, though the National Security Law limits statements supporting the North Korean regime. The 2016 anticorruption law subjects teachers and administrators to the same tight restrictions as public officials. In 2017, President Moon withdrew a controversial set of state-published history textbooks that Park's administration had developed in a failed bid to replace the existing selection of privately published texts, which it accused of having a left-wing bias.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4 (+1)

Private discussion is typically free and open, and the government generally respects citizens' right to privacy. A 2016 antiterrorism law granted the NIS expanded authority to monitor private communications, and its vague definition of "terrorism" raised concerns that it would enable the agency to track government critics, particularly online. The National

Security Law restricts speech that is considered pro-North Korean. However, a pattern of increased surveillance, investigation, and prosecution of online speech during Park's tenure appeared to ease after her impeachment. For example, the overall number of arrests under the National Security Law decreased from 21 in 2016 to 7 in 2017.

Score Change: The score improved from 3 to 4 due to an apparent decrease in the investigation and punishment of online speech under the new administration.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 11 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4

The government generally respects freedom of assembly, which is protected under the constitution. However, several legal provisions conflict with this guarantee, creating tension between the police and protesters over the application of the law.

After the Park-Choi scandal broke in 2016, large protests were organized in the streets of Seoul every weekend, and most proceeded without incident. Demonstrations continued until Park's impeachment was upheld by the Constitutional Court in March 2017. Smaller pro-Park rallies were also held without incident. Protests opposed to the installation of a new U.S. missile-defense system have been common since 2016. In September 2017, police clashed with participants in one such protest, causing injuries to about three dozen demonstrators.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 3 / 4

Human rights groups and other nongovernmental organizations are active and generally operate freely, though they have occasionally faced political pressure when they criticize the government or other powerful interests. In August 2017, after a three-year legal battle, the Supreme Court affirmed an LGBT advocacy foundation's right to register as a charity; the Seoul city government, the National Human Rights Commission, and the Justice Ministry had each refused the group's application.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

The country's independent labor unions advocate for workers' interests, organizing high-profile strikes and demonstrations that sometimes lead to arrests. However, labor unions in general have diminished in strength and popularity, especially as the employment of temporary workers increases. In September 2017, journalism unions organized strikes by over 3,000 journalists to protest against attacks on editorial independence as well as unfair labor practices at the two main public broadcasters, and to call for the resignations of their chief executives.

F. RULE OF LAW: 13 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 4 / 4

The judiciary is generally considered to be independent. The chief justice and justices of the Supreme Court are appointed by the president with the consent of the National Assembly. The justices are appointed based on recommendations from the chief justice, who is assisted by an expert advisory committee. The chief justice is also responsible for appointments to the lower courts, with the consent of the other Supreme Court justices. The president, the National Assembly, and the chief justice each nominate three members of the Constitutional Court.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 3 / 4

Judges render verdicts in all cases. While there is no trial by jury, an advisory jury system has been in place since 2008, and judges largely respect juries' decisions. The courts have sometimes been accused of denying due process and impartiality to defendants in National Security Law cases.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 3 / 4

Reports of abuse by guards in South Korea's prisons are infrequent, and prison conditions generally meet international standards. Violent crime is relatively rare, but the country is still technically at war with North Korea, resulting in a heavy military presence in some areas and the constant threat of renewed combat. Minor incidents of violence near the de facto border are not uncommon.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

South Korea lacks a comprehensive antidiscrimination law. The country's few ethnic minorities encounter legal and societal discrimination. Residents who are not ethnic Koreans face extreme difficulties obtaining citizenship, which is based on parentage. Children of foreign-born residents in South Korea suffer from systemic exclusion from the education and medical systems. There are about 31,000 North Korean defectors in South Korea. Defectors are eligible for citizenship, but they can face months of detention and interrogations upon arrival, and some have reported abuse in custody and societal discrimination.

Women generally enjoy legal equality but face social and employment discrimination in practice. Sexual harassment of women in the workplace is common. In November 2017, a high-profile case in which a female employee reported sexual assault by male colleagues and accused her employer of covering up the incident prompted other women to report abuse by their employers. The Labor Ministry noted a sharp increase in reports of workplace sexual harassment and assault, from 556 in 2016 to well over 2,000 in 2017, though only nine suspects had been indicted as of late November. A revised gender equality law adopted by the National Assembly that month established harsher punishments for employers that cover up offenses or fail to provide training.

Same-sex sexual relations are generally legal, and the law bars discrimination based on sexual orientation. However, there are no specific penalties for such discrimination, and transgender people are not protected as such. A "disgraceful conduct" provision of the Military Criminal Act is used to punish sexual acts between male soldiers, and the rule was aggressively enforced during 2017.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 13 / 16**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4**

Travel both within South Korea and abroad is unrestricted, except for travel to North Korea, which requires government approval. School is free for children between the ages of 6 and 15, but senior high schools charge modest tuition fees, and many families spend heavily on private academies to supplement public education. Individuals can change jobs freely, though the leading business conglomerates tend to focus their recruitment on graduates of specific universities.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 3 / 4

South Korea fully recognizes property rights and has a well-developed body of laws governing the establishment of commercial enterprises. However, the economy remains dominated by large family-owned conglomerates that have been accused of collusion with political figures.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

Women generally have equal rights in divorce and custody matters. Marriage and other forms of legal partnership are not available to same-sex partners. Abortion is considered a crime punishable with imprisonment except in cases of rape, incest, threats to the mother's health, or designated disorders or diseases; all abortions after 24 weeks of pregnancy are prohibited. In July 2017, a widely disseminated video of a man beating his ex-girlfriend led to a 100-day police action campaign to combat violence against women. A Korean Institute of Criminology survey released in August showed that almost 80 percent of the 2,000 male respondents had physically or psychologically abused a girlfriend while they were dating. A survey by the Korea Women's Hotline similarly reported that nearly 62 percent of female respondents said they had been abused while dating.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

Foreign migrant workers are vulnerable to debt bondage and forced labor, including forced prostitution. Korean women and foreign women recruited by international marriage brokers can also become sex-trafficking victims. Although the government actively prosecutes human trafficking cases, those convicted often receive light punishments.

South Sudan

Population: 12,700,000

Capital: Juba

Political Rights Rating: 7

Civil Liberties Rating: 7

Freedom Rating: 7.0

Freedom Status: Not Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: South Sudan, which gained independence from Sudan in 2011, has been ravaged by civil war since late 2013, when a rift between President Salva Kiir and the vice president he dismissed, Riek Machar, triggered fighting among their supporters and divided the country along ethnic lines. Overdue national elections have yet to be held, and the incumbent leadership has presided over rampant corruption, economic collapse, and atrocities against civilians, journalists, and aid workers.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- President Kiir continued to deflect international efforts to end the civil war and negotiate a political solution, refusing to abide by the terms of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (ARCSS), which he reluctantly

signed in 2015. For example, his government obstructed the deployment of a UN Regional Protection Force to secure the capital, Juba, and other urban centers.

- Fighting spread between forces aligned with Kiir's Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) and those associated with former vice president Machar's Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition (SPLM/A-IO). The civil war fragmented into at least five distinct conflicts, with neither of the two leaders exercising full control over their coalitions. A cease-fire was agreed by the main warring parties in December, but fighting nevertheless continued.
- In February, a famine was declared in two counties of the former Unity State. The UN Security Council said the crisis was man-made, blaming government troops for repeated military operations that had displaced tens of thousands of people, and noting that the situation was compounded by the government's obstruction of humanitarian access to the worst-hit areas. Although conditions had improved somewhat by June, the World Food Programme estimated that nearly five million people still faced severe food insecurity as of December.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: -2 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 1 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

Kiir was elected president of the semiautonomous region of Southern Sudan in 2010, and inherited the presidency of South Sudan when it gained independence in 2011. A revised version of Southern Sudan's 2005 interim constitution, adopted at independence, gives sweeping powers to the chief executive. The president cannot be impeached and has the authority to fire state governors and dissolve the parliament and state assemblies. A permanent constitution was due to be passed by 2015, but the National Constitutional Review Commission had yet to produce a draft in 2017.

Elections scheduled for 2015 were postponed. Instead, under the terms of the ARCSS, Kiir's mandate was extended until April 2018. However, he failed to maintain an inclusive Transitional Government of National Unity (TGoNU), which had been established as part of the peace deal. The TGoNU has existed in name only since mid-2016, when an SPLA offensive forced Machar to flee the country. Machar was replaced as first vice president by one of his former deputies, Taban Deng Gai, who brought a small group of SPLM/A-IO defectors over to the government side.

Members of the UN Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan have said that—absent an end to the war—moves to hold elections as scheduled in 2018 would be disastrous, as they would give Kiir's ethnic group, the Dinka, a dominant position that could only be maintained by force.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

South Sudan's bicameral National Legislature is dominated by the SPLM. The upper chamber, the Council of States, includes 20 former members of Sudan's Council of States, plus 30 members appointed by Kiir. The lower house, the 332-seat National Legislative Assembly (NLA), was elected in 2010. Under the terms of the ARCSS, the NLA has been expanded through the addition of 68 members of opposition groups to form the Transitional National Legislative Assembly (TNLA). The mandate of the legislature, which expired in 2015, was extended by the ARCSS until July 2018.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 1 / 4

The ARCSS set a six-month deadline for amendments to be made to South Sudan's 2012 Electoral Act and 2012 Political Parties Act to ensure that they conform to international standards. However, efforts to amend the laws did not begin until September 2017, placing the 2018 electoral calendar in further jeopardy.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 1 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 1 / 4

The SPLM dominates the political landscape and uses its power and resources to sideline opposition parties, which are largely irrelevant. Although a handful of non-SPLM parties are represented in the TNLA, they lack the resources to operate effectively and the experience to formulate policy and set party platforms.

Most political competition takes place within the SPLM. Kiir's faction is hostile toward internal dissent, and his dismissal of opponents in 2013 raised political tensions during the run-up to the civil war. In 2016, Kiir used a successful military offensive to expel Machar from South Sudan and co-opt a wing of the SPLM-IO.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 0 / 4

The civil war means that elections are unlikely to take place as scheduled in 2018. South Sudan's last elections, in 2010, featured the use of violence and intimidation against opposition parties and SPLM members whose loyalty to Kiir was in doubt. In office, Kiir has repeatedly manipulated state boundaries to divide the opposition and obtain a political and security advantage. In January 2017, he contravened the interim constitution and the ARCSS by unilaterally increasing the number of states from 28 to 32.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 0 / 4

The civil war has stifled ordinary politics and created a climate of fear. South Sudan's military, the SPLA, exercises an overbearing influence on political affairs and public life, and the activities of various other armed groups tied to partisan and ethnic factions have made political participation by civilians all but impossible.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 0 / 4

Under Kiir's leadership, the SPLM has sidelined non-Dinka South Sudanese. The exclusion of other ethnic groups, such as Machar's Nuer, has gone far beyond the denial of political opportunities to include violent attacks, sexual exploitation, and the destruction of property.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 0 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 0 / 4

South Sudan's government and legislature, which lack electoral legitimacy, are unable to exercise control over the national territory.

A clique of ethnic Dinka leaders surround Kiir and exert undue influence on decision-making processes. The UN Security Council has accused the group, known as the Jieng Council of Elders, of deliberately sabotaging the peace deal and stirring up ethnic hatred.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 0 / 4

Corruption is pervasive among political and military leaders. The state's resources, including the oil revenues upon which South Sudan's economy depends, are concentrated among an SPLM/A elite associated with Kiir. Military commanders have gained enormous wealth through corrupt procurement deals. In September 2017, the U.S. Department of the Treasury froze the assets of three officials linked to Kiir, accusing them of orchestrating the ongoing violence and "enriching themselves at the expense of the South Sudanese people." They included Paul Malong, the SPLA chief of staff until he was fired in May 2017. Shortly after his dismissal, he was detained near Juba and found to be carrying currency worth millions of dollars that was allegedly stolen from the SPLA treasury.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 0 / 4

Under the interim constitution, citizens have the right to access public information and records held by state entities. These rights are not respected in practice by the government, which is hostile to scrutiny and lacks the bureaucratic capacity to perform its functions, particularly in the midst of a civil war.

ADDITIONAL DISCRETIONARY POLITICAL RIGHTS QUESTION

Is the government or occupying power deliberately changing the ethnic composition of a country or territory so as to destroy a culture or tip the political balance in favor of another group? -4 / 0

International donors have warned of an impending genocide in South Sudan. Since the outbreak of the civil war, both sides have committed atrocities against civilians, but government-aligned forces have been responsible for the worst attacks since the breakdown of the ARCSS. These include ethnically motivated attacks against Nuer citizens in July 2016. The United Nations and the African Union (AU) have documented numerous incidents of murder, torture, rape, looting, displacement along ethnic lines, and forced starvation. Both organizations have accused Kiir's leadership of planning and coordinating some of the worst attacks. The United Nations has noted the use of hate speech by senior officials, including Kiir himself.

In 2017, the UN Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan presented evidence of government attempts to reconfigure the population by flying in Dinka to take up residence in places that other ethnic groups have fled and steering humanitarian assistance in their direction.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 4 / 60 (-2)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 2 / 16 (-2)

D1. Are there free and independent media? 0 / 4

South Sudan's transitional constitution guarantees freedom of the press, but this right is not respected in practice. The country is one of the most dangerous places in the world for journalists. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, at least six have been killed since independence. They include an American freelancer, Christopher Allen, who was killed in August 2017 while embedded with forces from the SPLA-IO. The government described Allen as an enemy combatant but denied reports that its troops had deliberately shot him.

Kiir's government has threatened and detained journalists for reports it does not like or for conducting interviews with SPLM-IO officials. A journalist with Radio Miraya, detained for three years, was finally released without charge in May 2017. While a press complaints council is supposed to adjudicate defamation cases, defamation has been prosecuted under criminal law to stifle free speech. The National Security Service (NSS) seizes pressruns of newspapers or temporarily closes media organizations that fall afoul of its arbitrary standards on what can be reported, causing grave economic harm to such outlets.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 1 / 4 (-1)

The interim constitution guarantees religious freedom, but houses of worship—used as places of refuge for civilians—have been attacked by gunmen seeking members of rival ethnic groups. An investigation by Radio Tamazuj in 2017 found that at least 40 church leaders had been killed since the civil war began in 2013. They included priests and pastors murdered inside their churches by the warring parties.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 due to deliberate attacks on churches and clerics by combatants in the civil war, including the reported murders of at least 40 church leaders since 2013.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 1 / 4

There are no government restrictions on academic freedom. However, the education system has been seriously disrupted by the civil war, with many schools closed or commandeered for military use. A report by the Assessment Capacities Project, a nongovernmental organization (NGO), estimated that by late 2016, one-quarter of schools that had been open at any point since independence were nonfunctional.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 0 / 4 (-1)

The NSS has extensive powers to conduct surveillance and monitor communications. According to the United Nations, agents have used these powers to intimidate and detain journalists, opposition activists, civil society groups, non-Dinka citizens, and even faith-based organizations, forcing many to flee the country.

Score Change: The score declined from 1 to 0 due to pervasive surveillance and intimidation of perceived government opponents by the NSS.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 2 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 1 / 4

South Sudan's commitment to freedom of assembly under the interim constitution is rarely put to the test in the current conditions of war, displacement, and famine, as demonstrations seldom occur. Past protests have been met with excessive force by the authorities.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 0 / 4

The government, including Kiir himself, has adopted a hostile stance toward NGOs, particularly groups that focus on political or human rights issues. According to the United Nations, the NSS has infiltrated civil society organizations, fomenting an atmosphere of

fear and distrust. A law passed in 2016 requires NGOs to get written permission from the authorities to conduct activities and hold a bank account in South Sudan, and at least 80 percent of staff must be South Sudanese.

Special hostility has been directed toward the United Nations, which Kiir has accused—without foundation—of siding with the SPLM-IO. Humanitarian operations have been consistently blocked, workers deliberately targeted, and food supplies looted. Since the war began, more than 70 aid workers have been killed. In one of the worst incidents, six aid workers were shot dead in March 2017.

After the declaration of famine in parts of the country in February 2017, the government announced that the cost of work permits for foreign aid workers would rise from \$100 to \$10,000. The decision was put on hold in April after an international outcry, but in November it was announced that the fee had been set at \$4,000 for some workers.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 1 / 4

South Sudan has yet to pass a comprehensive labor law; a Sudanese law that predates independence remains in force. While it allows workers to form independent unions, it does not provide protections for strikes and collective bargaining. A 2013 law regulates union operations, and the government holds extensive authority to intervene in union affairs. A Workers' Trade Union Federation, formed in 2010, has about 65,000 members, most of whom are public employees.

F. RULE OF LAW: 0 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 0 / 4

Judicial independence exists in theory but not in practice. In November 2017, a Supreme Court judge resigned, complaining of continual interference by the executive in the work of the judiciary. In May, all of South Sudan's judges went on a five-month strike to protest poor pay and working conditions.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 0 / 4

In March 2017, the chair of the UN Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan said that unlawful arrests and detention have become the norm. Under the National Security Service Law, which came into force in 2015, the NSS has almost unlimited powers to detain and interrogate suspects. Dysfunction and lack of capacity in the justice system have led to indefinite detention without charge in many cases.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 0 / 4

Torture and ill-treatment are widespread within the criminal justice system. According to a March 2017 report by Amnesty International, at least 20 detainees died in custody in Juba detention centers between 2014 and 2016.

There is near total impunity for perpetrators of violence and sexual abuse and other war crimes. Recognizing the inability of South Sudan's judiciary to prosecute these offenses, the ARCSS mandated the establishment of a hybrid court, under the auspices of the AU, to take charge of the process. The court had yet to be established at the end of 2017.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 0 / 4

Reports by the United Nations, the AU, and other international monitors have documented repeated, deliberate attacks by government forces against members of non-Dinka

ethnic groups, most of them civilians. The perpetrators have not been brought to justice. The UN Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan has concluded that these activities amount to a campaign of ethnic cleansing by the government.

The interim constitution includes guarantees on gender equality, but women are routinely exposed to discriminatory customary practices and gender-based violence. While same-sex sexual conduct is not explicitly illegal in South Sudan, “carnal intercourse against the order of nature” is punishable by up to 10 years in prison. LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) individuals face widespread discrimination and social stigma.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 0 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 0 / 4

South Sudan’s interim constitution enshrines the rights of free movement and residence, as well as the right to an education. In reality, the civil war, multiple local conflicts, and poor to nonexistent service delivery have made it impossible for many people to exercise these basic rights.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 0 / 4

Land use and ownership are frequent causes of conflict in South Sudan, and returning refugees from earlier wars have exacerbated the problem. Property rights are weak and not respected in practice. There have been multiple allegations of land grabbing and forced evictions in recent years. Customary practices often deny women their legal rights to property and inheritance.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 0 / 4

According to a March 2017 statement by the UN Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan, “the extent and scale of sexual violence in South Sudan is so horrifying that the consequences of doing nothing are unthinkable.” The commission concluded that the failure of the government to take action against the perpetrators meant that sexual abuse had become entrenched.

Customary law puts women at a disadvantage in matters of divorce and child custody. Forced and early marriages are common, and spousal rape is not a crime.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 0 / 4

The collapse of the national economy has led to rampant inflation that puts the prices of essential goods out of reach for ordinary people. Civil servants went several months without pay in 2017 because the government said it lacked the necessary funds.

Sex and labor trafficking is widespread, with rural women and girls, the internally displaced, and migrants from neighboring countries among the most vulnerable to exploitation. Armed groups involved in the civil war have routinely recruited child soldiers.

Spain

Population: 43,300,000

Capital: Madrid

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 1

Freedom Rating: 1.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Spain's parliamentary system features competitive multiparty elections and peaceful transfers of power between rival parties. The rule of law prevails, and civil liberties are generally respected. Although political corruption remains a concern, high-ranking politicians and other powerful figures have been successfully prosecuted. Restrictive legislation adopted in recent years poses a threat to otherwise robust freedoms of expression and assembly. A persistent separatist movement in Catalonia represents the leading challenge to the country's constitutional system and territorial integrity.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Defying orders from the Constitutional Court, a separatist-led regional government in Catalonia held a referendum on independence in October and subsequently attempted to declare an independent Catalan republic. However, the central government suspended the region's autonomy and ordered regional elections for December. Separatist parties again won control of the Catalan legislature and were working to form a new regional government at year's end.
- Ousted Catalan regional president Carles Puigdemont and several of his allies fled the country to avoid charges of rebellion and other offenses linked to the illegal referendum. Some separatist politicians and activists were detained pending trial.
- Cristina de Borbón, sister of King Felipe VI, was acquitted of tax fraud in a high-profile corruption case in February, but her husband was sentenced to more than six years in prison for his role in a scheme to obtain lucrative no-bid contracts from regional government bodies.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 38 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 11 / 12 (-1)

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

Following legislative elections, the monarch selects a candidate for prime minister, generally the leader of the party or coalition with a majority in the lower house. The parliament then votes on the selected candidate.

Incumbent prime minister Mariano Rajoy of the conservative Popular Party (PP) formed a new minority government in November 2016 after members of the opposition Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) agreed to abstain from a vote to confirm him in office. The move ended an impasse that began almost a year earlier. Either the PP or the PSOE have typically held a parliamentary majority in recent decades, but the success of two newer parties—the left-wing Podemos and center-right Ciudadanos—in the December 2015 elections triggered months of fruitless coalition talks, followed by fresh elections in June 2016 that similarly failed to produce a governing majority.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The lower house of Spain's bicameral parliament, the Congress of Deputies, is composed of 350 members elected in multimember constituencies for each of Spain's provinces, with the exception of the North African enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, each of which has one single-member constituency. The Senate has 266 members, 208 of whom are elected directly, and 58 of whom are chosen by regional legislatures. Members of both chambers serve four-year terms.

Spain's elections are generally considered free and fair. In the June 2016 parliamentary elections, the PP emerged with 137 seats in the Chamber of Deputies, followed by the PSOE with 85, Podemos with 45, Ciudadanos with 32, and several smaller parties with the remainder. The PP and its allies also took 130 directly elected seats in the Senate, giving them an overall majority of 151 in the upper chamber; the PSOE placed second with a total of 63 seats.

Regional elections in Catalonia were held in December 2017 after Prime Minister Rajoy dissolved Puigdemont's government in the wake of the illegal referendum on independence. Ciudadanos, which strongly opposes Catalan independence, led the voting with 36 seats, but the three separatist parties won a combined 70 seats in the 135-seat legislature, and they were in the process of forming another government at year's end. The PP took just 4 seats, the regional branch of the PSOE won 17, and the left-wing Catalonia in Common took 8.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4 (-1)

Spain's constitution and electoral laws provide the legal framework for democratic elections, and they are generally implemented fairly. However, the initiation and conduct of the October 2017 independence referendum in Catalonia featured a number of fundamental flaws.

The Catalan parliament's separatist majority voted in September to approve the referendum plan and procedures for declaring independence in the event of a "yes" vote, despite the fact that such moves had previously been banned by the courts on constitutional grounds. Opposition parties also cited violations of parliamentary procedure and walked out of the session. The Constitutional Court almost immediately suspended the legislation pending a review of its constitutionality, but the Catalan government ignored the court's order and held the vote on October 1. The court then confirmed that it violated the constitution in several ways and had no legal force.

For its part, the central government used aggressive methods to disrupt the referendum, adding to a chaotic environment that did not allow for fair and transparent balloting. Police deployed by the central authorities were ordered to halt the vote, in part by seizing ballot materials, and in some cases they used baton charges against peaceful demonstrators outside polling locations, leading human rights groups to allege excessive force. Some protesters also assaulted police. Separatist officials changed the voting rules just before balloting began, allowing citizens to cast ballots at any polling location; unofficial ballots were permitted, without the usual envelopes and other safeguards. Meanwhile, Spanish authorities blocked a number of websites related to the referendum.

The Catalan government reported that about 90 percent of referendum participants had voted for independence, with turnout at some 42 percent. Puigdemont then declared the independence of Catalonia but said its "effects" would be suspended pending a dialogue with Madrid. The central authorities responded by charging the Catalan leader and several other regional officials and independence activists with offenses such as rebellion, sedition,

and misuse of public funds. Some were placed in pretrial detention, while others, including Puigdemont, fled abroad and remained there at year's end.

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 due to the flawed Catalan independence referendum, which was held in defiance of court orders under conditions that did not guarantee a free and fair vote.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 16 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4

Citizens are free to organize political parties, which are able to function without interference in practice. While the PP and the PSOE dominated what had traditionally been a two-party system, corruption scandals and persistent economic woes in recent years have weakened their grip on power, permitting the rise of Podemos and Ciudadanos.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

There have been multiple democratic transfers of power between rival parties since Spain returned to democracy in the late 1970s. The most recent change in government occurred in 2011, when Rajoy and the PP replaced a PSOE leadership that had been in power for nearly eight years.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

Voting and political affairs in general are largely free from undue interference by unelected or external forces.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 4 / 4

Women and minority groups enjoy full political rights. Women are relatively well represented in politics, with more than 39 percent of the seats in the Chamber of Deputies. Spain's system of regional autonomy grants significant powers of self-government to the country's traditional national minorities, including Catalans and Basques.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 11 / 12 (+1)

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4 (+1)

Elected officials are generally free to make and implement laws and policies without undue interference. However, the partisan stalemate that followed the December 2015 elections left Spain without a full-fledged government until late 2016, when the PSOE acquiesced to a PP minority government rather than risk further instability. Prime Minister Rajoy struggled to pass legislation during 2017, as doing so required multiparty negotiations, but his government remained in place throughout the year.

Score Change: The score improved from 3 to 4 due to the end of a political impasse that had left the country without a national government for most of the previous year.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4

Concerns about official corruption often center on party financing. Though most party expenses are funded by the state, a 2007 law confirmed the right of political parties to use commercial bank loans as well. In 2012, Spain strengthened rules on political financing by restricting access to loans, increasing transparency, and establishing an audit framework. In 2015, new legislation prohibited banks from forgiving debt owed by political parties.

Although the courts have a solid record of investigating and prosecuting corruption cases, the system is often overburdened, and cases proceed slowly. A number of high-profile corruption cases continued during 2017. In July, Rajoy testified as a witness in a trial focused on alleged illegal financing of the PP and a related system of kickbacks for public contracts. The trial was ongoing at year's end. Separately, Cristina de Borbón, sister of Spain's current king, was acquitted of tax fraud in February, but her husband was sentenced to six years and three months in prison for offenses including tax evasion, fraud, and embezzlement, having used his influence to obtain inflated no-bid contracts from regional governments. A former regional premier from the Balearic Islands was among the other defendants in the case, receiving three years and eight months in prison.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 4 / 4

Legal safeguards to ensure government transparency include asset-disclosure rules for public officials and laws governing conflicts of interest. The Transparency Act, which took effect in 2014, is meant to facilitate public access to government records, though freedom of information activists have reported onerous procedures and called for improvements to the law.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 56 / 60**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 15 / 16****D1. Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4**

Spain has a free and active press that covers a wide range of perspectives and actively investigates high-level corruption. However, consolidation of private ownership and political interference at public outlets pose threats to media independence. In 2017, the national public broadcaster RTVE was criticized by its own journalists and its news council—tasked with monitoring its impartiality—for biased coverage of the Catalonia crisis. The crisis also featured pressure on journalists from both sides, including intimidation on social media, threats of prosecution, and assaults during clashes between police and protesters. Spanish authorities sought to block websites that shared information about the referendum.

A controversial public safety law that took effect in 2015, nicknamed the “gag law” by its critics, established large fines for offenses including spreading images that could endanger police officers or protected facilities. Journalists continued to face penalties for alleged violations of the law while reporting on police actions during 2017.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Religious freedom is guaranteed in the constitution and respected in practice. As the country's dominant religion, Roman Catholicism enjoys benefits not afforded to others, such as financing through the tax system. However, Jews, Muslims, and Protestants also have certain privileges through agreements with the state, including tax exemptions and permission to station chaplains in hospitals and other institutions. Other groups that choose to register can obtain a legal identity and the right to own or rent property.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

The government does not restrict academic freedom in law or in practice.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

Private discussion remains open and vibrant, but more aggressive enforcement of laws banning the glorification of terrorism has begun to threaten free speech, with dozens of people—including social media users and several performers—found guilty in recent years for what often amounts to satire, artistic expression, or political commentary.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 11 / 12**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 3 / 4**

The constitution provides for freedom of assembly, and the authorities typically respect this right in practice. However, the public safety act that took effect in 2015 imposed a number of restrictions, including fines of up to €600,000 (\$680,000) for participating in unauthorized protests outside key buildings or infrastructure. In 2017, separate protests by drought-stricken farmers and opponents of a new rail line in the Murcia region led to smaller fines for blocking roads and other infractions.

Police actions during referendum-related demonstrations in Catalonia prompted allegations of excessive force against protesters. Two prominent independence activists, Jordi Cuixart and Jordi Sánchez, were charged with sedition for leading protests aimed at preventing police from halting the referendum; they remained in detention at year's end.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Domestic and international nongovernmental organizations operate without significant government restrictions.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

With the exception of members of the military and national police, workers are free to organize in unions of their choice, engage in collective bargaining, and mount legal strikes.

F. RULE OF LAW: 15 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 4 / 4**

The constitution provides for an independent judiciary, and the courts operate autonomously in practice. However, the Council of Europe has criticized the fact that under current law, the 12 judges who sit on the 20-member General Council of the Judiciary—which oversees the courts and ensures their independence—are not directly elected by their peers, but appointed through a three-fifths vote in the parliament, as with the other eight members. Experts have argued that this arrangement increases the risk of political influence. In response to the Council of Europe's recommendations, the parliament as of late 2017 was reportedly drafting legislation that would institute direct elections by judges for the 12 seats in question.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 4 / 4

The authorities generally observe legal safeguards against arbitrary arrest and detention, though judges can authorize special restrictions on communication and delayed arraignment for detainees held in connection with acts of terrorism. Defendants enjoy full due process rights during trial.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 4 / 4

Prison conditions generally meet international standards, though short-term internment centers for irregular migrants have sometimes suffered from overcrowding and other problems.

Terrorism by radical Islamist groups remains a threat. In August 2017, a group of terrorists carried out two vehicular attacks on crowds in Catalonia, killing 16 people before being arrested or shot dead by police.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

Women, racial minorities, and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people enjoy legal protections against discrimination and other mistreatment, though a degree of societal bias persists. Women continue to face inequities in employment and compensation, while some minority groups—including Roma—remain economically marginalized and are allegedly subject to police profiling.

Spain is a major entry point for irregular migrants and refugees, many of whom congregate at the border between Morocco and the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla. In October 2017, the European Court of Human Rights found that Spain's practice of summarily expelling those who manage to cross the border fence is unlawful under the European Convention on Human Rights. Such expulsions were authorized by the public safety act that took effect in 2015.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 15 / 16**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4**

There are no significant restrictions on individuals' freedom to travel within the country or abroad, or to change their place of residence, employment, or education.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 4 / 4

The legal framework supports property rights, and there are no major restrictions on private business activity.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 4 / 4

There are legal protections against domestic abuse and rape, including spousal rape; while both remain problems in practice, the government and civil society groups work actively to combat them.

Same-sex marriage has been legal in Spain since 2005, and same-sex couples may adopt children.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

Residents generally have access to economic opportunity and protection from exploitative working conditions, but despite strong antitrafficking efforts by law enforcement agencies, migrant workers remain vulnerable to debt bondage, forced labor, and sexual exploitation.

Sri Lanka

Population: 20,900,000

Capital: Colombo

Political Rights Rating: 3

Civil Liberties Rating: 4

Freedom Rating: 3.5

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Sri Lanka has experienced improvements in political rights and civil liberties since the 2015 election of President Maithripala Sirisena, who reversed a number of repressive policies and has worked to repair government relations with the ethnic Tamil minority. However, the government has been slow to implement transitional justice mechanisms needed to address the aftermath of a 26-year civil war between government forces and Tamil rebels, which ended in 2009.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In September, the country's Constitutional Assembly, through its Steering Committee, released an interim report on constitutional reform that
- contained a draft constitution. Its release was a notable step toward political decentralization, which is considered key to establishing a sustainable peace.
- The Office of Missing Persons, which is tasked with setting up a database of missing persons, advocating for the missing persons and their families, and recommending redress, became operational in September. Authorities have yet to implement numerous other transitional justice mechanisms outlined in a 2015 UN resolution that Sri Lankan authorities had assented to.
- In November, allegations of the torture and sexual assault of some 50 Tamil men by members of the security forces emerged in the international media.
- In February, the Right to Information Act was operationalized under the Ministry of Information.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 24 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 8 / 16

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

The 1978 constitution vested strong executive powers in the president, but the approval in 2015 of the 19th Amendment curtailed those powers somewhat by reintroducing term limits—limiting the president to two five-year terms—and requiring the president to consult the prime minister on ministerial appointments. In the 2015 presidential election, then president Mahinda Rajapaksa suffered a surprise defeat, with his opponent, Maithripala Sirisena, winning 51 percent of the vote; turnout was a record 82 percent. Monitors from the Commonwealth Observer Group noted government abuses of administrative resources, as well as preelection violence that mainly affected Sirisena supporters, but deemed the election generally credible.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

The 225-member unicameral Parliament is elected for six-year terms through a mixed proportional representation system. The prime minister heads the leading party in Parliament, but has limited authority. In the 2015 parliamentary elections, the United National Party (UNP) led a coalition, the National Front for Good Governance, to a victory with 106 seats. The United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) took 95 seats, while the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), the largest party representing the ethnic minority, won 16 seats. While dozens of violent incidents, including murder, were reported prior to the elections, the polling itself was considered credible.

Local council elections, originally set for 2015, had not been held by the end of 2017, with the government having cited problems involving the delimitation of voting districts.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 2 / 4

Lawmakers continued debating electoral reforms in 2017, but progress was slow, due in part to differing opinions over whether constitutional reforms should come before or after electoral ones.

The Steering Committee of the Constitutional Assembly in September released an interim report containing a draft constitution. The draft charter included measures to devolve many powers of the central government to the regions, which is considered a key to establishing a sustainable peace. Debates on the interim report were ongoing at year's end.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 10 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 3 / 4

A range of political parties are able to operate freely and contest elections.

Following a 2015 coalition agreement between the UNP and SLFP, disgruntled SLFP members including Rajapaksa, along with other lawmakers, vowed to sit in the opposition. In 2016, the parliament speaker drew criticism after refusing to recognize the group, known as the Joint Opposition, as an independent parliamentary grouping.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 3 / 4

Opposition groupings are generally free to carry out peaceful political activities and are able to win power through elections. However, opposition figures and supporters sometimes face harassment.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 2 / 4

Members of the country's military visibly supported the incumbent ahead of 2015 presidential election. Election monitors have expressed concern about the potential for the military to intimidate voters and disrupt polling. Separately, monitors said the government offered gifts and handout to voters ahead of the 2015 presidential election.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 2 / 4

A number of parties explicitly represent the interests of ethnic and religious minority groups, including several Tamil parties, as well as the Sri Lankan Muslim Congress, the

country's largest Muslim party. Tamil political parties and civilians faced less harassment and fewer hindrances in voting during 2015 presidential and parliamentary elections, compared to the 2010 elections. However, systemic discrimination, including via language laws and naturalization procedures, negatively affects Tamils' political participation. The interests of women are not well-represented in Sri Lankan politics.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 7 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 3 / 4

Government accountability has improved under Sirisena, as the Rajapaksa family's power over various ministries waned and Parliament has taken a greater role in setting policy. The passage of the 19th Amendment in 2015 and the strengthening of independent commissions—including the National Human Rights Commission and the National Police Commission—represented important steps toward improving accountability mechanisms and reversing Rajapaksa's consolidation of executive power.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

The Sirisena administration continued its efforts to fight corruption in 2017, though some critics note that corruption investigations and related arrests have led to few major prosecutions. In November 2017, Sri Lanka's cabinet approved a measure that would establish a new High Court to conduct corruption trials that involve government officials.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

In February 2017, a Right to Information Act approved by Parliament in 2016 was operationalized under the Ministry of Information. However, access to information provisions are relatively new in Sri Lanka, and a pattern of enforcement has yet to be established.

ADDITIONAL DISCRETIONARY POLITICAL RIGHTS QUESTION

Is the government or occupying power deliberately changing the ethnic composition of a country or territory so as to destroy a culture or tip the political balance in favor of another group? -1 / 0

Following the end of the Sri Lankan Civil War in 2009, the traditionally Tamil areas of the north and east have seen a heightened military presence. The Rajapaksa government encouraged settlement by ethnic Sinhalese civilians by providing land certificates, housing, and other infrastructure, with the aim of diluting Tamil dominance in these areas. While such policies have ended under the new government, and some land has been released, displacement of Tamil civilians remains a concern.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 31 / 60 (-1)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 8 / 16 (-1)

D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4

Freedom of expression is guaranteed in the constitution, and respect for this right has dramatically improved since 2015. Since then, laws restricting media freedom have been invoked less frequently, and verbal and physical attacks against journalists have decreased.

However, challenges to press freedom persist. Senior officials including the prime minister have expressed hostility toward the media in public remarks. Impunity for past crimes against journalists is a problem. Several investigations into journalists' killings have been reopened in recent years, but none have resulted in convictions.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 2 / 4

The constitution gives special status to Buddhism. Religious minorities face discrimination and occasional violence. There have been attacks against members of the Christian and Muslim minorities, and monitors recorded more than 20 attacks against Muslims between mid-April and mid-June of 2017 alone. In October, a Buddhist monk and his associates were arrested and charged with crimes including property destruction in connection with their protest against the presence in Sri Lanka of Rohingya Muslim refugees from Myanmar, who were seeking asylum.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 2 / 4

Academic freedom is generally respected, but there are occasional reports of politicization in universities, and a lack of tolerance for dissenting views by both professors and students, particularly for academics who study issues related to the Tamil minority.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 2 / 4 (-1)

The civil war remains a sensitive topic. In 2017, there were reports of small, private remembrance activities commemorating those who died in the conflict being disrupted by security forces. Harassment by state officials of civil society activists working on human rights issues in the north and east of the country has deterred open discussion of those topics among private citizens.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 because harassment of rights activists in the north and east of the country has inhibited private discussion of related issues, and due to reports that security forces disrupted private memorial activities for those who died in the civil war.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 8 / 12**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 2 / 4**

Although demonstrations occur regularly, authorities sometimes restrict freedom of assembly. Police occasionally use tear gas and water cannons to disperse protesters. The army has continued to impose some restrictions on assembly in the north and east, particularly for planned memorial events concerning the end of the long-running civil war, in which the leaders of the Tamil rebels were killed.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 3 / 4

Conditions for NGOs have improved dramatically since 2015. However, some NGOs have faced difficulty operating in the northern and eastern areas of the country. Although the United Nations and humanitarian organizations are generally given access to former conflict zones, reports of harassment and interference against, and surveillance of, civil society activists and victims' groups working on human rights issues in those areas continued in 2017.

In March, police officers threatened the family of an activist with the Pupil Salvation Forum, a civil society organization that works to assist victims of the conflict, after he had addressed the UN Human Rights Council.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

Most of Sri Lanka's trade unions are independent and legally allowed to engage in collective bargaining. Except for civil servants, most workers can hold strikes, though the 1989 Essential Services Act allows the president to declare any strike illegal.

While more than 70 percent of the mainly Tamil workers on tea plantations are unionized, employers routinely violate their rights. Harassment of labor activists and official intolerance of union activities, particularly in export processing zones, are regularly reported.

F. RULE OF LAW: 7 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 2 / 4

Corruption and politicization remains common in the lower courts, but threats and political interference have abated somewhat under the Sirisena government. In past years there has been some evidence of the executive attempting to influence the judiciary, such as when the prime minister in 2016 asked the parliament speaker to overrule a Supreme Court judgment.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 2 / 4

Due process rights are undermined by the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), under which suspects can be detained for up to 18 months without trial. The law has been used to detain perceived enemies of the government, and many detained under the PTA's provisions have been held for longer than the law mandates is legal. Civil society groups continue to clamor for its repeal.

The cabinet in May 2017 approved a draft of a new Counter Terrorism Act (CTA) intended to replace the PTA. Its broad scope prompted concern among civil society groups and other observers, as did its continued allowance of detention without charge and inadequate oversight provisions.

Authorities have yet to implement numerous transitional justice mechanisms outlined in a 2015 UN resolution that Sri Lankan authorities had assented to. These include a truth commission and a war crimes court. However, an Office of Missing Persons, which is tasked with setting up a database of missing persons, advocating for the missing persons and their families, and recommending redress, became operational in September 2017. Months earlier, in March, the UN Human Rights Council unanimously voted to extend the resolution's implementation by two years.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 2 / 4

Police and security forces have engaged in abusive practices, including arbitrary arrest, extrajudicial execution, forced disappearance, custodial rape, torture, and prolonged detention without trial, all of which disproportionately affect Tamils. In November 2017, allegations of torture and sexual assault of some 50 Tamil men by members of the security forces emerged in the international media. Due to huge backlogs and a lack of resources, independent commissions have been slow to investigate allegations of police and military misconduct.

Some 65,000 people have been reported disappeared since the government began accepting such reports in 1994; the disappearances occurred during two conflicts: an uprising in the late 1980s, and the 26-year civil war that ended in 2009. Separately, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center estimated that around 44,000 people forced to flee their homes due to conflict and violence remained displaced as of December 2016.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

Tamils report systematic discrimination in areas including government employment, university education, and access to justice. The status of Sinhala as the official language puts Tamils and other non-Sinhala speakers at a disadvantage.

LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people face societal discrimination, occasional instances of violence, and some official harassment.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 8 / 16**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 2 / 4**

Freedom of movement is restricted by security checkpoints, particularly in the north, but recent years have seen greater freedom of travel. Access to education is affected by corruption from the primary through the tertiary levels.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

Government appropriation of land in the north and east as part of economic development projects or “high security zones” following the end of the civil war had prevented local people from returning to their property. However, the Sirisena administration has released some military-held land for resettlement by displaced civilians.

There have been few official attempts to help Muslims forcibly ejected from the north by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE or Tamil Tigers) rebel group in the early 1990s to return to their homes.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Women face sexual harassment as well as unequal wages and promotion opportunities in the workplace. Rape of women and children and domestic violence remain serious problems. Although women have equal rights under civil and criminal law, matters related to the family—including marriage, divorce, child custody, and inheritance—are adjudicated under the customary law of each ethnic or religious group, and the application of these laws sometimes results in discrimination against women.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Migrant workers are often exposed to exploitative labor conditions. Although the government has increased penalties for employing minors, thousands of children continue to work as household servants, and many face abuse. Women and children can be found engaging in forced sex work. The government in recent years has made some attempts to address human trafficking, including by establishing a specialized police unit to assist victims and those who report trafficking.

St. Kitts and Nevis

Population: 46,000

Capital: Basseterre

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 1

Freedom Rating: 1.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: St. Kitts and Nevis is one of the world's smallest parliamentary democracies. The islands have a history of competitive and credible elections, and civil liberties are generally upheld. There are some concerns about government corruption and transparency, particularly in regard to the Citizenship by Investment Program (CIP). Authorities in recent years have struggled to address a rising crime rate.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Former Jamaica Defense Force head Stuart Saunders was controversially appointed as the country's new national security adviser in July. Saunders had faced severe criticism for his actions during a 2010 police operation in Jamaica to capture a drug lord, which had left 74 people dead.
- In a March report, the US State Department noted that despite government efforts to improve safeguards for the country's Citizenship by Investment Program (CIP), it was still characterized by "significant deficiencies in vetting candidates."

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 36 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 10 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The prime minister, usually the leader of the largest party in parliament, is head of government. They are normally appointed after legislative elections by the governor general, who represents the British monarch as head of state. The prime minister and governor general have historically been installed according to the country's laws.

After the 2015 elections, Timothy Harris, leader of Team Unity—an umbrella organization of the two main opposition parties, the People's Action Movement (PAM) and the People's Labor Party (PLP) in St. Kitts, and the Concerned Citizens Movement (CCM) in Nevis—was appointed prime minister.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

There are 14 seats in the unicameral National Assembly—8 for representatives from Saint Kitts, 3 from Nevis, and 3 appointed by the governor general; all serve five-year terms. Team Unity won the 2015 parliamentary election, taking 7 of the 11 directly elected seats and unseating the Labor Party (SKNLP), which had been in government for two decades. The vote took place peacefully and was considered credible, but a number of shortcomings were observed. Opposition candidates and others criticized a lack of campaign finance legislation, and a monitoring mission from the Organization of American States (OAS) noted that

the difference between state resources and SKNLP financing was not always clear. Some observers also noted that the government enjoyed disproportionate access to state-owned media for campaign purposes.

Local elections in Nevis were held in December 2017, resulting in a win for the incumbent CCM.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4

Electoral laws are generally fair, and are usually implemented impartially by the Electoral Commission. However, the lead-up to the 2015 elections saw an eleventh-hour dispute over boundary delineations, and concerns about the Electoral Commission's independence. In January 2015, the SKNLP government introduced new electoral boundaries just a month before the polls. The changes were ultimately thrown out four days before the election by the Privy Council in London, the highest court of appeal for Saint Kitts and Nevis, after the opposition had challenged the changes. Separately, OAS observers had expressed concerns that an election calendar with key dates was not shared publicly. And, a delay in reporting the results of the 2015 polls prompted questions about the independence of the Election Commission. In December 2017, the former supervisor of elections was arrested and charged with misconduct in connection with the delayed transmission of the 2015 results.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 16 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4

People have the right to organize in different political parties and to form new parties. For example, the PLP was established in 2013 by two former members of the SKNLP, and is now part of the Team Unity government.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

Opposition candidates are able to campaign without restrictions or interference, and there are realistic opportunities for opposition parties to increase their support or gain power through elections. In 2015, the Team Unity coalition unseated the SKNLP, which had been in government for two decades.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

Candidates and voters are generally able to express their political choices without interference from actors not democratically accountable. However, in 2015, the OAS raised concerns about the lack of transparency of party and election campaign financing, and thus the potential for unidentified actors to influence politics.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 4 / 4

While women play an active role in political parties and as grassroots organizers, only one woman won a seat in the National Assembly in the 2015 elections. The LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) community is marginalized, and this impacts the ability of LGBT people to engage fully in political processes.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 10 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4

The elected prime minister, cabinet, and national legislative representatives are able to freely determine the policies of the government.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4

St. Kitts and Nevis's anticorruption laws are for the most part implemented effectively. However, the 2013 Integrity in Public Life Bill, which established a code of conduct for public officials and financial disclosure guidelines, was still not operational at the end of 2017.

Recently, concerns have been raised over St. Kitts and Nevis's CIP program, which allows foreigners to gain citizenship through an economic investment in the country. In a March 2017 report, the US State Department noted that despite government efforts to improve the program's safeguards, it was still characterized by "significant deficiencies in vetting candidates," a problem that could facilitate money laundering within the country or permit the presence of people who threaten national security.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 3 / 4

The government of St. Kitts and Nevis generally operates with transparency, though the country still lacks freedom of information legislation. Both SKNLP and Team Unity governments have stated that freedom of information legislation is a priority, but as of the end of 2017 no legislation had been passed. The Financial Intelligence Unit investigates financial crimes, but these reports are not publically available.

In the fall of 2017, in the aftermath of Hurricanes Irma and Maria, the government announced that it would temporarily reduce the amount required for participation in the CIP, and would link the investment program to a national hurricane relief fund. Inconsistent government statements about the nature of the temporary program prompted some confusion and media criticism.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 53 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 15 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4

Freedom of expression is constitutionally guaranteed, and the government generally respects press freedom in practice. However, the government owns the sole local television station, and the opposition faces some restrictions on access to it, particularly around elections. Defamation is a criminal offence that can potentially carry a prison sentence. Some journalists reportedly self-censor in order to avoid pressure from government officials.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Freedom of religion is constitutionally protected and generally respected in practice. However, Rastafarians face employment and other forms of discrimination on the basis of their beliefs.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

The government generally respects academic freedom.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

Individuals are free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 12 / 12**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4**

Freedom of assembly is constitutionally guaranteed, and generally respected in practice. Several demonstrations took place peacefully in 2017, including a Labor Day march hosted by the SKNLP, and a protest at which participants called on the government to address claims that a Chinese national accused of embezzling millions of dollars from a Chinese firm was being shielded by local authorities.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) generally operate without restrictions.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

While workers may legally form unions, employers are not bound to recognize them. A union can engage in collective bargaining only if more than 50 percent of the company's employees are union members. The right to strike, while not protected by law, is generally respected in practice.

F. RULE OF LAW: 13 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 4 / 4**

The judiciary is largely independent, and legal provisions for a fair and speedy trial are generally observed. The highest court is the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court, but under certain circumstances, there is a right of appeal to the Trinidad-based Caribbean Court of Justice, and the Privy Council in London.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 3 / 4

Defendants are guaranteed a range of legal rights, which are mostly respected in practice. Arbitrary arrests are prohibited and security forces generally operate professionally. However, extended pretrial detention is a problem, with some detainees remaining in custody for more than two years before facing trial—or seeing the charges against them dropped.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 3 / 4

While the islands are free from war and insurgencies, the government in recent years has struggled to contain increasing crime and homicides. Against these concerns, in July 2017, former Jamaica Defense Force head Stuart Saunders was controversially appointed as the country's new national security advisor. Saunders had been accused in a Commission of Enquiry report of "dereliction of duty and incompetence" in connection with his involvement in the violent 2010 police operation in Jamaica to capture drug lord Christopher "Dudas" Coke, in which 74 people were killed. The report had further recommended that Saunders not be employed in security operations.

Separately, there were two police shootings in 2016 and both officers implicated were awaiting trial in 2017. Prison conditions remain overcrowded.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

Societal discrimination against LGBT people is pervasive, and same-sex sexual conduct between men is illegal and punishable with imprisonment of up to 10 years. No law specifically prohibits sexual harassment, which has been reported in workplaces.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 13 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4

Individuals in St. Kitts and Nevis generally enjoy freedom of movement and are free to change their place of residence, employment, and education.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or non-state actors? 3 / 4

St. Kitts and Nevis is open to investment and both national and foreign investors are free to operate in the country, with the government actively sourcing foreign investment under its CIP program. However, eminent domain laws allow the government to seize private property and businesses, and the government does not always provide adequate and timely compensation.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

While domestic violence is criminalized, violence against women remains a widespread problem. Spousal rape is not prohibited by law. Child abuse and neglect is also a serious issue.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

Despite its high income status, poverty is an issue and represents a serious barrier to socioeconomic mobility for many people. Youth unemployment is high. Many people rely heavily on remittances for income.

St. Lucia

Population: 200,000

Capital: Castries

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 1

Freedom Rating: 1

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: St. Lucia is a democracy that holds regular elections and sees the periodic transfer of power between parties. Challenges include government corruption and transparency, police brutality and a perception of impunity for it, and discrimination against LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In June, the government signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the US Agency for International Development (USAID) to cooperate on an initiative aimed at reducing youth violence and participation in crime.
- A lawmaker was awarded EC\$40,000 (US\$14,800) in damages in connection with libel cases filed against a journalist, a printing company, and a publishing company over a 2011 letter published in the *Mirror* that described the lawmaker as corrupt.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 38 / 40 (-1)**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 11 / 12 (-1)****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4**

The prime minister, usually the leader of the largest party in parliament, is head of government. They are appointed by the governor general, who represents the British monarch as head of state. Allen Chastanet of the United Workers Party (UWP) was chosen as prime minister following the 2016 legislative elections, and installed according to the standard legal procedures.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

Under the 1979 constitution, the bicameral Parliament consists of the 17-seat House of Assembly, whose members are directly elected to five-year terms, and the 11-seat Senate, whose members are appointed. The prime minister chooses 6 Senate members, the opposition leader selects 3, and 2 are chosen in consultation with civic and religious organizations.

The most recent elections to the House of Assembly took place in 2016. The polls were considered competitive and credible, and stakeholders accepted the results. The UWP secured 11 seats, defeating the governing Saint Lucia Labour Party (SLP), which took 6. Voter turnout was low, at about 53 percent.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4 (-1)

Electoral laws are generally fair, and implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies. However, the unbalanced size of constituencies has resulted in unequal voting power among citizens. While the largest constituency (Gros Islet) has 20,593 registered voters, the smallest (Dennery South) has only 5,005.

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 because the unbalanced size of St. Lucia's electoral districts allow unequal voting power among citizens.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 16 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4**

Political parties may organize and operate freely. The country's majoritarian, or "first-past-the-post" electoral system helps sustain two-party politics. While a number of small political parties operate, the UWP and SLP have dominated politics since the 1960s.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

There are realistic opportunities for opposition parties to increase their support or gain power through elections, and power has transferred regularly between the UWP and SLP.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

Voters and candidates are generally free to express their political choices without encountering undue influence from actors who are not democratically accountable. However, a lack of transparency surrounding party and election campaign financing raises concerns about the potential influence of unknown, powerful domestic and foreign interests on the country's politics.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 4 / 4

Women are underrepresented in politics, and won only two seats in the House of Assembly in the 2016 elections. Three members of the Senate are women.

The LGBT community is marginalized, and this impacts the ability of LGBT people to engage fully in political processes.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 11 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4

The elected prime minister, cabinet, and national legislative representatives freely determine the policies of the government.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4

There are also several key state bodies that are responsible for combating corruption, such as the Parliamentary Commissioner, Auditor General, and Public Services Commission, but their effectiveness is somewhat restricted by a lack of resources.

Several high-level officials have faced corruption allegations recently. In 2016, the Eastern Caribbean Court of Appeal reinstated a claim against Prime Minister Chastanet that had been dismissed the year before. The claim, originally filed in 2013 and involving the 2011 general election, alleged breach of trust and misfeasance in public office. As of the end of 2017, the case had not yet been heard in the St. Lucian courts. And, in 2017, numerous corruption allegations against Guy Joseph, the current minister for economic development, housing, urban renewal, transport and civil aviation, surfaced in both the media and on the floor of the parliament. According to media reports, Joseph was among the targets of a bribery investigation involving an airport redevelopment project, which St. Lucian authorities had asked the United States to assist with.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 4 / 4

The government of St. Lucia generally operates with openness and transparency. Access to information is legally guaranteed, and government officials are required by law to present their financial assets annually to the Integrity Commission.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 53 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 15 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4

The constitution of St. Lucia guarantees freedom of speech, and a number of private and independent news outlets discuss a wide spectrum of issues. However, criminal libel laws remain on the books, and convictions can draw heavy fines and a jail sentence of up to five years. In 2017, opposition lawmaker Philip Pierre was awarded EC\$40,000 (US\$14,800) in damages in libel cases filed against journalist Guy Ellis, the Mayers Printing Company, and Mirror Publishing Company, in connection with a 2011 letter to the editor published in the *Mirror* that described Pierre as corrupt.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Freedom of religion is protected under the constitution and other laws. However, Rastafarians face various forms of discrimination.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is generally respected.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

Individuals are free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 12 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4

The government generally respects the constitutionally protected right to free assembly. A number of protests took place peacefully in 2017, including several SLP-led events at which participants expressed opposition to government policies.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights—and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Independent nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are free to operate.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

Most workers have the right under the law to form and join independent unions, go on strike, and bargain collectively. Antiunion discrimination is prohibited.

F. RULE OF LAW: 12 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 3 / 4

The judicial system is independent and includes a high court under the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court (ECSC). St. Lucia announced in 2014 that it would adopt the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) as its final court of appeal, replacing the London-based Privy Council. However, its accession to the CCJ has not yet been finalized at the end of 2017.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 3 / 4

Detainees and defendants are guaranteed a range of legal rights, which are mostly respected in practice. However, lengthy pretrial detention remains a problem. Defendants charged with serious crimes may spend up to six years in pretrial detention.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 3 / 4

Police brutality has been seen as a significant problem in St. Lucia in recent years, and there is a widespread perception that members of the Royal Saint Lucia Police Force (RSLPF) enjoy impunity for abusive behavior. In 2013, the United States cut aid to the RSLPF due to credible allegations of gross human rights violations related to 12 extrajudicial killings that took place in 2010 and 2011. The government responded by inviting an international investigation of the killings. Although the investigation was completed in 2014 and members of the RSLPF were seen as culpable, no legal action had been taken by the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions as of the end of 2017. As a consequence, through the end of 2017 St. Lucia remained excluded from military assistance from the United States under the Leahy Law, which prohibits all security-related assistance to the country as a result of what the United States views as serious abuse of human rights by security forces. In response to the 2014 investigation, the government did define a “use of force” policy for the RSLPF, and members were forced to undertake human rights training.

Separately, the government in June 2017 signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the US Agency for International Development (USAID) to cooperate on an initiative aimed at reducing youth violence and participation in crime.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

No law prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. Same-sex sexual relations are illegal and punishable by up to 10 years in prison. People living with HIV/AIDS experience discrimination, and medical professionals do not always honor obligations to keep their health care information confidential. The Civil Code makes reference to legitimate and illegitimate children, which can permit discrimination against children and unwed mothers in civil and family law cases.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 14 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4

Individuals in St. Lucia enjoy freedom of movement, and may freely choose their place of employment, residence, and education.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or non-state actors? 4 / 4

Individuals are free to own property and establish and conduct business. The government has actively encouraged both national and foreign investors to operate businesses in the country.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

Domestic violence is a serious concern and often goes unreported, as does sexual assault. The law criminalizes rape, but it only criminalizes spousal rape when a couple is separated, or if the Family Court has issued a protection order.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

Safety and other protections for workers are typically upheld, though St. Lucia has no minimum wage law.

St. Lucia’s government has made efforts to provide services to trafficking victims, but prosecutions are infrequent and the country’s national action plan against human trafficking

has not been fully implemented. A lack of awareness of trafficking among some officials and members of the public contributes to the problem. Immigrants from Caribbean countries and from South Asia are particularly vulnerable to trafficking for the purposes of forced labor and sex work.

St. Vincent and the Grenadines

Population: 100,000

Capital: Kingstown

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 1

Freedom Rating: 1.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: St. Vincent and the Grenadines is a democracy that holds regular elections, though it has been under the political leadership of the Unity Labour Party (ULP) since 2001, and aspects of the most recent legislative polls are being disputed in court by the opposition. Civil liberties are generally upheld, though journalists and peaceful protesters have experienced police harassment during times of political tension.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In July, the High Court of St. Vincent and the Grenadines ruled that two election petitions filed more than a year previously by the opposition New Democratic Party (NDP) would be allowed to proceed. The cases involved alleged misconduct in vote counting in two constituencies during the 2015 legislative elections.
- Authorities rejected an assessment of the country by the US State Department as a major hub for money laundering.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 36 / 40 (-1)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 11 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The prime minister, usually the leader of the largest party in parliament, is head of government. They are normally appointed after legislative elections by the governor general, who represents the British monarch as head of state. The prime minister and governor general have historically been installed according to the country's laws. Ralph Gonsalves retained his position as prime minister following the victory of the incumbent Unity Labour Party (ULP) in the 2015 legislative elections.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The constitution provides for the direct election of 15 representatives to the unicameral House of Assembly. In addition, the governor general appoints 6 senators to the chamber: 4 selected on the advice of the prime minister and 2 on the advice of the opposition leader. All serve five-year terms.

The 2015 legislative elections saw a narrow victory by the incumbent, social democratic ULP, which took 8 seats in the House of Assembly; the opposition New Democratic Party (NDP) took the remaining 7. International and domestic election observers deemed the polls generally competitive and credible. However, the Organization of American States (OAS) observer mission expressed concerns about partiality of the presiding officer at the final vote count in the constituency of Central Leeward. According to its observation report, the returning officer there continually refused requests for information or access from representatives of the NDP, while responding to requests from representatives of the ULP.

The NDP mounted several mass protests alleging electoral irregularities in the polls, and initiated two legal complaints regarding the conduct of polling in Central Leeward and North Windward. In July 2017, the High Court ruled that the petitions be allowed to proceed, and both cases were open at year's end.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4

Electoral laws are generally fair and impartially implemented. While efforts to clean up voter lists were initiated in 2013, the 2015 OAS election monitoring mission noted in its final report that authorities should continue this effort. The mission also called for better standardization of voting procedures across voting sites.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 15 / 16 (-1)

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4

Political parties can organize freely. While there have been a number of small political parties in the country, since 1998 only the ULP and NDP have won seats in parliament. The effects of the country's "first-past-the-post" electoral system has entrenched two-party politics. The dominance of the ULP in government since 2001 has been the source of some public frustration, though it does not appear to have affected voter turnout significantly.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

While there has not been a change of the party in power since 2001, opposition parties and candidates face no systemic restrictions, and there are realistic opportunities for opposition parties to increase their support or gain power through elections.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

Candidates and voters are generally able to express their political choices without interference from actors not democratically accountable. However, in 2015, the OAS raised concerns about the lack of transparency of party and election campaign financing, and thus the potential for unidentified actors to influence politics.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4 (-1)

Women are underrepresented in the legislature and in politics generally. No women were elected to the House of Assembly in 2015, when only 6 of the 43 candidates were women. There are currently three women senators in parliament, who were appointed. In

its report on the 2015 elections, the OAS noted that there was a “pervasive reluctance” on the part of women who were potential candidates to take part in harsh political campaigns.

The LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) community is marginalized, and this impacts the ability of LGBT people to engage fully in political processes.

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 due to the significant underrepresentation of women in politics.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 10 / 10

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4

The prime minister, cabinet, and national legislative representatives freely determine the policies of the government. However, in 2014, the NDP announced that it was suspending all cooperation with the Gonsalves government until the next general elections. Following the disputed elections in 2015, the NDP boycotted the parliament for two weeks.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4

No independent body investigates government corruption, and government officials have indicated that they do not see a need to establish one. Nevertheless, reports of political handouts and other forms petty corruption continue. Separately, in 2017, authorities rejected an assessment of the country in a US State Department report as a major hub for money laundering. The document, the *2017 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report*, also noted that in 2016 only one money laundering prosecution had been launched, and that the year had seen no convictions.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 3 / 4

The government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines generally operates with openness and transparency. However, freedom of information legislation that was passed in 2003 has yet to be fully implemented, and there is no active legislation requiring government officials to disclose assets, incomes, or gifts.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 54 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 15 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4

The constitution guarantees freedom of speech and of the press, and these guarantees are usually upheld in practice. However, some journalists reported harassment and physical abuse by police as they covered the 2015 election campaign. Additionally, in 2016, lawmakers approved a new Cybercrime Act that broadened the definition and scope of defamation to include online publications; violation of its provisions can carry a fine of as much as EC\$500,000 (US\$186,000) and up to seven years’ imprisonment. Journalists in St. Vincent and abroad strongly criticized the legislation, saying its provisions were worryingly vague and that it could be invoked to curb independent reporting.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Freedom of religion is constitutionally protected and respected in practice.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is generally upheld.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

Individuals are free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of retribution or surveillance.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 12 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4

Freedom of assembly is constitutionally protected and generally upheld in practice. However, there were reports of police using excessive force to disperse peaceful protests during the 2015 election period.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights-and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operate without restriction.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

Labor unions are active and permitted to strike and engage in collective bargaining. Antiunion discrimination is prohibited.

F. RULE OF LAW: 13 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 3 / 4

The government generally respects judicial independence, but judicial effectiveness is hampered by a lack of resources. The highest court is the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court, which includes a court of appeals and a high court. The country recognizes the original jurisdiction of the Caribbean Court of Justice, but the Privy Council in London remains the final court of appeal.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 3 / 4

Detainees and defendants are guaranteed a range of legal rights, which are mostly respected in practice. However, there is a significant case backlog, caused in large part by personnel shortages in local courts. According to the US State Department, about 20 people have been held in pretrial detention for longer than two years, with many of these cases involving delays in obtaining psychiatric evaluations of the defendant.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 4 / 4

Crowded prison conditions have improved after the long-awaited transfer of prisoners to a new correctional facility in 2012. However, in 2017, juvenile offenders continued to be held in adult prisons.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

Legal and societal discrimination against LGBT people persists. Same-sex sexual conduct is illegal, and some such conduct between men is punishable with imprisonment of up to 10 years. These laws, however, are rarely enforced.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 14 / 16**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4**

Individuals in St. Vincent and the Grenadines generally enjoy freedom of movement, and may freely choose their place of residence, employment, and education.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or non-state actors? 4 / 4

Individuals are free to own property and establish and conduct business. The government has actively encouraged both national and foreign investors to do business in the country.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

The Domestic Violence Act of 2015, which went into effect in 2016 and provides for protective orders, offers some tools and resources to victims of domestic violence. However, domestic violence, and violence against women, remains a problem. Rape, including spousal rape, is against the law, and the government generally enforces the law when victims come forward.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

Safety and other protections for workers are typically upheld. The Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act of 2011 criminalizes forced labor, but the government is not sufficiently proactive in its response, according to the US State Department's *Trafficking in Persons Report*.

Sudan

Population: 42,100,000

Capital: Khartoum

Political Rights Rating: 7

Civil Liberties Rating: 7

Freedom Rating: 7.0

Freedom Status: Not Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: Sudan's political system is dominated by an authoritarian president, Omar al-Bashir, and his National Congress Party (NCP), which rely on repression and inducements to maintain power. The regime violently represses—including through attacks on civilians—groups representing regions, religions, and ethnicities that do not share its narrow nationalist vision. Civil society encounters severe restrictions, religious rights are not respected, and the media is closely monitored.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- President Omar al-Bashir formed a national unity government in May that included a small number of parties allied with his ruling NCP. Several members of the opposition were appointed to a new cabinet.

- Efforts to replace the 2005 interim constitution with a permanent document made little progress. Fissures emerged in the unity government when a series of proposed amendments to increase religious freedom and political rights and to end press censorship were rejected, and an amendment to curtail the powers of Sudan's internal security agency, the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS), was gutted by the National Assembly.
- In October, the United States ended most of the economic sanctions it had imposed on Sudan in 1997, citing Khartoum's progress on fighting terrorism. The United States also pointed to Sudan's progress in maintaining a cessation of hostilities in Darfur, South Kordofan, and Blue Nile; increasing humanitarian access to people affected by the conflicts; and curtailing proxy support for armed factions in South Sudan's civil war.
- Sudanese authorities intensified their persecution of Christians, demolishing church buildings, ordering others closed, and arresting church leaders.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 4 / 40 (+2)**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 2 / 12****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4**

President al-Bashir was reelected in 2015 with 94 percent of the vote. The main opposition parties boycotted the election. They argued that free and fair elections were not possible until a national dialogue on Sudan's political and constitutional future was held. This dialogue did not begin until after the election and was boycotted by most of the opposition, which claimed it was an insincere effort by the NCP to stay in power.

The parties that chose to join in the dialogue were rewarded with representation in the new national unity government, which took office in May 2017. This followed the creation, in March, of the new position of prime minister, a step intended to reduce the powers of the executive. Al-Bashir awarded the position to a close ally, Bakri Hassan Saleh, who already held the position of first vice president.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4

The opposition boycott of the 2015 elections enabled the NCP to win a large majority in the National Assembly, where it claimed 323 of 426 seats. Many of the remaining seats were taken by NCP-aligned parties. The United States, the United Kingdom, and Norway—which did not send monitors—issued a joint statement expressing regret over Sudan's "failure to create a free, fair, and conducive elections environment."

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 0 / 4

The National Election Commission is not independent; its chairman is an NCP official.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 4 / 16 (+1)**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 1 / 4**

Sudan has more than 100 political parties but they face obstacles that prevent them from operating and competing freely. The government imposes onerous regulations on opposition parties, and uses the NISS to intimidate, harass, and detain opposition officials.

Four members of the National Consensus Forces, an opposition group, who had been held for two months after protesting economic austerity measures, were released in January 2017.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 1 / 4 (+1)

The formation of the national unity government saw ministerial appointments handed out to opposition parties including the Popular Congress Party (PCP), which had members appointed to two minor ministries, and the National Umma Party and Democratic Unionist Party, which each had members appointed to one ministry. Meanwhile, harassment of opposition leaders and activists from parties outside the unity government continued.

Score Change: The score improved from 0 to 1 to reflect the representation of some opposition parties in the national unity government.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 1 / 4

Al-Bashir surrounds himself with a clique of unelected internal security and military officials, who influence decision-making. The NCP has a sizable Islamist wing, although its influence over policymaking has waned in recent years.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 1 / 4

Sudan's political system heavily favors the ethnic groups, predominantly Arab and Muslim, who live around Khartoum. Peripheral regions—notably Darfur, the Two Areas of South Kordofan and Blue Nile, and eastern Sudan—are marginalized. A total of 128 seats in the National Assembly are reserved for women, who are directly elected by a system of proportional representation.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 1 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 1 / 4

Al-Bashir dominates the other arms of government, despite attempts to dilute the powers of the presidency by reestablishing the post of prime minister. Soon after the formation of the national unity government, participants complained that their views were being overridden by the NCP. By June 2017, leading members of the PCP were threatening to quit the unity government, complaining that their involvement was “entirely unproductive.”

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 0 / 4

Corruption is rampant among the NCP-linked elite and security agencies and efforts to control the problem have been insufficient. Corruption has exacerbated Sudan's economic crisis, aggravating the hardships faced by most of its citizens. Citizens who expose public malfeasance face arrest. In July 2017, a journalist with *Al-Gareeda* newspaper who wrote about corruption in South Darfur's Ministry of Finance was charged with defamation, a crime carrying a sentence of up to two years in prison.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 0 / 4

Sudan's government operates in an unaccountable manner. The bloated security institutions, which receive 78 percent of the national budget, are opaque and corrupt. Government

ministries run large off-budget accounts and bodies intended to oversee public spending have been eroded.

ADDITIONAL DISCRETIONARY POLITICAL RIGHTS QUESTION:

Is the government or occupying power deliberately changing the ethnic composition of a country or territory so as to destroy a culture or tip the political balance in favor of another group? -3 / 0 (+1)

The government stands accused of attempting to change the ethnic composition of Sudan through its response to an insurgency led by marginalized non-Arab ethnic groups in Darfur. Tactics include the alleged use of chemical weapons against civilians as recently as 2016 and terror campaigns against civilians conducted by a paramilitary group, the Rapid Support Forces, under the authority of the NISS. Al-Bashir faces outstanding arrest warrants from the International Criminal Court (ICC) on charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and—controversially—genocide in Darfur. Accusations of ethnically targeted violence have also been leveled against the government for its handling of the wars in the Two Areas of South Kordofan and Blue Nile, where there has been repeated, indiscriminate aerial bombardment of civilians. However, al-Bashir declared a unilateral cease-fire in all three areas in June 2016, which—despite violations by both sides—remained in place as of the end of 2017. One of the justifications used by U.S. officials for their decision to drop sanctions was that there were no confirmed incidents of aerial bombing in the Two Areas during the assessment period, which ran for much of 2017.

Score Change: The score improved from -4 to -3 to reflect the fact that, notwithstanding the ICC indictments against Bashir, Sudan has declared cease-fires in Darfur and the Two Areas that, despite violations, continue to hold.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 4 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 2 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 0 / 4

Sudan's diverse media faces many obstacles due to government restrictions, censorship, and harassment of journalists by NISS agents. Journalists are forbidden to publish stories about 15 so-called red line issues, including articles about the NISS and the army. In July alone, at least three reporters were interrogated or detained by NISS agents for allegedly crossing these lines. In July, Saudi Arabia deported three Sudanese bloggers to Khartoum. The men, who had helped organize antigovernment protests, were detained and have been held incommunicado ever since. A favored NISS tactic is to seize the print runs of newspapers that publish articles it does not like. This practice occurred with regularity in 2017; even progovernment publications and a sports newspaper were impacted.

Approximately one-quarter of the population has access to mobile broadband services. The authorities have been accused of restricting internet access in order to stifle protests.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 0 / 4

Freedom of religion is guaranteed under the 2005 interim constitution but is not respected in practice. Since the independence of South Sudan in 2011, the small Christian community in Sudan has faced persecution and several churches have been shuttered. In January 2017, the Khartoum state government ordered the demolition of 27 churches within the state, many of them located on land wanted by real estate investors. The order is facing a court challenge. However, in May a building belonging to the Sudanese Church of Christ

was demolished without warning. In addition, a ban has been placed on the construction of new churches. In January, two church leaders were jailed for 12 years each after being convicted of a range of offenses including “provoking hatred among sects.” A Czech national convicted alongside them was released a month later. In May, a man was charged with apostasy, which is a criminal offense punishable by death, after he tried to change his religious affiliation on state documents to “non-religious.” The charges were later dropped.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 1 / 4

The government views students as a source of opposition and harshly responds to signs of restiveness on university campuses, often using NCP-affiliated students to attack and intimidate protesters. In three separate incidents in May 2017, violence was used to break up demonstrations at university sites. In the most serious incident, several students were injured and seven others arrested when progovernment student militia and NISS agents attacked a meeting at a hostel affiliated with Al-Azhari University in Khartoum. The meeting had been called to protest the expulsion of seven Darfuri students.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 1 / 4

The NISS intimidates individuals who engage in private discussion of issues of a political nature, and reportedly monitors private communications without adequate oversight or authorization. People who take part in demonstrations or meetings considered unfriendly to the government face the threat of subsequent arrest and questioning by NISS agents.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 1 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 0 / 4

The authorities have repeatedly used deadly force to disperse protesters. In September 2017, a demonstration broke out in a camp for displaced people in Darfur, ahead of a scheduled visit by President al-Bashir. Live ammunition was used against the crowd, resulting in at least five deaths. No one has been held publicly accountable for the massacre of 185 protesters by the security forces as they peacefully demonstrated in Khartoum in 2013.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 1 / 4

NGOs, particularly those that work on human rights issues, face harassment and arrest. Three human rights defenders working for the organization TRACKS were sentenced to one year in prison in March 2017 for offenses including disseminating false information. The men were released the following day, having already served one year in detention since their arrest in March 2016. A human rights defender working on Darfur, Mudawi Ibrahim Adam, was held for more than eight months for “waging war against the state” before the charges were dropped in August. In 2017, the government eased some restrictions on the movement of humanitarian workers in conflict zones. In March, Sudan opened a humanitarian corridor to enable the World Food Program to move emergency assistance to famine-afflicted parts of South Sudan. The authorities continued to obstruct the movements of the UN/African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID).

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 0 / 4

Trade union rights are minimal, and there are no independent unions. The Sudan Workers’ Trade Unions Federation has been coopted by the government, which also must approve

all strikes. Doctors' organizations have been targeted following a strike by medical staff in 2016. The authorities have harassed the Central Committee of Sudanese Doctors, a body set up in 2016 to rival the pro-doctors union. In April 2017, its chairman and former chairman were arrested, accused of forming an illegal organization.

F. RULE OF LAW: 0 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 0 / 4**

The judiciary is not independent. Lower courts provide some due process safeguards, but the higher courts are subject to political control. Special security and military courts do not apply accepted legal standards.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 0 / 4

The 2010 National Security Act gives the NISS sweeping authority to seize property, conduct surveillance, search premises, and detain suspects for up to four and a half months without judicial review. The NISS has systematically detained and tortured government opponents, including Darfuri activists, students, and journalists. In April, the National Assembly delayed consideration of a constitutional amendment to scale back the powers of the NISS, instead proposing language to keep its authorities intact. Under the Police Act of 2008, police officers are immune from prosecution.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 0 / 4

Torture and abuse of detainees and prisoners is rampant, with political detainees from Darfur subject to particularly harsh treatment. In the parts of Sudan worst affected by conflict—Darfur and the Two Areas—cease-fires resulted in some improvements, including a reduction in aerial bombing of civilians. However, human rights abuses by government or government-backed forces like the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) continued. In May and June 2017, villages were targeted and tens of thousands of civilians displaced during fighting between RSF and two rebel groups in central and west Darfur. In one incident, in June, soldiers from the Sudanese Armed Forces opened fire on a market, killing 11 people. Ten women and girls were raped and property was looted.

The death penalty is applied to a broad range of offenses and has been used against members of the political and armed opposition, particularly in Darfur. Sudanese criminal law is based on Sharia (Islamic law) and allows punishments such as flogging and cross-amputation (removal of the right hand and left foot).

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 0 / 4

Sudan's many ethnic, regional, and religious groups face political, social, and economic marginalization. Same-sex sexual acts are illegal, though this prohibition does not appear to be strongly enforced. Official and societal discrimination against LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) individuals is widespread. Sudan passed legislation in 2014 to strengthen the rights of asylum seekers, but these rights are not respected in practice. In August 2017, 30 Eritrean youth were deported to risk possible persecution in their home country.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 1 / 16**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 0 / 4**

The government restricts freedom of movement in conflict-affected areas, particularly in Darfur, South Kordofan, and Blue Nile, where a state of emergency is in place. Women are not allowed to travel or obtain state identification without the permission of a male guardian. These restrictions are used to target female activists and journalists.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 1 / 4

Sudanese citizens are allowed to buy land and set up businesses but encounter many obstacles in practice. Weak land rights have been a chronic driver of conflict in Sudan, exploited by corrupt government officials and unscrupulous investors to evict smallholders to make way for commercial development. In 2016, 200 families in Omdurman were left homeless after local authorities demolished their homes and sold their land to an investment company.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 0 / 4

Women face extensive discrimination. Islamic law denies women equal rights in marriage, inheritance, and divorce. Traditional and religious law restricts the property rights of women. Women convicted of adultery can face the death penalty. Police use criminal code provisions outlawing “indecent and immoral acts” to prohibit women from wearing clothing of which they disapprove. Violence against women is a major problem, particularly in conflict-affected regions, and few perpetrators are brought to justice. There has been no accountability for the more than 200 women and girls who were raped, some of them repeatedly, when soldiers entered Tabit, in North Darfur state, in 2014.

In August 2017, Sudan’s constitutional court clarified one of the unresolved issues of South Sudan’s independence when it ruled that children born to parents of mixed Sudanese and South Sudanese nationality were entitled to Sudanese citizenship.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 0 / 4

Economic mismanagement by the government and the concentration of wealth in the hands of a military, religious, and business elite linked to the NCP have deprived ordinary Sudanese of economic opportunity and condemned them to poverty.

According to the U.S. Department of State, Sudan is failing to take adequate steps to eliminate the trafficking of persons and denies the existence of sex trafficking of women and children.

Suriname

Population: 576,000

Capital: Paramaribo

Political Rights Rating: 2

Civil Liberties Rating: 2↑

Freedom Rating: 2.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Ratings Change: Suriname’s civil liberties rating improved from 3 to 2 due to increased judicial independence, notably reflected in the handling of a case in which the current president is accused of involvement in the 1982 mass murder of his political opponents.

Overview: Suriname is a constitutional democracy with a unicameral legislature. Corruption and nepotism are pervasive problems in government. Attacks on judicial independence, underscored by the president’s interference in his own murder trial, remain a concern. However, the judiciary has resisted pressure from the executive.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In June, the public prosecutor called for a 20-year prison sentence in the murder trial against President Dési Bouterse. The government subsequently adopted a resolution warning the prosecutor to be “careful” and asking him to voluntarily resign, but later withdrew it.
- In August, the National Assembly passed an anticorruption law that established new preventive powers, and protections for whistleblowers.
- In January, a judge ruled that a transgender woman had the right to change her gender to female in the census, a decision considered a step forward for transgender rights. However, in February, the civil registrar appealed the ruling.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 34 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The president is elected to five-year terms by a two-thirds majority of the 51-seat National Assembly. If no such majority can be reached, a United People’s Assembly—consisting of lawmakers from the national, regional, and local levels—convenes to choose the president by a simple majority. In 2015, the National Assembly reelected President Dési Bouterse in accordance with international standards.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The 1987 constitution provides for a unicameral, 51-seat National Assembly. Representatives are elected for five-year terms via proportional representation. The last legislative elections in 2015 were considered credible by monitors.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

Electoral laws meet international standards of fairness. Critics charge that the proportional representation system stimulates the formation of ethnic voting blocs. The president appoints the members of the election commission, the Independent Electoral Bureau, and has the power to fire them.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 14 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4

Suriname’s many political parties, which often reflect the country’s ethnic cleavages, operate freely.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

Opposition parties can gain power through elections. Most parties form coalitions to contest elections. In the 2015 elections, the V7, an opposition coalition, won 18 of 51 seats in the National Assembly.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 3 / 4

There are no indications that people's political choices are subject to undue coercion. Opposition political parties have raised concerns about campaign financing, which is unregulated and lacks transparency, and the resulting influence that special interest groups can have on political parties.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

Parties are often formed along ethnic lines, meaning most ethnic groups have political representation. However, the interests of indigenous communities are often overlooked. Women have historically played a limited role in politics, but have experienced gains in recent years—in 2015, 13 out of the 51 representatives elected to the National Assembly were women, compared to 6 women elected in 2010.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 8 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4**

Freely elected legislators work with the president to determine the laws and government policies.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

Government corruption is pervasive, notably within the Ministry of Labor and the Ministry of Justice and Police, which in 2017 remained entangled in a scandal involving residence permits.

In August 2017, the National Assembly adopted a new anticorruption law. Under the law, a new corruption prevention commission oversees charges of corruption, and the identity of whistleblowers is protected. The law, however, does not have retroactive force.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

The government does not always operate with transparency. Officials are not legally required to disclose information about their finances. Suriname does not have laws to facilitate access to public information, and access is limited in practice.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 44 / 60 (+1)**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 15 / 16****D1. Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4**

The constitution guarantees press freedom, and the media sector is fairly diverse. Although some journalists engage in self-censorship in response to government pressure and intimidation, the press frequently publishes stories critical of the government. Defamation and libel remain criminal offenses. In 2014, lawmaker Noreen Cheung threatened to sue the

magazine *Parbode* for libel after it quoted her expressing doubt about controversial amnesty legislation from 2012 that would have protected President Bouterse from prosecution.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

The constitution guarantees freedom of religion, which is typically upheld in practice.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is generally respected.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

Freedom of expression is enshrined in the constitution, and private citizens are generally able to engage in discussions of a sensitive or political nature without fear of retribution or surveillance. In August 2017, the government proposed a bill to parliament that would make insulting the president on social media a criminal offense.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 11 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4

The constitution guarantees freedom of assembly, which is generally respected in practice. However, members of the antigovernment protest movement *We Zijn Moe-Dig* (We Are Tired/Courageous) say President Bouterse has characterized them as traitors. The movement was founded in 2015, and grew in 2017 as Suriname struggled with sluggish economic growth and high inflation.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) function freely in Suriname.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

Workers are free to join independent trade unions, which are actively involved in politics. Civil servants lack the legal right to strike. There have been isolated reports of private-sector employers denying collective bargaining rights to unions.

F. RULE OF LAW: 8 / 16 (+1)

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 2 / 4 (+1)

Executive influence over the judiciary remains a matter of concern. While President Bouterse has accepted “political responsibility” for his involvement in the abduction and extrajudicial killing of 15 political opponents in 1982, he has yet to face legal consequences for his actions. After a military court declared an amnesty law unconstitutional in June 2016, Bouterse sought to prevent a trial from moving forward. When his efforts failed, Bouterse fired the Minister of Justice and in March 2017 replaced her with a close ally. In June, the public prosecutor demanded a 20-year prison sentence against Bouterse. The government subsequently adopted a resolution warning the prosecutor to be “careful,” and asking him to voluntarily resign. Bouterse later withdrew this resolution in the face of public outrage, and the trial proceeded.

Score Change: The score improved from 1 to 2 due to signs of increased judicial independence, reflected in the handling of a case in which the current president is accused of involvement in the 1982 murder of his political opponents.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

Due process is undermined by corruption, a shortage of judges, and a lack of resources and staff to support the judiciary. Payments are sometimes made to obtain favorable outcomes in criminal and civil proceedings. There is a backlog of cases involving non-Dutch speakers, as interpreters who have gone unpaid have refused to work additional cases.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 3 / 4

The use of force by law enforcement officials is prohibited, but cases of police abuse have been reported. While prison conditions are generally adequate, temporary detention facilities are characterized by unhygienic conditions, understaffing, and overcrowding. Suriname lies on a major drug-trafficking route, giving way to some drug-trafficking-related violence. Violent crimes such as burglary and armed robbery are common, and police resources are insufficient to address the problem.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on race or ethnicity. Nevertheless, the Maroons, descendants of slaves who comprise approximately 21 percent of the population, face inequality in areas such as education and employment. Indigenous groups do not enjoy any group rights or special protections. Despite rulings by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, minority groups can legally be dispossessed of their lands.

Same-sex sexual relations are legal, though the age of consent differs from that of heterosexual couples.

The constitution bars gender discrimination, but in practice, women experience disadvantages in access to employment and education.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 10 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4

The government generally upholds constitutional freedoms of internal movement and residence, though the lack of protections for indigenous and Maroon lands leave those communities vulnerable to displacement by unregulated logging and mining operations.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

Although Suriname's constitution guarantees property rights, they are sometimes inadequately protected. Corruption can hinder private business activity, especially regarding land policy, government contracts, and licensing.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

The constitution bars gender discrimination, but in practice women face inequality related to marriage, inheritance, and property due to discriminatory local customs. Domestic violence remains a serious problem, and laws criminalizing it are not well-enforced.

Despite legal protections adopted in 2015, members of the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) community face societal discrimination, harassment, and abuse by police. In February 2017, the civil registrar appealed a January court ruling that granted a transgender woman the right to have her official registration reflect her gender identity. The Minister of Justice criticized the appeal.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Human trafficking remained a problem in 2017. Women and migrant workers are especially at risk of human trafficking, sexual exploitation, and forced labor in various industries, including illegal mining operations. Corruption has facilitated the criminal activities of traffickers. The government has taken steps to address the issue, including the establishment of a shelter for victims, but arrests and prosecutions for trafficking dropped in 2017.

Swaziland

Population: 1,300,000

Capital: Mbabane (administrative), Lobamba (legislative, royal)

Political Rights Rating: 7

Civil Liberties Rating: 6 ↓

Freedom Rating: 6.5

Freedom Status: Not Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Ratings Change: Swaziland's civil liberties rating declined from 5 to 6 due to increased government infringements on religious freedom and freedom of private discussion.

Overview: Swaziland is a monarchy currently ruled by King Mswati III. The king exercises ultimate authority over all branches of the national government and effectively controls local governance through traditional chiefs. Political dissent and civic or labor activism are subject to harsh punishment under laws on sedition and other offenses. Additional human rights problems include impunity for security forces and discrimination against women and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In January, the government banned the teaching of religions other than Christianity in public schools.
- In August, the king approved amendments to the Public Order Act and the Suppression of Terrorism Act (STA) that nominally addressed some human rights concerns, but the laws continued to impose serious constraints on peaceful dissent and activism and introduced some new restrictions.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 1 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 0 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

The king, who remains the chief executive authority, is empowered to appoint and dismiss the prime minister and members of the cabinet, though they must be members of

Parliament. Barnabas Sibusiso Dlamini, the king's half-brother, has served as prime minister since 2008, having secured reappointment following the 2013 elections, which were neither free nor fair. Dlamini had previously held the post from 1996 to 2003.

Traditional chiefs govern their respective localities and typically report directly to the king. While some chiefs inherit their positions according to custom, others are appointed through royal interventions, as allowed by the constitution.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

Of the House of Assembly's 65 members, 55 are elected by popular vote within the *tinkhundla* system, which allows local chiefs to vet candidates and influence outcomes in practice; the king appoints the other 10 members. The king also appoints 20 members of the 30-seat Senate, with the remainder selected by the House of Assembly. All members of Parliament serve five-year terms, and because political parties are unable to participate in elections, all candidates run as independents. After the 2013 elections, which reportedly featured vote buying and other irregularities, the king named several members of the royal family to the appointed seats in the House of Assembly.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 0 / 4

The Elections and Boundaries Commission (EBC) is not considered impartial. It is financially and administratively dependent on the executive, and its members are appointed by the king on the advice of the Judicial Service Commission, whose members are also royal appointees. The EBC chairman, Gija Dlamini, is a half-brother of the king. Traditional chiefs also play an important role in elections, as candidates effectively need their approval to run for office.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 1 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 0 / 4

Election to public office is based on "individual merit," according to the constitution, and there is no legal avenue for parties to register and participate in elections. Some political associations exist without legal recognition, but those that advocate for democracy, such as the People's United Democratic Movement (PUDEMO), are banned and subject to prosecution.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 0 / 4

The 2013 elections featured significant turnover in the House of Assembly, with most incumbents replaced by new members. However, the king's tight control over the political system—in law and in practice—leaves no room for the emergence of an organized opposition with the potential to enter government.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 0 / 4

Traditional chiefs, as the king's representatives, wield enormous influence over their subjects. In addition to vetting prospective candidates for office, they have been accused of ordering residents to vote or not vote for certain candidates.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 1 / 4

There are virtually no members of minority groups in the government, as most officials have some connection to the royal family or its broader clan. Women are also politically marginalized, and the authorities have not adhered to constitutional gender quotas for the House and Senate. Only one woman was elected to the House in 2013, and three were appointed, leaving the chamber well short of the 30 percent minimum. Ten women were named to the Senate, short of the required 13. Customary restrictions on widows in mourning—a period that can last from one to three years—effectively bar them from participating in public affairs.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 0 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 0 / 4

The king and his government determine policy and legislation; members of Parliament cannot initiate legislation and have little oversight or influence on budgetary matters. In March 2017, the House of Assembly rejected the national budget on the grounds that its spending priorities favored security forces over basic services for ordinary people, but members reportedly reversed themselves after the prime minister rebuffed the possibility of any changes.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 0 / 4

Corruption is a major problem, and implicated officials generally enjoy impunity. The Anti-Corruption Commission is perceived to be ineffective, with civil society groups accusing it of pursuing politically motivated cases and serving the interests of the prime minister. The commission, which reports to the Justice Ministry, lacks adequate financial and human resources and must consult with the minister on hiring.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 0 / 4

Swaziland has no laws guaranteeing public access to government information, and there is no culture of proactive disclosure of such information. Public requests for information are largely ignored in practice. The authorities tightly restrict access to data on spending by the royal family and the security forces.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 15 / 60 (-2)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 5 / 16 (-2)

D1. Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4

A variety of laws, including the Sedition and Subversive Activities Act (SSAA), can be used to restrict media coverage. The state broadcaster is tightly controlled by the government, and the *Swazi Observer*, a major newspaper, is effectively owned by the king. Journalists often face harassment and intimidation, and self-censorship is reportedly common. In January 2017, an editor and senior reporter with the *Times Sunday*, sister paper to the *Times of Swaziland*, received death threats over a planned story on alleged misdeeds by security personnel. In September, two journalists with the state television outlet were disciplined for covering a protest march by public servants seeking a wage hike.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 2 / 4 (-1)

The constitution guarantees religious freedom and bars discrimination based on religion. Rules requiring registration of religious organizations are not strictly enforced. However, members of the Muslim minority allege discrimination by officials and Christian citizens, and police reportedly monitor mosques. Non-Christian groups are also denied airtime on state broadcasters. Construction of religious buildings must be approved by the government or local chiefs. Christian education is compulsory in public schools, and in January 2017, a government decision banned all teaching of other religions in the public school curriculum. In May, firefighters expressed concern about pressure from superiors to attend Christian fellowship services.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 due to a government directive that prohibited teaching on non-Christian religions in public schools, reinforcing a pattern of official support for Christian churches and discrimination against non-Christian groups.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 1 / 4

Academic freedom is limited by restrictive laws such as the STA and SSAA. In 2017, officials at the University of Swaziland attempted to ban meetings of student groups, which at times clashed with police during protests over inadequate funding and living conditions. Ten students were arrested following protests in September.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 1 / 4 (-1)

Constitutional rights to free expression are severely restricted in practice. Security agencies reportedly monitor personal communications, social media, and public gatherings, and criticism of the king or other elements of the regime can be punished under laws such as the SSAA, the STA, and the Public Order Act. While the latter two were amended in August 2017, they remained highly restrictive, and in some cases the amendments added new constraints on expression. Under the revised Public Order Act, any criticism of Swazi culture and traditions or defacement of national symbols—including the king's image—can draw fines and up to two years in prison.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 due to amendments to the Public Order Act that prescribe fines and imprisonment for criticism of Swazi culture and traditions or defacement of national symbols.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 2 / 12**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 0 / 4**

Freedom of assembly remained heavily restricted in 2017 despite the August amendments to the Public Order Act and the STA. The amended Public Order Act defines a public gathering as any assembly or procession of 50 or more people, compared with 10 in the previous version, and removes controls on private gatherings. Nevertheless, authorities continued to monitor meetings and obstruct assemblies throughout the year, at times using batons and tear gas to disperse protesters.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 1 / 4

The operation of nongovernmental organizations has been inhibited by the broadly written sedition and terrorism laws as well as police monitoring and interference. Organizations that advocate for democracy remain banned. In September 2017, police blocked a prodemocracy meeting in the capital on the grounds that permission had not been granted.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 1 / 4

Swaziland has active labor unions, but workers' rights are not upheld in practice. Although workers in most sectors, with the exception of essential services defined by the labor minister, can join unions, strikes and other labor activism routinely trigger crackdowns and arrests by the police. In February 2017, the police prevented a march to the Ministry of Labour by members of the Trade Union Congress of Swaziland (TUCOSWA).

F. RULE OF LAW: 4 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4

Although the judiciary displays a degree of independence in some cases, the king holds ultimate authority over the appointment and removal of judges, acting on advice from a Judicial Service Commission made up of royal appointees.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

Safeguards against arbitrary arrest and detention, such as time limits on detention without charge, are not always respected in practice. Detainees are generally granted access to lawyers, though only those facing life imprisonment or capital punishment can obtain counsel at public expense. Lengthy pretrial detention is common, and politically sensitive cases often feature high bail levels. Fair trial rights are not respected by traditional courts, often headed by chiefs, that adjudicate minor offenses and use customary law.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 1 / 4

Physical abuse of suspects and inmates by law enforcement officials is an ongoing problem, and investigations into such abuse lack independence and transparency. Some prisons also suffer from overcrowding and other harsh conditions. Rangers tasked with combating game poachers have been accused of improper use of lethal force, and several deaths were reported during 2017, but the law grants rangers immunity from prosecution for such killings.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

Women's rights remain restricted in law and in practice. Both civil and customary law treat women as dependents of their fathers or husbands, and societal discrimination further impairs their access to education and employment. Residents who are not ethnic Swazis also face de facto discrimination. Discrimination against LGBT people is not prohibited by law and is widespread in practice. A criminal ban on same-sex sexual activity is not regularly enforced.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 4 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 1 / 4

The constitution guarantees freedom of movement. However, minority ethnic groups and political activists have faced delays in obtaining passports and other citizenship

documents. Traditional chiefs regulate movement and residence within their communities and generally deny access to groups advocating human rights or democracy. Individuals who violate customary rules can face eviction from their localities. Widows in mourning are barred from approaching chiefs or the king and excluded from certain public places and activities.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 1 / 4

The constitution provides legal protections for property rights, but women generally face limitations under customary rules that subordinate them to male relatives. Widows in particular face expropriation by the deceased husband's family. Chiefs have broad authority to allocate and withdraw rights to communal land. Individuals can also face expropriation due to land claims by state-owned companies and powerful private interests, and constitutional guarantees of fair compensation are not upheld.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 1 / 4

Women's social freedoms are restricted by both civil and customary law, which puts them at a disadvantage regarding marriage, divorce, and child custody. Customary law allows girls as young as 13 to marry. Sexual and domestic violence remains extremely common, and any penalties for perpetrators are often lenient.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

Residents have some access to formal employment and economic opportunity, but the majority of the population lives in poverty. Forced labor remains a problem, with some chiefs compelling Swazis, including children, to work in their communities or the king's fields. Among other forms of child labor, girls are particularly vulnerable to domestic servitude and commercial sexual exploitation. In May 2017, the *Observer* reported on an alleged practice in which soldiers give food parcels to girls from poor rural families in exchange for sex.

Sweden

Population: 9,900,000

Capital: Stockholm

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 1

Freedom Rating: 1.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Sweden is a parliamentary monarchy with free and fair elections and a strong multiparty system. Civil liberties and political rights are legally guaranteed and respected in practice, and the rule of law prevails.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In April, an attacker drove a truck through central Stockholm and into a department store, killing 5 people and wounding 10 others.
-

- In June, the government and opposition agreed on new antiterrorism measures, which focused on tighter security in public places, greater information sharing between government agencies, and tighter controls on individuals deemed to pose a security threat.
- In May, an appeals court ruled that the Swedish state must pay 164 million krona (\$18.6 million) in compensation to roughly 4,700 Roma people who had been improperly added to a police registry on the basis of their ethnicity.
- Several anti-Semitic incidents took place in late 2017, including a Molotov cocktail attack on a synagogue in Gothenburg.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 40 / 40**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4**

The prime minister is the head of government, and is appointed by the speaker of the freely elected parliament, or Riksdag, and confirmed by the body as a whole. King Carl XVI Gustaf, crowned in 1973, is the ceremonial head of state.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The unicameral Riksdag is comprised of 349 members who are elected every four years by proportional representation. A party must receive at least 4 percent of the vote nationwide or 12 percent in an electoral district to win representation. Swedish elections are broadly free and fair.

In the 2014 parliamentary elections, the Social Democratic Party (SAP) won 113 seats, and SAP leader Stefan Löfven became prime minister in a minority government with the Green Party, which won 25 seats.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

Elections are regulated by the Swedish Election Authority, which effectively upholds its mandates. Monitors from the Swedish International Liberal Center observing the 2014 polls called on the Swedish Election Authority provide more information about elections to election observers.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 16 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4**

Political parties may form and operate without restriction. Eight political parties gained representation in the Riksdag in 2014, with the SAP, the Moderates, and the Sweden Democrats holding the most seats.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

Sweden has a strong multiparty system with a robust opposition.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

People's political choices are generally free from domination by actors that are not democratically accountable.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 4 / 4

The country's principal religious, ethnic, and immigrant groups are represented in the parliament, as are many women. Since 1993, the indigenous Sami community has elected its own legislature, which has significant powers over community education and culture, and serves as an advisory body to the government.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 12 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4

Sweden's freely elected representatives are able to effectively develop and implement policy.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 4 / 4

Corruption is relatively low in Sweden. Anticorruption mechanisms are generally effective. The country's lively free press also works to expose corrupt officials. However, Sweden has faced some criticism for insufficient enforcement of foreign bribery laws.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 4 / 4

The country has one of the most robust freedom of information statutes in the world, and state authorities generally respect the right of both citizens and noncitizens to access public information.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 60 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 16 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 4 / 4

Sweden's media are independent. Most newspapers and periodicals are privately owned, and the government subsidizes daily newspapers regardless of their political affiliation. Public broadcasters air weekly radio and television programs in several minority languages.

In December 2017, Utgivarna, an interest group representing the major Swedish media publishers, reported that threats against journalists had increased from the previous year. The group noted that threats typically come from parties dissatisfied with a story, followed by apparent members of extremist or criminal groups. Utgivarna asserted that threats against journalists tend not to result in compromised independence or self-censorship.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Religious freedom is constitutionally guaranteed and generally respected. State authorities document religion-based hate crimes, investigate and prosecute cases, and provide adequate resources for victims. The police force includes a permanent unit trained to handle hate crimes.

Data released in December 2017 by the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention showed that hate crimes had decreased in 2016 compared to the previous year. Most hate crimes that were reported, though, were related to religion. Several anti-Semitic incidents took place in late 2017, including a Molotov cocktail attack on a synagogue in Gothenburg. Three people were arrested in connection with the incident.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is generally respected.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

Private discussion is open and vibrant.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 12 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4

Freedom of assembly is generally respected in law and in practice. However, violence has erupted between far-right demonstrators and counterprotesters.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations of all kinds function freely.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

The rights to strike and organize in labor unions are guaranteed. Trade union federations, which represent approximately 70 percent of the workforce, are strong and well organized.

F. RULE OF LAW: 16 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 4 / 4

The judiciary is independent.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 4 / 4

The rule of law prevails in civil and criminal matters. Defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty, and the state must provide legal counsel to people accused of criminal offenses.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 4 / 4

In April 2017, an attacker drove a truck through central Stockholm and into a department store, killing 5 people and wounding 10 others. The suspect, an Uzbek citizen whom Swedish officials had once flagged as posing a possible security threat, had seen his residency application rejected in 2016, and had subsequently gone underground in order to avoid deportation. Uzbek officials claimed that he had links to the Islamic State (IS) militant group.

The attack sparked debate in Sweden over intelligence gathering and migration policy. In June, the government and opposition agreed on new antiterrorism measures, which focused on tighter security in public places, greater information sharing between government agencies, and tighter controls on individuals deemed to pose a security threat.

Conditions in prisons and temporary detention facilities are adequate, but concerns have been raised against excessive use of long detention periods. Changes to the law regarding detention have been proposed in the Swedish parliament. Swedish courts have jurisdiction to try suspects for genocide committed abroad.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 4 / 4

The Swedish state works to ensure equal protection and rights for all members of the population. An equality ombudsman oversees efforts to prevent discrimination on the basis of gender, ethnicity, disability, and sexual orientation. However, the UN has called for the ombudsman's powers to be strengthening, and has noted problems with discrimination by police and correctional personnel.

In June 2016 the Swedish state was found guilty of ethnic discrimination against 11 Roma people who appeared in a police registry only because of their ethnic identity. The state's appeal of the case failed and in May 2017, it was ordered to pay 164 million krona (\$18.6 million) in compensation to the roughly 4,700 people on the registry.

In May 2017, in the wake of growing right-wing sentiment and increasing immigration from abroad, the Swedish government voted to place limits on parental leave benefits for immigrants.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 16 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4

Freedom of movement is legally guaranteed and generally respected in practice. However, asylum seekers may be assigned to a place of residence, and at times may be forced to change locations. In September 2017, the European Union (EU) ordered Sweden to eliminate checkpoints on its external borders that were instituted during the 2015 refugee crisis.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 4 / 4

The government respects the rights of individuals to own property and establish private businesses. A 2011 Supreme Court ruling granted Sami reindeer herders common-law rights to disputed lands.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 4 / 4

Same-sex couples are legally allowed to marry and adopt; lesbian couples have the same rights to artificial insemination and in-vitro fertilization as heterosexual couples. The Lutheran Church allows same-sex marriage ceremonies.

The United Nations has criticized Sweden for not doing enough to prevent domestic violence against women and children.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 4 / 4

People in Sweden generally enjoy equality of opportunity. Women earn the equivalent of 95.5 percent of men's wages when differences in age, sector, and experience are taken into account. However, unemployment is higher among immigrants than it is among people who were born in Sweden.

Sweden is a destination and, to a lesser extent, a transit point for women and children trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation, but the Swedish government is proactive

in combatting the problem. Nevertheless, the United Nations has pointed out that Sweden lacks robust methods to prevent individuals, especially unaccompanied immigrant children, from falling victim to human trafficking.

Switzerland

Population: 8,400,000

Capital: Bern

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 1

Freedom Rating: 1

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: The political system of Switzerland is characterized by decentralization and direct democracy. The multilingual state is typically governed by a broad coalition that includes members from the four largest political parties represented in the parliament. The 26 cantons that make up the Swiss Confederation have considerable decision-making power, and the public is often asked to weigh in on policy matters through referendums. Civil liberties are generally respected in the country, though laws and policies adopted in recent years have reflected a growing wariness of immigration and minority groups of foreign origin, which sometimes face societal discrimination.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In February, voters passed a referendum that created an easier path to citizenship for third generation immigrants, easing Switzerland's restrictive citizenship laws.
- In March, the Council of States rejected a ban on burqas proposed by the right-wing Swiss People's Party (SVP). In October, the government announced that a referendum on the subject would be put to a vote.
- In September, the Intelligence Service Act went into effect. The law gives the government new surveillance powers, including the ability to monitor internet usage, bug private property, and tap the phone lines of suspected terrorists.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 39 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

Executive power lies in the Federal Council (cabinet), a seven-member executive council, with each member elected by the bicameral Federal Assembly to four-year terms. The Federal Council is comprised of a consensus-based coalition between all of the large parties represented in the Federal Assembly. The presidency is largely ceremonial and rotates annually among the Federal Council's members. In December 2017, Alain Berset of the Social Democratic Party (SP) was elected President by the Federal Assembly in accordance with Swiss law.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The constitution provides for a Federal Assembly with two directly elected chambers: the 46-member Council of States (in which each canton has two members and each half-canton has one) and the 200-member National Council. All lawmakers serve four-year terms. Switzerland's electoral process is vibrant and pluralistic, garnering high levels of confidence from the public. The last elections were held in 2015. In the National Council, the right-wing SVP won 65 seats, up from the 54 it previously held. The SP won 43 seats, the Free Democratic Party of Switzerland (FDP) took 33 seats, the Christian Democratic People's Party (CVP) captured 27 seats, and the Green Party won 7 seats. In the Council of States, the FDP and the CVP won 13 seats each, the SP took 12, and three other parties split the remainder.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

Switzerland's electoral process is robust and well-implemented. Electoral laws are fair, and the Election Commission of Switzerland, which administers elections, is considered credible.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 15 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4

Political parties are free to form and operate, and a wide range of parties are active at the federal and regional levels. The political system is stable, but remains open to new groups.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

Switzerland operates a consensus-oriented political system, where most parties govern together by common agreement. The government often relies on referenda to decide on contentious policy issues, and there is a realistic opportunity for different parties to vie for influence. Parties frequently gain or lose seats in federal elections. The Federal Council is comprised of two members each from the SVP, the SP, and the FDP, and one member from the CVP.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

The people's political choices are generally free from domination by democratically unaccountable powers. However, the Council of Europe's Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) continued to criticize Switzerland for failing to combat the lack of transparency in party financing. Civil society leaders contend that the opaque campaign finance system allows wealthy interests to influence the platforms of the major political parties.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

Restrictive citizenship laws and procedures tend to exclude many immigrants, as well as their children, from political participation. A referendum passed in February 2017 created an easier path to citizenship for third generation immigrants.

Women participate robustly in Swiss politics, both as voters and candidates for office. In the 2015 elections, 64 women were elected to the National Council.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 12 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4

Switzerland's freely elected officials are able to effectively implement national and local policy through a decentralized system of government.

The 26 cantons have significant control over economic and social policy, with the federal government's powers largely limited to foreign affairs and some economic matters. Referendums, which are used extensively, are mandatory for any amendments to the federal constitution, the joining of international organizations, or major changes to federal laws.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 4 / 4

Safeguards against corruption are generally effective. However, with a robust financial sector and a number of loopholes in the tax laws, tax evasion continues to be a problem: in December 2017, the European Union (EU) placed Switzerland on a "grey list" of countries that had been uncooperative in abolishing questionable tax policies.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 4 / 4

The government is generally transparent. In 2017, however, an ongoing overhaul of federal procurement laws initiated by the Federal Council meant to increase transparency was weakened by the Council's own revisions to the law, strongly curtailing the law's intended purpose by restricting access to public procurement documents for the public and media.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 57 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 15 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 4 / 4

Freedom of the press is generally respected in practice. The law punishes public incitement to racial hatred or discrimination as well as denial of crimes against humanity. Switzerland has a free media environment, although the state-owned Swiss Broadcasting Corporation (SRG/SSR) dominates the broadcast market. Consolidation of newspaper ownership in large media conglomerates has forced the closure of some smaller newspapers in recent years.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4

Freedom of religion is guaranteed by the constitution and the penal code prohibits discrimination against any religion. However, Muslims face legal and de facto discrimination. The construction of new minarets and mosques is prohibited, the result of a 2009 referendum. In 2017, anti-Islamic political discourse intensified, especially from the SVP. A federal ban on burqas proposed by the SVP was rejected by the Council of States in March. In October, the government announced that a referendum on the subject would be put to a vote. In 2016, the canton of Ticino passed its own burqa ban.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is largely respected.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

Individuals are generally able to express their personal views on political issues without fear of retribution. The Intelligence Service Act, approved by referendum in 2016, went into effect in September 2017. The law gives wider surveillance power to the Federal Intelligence Service, allowing it to monitor internet usage, bug private property, and tap the phone lines of suspected terrorists.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 12 / 12**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4**

Freedom of assembly is guaranteed by the constitution and generally respected. However, in April 2017, the owners of the Zurich World Trade Center cancelled the reservation of the controversial Islamic Central Council of Switzerland (IZRS), which was planning a conference at the venue. The property owners claimed that they cancelled the booking because IZRS invited radical Islamists to speak at the event.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

NGOs operate without undue restrictions.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

People are generally free to form trade unions and other professional organizations. The right to collective bargaining is respected, and approximately 16 percent of the workforce is unionized.

F. RULE OF LAW: 15 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 4 / 4**

While the judiciary is largely independent, judges are affiliated with political parties and are selected based on a system of proportional party, linguistic, and regional representation in the Federal Assembly. In late 2017, a group of civil society leaders introduced an initiative to remove the party affiliation requirement from the judicial nomination process in an effort to strengthen the independence of the judiciary.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 4 / 4

Due process normally prevails in civil and criminal matters.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 4 / 4

Switzerland is generally free from war and the use of illegitimate force by authorities is relatively rare. The occasional use of excessive force by police has been documented. The Universal Periodic Review of Switzerland's human rights record, which was presented by the Swiss government to the United Nations in June 2017, documented some incidents of alleged excessive use of force against undocumented immigrants during the deportation process. Conditions in prisons and detention centers generally meet international standards, and the Swiss government permits visits by independent observers.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

Although the law prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, gender, or religion, anti-immigrant attitudes have grown in recent years. An immigration law passed in 2016 enacted policies to curb mass migration from the EU. It also required employers to give

preference to Swiss citizens in hiring practices. Despite the government's negotiations with the EU and a new law against mass immigration, the SVP initiated a referendum in June 2017 on an end to the free movement between Switzerland and the EU.

The rights of cultural, religious, and linguistic minorities are legally protected, but minority groups—especially those of African and Central European descent, as well as Roma—face societal discrimination. Roma continue to fight to be officially recognized as a minority in Switzerland. In April, two SVP officials were found guilty on charges of racial discrimination after publishing a racially charged campaign advertisement against people from Kosovo on the party's website and several news outlets. The officials were fined approximately \$22,900.

While LGBT rights are generally respected, Switzerland's antidiscrimination laws do not specifically address sexual orientation or gender identity. Gender pay gaps and discrimination against women persist in the workplace. In July 2017, the Swiss cabinet presented the National Assembly with a bill obligating companies with more than 50 employees to conduct gender pay audits and publicly disclose their findings.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 15 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4

Freedom of movement is respected, and there are no undue limitations on the ability to choose one's place of residence, employment, or education.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 4 / 4

The rights to own property and establish a business remain unrestricted.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 4 / 4

Personal social freedoms are enjoyed by most people. In a 2005 referendum, voters approved same-sex civil unions. Recognized since 2007, these unions grant many of the legal benefits of marriage, with the exception of full adoption rights.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

Although the government complies with international standards for combating trafficking, according to the U.S. State Department's 2017 *Trafficking in Persons Report*, Switzerland remains a destination for victims of human trafficking. Switzerland lacks a national minimum wage. Migrant workers are prone to exploitive labor practices and dangerous working conditions, particularly in the construction, healthcare, and tourism industries, among others.

Syria

Population: 17,200,000

Capital: Damascus

Political Rights Rating: 7

Civil Liberties Rating: 7

Freedom Rating: 7.0

Freedom Status: Not Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: Political rights and civil liberties in Syria are severely compromised by one of the world's most repressive regimes and by other belligerent forces in an ongoing civil war. The regime prohibits genuine political opposition and harshly suppresses freedoms of speech and assembly. Corruption, enforced disappearances, military trials, and torture are rampant in government-controlled areas, while residents of contested regions or territory held by nonstate actors are subject to additional abuses including intense and indiscriminate combat, sieges and interruptions of humanitarian aid, and mass displacement.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In April, government forces used banned chemical weapons in an attack on the town of Khan Sheikhou in rebel-held Idlib Province, killing more than 70 civilians. The United States retaliated with missile strikes on the air base allegedly used to carry out the attack.
- In May, regime forces captured the Damascus suburb of Barzeh from opposition forces, compelling hundreds of people to relocate to Idlib Province, where extremist militant groups played an increasingly dominant role.
- In October, U.S. troops and allied fighters from the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) liberated the city of Raqqa from the Islamic State (IS) militant group. Meanwhile, government forces made parallel gains against IS in Deir ez-Zor Province to the southeast, leaving the militants with no major towns under their control at year's end.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: -3 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 0 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

President Bashar al-Assad was elected for a third term in 2014 with what the government claimed was 88.7 percent of the vote. The balloting was conducted only in government-controlled areas amid war and severe repression. Major democratic states denounced the election as illegitimate.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

The most recent elections for the 250-seat People's Council were held in April 2016, but only in government-controlled territory. Several opposition groups that were traditionally tolerated by the authorities boycotted the polls, and state workers reportedly faced pressure to vote. Members of the military were permitted to participate in the elections for the first

time. The ruling Baath Party and its declared allies took 200 of the 250 seats; the remainder went to nominal independents.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 0 / 4

There is no transparency or accountability surrounding the official electoral process. The executive authorities, acting through the military-security apparatus, effectively grant or withhold permission to participate in elections in government-held areas. Although some provisional local councils in rebel-held areas have organized rudimentary elections in recent years, ongoing attacks by progovernment forces and Islamist militants have largely made such processes untenable. Kurdish-held areas in the north have a provisional constitution that allows local elections, but the Democratic Union Party (PYD) exercises ultimate control.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 0 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 0 / 4

A 2011 decree allowed the registration of new political parties, but it also imposed significant obstacles to party formation and prohibited parties based on religion, regional affiliation, and other criteria. In practice, all legal political groups and independents are either part of, allied with, or heavily vetted by the regime.

The local councils active in some opposition areas are often sponsored or appointed by prominent families or armed groups. In Kurdish areas, decentralized governance theoretically allows for open political participation, but in practice political affairs are dominated by the most powerful group, the PYD, which engages in arbitrary detentions of its political opponents.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 0 / 4

The Baath Party has governed Syria without interruption since the 1960s, led by Assad or his late father for nearly all of that time. The 2011 decree and 2012 constitutional reforms formally relaxed rules regarding the participation of non-Baathist parties, but in practice the government maintains a powerful intelligence and security apparatus to monitor and punish opposition movements that could emerge as serious challengers to Assad's rule.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 0 / 4

In its territory, the regime's security and intelligence forces, militias, and business allies are a serious obstacle to the autonomy of voters and politicians. Foreign actors including Russia, Iran, and the Lebanese Shiite militia Hezbollah also exert heavy influence over politics in regime-held areas due to their involvement in the war and material support for the government. In opposition areas, civilian politics are often subordinated to armed groups and external funders, while the PYD and its affiliated militias exercise control over the political choices of residents in Kurdish regions.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 0 / 4

Although the government is often described as an Alawite regime and a protector of other religious minorities, it is not an authentic vehicle for these groups' political interests. Political access is a function not primarily of sect, but of proximity and loyalty to Assad and his associates. The political elite is not exclusively Alawite and includes members of the majority Sunni sect, which also makes up most of the rebel movement. Meanwhile, Alawites, Christians, and Druze outside Assad's inner circle are just as politically disenfranchised as the broader Sunni population.

The opposition's dwindling territory is divided among moderate, Islamist, and radical jihadist rebels, with varying implications for ethnic and religious minorities. The PYD nominally ensures representation for minorities, but it has been accused of mistreating non-Kurdish residents, particularly those suspected of IS sympathies.

Women have equal political rights; they hold 13 percent of the seats in the legislature, and some have been appointed to senior positions in recent years. However, women are typically excluded from political decision-making in practice and have little ability to organize independently given state repression and the presence of hostile armed groups. All leadership positions in Kurdish areas are reportedly shared between a man and a woman, and women are well represented in political life, though they have limited autonomy outside PYD-led structures.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 0 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 0 / 4

De facto authority in government-controlled Syria lies with the president—who is not freely elected—and his political, security, and business allies rather than in formal institutions such as the cabinet and parliament. Foreign powers like Iran and Russia also wield considerable influence over state policy, and both opposition forces and Kurdish-led fighters hold large swaths of territory with the help of countries including Turkey and the United States, respectively.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 0 / 4

Members and allies of the ruling family are said to own or control much of the Syrian economy. The civil war has created new opportunities for corruption among the government, loyalist armed forces, and the private sector. The regime has regularly distributed patronage in the form of public resources, and implemented policies to benefit favored industries and companies, to secure its support base. Government contracts and trade deals have also been awarded to allies like Iran, possibly as compensation for political and military aid. Even basic state services are extended or withheld based on a community's demonstrated political loyalty to the Assad regime, providing additional leverage for bribe-seeking officials. Similar manipulation has been alleged in the distribution of humanitarian aid.

Corruption is also widespread in rebel-held areas. Some rebel commanders, including from brigades nominally aligned with democratic powers and their allies, have been accused of looting, extortion, and theft. Local administrators and activists complain that little of the international aid reportedly given to opposition representatives abroad seems to reach them, raising suspicions of graft.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 0 / 4

The government has long operated with minimal transparency and public accountability, and conditions have worsened during the civil war amid the rise of militias that are nominally loyal to the regime but largely autonomous and free to exploit the population in areas

they control. Officials have broad discretion to withhold government information, and they are not obliged to make public disclosures of their assets. Independent civil society groups and media outlets are harshly suppressed and cannot influence or shed light on state policies.

ADDITIONAL DISCRETIONARY POLITICAL RIGHTS QUESTION

Is the government or occupying power deliberately changing the ethnic composition of a country or territory so as to destroy a culture or tip the political balance in favor of another group? -3 / 0

Sunni Arab civilians bear the brunt of attacks by the Alawite-led government and loyalist militias. The regime has forcibly transferred thousands of civilians from captured opposition areas, and it continued to bomb and besiege others during 2017. Sunni Islamist and jihadist groups often persecute religious minorities and Muslims they deem impious. Kurdish militias have been accused of displacing Arab and Turkmen communities in the context of their fight against IS. In the face of these threats, civilians of all backgrounds have sought safety among their respective religious or ethnic groups, contributing to the demographic changes wrought by the war.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 2 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 2 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 0 / 4

The constitution nominally guarantees freedom of speech and the press, but in practice freedom of expression is heavily restricted in government-held areas, and journalists or ordinary citizens who criticize the state face censorship, detention, torture, and death in custody. All media must obtain permission to operate from the Interior Ministry. Private media in government areas are generally owned by figures associated with the regime. Media freedom varies in territory held by other groups, but local outlets are generally under heavy pressure to support the dominant militant faction in the area. Journalists face physical danger throughout Syria, especially from regime forces and extremist groups. At least eight were killed in 2017, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, bringing the death toll to 115 since the war began in 2011.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 1 / 4

While the constitution mandates that the president be a Muslim, there is no state religion, and the regime has generally allowed different confessional groups to practice their faiths as long as their religious activities are not politically subversive. The government monitors mosques and controls the appointment of Muslim religious leaders. The growing dominance of extremist groups in opposition-held areas of western Syria has threatened freedom of worship for local residents and displaced people, though IS's military defeats in the east during 2017 effectively reduced its ability to persecute religious activity that does not conform to its version of Sunni Islam.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 0 / 4

Academic freedom is heavily restricted. University professors in government-held areas have been dismissed or imprisoned for expressing dissent, and some have been killed for supporting regime opponents. Combatants on all sides of the war have regularly attacked or commandeered schools. Groups including IS and the PYD have set up education systems in their territories, but they are infused with political indoctrination.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 1 / 4

The government engages in heavy surveillance of private and online discussion and harshly punishes dissent in areas it controls. The environment is somewhat more open in areas where neither the government nor an extremist group has a dominant presence, though the PYD and some opposition factions have allegedly suppressed freedom of speech.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 0 / 12**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 0 / 4**

Freedom of assembly is severely restricted across Syria. Opposition protests in government-held areas are usually met with gunfire, mass arrests, and torture of those detained. IS, the PYD, and some rebel factions have also used force to quash civilian dissent and demonstrations.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 0 / 4

The regime generally denies registration to nongovernmental organizations with reformist or human rights missions, and regularly conducts raids and searches to detain civic and political activists. A variety of new grassroots civil society networks emerged in many parts of Syria following the 2011 uprising, monitoring human rights abuses by all sides and attempting to provide humanitarian and other services in opposition areas. However, such activists face violence, intimidation, and detention by armed groups, and must operate secretly in some cases.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 0 / 4

Professional syndicates in state-held areas are controlled by the Baath Party, and all labor unions must belong to the General Federation of Trade Unions, a nominally independent grouping that the government uses to control union activity. The war's economic and political pressures have made functioning labor relations virtually impossible across the country.

F. RULE OF LAW: 0 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 0 / 4**

The constitution forbids government interference in the civil judiciary, but all judges and prosecutors must belong to the Baath Party and are in practice beholden to the political leadership.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 0 / 4

Military officers can try civilians in both conventional military courts and field courts, which lack due process guarantees. While civilians may appeal military court decisions with the military chamber of the Court of Cassation, military judges are neither independent nor impartial, as they are subordinate to the military command. Extremist groups have set up religious courts in their territories, imposing harsh punishments for perceived offenses by civilians under their interpretation of religious law. The general breakdown of state authority and the proliferation of militias in much of the country has led to arbitrary detentions, summary justice, and extrajudicial penalties by all sides in the civil war.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 0 / 4

More than 400,000 people have been killed in the civil war since 2011. Both the regime and insurgent groups frequently engage in extreme violence against civilians, including indiscriminate bombardment, extrajudicial killings, and torture of detainees. However, abuses by the government are the largest in scale. Regime forces have detained and tortured tens of thousands of people since the uprising began, and many have died in custody, though detention conditions that amount to enforced disappearance mean the fate of most detainees is unknown.

Among other violations, the regime has been accused of repeatedly using chemical weapons on civilian targets. An attack that employed a chemical nerve agent in the Idlib Province town of Khan Sheikhoun killed more than 70 people in April 2017, prompting the United States to conduct missile strikes on a government air base that was allegedly used to carry out the attack.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 0 / 4

Women are subject to legal and societal inequities, including gender-based disadvantages in social benefits and a severe gender gap in labor force participation. Official mechanisms meant to safeguard women's rights are reportedly not functional, and the general deterioration of law and order has left women exposed to a range of abuses, particularly at the hands of extremist groups that impose their own interpretations of religious law.

The Kurdish minority has faced decades of state discrimination, including restrictions on the Kurdish language and persecution of Kurdish activists, though conditions have improved dramatically in areas controlled by Kurdish militias since 2011.

Syrian law discriminates against LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people. According to the 1949 penal code, "unnatural sexual intercourse" is punishable with up to three years in prison. Individuals suspected of same-sex sexual activity are at risk of execution in areas held by extremist groups.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 0 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 0 / 4

The proliferation of regime and militia checkpoints and ongoing combat have severely restricted freedom of movement. Nearly 2.9 million people were displaced by the conflict during 2017, for a total of more than 6 million internally displaced since 2011. Another 5 million have sought refuge abroad.

The government and other forces have systematically blockaded regions controlled by their opponents. The number of people living under siege declined somewhat during 2017 as the government captured territory from rebels and IS, leaving about 700,000 people trapped at year's end, according to the Syria Institute, a U.S.-based think tank. In May, regime forces captured the Damascus suburb of Barzeh from opposition forces, compelling hundreds of people to relocate to Idlib Province. In October, U.S. troops and SDF fighters defeated IS in the city of Raqqa, and government forces made parallel gains against the militant group in Deir ez-Zor, part of which had long been under siege by IS. The besieged rebel-held district of Eastern Ghouta, outside Damascus, came under increasing pressure from the regime late in the year.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or non-state actors? 0 / 4

Property rights have been routinely disregarded throughout the civil war. Businesses are frequently required to bribe officials to continue operating and to complete bureaucratic procedures. Access to markets dominated by regime members or allies is restricted. Militias also extort businesses and confiscate private property to varying degrees.

Personal status laws based on Sharia (Islamic law) discriminate against women on inheritance matters, and societal practices further discourage land ownership by women.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 0 / 4

Perpetrators of “honor crimes” can receive reduced sentences under the penal code, and rapists can avoid punishment by marrying their victims. Women cannot pass citizenship on to their children. Personal status laws for Muslims put women at a disadvantage regarding marriage, divorce, and child custody. Church law governs personal status issues for Christians, in some cases barring divorce. Early and forced marriages are a problem, with displaced families in particular marrying off young daughters as a perceived safeguard against endemic sexual violence or due to economic pressure. Conditions for women are uneven in areas outside government control, ranging from sexual slavery and onerous dress codes in extremist-held areas to formal equality under the PYD in Kurdish areas.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 0 / 4

Many armed groups engage in forced conscription or the use of child soldiers. Displaced people are especially vulnerable to labor exploitation and human trafficking, and there is little equality of opportunity even in relatively stable government-controlled areas, as access to employment and investment is often dependent on personal, political, or communal affiliations.

Taiwan

Population: 23,500,000

Capital: Taipei

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 1

Freedom Rating: 1.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Taiwan’s vibrant and competitive democratic system has allowed three peaceful transfers of power between rival parties since 2000, and protections for civil liberties are generally robust. Ongoing concerns include Chinese efforts to influence policymaking and some sectors of the economy, foreign migrant workers’ vulnerability to exploitation, and disputes over the land and housing rights of both ordinary citizens and Taiwan’s indigenous people.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- The Constitutional Court ruled in May that provisions of the civil code barring same-sex unions violated the constitution’s guarantees of equality before the law and freedom of marriage. The court gave the legislature two years to amend the civil code accordingly.

- Also in May, the legislature adopted the Indigenous Languages Development Act, which took effect in June. It designated the languages spoken by 16 officially recognized indigenous tribes as national languages of Taiwan and authorized their formal use in legislative and legal affairs.
- Executive Summary
- Since their resounding 2016 electoral victory, President Tsai Ing-wen and her Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) have made some headway in delivering on their campaign promises. For example, the legislature has adopted new laws meant to improve conditions for indigenous peoples and foreign migrant workers, though further steps would be necessary to ensure full implementation.
- The Constitutional Court's May 2017 ruling that a legal prohibition against same-sex unions violated constitutional guarantees paved the way for Taiwan to become the first Asian country to legalize same-sex marriage.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 37 / 40**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4**

The president, who is directly elected for up to two four-year terms, appoints the premier with the consent of the legislature. The Executive Yuan, or cabinet, is made up of ministers appointed by the president on the recommendation of the premier. In practice, the president holds most executive authority.

Current president Tsai of the DPP was elected in January 2016 with 56 percent of the vote, defeating two opponents. Direct elections for the president, held since 1996, have been considered generally free and fair.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

In the January 2016 elections for the Legislative Yuan, the DPP won 68 out of 113 seats, leaving the Kuomintang (KMT) with 35, the New Power Party with 5, the People First Party with 3, and the Non-Partisan Solidarity Union and an independent with 1 seat each. Direct legislative elections, held since 1991, have been considered generally free and fair.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

Elections in Taiwan are administered by the Central Election Commission. The law mandates that no political party may hold more than one-third of the seats on the commission. Since 2007, instances of vote buying and other electoral irregularities have gradually waned thanks to tighter enforcement of anticorruption laws.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 15 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4**

Taiwan's multiparty system features vigorous competition between the two major parties, the DPP and KMT. Smaller parties are also able to function without interference and have played a significant role in both presidential and legislative contests.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

Amid widespread dissatisfaction with the KMT government, voters handed the opposition DPP a resounding victory in the 2016 general elections. The results led to Taiwan's third peaceful transfer of power between parties, after previous handovers in 2000 and 2008. The KMT, now in opposition, continues to lead a large number of county and municipal governments.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 3 / 4

Major business owners with interests in China remain an influential force in Taiwanese politics, largely through their close relationship with the KMT and support for its China-friendly policies. The KMT, which governed Taiwan as an authoritarian, one-party state for decades until democratic reforms took hold in the 1980s and 90s, has typically enjoyed a considerable financial advantage over rivals like the DPP, which has traditionally favored greater independence from China.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 4 / 4

Taiwan's constitution grants all citizens the right to vote. This guarantee applies regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or gender identity. The 2016 elections increased women's overall political representation, with female candidates winning the presidency and a record 38 percent of seats in the Legislative Yuan.

Six seats in the Legislative Yuan are reserved for indigenous candidates elected by indigenous voters. An additional two indigenous candidates won seats in 2016 through normal party-list voting. Members of Taiwan's 16 indigenous tribes make up roughly 2 percent of the population.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 10 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4**

Though consideration of China plays a significant role in Taiwanese politics, elected officials in Taiwan are free to set and implement policy without undue interference from foreign or other unelected actors.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4

Corruption is significantly less pervasive than in the past, but it remains a problem. Political and business interests are closely intertwined, leading to malfeasance in government procurement. The current DPP-led government has moved to reduce these practices, including through a proposed reform of the Government Procurement Act. Corruption cases against former officials were ongoing in 2017, including a number of allegations against former president Ma Ying-jeou, though he was cleared of some charges in March and August.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 3 / 4

Taiwan's 2005 Freedom of Government Information Law enables public access to information held by government agencies, including financial audit reports and documents about administrative guidance. Civil society groups are typically able to comment on and influence pending policies and legislation. It remains to be seen whether proposed reforms

of the procurement system will improve transparency and competition in the awarding of government contracts.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 56 / 60 (+2)**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 16 / 16****D1. Are there free and independent media? 4 / 4**

Taiwan's media reflect a diversity of views and report aggressively on government policies and corruption allegations, though many outlets display strong party affiliation in their coverage. Beijing continues to exert influence on Taiwanese media. A number of media owners have significant business interests in China or rely on advertising by Chinese companies, leaving them vulnerable to pressure and prone to self-censorship on topics considered sensitive by the Chinese government. However, in recent years Taiwanese regulators have successfully resisted proposed mergers that would have concentrated important media companies in the hands of such owners, and the Taiwanese press was able to report freely on the 2016 elections. The government does not restrict internet access.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Taiwanese of all faiths can worship freely. Religious organizations that choose to register with the government receive tax-exempt status.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Educators in Taiwan can generally write and lecture without interference, and past practices—including prosecutions—aimed at restricting academics' political activism have been rare in recent years.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

Private discussion is open and free, and there were no reports of the government illegally monitoring online communication.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 11 / 12**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4**

Taiwan's Assembly and Parade Act, passed in 1988, enables authorities to prosecute protesters who fail to obtain a permit or follow orders to disperse, but freedom of assembly is largely respected in practice.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

All civic organizations must register with the government, though registration is freely granted. Nongovernmental organizations typically operate without harassment.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

Trade unions are independent, and most workers enjoy freedom of association, though the government strictly regulates the right to strike. Among other barriers, teachers, workers in the defense industry, and government employees are prohibited from striking.

F. RULE OF LAW: 15 / 16 (+1)**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 4 / 4**

Taiwan's judiciary is independent. Court rulings are generally free from political or other undue interference.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 4 / 4 (+1)

Constitutional protections for due process and defendants' rights are generally upheld, and police largely respect safeguards against arbitrary detention. Although prosecutors and other law enforcement officials have at times engaged in abusive practices over the past decade, particularly in high-profile cases like that of former president Chen Shui-bian, such violations have been less common in recent years.

Score Change: The score improved from 3 to 4 due to a decrease in reports of lengthy pre-trial detentions and other violations of criminal defendants' rights in recent years.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 4 / 4

Both criminal violence and excessive use of force by police are relatively rare in Taiwan, and attorneys are allowed to monitor interrogations to prevent torture.

After a four-year moratorium on the use of the death penalty, the government reinstated the practice in 2010. Condemned inmates, after being sedated, are shot from behind at close range. Family members of inmates facing the death penalty are typically not informed about scheduled dates of executions. Authorities executed no inmates in 2017, compared with one the previous year. In October 2017, a former death row inmate was acquitted in a case involving the killing of a police officer, having served 14 years in prison before his release pending a retrial in 2016. The court found a number of crucial flaws in the case, including evidence that the defendant's initial confession had been coerced, prompting renewed calls for abolition of the death penalty.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

The constitution provides for the equality of all citizens before the law, though the island's indigenous people continue to face social and economic discrimination, leading to high unemployment levels, lower wages, and barriers to education and social services. In 2016, President Tsai offered the government's first formal apology to indigenous people for centuries of suffering and injustice, while launching a justice commission to investigate historical mistreatment. A new Indigenous Languages Development Act took effect in June 2017, designating the languages spoken by 16 officially recognized indigenous tribes as national languages of Taiwan and authorizing their formal use in legislative and legal affairs. In August, the first nationwide indigenous radio station began broadcasting in the 16 recognized languages.

The constitution guarantees women equal rights, though Taiwanese women continue to face discrimination in employment and compensation.

Taiwanese law prohibits discrimination in employment based on sexual orientation, and violence against LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people is adequately addressed by police.

Taiwanese law does not allow for asylum or refugee status. In 2016, a long-awaited draft bill to address the problem passed its first committee review in the Legislative Yuan.

In April 2017, the government convened a roundtable with civil society actors to discuss the bill, prompting renewed campaigns by refugee rights supporters for its passage.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 14 / 16 (+1)

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4

Taiwan's residents enjoy freedom of movement, and Taiwanese authorities have gradually eased restrictions on travel between Taiwan and China in recent years. A program launched in 2011 allows Chinese tourists to travel to Taiwan without supervision, with a cap on the daily number raised to 5,000 by 2015. However, the number of Chinese tourists visiting Taiwan has dropped sharply since the DPP government took office in 2016, allegedly due to Chinese government pressure on tour operators.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 3 / 4

Urban renewal projects and conversions of agricultural land for industrial or residential use have been criticized for unfairly displacing residents. Housing advocates have called for legal amendments to clarify residency rights, including protections against forced eviction, and establish an appeals system to review alleged violations. Demonstrations held in the city of Kaohsiung in 2016 over planned demolitions of homes and local markets to make way for development projects appeared to have tapered off in 2017. Nonetheless, there were concerns that new rounds of forced evictions in the country's cities could prompt further protests. Separately, disputes over indigenous lands continue amid stalled efforts to pass legislation on indigenous autonomy.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 4 / 4 (+1)

Taiwan's Constitutional Court ruled in May 2017 that provisions of the civil code barring same-sex unions violated the constitution's guarantees of equality before the law and freedom of marriage. The court gave the legislature two years to amend the civil code accordingly.

Rape and domestic violence remain serious problems, and although the law permits authorities to investigate complaints without the victims actually pressing charges, cultural norms inhibit many women from reporting these crimes to the police. However, reforms implemented in recent years have improved protections for accusers and encouraged reporting of rape and sexual assault, which appears to have gradually increased rates of prosecution and conviction.

Score Change: The score improved from 3 to 4 due to gradual progress on reporting and punishment of rape and sexual assault as well as a court ruling that cleared the way for legalization of same-sex marriage.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

Over 600,000 foreign migrants work in Taiwan, with a substantial number working as domestic helpers and fishermen; most come from Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, and the Philippines. Foreign domestic workers and fishermen are not covered by Taiwan's Labour Standards Act, meaning they are excluded from its minimum wage, overtime, and paid leave protections. As a result, foreign workers in these and other fields are at substantial risk of exploitation, with widespread accounts of unpaid wages, poor working conditions,

and physical and sexual abuse, as well as extortion and fraud at the hands of recruitment and brokerage agencies. A 2016 law eliminated a requirement that foreign workers leave the country between employment contracts, and in September 2017 the government announced draft amendments to the Employment Services Act that would help combat employer abuses against migrant workers.

Legislation adopted in 2016 to establish stricter rules and stronger punishments regarding worker exploitation by Taiwanese fishing companies took effect in early 2017. However, labor advocates and international monitors have accused government agencies of poor implementation, citing ongoing mistreatment and abuse of foreign fishermen on Taiwanese vessels. The government has said that it remains committed to addressing the situation. In September, for instance, officials filed charges against 19 people for human trafficking and deprivations of personal liberty involving the alleged abuse of 81 foreign fishermen.

Tajikistan

Population: 8,600,000

Capital: Dushanbe

Political Rights Rating: 7

Civil Liberties Rating: 6

Freedom Rating: 6.5

Freedom Status: Not Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: Political rights and civil liberties in Tajikistan are severely curtailed by the government of President Emomali Rahmon, which sustains a campaign of repression against political opposition, dissent, and criticism.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In January, President Rahmon further consolidated his family's grip on power by installing his son, Rustam Emomali, as Dushanbe's mayor. He replaced Mahmadsaid Ubaidulloev, who had been in power for 19 years.
- The harassment and detentions of former members of the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT) and their families continued throughout 2017.
- Continuing its crackdown on observant Muslims, in August the government passed a law that requires citizens to "stick to national clothes and culture," a move widely seen as an effort to limit the wearing of hijabs.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 1 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 0 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

President Emomali Rahmon was first elected in 1994, during Tajikistan's 1992–97 civil war, and has been in power ever since. The president is elected for a seven-year term. Amendments ratified in 2016 removed presidential term limits and further consolidated Rahmon's power. In the last presidential election in 2013, Rahmon was reelected to a fourth term with 83.6 percent of the vote. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

(OSCE) observers noted that the election “lacked a real choice” and failed to meet international standards.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

The People’s Democratic Party (PDP), led by the president, consistently dominates legislative elections. The bicameral Supreme Assembly is comprised of an upper house, the National Assembly, and a lower house, the Assembly of Representatives. The 34-member National Assembly is comprised of 25 members elected by local assemblies and 8 appointed by the president; an additional 1 seat is held for each living former president. The 63-member Assembly of Representatives is elected by popular vote. Members of each body serve five-year terms.

Ahead of the 2015 elections, the government directed an extensive anti-opposition campaign through state media and the persecution of many candidates, particularly those of the IRPT, leading to the disenfranchisement of the country’s most significant opposition force. The PDP won 51 of 63 lower-house seats, and small, mostly progovernment parties took the remainder. According to OSCE monitors, the elections were marred by serious violations and failed to meet democratic standards.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 0 / 4

The Central Commission for Election and Referenda (CCER) is subservient to the government, and enforces laws in inconsistent and nontransparent ways.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 0 / 12

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 0 / 4

The government consistently marginalizes independent or opposition parties, which have become completely excluded from the political process. In 2015, the Justice Ministry revoked the IRPT’s legal registration based on a technicality and the Supreme Court declared the IRPT a terrorist organization, criminalizing membership in or expression of support for the group. The constitutional amendments passed in a 2016 referendum banned faith-based political parties, effectively preventing the IRPT from reforming.

Harassment of former IRPT members continued in 2017, and included the two-day detention of the father of an activist who attended an OSCE conference on human rights in Warsaw. Additionally, one of two lawyers sentenced to over 20 years in prison for defending IRPT members in court had his sentence extended twice, to total 28 years.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 0 / 4

Years of unrelenting repression of opposition activities have left opposition forces unable to compete, and in many cases even participate, in elections. The incumbent administration uses its near-absolute control over the media, an extremely high threshold for number of signatures required to run for office, and the exclusion of Tajikistani migrant workers—who comprise between 20 and 45 percent of the electorate—from the nomination process for the presidency and parliament, to cement its dominance over the electoral process. Many IRPT members and their relatives were beaten, harassed, and imprisoned before the 2015 elections, with some reportedly tortured in custody.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 0 / 4

Political power in Tajikistan is controlled almost exclusively by Rahmon's extended family, leaving citizens with few avenues to exercise meaningful political choices or participate in political processes.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 0 / 4

No segment of the population has full political rights or electoral opportunities. Women remain underrepresented in the political system, both as voters and in elected positions.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 1 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 0 / 4

Following the 2015 elections, the president's ruling party cemented a virtually unopposed position in determining and implementing policy. Officials from the president's native Kulob District are dominant in government. In January 2017, President Rahmon strengthened his family's grip on power by installing his son, Rustam Emomali, as Dushanbe's mayor. He replaced Mayor Mahmadsaid Ubaidulloev, who had been in power for 19 years.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 0 / 4

Patronage networks and regional affiliations are central to political life, corruption is pervasive, and laws designed to prevent it are routinely ignored. Major irregularities have been reported at the National Bank of Tajikistan and the country's largest industrial company, the state-owned TALCO Aluminum.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 1 / 4

Public officials are not required to disclose financial information, and government decision-making and budgetary processes lack transparency.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 10 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 2 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 0 / 4

Independent journalists face harassment and intimidation. Civil libel charges are often used to cripple newspapers that criticize the government. The government controls most printing presses, newsprint supplies, and broadcasting facilities, effectively denying independent media access to them. Authorities block some critical websites and news portals, and use temporary full blackouts of internet services and messaging to suppress criticism.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 0 / 4

The government imposes strict restrictions on religious freedom, and limits religious activities to state-approved venues. In 2017, Tajikistan continued to prosecute individuals for alleged membership in banned religious organizations, including Christian groups. Minors are banned from attending religious services in mosques. A law passed in August that discourages religious clothing is widely perceived as an effort to limit the wearing of hijabs.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 1 / 4

The government exercises significant influence over the administration of education institutions.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 1 / 4

Authorities frequently monitor private communications, often without authorization. In July 2017, a law was passed that allows authorities to monitor citizens' online behavior, and imposes fines and prison sentences for visiting "undesirable websites" or posting "inappropriate comments".

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 2 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 0 / 4

The government strictly limits freedoms of assembly. Local government approval is required to hold demonstrations, and officials often refuse to grant permission.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 1 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) must register with the Ministry of Justice and are vulnerable to closure for minor technicalities. NGOs must disclose funding from foreign sources to the Ministry of Justice. Foreign funds must be logged in a state registry before organizations can access them, and the government has oversight of operations supported by the funds.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 1 / 4

Citizens have the legal right to form and join trade unions and to bargain collectively, but unions are largely subservient to the authorities.

F. RULE OF LAW: 2 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4

The judiciary lacks independence. Many judges are poorly trained and inexperienced, and bribery is widespread.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 0 / 4

Court proceedings rarely follow the rule of law, and nearly all defendants are found guilty. Arbitrary arrests are common.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 0 / 4

People in Tajikistan are subject to abuses by security forces and have no meaningful opportunity for recourse. Detainees are frequently beaten in custody to extract confessions. Overcrowding and disease contribute to often life-threatening conditions in prisons.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

Discrimination against ethnic minorities is not a significant problem. However, discrimination, harassment, and violence against LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender)

people is common, and there is no legislation against discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. LGBT people frequently face abuse by security forces.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 4 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 1 / 4

Citizens can travel freely but must register their permanent residence with local authorities. The right to choose institutions of higher education is formally protected, but schools and universities are plagued by corruption. Students interested in studying Islamic theology are forbidden from attending schools outside the country.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 1 / 4

Tajikistan's generally dysfunctional economic environment affects everything from peasant farms to large enterprises. Officials from the president's native Kulob District dominate government, and family members maintain extensive business interests in the country, offering them great influence over the private sector.

By law, all land belongs to the state, which allocates use rights primarily for agricultural purposes in a process plagued by corruption and inefficiency.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 1 / 4

Sexual harassment, discrimination, and violence against women are common, but cases are underreported and seldom adequately investigated. Reports indicate that women sometimes face societal pressure to wear headscarves.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

Despite some government efforts to address the issue, Tajikistan remains a source and transit country for sex trafficking. Child labor, particularly on cotton farms, remains a serious problem. The scarcity of economic opportunity has forced many to seek work abroad.

↓ Tanzania

Population: 54,200,000

Capital: Dodoma

Political Rights Rating: 4 ↓

Civil Liberties Rating: 4

Freedom Rating: 4.0

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Ratings Change, Trend Arrow: Tanzania's political rights rating declined from 3 to 4 and it received a downward trend arrow due to mounting repression of the opposition, media outlets, and social media users who are critical of the increasingly authoritarian president, John Magufuli.

Overview: Tanzania has held regular multiparty elections since its transition from a one-party state in the early 1990s, but the opposition remains relatively weak, and the ruling party,

Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM), has retained power for over half a century. Since 2015, the government has cracked down with growing severity on its critics in the political opposition, the press, and civil society.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- A prominent opposition politician was shot and wounded by unidentified assailants in September, and other members of the opposition faced arrests and criminal charges during the year.
- An independent newspaper was suspended in June, two more papers received suspensions in September, and a trial against the founders of a well-known online discussion site began in August. A freelance journalist went missing in late November and remained unaccounted for at year's end.
- In August, authorities instructed all nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to verify their registration status by submitting a series of documents or risk deregistration. NGOs were separately threatened with deregistration if they supported the rights of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people or challenged the president's June declaration that girls who were excluded from school for being pregnant should not be allowed to return.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 22 / 40 (-3)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 7 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

The president of Tanzania is elected by direct popular vote for up to two five-year terms. In the 2015 presidential election, held concurrently with parliamentary elections, the CCM's John Magufuli won with 58 percent of the vote, while Edward Lowassa of Chama Cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo (CHADEMA) took 40 percent. Domestic and international observers generally deemed the election to be credible, but noted a number of areas of concern. An observer mission from the European Union (EU) described "highly competitive, generally well organized elections, but with insufficient efforts at transparency from the election administrations." The EU mission noted that the CCM had drawn on state resources, such as public stadiums, to support its campaign.

The semiautonomous region of Zanzibar elects its own president. Although international observers found that the 2015 election was lawfully conducted and the National Election Commission (NEC) accepted the Zanzibar results for national offices, the Zanzibar Electoral Commission (ZEC) annulled the vote for regional offices before official results were announced. The opposition Civic United Front (CUF) accused the ZEC of attempting to save the CCM from defeat. A rerun of the Zanzibar election was held in March 2016, but the opposition boycotted, allowing the CCM to rule unilaterally. The preelection period featured an increased military presence in the region and reports of attacks on political party offices and journalists. CCM legislators voted in September to change Zanzibar's constitution, eliminating a 2010 amendment establishing the Government of National Unity, a CCM-CUF power-sharing arrangement that had enabled years of stability.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4

Legislative authority lies with a unicameral, 393-seat National Assembly (the Bunge) whose members serve five-year terms. There are 264 seats filled through direct elections in single-member constituencies, 113 are reserved for women elected by political parties, 10

are filled by presidential appointment, and 5 members are elected by the Zanzibar legislature. The attorney general holds an ex officio seat. In the 2015 parliamentary elections, the CCM won a total of 253 seats, CHADEMA took 70, the CUF won 42, and the Alliance for Change and Transparency (ACT) and the National Convention for Construction and Reform (NCCR)–Mageuzi each won one.

Members of Zanzibar’s 85-seat House of Representatives serve five-year terms and are seated through a mix of direct elections and appointments. The opposition boycott of the Zanzibari rerun elections in 2016 left the CCM with full control of the regional legislature.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 2 / 4

Tanzania’s constitution dates to 1977, when the country was under single-party rule, and an effort to adopt a new constitution drafted in 2014 has since stalled amid opposition parties’ complaints that their input was ignored. Among other proposed changes, the 2014 draft would create a three-tiered federal structure, allow independent candidates for office, limit executive powers of appointment, and include a bill of rights.

In addition to the ZEC’s controversial annulment of the 2015 Zanzibari elections, the structures of the NEC and ZEC contribute to doubts about their independence. The NEC is appointed by the Tanzanian president, and the ZEC is appointed by the Zanzibari president, though the opposition nominates two of the seven ZEC members. The national president maintains the ability to appoint regional and district commissioners—administrative officials who can be influential during elections.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 9 / 16 (-2)

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 2 / 4

Tanzanians have the right to organize into political parties, but the ruling CCM enjoys considerable advantages related to its long and unbroken incumbency. For example, government subsidies for party campaigns continue to disproportionately benefit the CCM. In 2016, the government banned all political rallies and demonstrations outside election periods, sharply curtailing parties’ ability to mobilize public support.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 2 / 4 (-1)

Tanzania’s opposition, which performed better in the 2015 elections than it ever had before, still controls only 29 percent of the National Assembly seats and faces significant interference, harassment, violence, and criminal prosecutions by the government and its allies.

The pressure on leading opposition figures increased during 2017. Tundu Lissu of CHADEMA, a senior opposition lawmaker, was arrested several times on different charges, including for insulting Magufuli. In September he was shot and wounded by unidentified attackers in Dodoma. The government failed to mount an effective investigation and was accused of complicity. Lissu sought medical treatment in Kenya, where he remained at year’s end.

CHADEMA chairman Freeman Mbowe was accused of drug trafficking in February, and CHADEMA legislator Halima Mdee was arrested in July and charged with insulting the president. A number of other CHADEMA officials were arrested separately during the year. The leader of ACT was detained in October for alleged sedition and reporting inaccurate

statistics on the economy, and the party's offices were later raided. In March, a police officer threatened recently fired information minister Nape Nnauye with a gun to block him from speaking to the media; in November, the former tourism minister became the target of a corruption investigation two weeks after he resigned and defected to the opposition.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 due to increased pressure on the opposition, including arrests of politicians for criticizing the president and the attempted murder of a senior opposition lawmaker.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 3 / 4

Tanzanian voters and politicians are mostly free of undue influence from forces outside the political arena. However, chronic problems include partisan violence; excessive force against the opposition by police, particularly in Zanzibar; and the alleged use of vote-buying and other material incentives by the ruling party.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 2 / 4 (-1)

Members of cultural, ethnic, religious, and other minority groups have full political rights, but parties formed on explicitly ethnic or religious bases are prohibited. In December 2017, the government threatened to revoke the licenses of religious organizations whose leaders comment on politics.

Several incidents during 2017 indicated that women's interests are not adequately represented in the political system, despite quotas guaranteeing seats for women lawmakers. For example, in June the president declared that girls expelled from school for becoming pregnant should not be allowed to return, and in December some regional and district commissioners ordered the arrest of pregnant schoolgirls. Mdee, the opposition lawmaker arrested in July, was charged over her objections to Magufuli's order, and women's rights organizations that criticized such policies were threatened with deregistration. Separately, groups supporting the rights and health needs of LGBT people faced an ongoing crackdown that began in 2016.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 because the rights and interests of women and LGBT people are not adequately addressed by the political system.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 6 / 12 (-1)

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 2 / 4 (-1)

Magufuli has consolidated political power in the presidency since taking office, sidelining the legislature—in part by suppressing dissent within the ruling party—and exerting greater control over cabinet ministers through dismissals and reshuffles. Among other changes during 2017, he dismissed the information minister in March after the latter opened an investigation into regional officials' raid on a media organization. Former military and police commanders have been prominent among the president's newly appointed regional and district commissioners, and Magufuli has relied heavily on intelligence and law enforcement agencies to advance his anticorruption agenda and weaken political rivals through criminal investigations.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 due to the president's centralization of power in the executive and marginalization of both the legislature and his own cabinet.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

Magufuli's anticorruption drive has had mixed results. It has earned some popular support for targeting petty corruption, and in 2017 the government penalized foreign firms and complicit officials for undervaluing exports from extractive industries. However, the Prevention and Combating of Corruption Bureau (PCCB) has been accused of focusing on low-level corruption and doing little to address graft committed by senior government officials. Magufuli has dismissed some cabinet ministers over corruption allegations, but critics argue that such ad hoc efforts led personally by the president are no substitute for strong and independent institutions that can pursue cases impartially.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

An access to information act was adopted in 2016, but implementation stalled during 2017. Critics noted that the act gives precedence to any other law governing the handling of government information, and appeals of decisions on information requests are handled by a government minister rather than an independent body. The law also imposes prison terms on officials who improperly release information, but no clear penalties for those who improperly withhold information. Among other impediments to government transparency, live broadcasts of parliament sessions have been suspended since April 2016. Tanzania withdrew from the Open Government Partnership in September 2017.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 30 / 60 (-3)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 7 / 16 (-2)

D1. Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4 (-1)

The 2016 Media Services Act created statutory regulators with broad authority over media content and the licensing of outlets and journalists. It also prescribes harsh penalties, including prison terms, for publication of defamatory, seditious, or other illegal content. Officials repeatedly invoked the new law during 2017 to punish alleged violations by critical media outlets. The newspaper *Mawio* was suspended for two years in June for articles that linked mining-related corruption to two former presidents. In September, the newspaper *Mwanahalisi* was also banned for two years, for content that was allegedly seditious, insulting to the president, and a threat to security. Another newspaper, *Raia Mwema*, was suspended for 90 days that month after suggesting that Magufuli's presidency would be a failure.

In March, regional authorities raided a private broadcaster and demanded, without success, that it air a video attacking a popular local pastor. Also that month, a rapper was arrested over a song that indirectly questioned Magufuli's tolerance of criticism. Separately, freelance journalist Azory Gwanda, who had investigated a series of murders targeting police and local officials in Pwani Region, went missing in November and remained unaccounted for at year's end.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 due to the implementation of the restrictive Media Services Act, lengthy suspensions of critical newspapers, and the disappearance of an investigative journalist, among other problems.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4

Freedom of religion is generally respected, and interfaith relations are largely peaceful, though there have been periodic cases of violence. Religious figures have faced government pressure for commenting on political affairs. Muslim leader Sheikh Issa Ponda was arrested and interrogated in October 2017 over allegedly seditious remarks at a press conference following his return from Kenya to visit Lissu, the opposition leader who had been shot the previous month. Religious organizations must register with the Home Affairs Ministry to operate legally, and in December the government threatened to revoke the registration of those whose leaders make political statements. A prominent Christian cleric had recently criticized political repression in a sermon.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 2 / 4

Historically, there have been few government restrictions on academic freedom. The 2015 Statistics Act—which requires data released publicly to be first approved by the National Bureau of Statistics—has raised concerns about its potential effects on researchers and academics. It was reported in August 2017 that the bureau had warned a polling firm to stop releasing unofficial statistics on television viewership.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 1 / 4 (-1)

The CCM has traditionally monitored the population through a neighborhood-level party cell structure, but the government has turned its attention to social media in recent years, and constraints on individuals' freedom to discuss political topics online have grown.

Social media users in 2017 continued to face the risk of prosecution under the 2015 Cybercrimes Act and other laws for offenses such as insulting the president, and government officials threatened to prosecute users for supposedly spreading homosexuality through social media. The cofounders of the popular discussion site JamiiForums, who were arrested in December 2016, went on trial in August for refusing to identify anonymous users who had written about corruption and other sensitive topics; the trial was ongoing at year's end.

In September, the National Assembly approved the draft Electronic and Postal Communications (Online Content) Regulations, which would require all online content publishers—including blogs—to register and pay license fees and to ban anonymous users. Social media users would be liable for content deemed to “cause annoyance” or “lead to public disorder,” among other vague standards. Internet cafes would have to install surveillance cameras. Violations of the regulations, which were awaiting final approval by the information minister at year's end, could be punished with fines and jail terms.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 due to the government's increased prosecution of and threats against social media users who discuss sensitive topics including the president, corruption, and LGBT identity since 2015.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 6 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 2 / 4

The constitution guarantees freedom of assembly, but the government can limit this right. All assemblies require police approval, and critical political demonstrations are at times actively discouraged. A ban on political rallies has been in place since mid-2016.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 2 / 4

Tanzania has a diverse and active civil society sector, but current laws give the government broad authority to deregister NGOs, and officials repeatedly threatened to use that power against critical groups in 2017. For example, in June the home affairs minister threatened to deregister women's rights organizations that challenged the president's ban on teen mothers returning to school as well as any group working to support the rights of LGBT people. Some individual human rights activists faced arrest during the year, and in August the government instructed all NGOs to submit documents to "verify" their registration status, threatening deregistration for those that failed to comply. Also that month, a well-known elephant conservationist was shot and killed after receiving multiple death threats.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

Trade unions are ostensibly independent of the government and are coordinated by the Trade Union Congress of Tanzania and the Zanzibar Trade Union Congress. The Tanzania Federation of Cooperatives represents most of Tanzania's agricultural sector. The government has significant discretion to deny union registration, and many private employers engage in antiunion activities. Essential public service workers are barred from striking, and other workers are restricted by complex notification and mediation requirements. Strikes are infrequent on both the mainland and Zanzibar.

F. RULE OF LAW: 8 / 16 (-1)

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 2 / 4

Tanzania's judiciary suffers from underfunding and corruption. Judges are political appointees, and the judiciary does not have an independent budget, which makes it vulnerable to political pressure. Of two High Court judges who resigned in May 2017, one had been criticized over her suspiciously flawed handling of drug-trafficking cases, and the other had been implicated in a corruption scandal.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 2 / 4 (-1)

Due process does not always prevail in civil and criminal matters. Policies and rules regarding arrest and pretrial detention are often ignored, and pretrial detention commonly lasts for years.

Magufuli's anticorruption campaign since 2015 has been marked by a pattern of abrupt firings that circumvent institutional rules on reviewing and dismissing public servants. In April 2017, he demanded the resignation of nearly 10,000 state employees after a presidential task force—having supposedly reviewed hundreds of thousands of records since it was formed in February—accused them of holding fraudulent credentials. Some officials have been removed over policy disputes with the president; in January 2017, for example, Magufuli fired the head of the state-owned Tanzania Electric Supply Company (TANESCO), Felchesmi Mramba, for raising electricity tariffs, despite the fact that the company had obtained approval from the government regulator to do so.

In its disputes with companies engaged in extractive industries, the government has used aggressive tactics that may entail due process violations. For instance, the state imposed a ban on gold and copper ore exports in March 2017, and in July the goldmining company Acacia was ordered to pay a total of \$190 billion in back taxes and penalties for allegedly underreported export revenues since 2000. Acacia had total annual revenues of \$1.05 billion in 2016 and less in previous years, and observers said the government's claims were implausible. Also in July, the government pushed through a series of laws, without consultation, that effectively allow it to seize stakes in mining firms.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 because the president's aggressive efforts to advance his anticorruption and economic policy agendas since 2015 have apparently led to infringements on the principles of due process.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 2 / 4

Security forces reportedly abuse, threaten, and mistreat civilians routinely and with limited accountability. Vigilante justice and mob violence are common, and security forces are often unable or unwilling to enforce the rule of law. Prisoners suffer from harsh conditions, including overcrowding and poor medical care.

The Pwani (Coast) Region has suffered from a spate of murders targeting police and local government leaders since 2015, with at least 39 killings documented by mid-2017. In April 2017, seven police officers in Rufiji District, part of the Coast Region, were assassinated. In August police killed 13 suspected criminals who were allegedly involved in the murders.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

Women's rights are constitutionally guaranteed but not uniformly protected. Women face de facto discrimination in employment, including sexual harassment, which is rarely addressed through formal legal channels. Women's socioeconomic disadvantages are more pronounced in rural areas and the informal economy.

Same-sex sexual relations are punishable by lengthy prison terms, and LGBT people face discrimination and police abuse in practice, leading most to hide their identities. The government continued a crackdown on organizations providing health and other services to LGBT people in 2017, barring a group of 40 private health centers from providing HIV/AIDS services in February. In September, 20 people were arrested in Zanzibar as they met to receive training about HIV/AIDS education programs, and a dozen activists and legal advocates were arrested in October at a meeting on HIV policy in Dar es Salaam. In some cases police have carried out forced anal examinations of men detained for suspected same-sex conduct.

There were more than 300,000 refugees and asylum seekers from Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo in Tanzania in 2017, with most living in overcrowded camps featuring poor health and safety conditions. In January, the Home Affairs Ministry began requiring individual reviews to grant refugee status to Burundians, who had previously received prima facie refugee status. During a visit by Burundi's president in July, Magufuli urged Burundian refugees to return to their home country.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 9 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4

Residents generally enjoy basic freedoms pertaining to travel and choice of residence, employment, and education, though corruption remains an obstacle.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

Tanzanians have the right to establish private businesses but are often required to pay bribes to license and operate them. The state remains the owner of all land and leases it to

individuals and private entities, leading to clashes over land rights between citizens and companies engaged in extractive industries.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Rape, domestic violence, and female genital mutilation (FGM)—which is concentrated in certain regions—are reportedly common but rarely prosecuted. Activists criticized Magufuli for including two convicted child rapists in a mass pardon in December 2017. The government has stalled implementation and pursued appeals of a 2016 High Court ruling that called for the minimum age of marriage to be raised to 18 for girls as well as boys. Tanzania's adolescent fertility rate is more than twice the global average. Girls can be expelled from school for becoming pregnant, and in June 2017 Magufuli prohibited those who had given birth from returning to school. In December, some local officials began arresting students who had become pregnant. Laws and practices regarding marriage, divorce, and other personal status issues favor men over women, particularly in Zanzibar.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Sexual and labor exploitation remain problems, especially for children living in poor rural areas who are drawn into domestic service, agricultural labor, mining, and other activities. Tanzanians are also vulnerable to trafficking for work under exploitative conditions abroad.

Thailand

Population: 65,300,000

Capital: Bangkok

Political Rights Rating: 6

Civil Liberties Rating: 5

Freedom Rating: 5.5

Freedom Status: Not Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: Thailand is ruled by a military junta that launched a coup in 2014, claiming that it would put an end to a political crisis that had gripped the country for almost a decade. As the military government goes about remaking the political system, it has exercised unchecked powers granted by the constitution to impose extensive restrictions on civil and political rights, and to suppress dissent.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In January, the new king, Maha Vajiralongkorn, requested several changes to the military-drafted constitution, which had been approved in 2016 in a highly controlled referendum. The National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO)—the military junta that seized power in 2014—quickly approved the changes, which were interpreted as expanding royal powers.
- In April, the king signed the revised constitution into law, effectively consolidating the military's grip on power. The new charter does not annul any of the repressive laws and policies the NCPO had passed since 2014, including the provisions of the

interim constitution's Article 44, which give the NCPO head the ability to override existing legislation and issue new laws at will. Elections under the new charter are scheduled for 2018.

- Journalists, academics, and activists continued to face harassment or arrest for criticizing NCPO authorities or the monarchy. In August, a student activist known as Pai Dao Din was sentenced to two years and six months in prison for posting to Facebook a British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) article deemed critical of the new king.
- In August, former prime minister Yingluck Shinawatra, who was ousted in the 2014 coup, fled Thailand ahead of an expected ruling in a corruption case against her. In September, she was convicted and sentenced in absentia to five years in jail.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 6 / 40 (-1)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 0 / 12 (-1)

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

Thailand's current head of government, Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha, staged a military coup against Thailand's democratically elected government in 2014. Prayuth, who was then the army chief, was subsequently designated prime minister in the absence of elections.

The NCPO's "road map" for a return to civilian rule has been delayed several times since 2014. In October 2017, the junta announced that general elections would take place in November 2018, though the provisions of the new constitution weaken political parties and are expected to further entrench the authority of the military.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

The 2014 interim constitution promulgated by the NCPO created a 220-seat National Legislative Assembly (NLA), which quickly installed the prime minister and cabinet. The 200-member National Reform Steering Assembly (NRSA), tasked with making recommendations for reforms to government and the political process, was convened in 2015. Members of both the NLA and the NRSA were chosen by the NCPO.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 0 / 4 (-1)

The NCPO-appointed Constitutional Drafting Committee (CDC) developed a draft constitution that was approved in a tightly controlled 2016 referendum. The new constitution, which will govern future elections, is expected to weaken political parties and elected officials while strengthening unelected institutions. In the mixed-member apportionment system introduced in the charter, there will be 350 constituency seats and 150 party-list seats in the House of Representatives, the lower house of parliament. Citizens will cast only one vote, rather than two distinct votes, which counts for a candidate as well as for that candidate's party for the party list seats. Experts anticipate that without separate votes for each type of seat, parties will have difficulty gaining a majority, leading to unstable coalition governments. All 250 seats in the Senate, or upper house, will be appointed for the first five-year term by the junta, and will include six seats reserved for senior military officials. The Senate will have influence over the selection of the prime minister.

In January 2017, Thai king Maha Vajiralongkorn requested several changes to the military-drafted constitution, including the removal of a provision under which power could

be granted to the Constitutional Court in times of crisis. Its omission was interpreted as bolstering the powers of the monarchy. He then signed the constitution in April.

Score Change: The score declined from 1 to 0 because provisions of the new constitution are designed to empower the military while weakening political parties, and because the king requested constitutional modifications that were approved by the NCPO in the absence of any review or discussion by elected leaders or the public.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 3 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 1 / 4

In 2014, the NCPO enacted measures banning the formation of new political parties and prohibiting existing parties from meeting or conducting political activities. A Political Party Act approved in October 2017 introduced costly provisions that will likely be difficult for small parties to adhere to; these include annual fees and a requirement that parties establish branches in different parts of the country. The law, to take effect in 2018, did not lift the ban on political parties. However, in December, Prime Minister Prayuth used Article 44 powers to push through an amendment to the Political Party Act allowing for the formation of new political parties—though any new parties will have to be approved by the NCPO before they can begin operations.

Separately, criminal proceedings against former prime minister Yingluck Shinawatra of the Pheu Thai Party (PTP) that were linked with alleged mismanagement of a rice-subsidy scheme concluded in September 2017, when the Supreme Court convicted her in absentia and sentenced her to five years in jail. Yingluck had fled Thailand the previous month, ahead of the trial's verdict.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 1 / 4

The PTP—Thailand's main opposition grouping—enjoys some popular support but under the current regime has no opportunity to increase its support or gain power through elections. NCPO-approved parties are expected to compete in the 2018 polls.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 0 / 4

Thailand is currently ruled by an unelected junta aligned with the country's monarchy and economic elites. Citizens are excluded from meaningful political participation.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 1 / 4

Since political rights are broadly denied to citizens, women and members of minority groups are generally unable to choose their representatives or organize independently to assert their interests in the political sphere.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 3 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 0 / 4

The policies of the Thai government are determined by the unelected prime minister and his appointed government, the NCPO. The new constitution does not annul any of the repressive laws and policies passed by the junta since 2014, including those that were granted by Article 44 of the interim charter. The provision gives the head of the NCPO unchecked powers, including the ability to override existing legislation and issue new laws at will.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

The National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) receives a high number of complaints each year, and the NCPO has taken efforts to implement anticorruption laws. However, while the coup leaders cited corruption as one justification for the overthrow of the previous government, the current regime has engaged in corruption, cronyism, and nepotism.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 1 / 4

The NCPO largely operates without openness and transparency. High-level decisions are generally made, and the drafting of legislation carried out, with near-total opacity and no public consultation.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 25 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 6 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4

Since taking power in 2014, the NCPO has systematically used censorship, intimidation, and legal action to suppress freedom of the press. Journalists have been detained without charge and questioned by the NCPO in military camps, in an intimidation tactic known as an “attitude adjustment.” Journalists and media outlets risk penalties for violating an NCPO ban on material that “maliciously” criticizes the government or is deemed divisive. Several news outlets were suspended in 2017 for failing to comply with the ban, though they were later reinstated after agreeing to avoid disseminating such material. Additionally, in August 2017, prominent journalist Pravit Rojanaphruk was charged with sedition and spreading false information. The charges came in connection with comments he had posted to Facebook in 2015 that were critical of the draft constitution, and more recent comments in which he had criticized the NCPO, as well as the criminal proceedings against Yingluck.

In May 2017, over the objections of a coalition of media organizations, the NRSA passed a law creating a regulatory media council whose members will be appointed by the military government. The Thai Journalists’ Association objected to the law, saying that journalists should self-regulate, and that the law’s definition of who is a journalist was broad and could result in sanctions against members of the general public.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4

There is no state religion, and religious freedom is respected in the majority of the country. Religious organizations operate freely, and there is no systemic or institutional discrimination based on religion. In 2016, when concerns emerged over potential bias towards Buddhism in an article of the new constitution, the head of the NCPO attempted to allay concerns by using his powers under Article 44 to issue an order clarifying that the state would protect all religions.

However, some restrictions exist. Speech considered insulting to Buddhism is prohibited by law. A long-running civil conflict in the south, which pits ethnic Malay Muslims

against ethnic Thai Buddhists, continues to undermine citizens' ability to practice their religions.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 1 / 4

Academic freedom is constrained under the NCPO. University discussions and seminars on topics regarded as politically sensitive are subject to monitoring or outright cancellation by government authorities. In August 2017, five people, including the prominent academic Chayan Vaddhanaphuti, were charged with contravening a government prohibition on public assembly in connection with their attendance of academic conference at Chiang Mai University weeks earlier.

Academics working on sensitive topics are subjected to oppressive tactics including summonses for questioning, home visits by security officials, surveillance of their activities, and arbitrary detention for the purpose of questioning. Some academics have fled into exile.

Since the 2014 coup, the junta has also bolstered its efforts to foster student support for government ideas, including through curriculum development.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 1 / 4

Security forces have enforced stringent surveillance on people viewed as critical of the NCPO, including surveillance of online activities.

The number of lèse-majesté cases has increased sharply under the NCPO. Cases have been used to target activists, scholars, students, journalists, and politicians, and accusations have also been lodged by citizens against one another. In addition to authorities' monitoring of social media sites for lèse-majesté violations, this type of social surveillance has also been undertaken by citizens who, either with the backing of the government or on their own initiative, scan online postings and report them to authorities. In August 2017, a student activist known as Pai Dao Din was sentenced to two years and six months in prison in a lèse-majesté case for posting to Facebook a profile of the new king by the BBC that was deemed critical of the monarchy.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 4 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 1 / 4

Prohibitions on political gatherings of five or more people continued to be enforced in 2017. What constitutes a political gathering is at the discretion of the authorities. Those who engage in symbolic actions or public protests advocating for democracy and human rights risk a spectrum of consequences, including fines, arrest, and being subject to political reeducation.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 1 / 4

Thailand has a vibrant civil society, but groups focused on defending human rights or freedom of expression face restrictions, with the NCPO often insisting that such activities violate laws concerning political gatherings, or create "public disturbances." When such activities are allowed to move forward, authorities have cautioned organizers against opposing NCPO policies ahead of time, and heavily monitor the events. In 2016, the NCPO canceled a number of seminars and public discussions on the draft constitution.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

Thai trade unions are independent and have the right to collectively bargain. However, civil servants and Thailand's numerous temporary workers do not have the right to form unions, and less than 2 percent of the total workforce is unionized. Antiunion discrimination in the private sector is common, and legal protections for union members are weak and poorly enforced.

F. RULE OF LAW: 5 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4**

Although the new constitution grants independence to the judiciary, military courts have jurisdiction over certain types of civilian cases. In 2016, the government issued an order that halted the practice of trying civilians accused of national security and *lèse-majesté* crimes and of violating NCPO orders in military courts. However, the NCPO order is not retroactive and does not cover cases that had already entered the military court system.

In August 2017, Thailand's Supreme Court declined to hear a case against former prime minister Abhisit Vejjajiva and his deputy, who were charged for their role in a deadly 2010 crackdown against Yingluck supporters, in which at least 98 people had been killed.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

Restrictions implemented by the NCPO severely undermine due process rights. Orders issued in 2015 permit the detention of individuals without charge for up to seven days, and expanded the authority of military officers in the area of law enforcement, permitting them to arrest, detain, and investigate crimes related to the monarchy and national security.

Cases related to land and natural resources, particularly those deemed by the junta to be vital to the country's economic development, are susceptible to political interference.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 1 / 4

While most of the country is free from terrorism or insurgencies, a combination of martial law and emergency rule has been in effect for over a decade in the four southernmost provinces, where Malay Muslims form a majority and a separatist insurgency has been ongoing since the 1940s. Civilians are regularly targeted in shootings, bombings, and arson attacks, and insurgents have focused on schools and teachers as symbols of the Thai state. Counterinsurgency operations have involved the indiscriminate detention of thousands of suspected militants and sympathizers, and there are long-standing and credible reports of torture and other human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, by both government forces and insurgents. The police and military often operate with impunity.

Land and environmental activists risk serious and even deadly violence, and the environmental rights group Global Witness has described Thailand as among the most dangerous countries in Asia for such activists to operate. Perpetrators of attacks against them generally enjoy impunity.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

In Thailand's north, so-called hill tribes are not fully integrated into society. Many lack formal citizenship, which renders them ineligible to vote, own land, attend state schools, or receive protection under labor laws. Thailand is known for its tolerance of the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) community, though societal acceptance is higher for tourists and expatriates than for nationals, and unequal treatment and stigmatization remain

challenges. Thailand has not ratified the UN convention on refugees, who risk detention as unauthorized migrants and often lack access to asylum procedures.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 10 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4

Thai citizens generally have freedom of travel and choice of residence. However, travel may be restricted in areas affected by civil conflict, and the junta has at times imposed travel bans on its critics. Citizens have freedom to choose their place of employment and education.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

The rights to property and to establish businesses are protected by law, though in practice business activity is affected by some bureaucratic delays, and at times by the influence of security forces and organized crime. In 2014, the military junta developed a policy to restore national forests through replanting programs and new restrictions on poaching, and in 2015 issued plans to create special economic zones. The policies have since led to eviction orders for many communities.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

While women have the same legal rights as men, they remain subject to economic discrimination in practice, and are vulnerable to domestic abuse, rape, and sex trafficking.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Exploitation and trafficking of migrant workers and refugees from Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos are serious and ongoing problems, as are child and sweatshop labor. Sex trafficking remains a problem in which some state officials are complicit. However, the government has made some efforts to prosecute and seize the assets of those suspected of involvement in human trafficking, including police officers and local officials.

In June 2017, the NCPO passed a law that would inflict lengthy prison terms and high fines upon migrant workers in the country illegally, causing a mass exodus of registered and unregistered migrant workers from neighboring countries.

Timor-Leste

Population: 1,300,000

Capital: Dili

Political Rights Rating: 2 ↑

Civil Liberties Rating: 3

Freedom Rating: 2.5

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Status Change: Timor-Leste's status improved from Partly Free to Free and its political rights rating improved from 3 to 2 due to fair elections that led to a smooth transfer of power and enabled new parties and candidates to enter the political system.

Overview: Timor-Leste has held competitive elections and undergone peaceful transfers of power, but its democratic institutions remain fragile, and disputes among the major personalities from the independence struggle dominate political affairs. Judicial independence and due process are undermined by serious capacity deficits and political influence.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- International election monitors described the year's presidential and parliamentary elections as peaceful and generally well administered.
- Two new political parties entered the legislature: the Kmanek Haburas Unidade Nasional Timor Oan (KHUNTO), a youth party, and the People's Liberation Party (PLP).
- In June, two journalists were acquitted of defamation charges that had been brought by former prime minister Rui Maria de Araújo during his administration.
- A national land law designed to establish formal tenure and to help resolve disputes was enacted in June.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 32 / 40 (+3)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 11 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The directly elected president is a largely symbolic figure, with formal powers limited to the right to veto legislation and make certain appointments. The president may serve up to two five-year terms. Francisco Guterres was elected president in March 2017, following a campaign period a European Union (EU) observer mission praised for its generally peaceful conduct. The mission assessed the election itself as having been generally well administered.

The leader of the majority party or coalition in Parliament becomes prime minister, and serves as head of government. Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri, of the Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor (Fretilin) was sworn in as prime minister in September, following the year's parliamentary elections.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

Members of the 65-seat, unicameral Parliament are directly elected and serve five-year terms. Fretilin won the most seats in the July 2017 parliamentary elections, taking 23, while the National Congress for the Reconstruction of Timor-Leste (CNRT) won 22; smaller parties won the remaining seats. Fretilin formed a minority government with the Democratic Party (PD), which was sworn in in September.

The EU observer mission similarly praised the administration of the parliamentary elections and their peaceful conduct, though it also noted irregularities including state abuse of administrative resources and reports of voter intimidation.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4

The 2017 EU Election Observation Mission generally praised the National Election Commission (CNE) for its oversight of the year's polls, but expressed concern that late changes to the election laws somewhat reduced the body's supervisory responsibilities. The mission also noted that provisions governing elections were found in a number of pieces of legislation, and called for legal mandates governing elections to be harmonized into a more coherent framework.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 14 / 16 (+2)**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4 (+1)**

Some campaign finance regulations favor larger parties, such as a lack of caps on spending, and a system in which government campaign subsidies are awarded after elections, according to the number of votes a party won.

Nevertheless, political parties are generally free to form and operate. Two new parties, the youth-aligned KHUNTO, and the People's Liberation Party (PLP), concentrated enough support ahead of the 2017 elections to win 13 legislative seats between them.

Score Change: The score improved from 3 to 4 because political parties are able to form and operate freely, as reflected by the strong performance of two new parties in the 2017 parliamentary elections.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4 (+1)

The 2017 parliamentary elections marked the second time since independence that governing power transferred between parties. The formation of a new minority government comprised of Fretilin and the DP also marked a shift back to partisan politics, as the previous unity government between the CNRT and Fretilin had left little meaningful opposition in the parliament.

While some smaller parties hold seats in parliament, parties associated with the independence movement continue to dominate politics.

Score Change: The score improved from 3 to 4 because in 2017, Timor-Leste experienced its second transfer of power between parties since independence.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 3 / 4

Politics is dominated by independence-movement figures who have formed political parties, and there has been some concern about their reluctance to retire and allow a new generation a chance to gain experience in government.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

Ethnic minorities are generally well represented in politics. Mari Alkatiri, the newly appointed prime minister, is Muslim, a significant religious minority in Timor-Leste.

Due to parity laws, Timor-Leste has the highest percentage of women in Parliament in the Asia-Pacific region. However, during internationally backed programs held in 2017 and aimed at increasing women's participation in politics, women overwhelmingly expressed the opinion that there would be few if any women candidates on party lists in the absence of parity laws, and that in practice women politicians have difficulty participating meaningfully in political processes.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 7 / 12 (+1)**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 3 / 4 (+1)**

In 2017, the government held elections without the supervision of a UN mission that had been deployed to help restore peace and security in the wake of a 2006 political crisis. The polls took place peacefully and were generally praised by monitors. A new minority government was formed after the legislative elections, and at year's end, was working to win approval for its budget.

Score Change: The score improved from 2 to 3 because a government was formed following peaceful elections that were conducted without the supervision of a UN mission.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

The independent Anti-Corruption Commission (CAC) has no powers of arrest or prosecution and must rely on the prosecutor general, with input from police and the courts, to follow up on corruption investigations. Anticorruption bodies lack enough funding to operate effectively.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

While the state has attempted to make budgets more accessible, procurement processes remain largely opaque. Requests for public information are not always granted, and at times require applicants to undertake inconvenient travel. Information is often issued in Portuguese, as opposed to local languages.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 37 / 60 (+1)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 13 / 16 (+1)

D1. Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4

Media freedom is protected in the constitution. In practice, domestic media outlets are vulnerable to political pressure due to their reliance on government financial support in a media market with small audiences and limited nongovernmental sources of paid advertising. Journalists are often treated with suspicion, particularly by government officials, and practice self-censorship.

However, in recent years, the country's press corps has been more willing to produce articles critical of the government. And, in a June 2017 development celebrated as a victory for press freedom, two journalists were acquitted of criminal defamation charges filed in 2015 by then prime minister Rui Maria de Araújo. The charges had come in connection with an article about alleged irregularities in procurement processes at the Finance Ministry.

Score Change: The score improved from 2 to 3 because journalists have been producing more articles critical of the government, and because the acquittal of two journalists in a high-profile defamation case reflected a willingness by the courts to uphold press freedom.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4

Freedom of religion is protected in the constitution, and Timor-Leste is a secular state. Approximately 97 percent of the population is Roman Catholic. Protestant groups have reported some cases of discrimination and harassment.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is generally respected.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4

There are few constraints on open and free private discussion. However, topics related to the 2006 unrest, in which armed clashes between the police and mobilized civilian groups resulted in numerous deaths and the displacement of some 150,000 people, remain sensitive.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 8 / 12**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 3 / 4**

Freedom of assembly is constitutionally guaranteed, and while it is generally respected in practice, some laws can be invoked to restrict peaceful gatherings. Demonstrations aimed at “questioning constitutional order” or disparaging the reputations of the head of state and other government officials are prohibited. Demonstrations must be authorized in advance, and laws restrict how close they can be to government buildings and critical infrastructure.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 3 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) can generally operate without interference, although the state actively monitors and regulates their work. Few NGOs operate outside of the capital.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

Workers, other than police and military personnel, are permitted to form and join labor unions and bargain collectively, though a 2011 law requires written notification five days in advance of a strike. In practice, few workers are unionized due to high levels of unemployment and informal economic activity.

F. RULE OF LAW: 7 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4**

Since independence, the judicial system had depended on contracted foreign judges and lawyers due to limited capacity within the country. In 2014, however, the government, with parliamentary support, terminated the contracts and revoked the visas of foreigners working in judicial, prosecutorial, and anticorruption institutions. The 2014 terminations did not follow legal protocol, according to which only the Superior Council of Magistrates may remove judicial officers. As a result of the move, legal proceedings in some courts were delayed or forced to restart with new personnel. A 2017 law explicitly permitted foreign judges.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

Across the justice sector, due process rights are often restricted or denied, owing largely to a dearth of resources and personnel. The training of new magistrates following the 2014 dismissals of foreign judges has been slow, resulting in significant case backlogs. Alternative methods of dispute resolution and customary law are widely used, though they lack enforcement mechanisms and have other significant shortcomings, including unequal treatment of women. Nine of thirteen municipalities have no fixed courts. The use of Portuguese for court administration poses an obstacle due to the limited number of Portuguese speakers. A shortage of Portuguese interpreters often forces the adjournment of trials.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 3 / 4

Police officers and soldiers are regularly accused of excessive force and abuse of power, though the courts have had some success in prosecuting them. Public perception of the police has improved in recent years, as have general feelings of security.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

While hate crimes based on sexual orientation are considered an aggravating circumstance in the penal code, other protections against discrimination for LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people are lacking. Issues like sexual orientation and gender identity receive little public attention, though a small number of LGBT advocacy organizations have been active in recent years.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 9 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4

Citizens generally enjoy unrestricted travel, though travel by land to the enclave of Oecusse is hampered by visa requirements and Indonesian and Timorese checkpoints. Individuals also enjoy free choice of residence and employment, but unemployment rates are high, and most of the population still relies on subsistence farming.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

While Timorese have the right to establish businesses, property rights are complicated by past conflicts and the unclear status of communal or customary land rights. A national land law designed to establish formal tenure and to help resolve disputes was enacted in June 2017.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Equal rights for women are constitutionally guaranteed, but discrimination and gender inequality persist in practice and in customary law. Gender-based and domestic violence remain widespread. A 2016 study found that 14 percent of women 15-49 years of age had experienced non-partner rape. Civil society groups have criticized the courts' use of prison sentences for only the most severe and injurious domestic violence cases. Many victims are reluctant to seek justice.

A government plan to restrict contraception to those who are married was proposed in July 2017, but it had not yet passed in the majority-Catholic country. Timor-Leste has a teenage pregnancy rate of 24 percent. An estimated 19 percent of teenage girls are married by age 18.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Timorese women and girls from rural areas are vulnerable to human trafficking for sexual exploitation and domestic servitude, and children are sometimes placed in bonded labor. The government has increased its efforts to prosecute offenders.

Togo

Population: 7,500,000

Capital: Lomé

Political Rights Rating: 4

Civil Liberties Rating: 4

Freedom Rating: 4.0

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: While regular multiparty elections haven't taken place since 1992, Togo's politics have been dominated since 1963 by Gnassingbé Eyadéma and his son, the current president, Faure Gnassingbé. Advantages including a security service dominated by the president's ethnic group, disproportionately drawn election districts, and a fractured opposition have helped President Gnassingbé and his party hold on to power. In 2017, protests calling for the reintroduction of term limits were harshly repressed.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Massive protests in response to president's continued refusal to be constrained by term limits prompted temporary disruptions of internet and mobile phone service, a ban on weekday protests, and the use of disproportionate force by police against protesters. Journalists covering the protest movement experienced harassment.
- The opposition boycotted a National Assembly vote to reintroduce term limits because the limits would not be retroactive, meaning that they would not apply to Gnassingbé, who has been in power since 2005. Without enough support to push the measure through the legislature, the government announced plans to hold a national referendum on it.
- Authorities arrested numerous students at the University of Lomé in connection with demonstrations at which participants demanded better university facilities.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 18 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 6 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4

The president is head of state, and is elected to a five-year term. The president appoints the prime minister, who is head of government. Presidential term limits were eliminated in 2002.

President Faure Gnassingbé—who was initially installed as president by the military after the death of his father, Gnassingbé Eyadéma, in 2005—secured a third term in 2015 elections, in which he took 59 percent of the vote. The election was considered largely free and fair by observers, but the opposition criticized numerous aspects of the electoral process. Additionally, the main opposition candidate, Jean-Pierre Fabre, was reportedly prohibited from broadcasting a message viewed as critical of the government during the campaign. Opposition leaders declined to dispute the election at the Constitutional Court, saying the court was tilted in favor of Gnassingbé.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4

Legislative elections for the National Assembly were held in 2013, after much delay. While the polls were generally considered credible and transparent, the opposition disputed the results. Gnassingbé's Union for the Republic (UNIR) won 62 of the 91 seats, and 23 of the country's 28 electoral zones.

The 1992 Constitution states that local territories administer themselves by elected councils, but local elections have not been held since 1986.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 2 / 4

Elections are organized and supervised by the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI), which by law includes members of the parliamentary opposition. In 2015, the opposition criticized delays in appointing the CENI vice president—a post to be held by the opposition—until the eve of the vote itself, as well as the new electronic vote tabulation system. Malapportionment has resulted in the delivery of outsized legislative majorities to the UNIR.

In 2017, the president's constitutional reform commission, which included no opposition members, proposed a two-term limit that was not retroactive, which meant that Gnassingbé would not be bound by it. In September, a draft bill to amend the constitution according to the proposal was introduced in the National Assembly, but an opposition boycott of the vote prevented its approval. The government subsequently announced plans to hold a referendum on the proposal.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 7 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 2 / 4

Opposition parties are generally free to form and operate. However, the dominance of the UNIR—which controls government at all levels and can confer benefits upon party members that are not available to outsiders—undermines the visibility and competitiveness of other parties. Opposition members are sometimes arrested in connection with peaceful activities.

In 2017, antigovernment protests organized by opposition parties were violently suppressed, and a number of opposition supporters were arrested in connection with their participation in the demonstrations. Separately, Kombate Garimbité, a member of the opposition Alliance of Democrats for Integral Development (ADDI) was arrested in April after he criticized a local leader in Yembour locality. Authorities claimed that he had organized an antigovernment protest in the capital the previous month, and charged him with disturbing public order.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 1 / 4

Gnassingbé's family has controlled Togo's powerful presidency since the 1960s. The structure of the electoral system, including district malapportionment and the single round of elections (rather than the two rounds favored by the opposition, which was the case before the Constitution was amended in 2002), have helped Gnassingbé and the UNIR remain in power.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 2 / 4

The government is dominated by Gnassingbé's Kabyé ethnic group, who also make up the vast majority of the security services. In 2005, the military installed Faure Gnassingbé as president, in violation of the constitution. In recent elections, the UNIR has distributed benefits to voters.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 2 / 4

The Éwé, Togo's largest ethnic group, are persistently excluded from positions of influence; they are prominent within the opposition. Women are underrepresented in government, and face some societal pressure discouraging their active political participation.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 5 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 2 / 4

The legislature has influence over policy, but most power lies in the hands of the president.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

Corruption remains a serious problem. In early 2017, members were appointed to the High Authority for the Prevention and Fight against Corruption and Related Offenses (HAP-LUCIA), an anticorruption body authorized in 2015. However, the majority of HAP-LUCIA members are presidential appointees, raising concerns about the body's independence. By the end of 2017, it had registered few concrete accomplishments.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

A 2016 freedom of information law guarantees the right to access government information, though some information is exempted, and the government does not always respond to requests.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 29 / 60 (-1)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 9 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4

Freedom of the press is guaranteed by law but inconsistently upheld in practice. Numerous independent media outlets offer a variety of viewpoints, but a history of impunity for those who commit crimes against journalists, as well as restrictive press laws, encourage self-censorship. There is no mechanism to appeal decisions made by the High Authority for Audiovisual and Communication (HAAC), which can hand down suspensions for the violation of broadly worded regulations.

In February 2017, gendarmes arrested and beat a journalist, Robert Kossi Avotor, as he was reporting on an antigovernment protest, and deleted materials from his camera; he was later released without charge. In September, authorities issued complaints about press coverage of antigovernment protests, and engaged in other acts of intimidation aimed at discouraging coverage of the events. Authorities also temporarily disrupted mobile phone and internet service as the protests were taking place, hampering coverage of them.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4

Religious freedom is constitutionally protected and generally respected. Islam and Christianity are recognized as official religions; other religious groups must register as associations.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 2 / 4

University figures are able to engage in political discussions. However, government security forces have repeatedly cracked down on student protests. In June 2017, authorities arrested numerous students at the University of Lomé in connection with demonstrations at which participants demanded better facilities. Some of the students reported being beaten by security forces as they moved to quell the protests.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 2 / 4

Citizens are able to speak openly in private discussion, but may be arrested on incitement or other charges for speaking critically of the government to journalists or human rights organizations.

In September 2017, the government cut mobile phone and internet service temporarily, in an apparent attempt to halt the spread of antigovernment protests.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 6 / 12 (-1)

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 1 / 4 (-1)

Sparked in part by gas price increases, protests that began at the start of 2017 rapidly expanded, attracting hundreds of thousands of participants in the summer, with protesters demanding restoration of the presidential term limits and the two-round presidential election system in the 1992 Constitution. Authorities moved to suppress the demonstrations, including by initiating temporary blocks on mobile phone and internet service, and banning weekday protests for a period in October. Police responded to the protests with disproportionate force on a number of occasions, with rights group Amnesty International counting 11 people killed at protests during the year.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 due to attempts by the authorities to suppress a protest movement, which included moves to disrupt internet and mobile services, the temporary banning of weekday protests, and the use of disproportionate force against protesters by police.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 2 / 4

Foreign or international associations must attain prior authorization to operate and may be dissolved by the government for engaging in controversial activities or taking positions contrary to those of the ruling party. According to a May 2017 report by Amnesty International, a group representing the rights of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people was denied registration because their mandate was considered by authorities to challenge cultural norms.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

The government generally protects rights to form and join labor unions outside the export-processing zone, where unions have fewer legal protections.

F. RULE OF LAW: 7 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 2 / 4**

The constitution provides for an independent judiciary, but in practice it is heavily influenced by the presidency. The Constitutional Court in particular is believed to be partial to UNIR; Fabre chose not to appeal the 2015 election results with the court for this reason.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 2 / 4

Executive influence and judicial corruption limit constitutional rights to a fair trial. In 2017, more than two dozen people who had participated in an antigovernment protest were charged, tried, and convicted within two days of their initial arrest, raising questions about the fairness of the trial. All but one of the defendants lacked legal counsel.

Corruption and inefficiency are widespread among the police, and there are also reports of arbitrary arrest.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 2 / 4

Prisons suffer from overcrowding and inadequate food and medical care, sometimes resulting in deaths among inmates from preventable or curable diseases. The government periodically releases prisoners to address overcrowding, but the process by which individuals are chosen for release is not transparent.

The 2015 penal code criminalizes torture. However, its definition of torture does not conform to the definition in the UN Convention against Torture, and reports of torture by security forces continue, including in 2017 against participants in antigovernment demonstrations.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

Although women and men are equal under the law, women continue to experience discrimination, and their opportunities for employment and education are limited. Official and societal discrimination persisted against persons with disabilities, regional and ethnic minority groups, and LGBT people, for whom nondiscrimination laws do not apply.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 7 / 16**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 2 / 4**

The law provides for freedom of internal movement and foreign travel, but some of these rights are restricted by the government. Domestic travel can involve arbitrary traffic stops for collecting bribes.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

The country has made improvements in the ease of starting a business, but problems remain with regard to property rights. It is difficult to register property in Togo, and there is a widespread perception that judges can be bribed in cases involving land disputes.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 1 / 4

Rape is illegal but rarely reported and, if reported, often ignored by authorities. Domestic violence, which is widespread, is not specifically addressed by the law.

Same-sex sexual activity is a criminal offense, but the law is rarely enforced.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Laws prohibiting commercial sexual exploitation of children are not effectively enforced.

The government is making efforts to address human trafficking, including by conducting more frequent labor inspections in susceptible industries, providing services to victims, and encouraging people to report suspected trafficking.

Tonga

Population: 100,000

Capital: Nuku'alofa

Political Rights Rating: 2

Civil Liberties Rating: 2

Freedom Rating: 2.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Tonga's constitutional monarchy has featured a prime minister backed by a mostly elected parliament since 2010. However, the king retains important powers, including the authority to veto legislation, dissolve the parliament, and appoint judicial officials. While civil liberties are generally protected, ongoing problems include political pressure on the state broadcaster and land laws that discriminate against women.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In August, the king dissolved the parliament in an apparent bid to oust the government of Prime Minister 'Akilisi Pōhiva, a commoner and former democracy activist who had survived a no-confidence motion by members of the nobility in February.
- Pōhiva was returned to office in December after his supporters won snap elections in November.
- The prime minister's harsh complaints about coverage by the public broadcaster led to a series of leadership changes during the year, prompting serious concerns about the outlet's future independence.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 30 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 9 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

The king is no longer the chief executive authority, but he retains significant powers, including the ability to veto legislation and dissolve the parliament. The current monarch, King Tupou VI, came to the throne in 2012 and is known to hold more conservative views than his late brother and predecessor, George Tupou V.

The prime minister, who chooses the cabinet, is formally appointed by the king on the recommendation of the parliament. Prime Minister Pōhiva first took office in 2014 after that year's elections. In February 2017, he survived a no-confidence motion led by noble members of the parliament. The king dissolved the parliament in August after consulting with the speaker, Lord Tu'ivakanō, who accused the prime minister of seeking to further reduce the

monarch's constitutional authority. However, after snap elections in November resulted in a victory for Pōhiva's supporters, he was returned to the premiership in December.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

The unicameral Fale Alea, or Legislative Assembly, consists of 17 members who are directly elected by commoners, nine noble members elected by their peers, and up to four additional members whom the prime minister may appoint to the cabinet from outside the parliament and who hold their seats *ex officio*. The speaker is appointed from among the noble members on the recommendation of the assembly.

In the November 2017 snap elections, Pōhiva and his supporters in the loosely affiliated Democratic Party of the Friendly Islands won 14 of the 17 popularly elected seats, a sizeable gain from their previous share.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4

The Electoral Commission administers elections competently and fairly, though the framework for parliamentary elections falls short of universal suffrage due to the reservation of nine seats for the nobility.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 14 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4

A formal party system has yet to develop, and all candidates technically run as independents in their single-member constituencies. Nevertheless, there are no major restrictions on political competition, and in practice politicians have begun to form loose partisan affiliations such as Pōhiva's Democratic Party of the Friendly Islands.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

Reformist commoners and more conservative noble politicians have alternated in the premiership in recent years, establishing a pattern of democratic transfers after the 2010 constitutional reforms. Before Pōhiva took office in 2014, Lord Tu'ivakano was the prime minister.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 3 / 4

The monarchy, the nobility, and the country's churches exert considerable political influence, but this has not prevented majority support for prodemocracy candidates in recent elections.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

Women have the same formal political rights as men, and 15 women ran for seats in the November 2017 parliamentary elections, but only two won office—an increase from zero in the previous legislature. Cultural biases tend to discourage women's political participation, and women cannot inherit noble titles, meaning the noble seats in the parliament

are effectively reserved for men. Participation by ethnic minorities is subject to similar obstacles, though the population is mostly homogeneous, and many members of the small Chinese minority have been able to obtain citizenship and its associated political rights.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 7 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 3 / 4

The elected prime minister and his cabinet largely control the formulation and implementation of government policy, but the king continues to rely on a privy council—whose members he appoints himself—for advice regarding the use of his constitutional powers.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

Corruption and abuse of office are serious problems. While public officials and leaders of state-owned companies are sometimes held to account for bribery and other malfeasance, anticorruption mechanisms are generally weak and lacking in resources. An ombudsman was appointed in late 2016, but the post of anticorruption commissioner has been vacant since its creation in 2007. The illegal sale of Tongan passports is an ongoing problem. Pōhiva has been criticized for appointing his son as his personal assistant and allegedly misusing public funds.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

Tonga does not have a law to guarantee public access to government information, which can be difficult to obtain in practice, and officials are not legally obliged to disclose their assets and income. The government has at times resisted public scrutiny of pending policies. Nevertheless, the parliament generally operates openly, and the media and civil society are typically able to monitor its proceedings and comment on legislation.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 45 / 60 (+1)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 12 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4

The constitution guarantees freedom of the press, and a variety of news outlets operate independently, including online. However, politicians have a history of using civil defamation suits and other means to retaliate against critical coverage. Pōhiva has repeatedly complained about reporting by the state-run Tonga Broadcasting Commission (TBC), accusing the radio and television outlet of becoming “an enemy of government” in March 2017. A series of leadership changes followed later in the year. The TBC’s longtime general manager was terminated in May when her contract came up for renewal, a Pōhiva ally was appointed as board chairman in September after a previous chairman was pressured to resign, and the chief editor and news manager were transferred to the sales department in October, raising widespread concerns among press freedom advocates.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Constitutional protections for religious freedom are generally upheld in practice. Religious groups are not required to register, but those that do receive various benefits. There are some restrictions on commercial activity on Sundays in keeping with a constitutional recognition of the Christian sabbath. The TBC’s policy guidelines bar broadcasts of preaching outside the “mainstream Christian tradition,” though this has reportedly not been strictly enforced.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 3 / 4

Academic freedom is generally unrestricted, though there have been reports of self-censorship to avoid friction with the government in the past.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4

There are no major constraints on Tongans' ability to discuss politics and other topics in person or on social media. The government is not known to monitor personal communications.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 9 / 12**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 3 / 4**

The constitution protects freedom of assembly, and demonstrations, though rare, generally remain peaceful. However, political protests in 2006 degenerated into violent riots, prompting the government to declare a state of emergency that lasted until early 2011.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 3 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations have not reported harassment or other restrictions by the authorities. A number of different laws govern the registration processes for civil society groups, but they are not considered onerous.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

Workers have the legal right to organize in trade unions, but implementing regulations have never been issued, meaning the country's various de facto unions generally operate as associations. Tonga joined the International Labour Organization in 2016, though it has yet to ratify the organization's conventions on labor standards.

F. RULE OF LAW: 12 / 16 (+1)**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 3 / 4**

The king retains authority over judicial appointments and dismissals. The Judicial Appointments and Discipline Panel, a committee of the privy council, provides advice on appointments, including for the lord chancellor, who has responsibility for administering the courts. The king in privy council has final jurisdiction over cases in the land court relating to hereditary estates and titles.

The judiciary is regarded as largely independent, but the prime minister has accused the royally appointed attorney general of interfering with judicial rulings, and has pressed for reforms that would bring the attorney general into the orbit of the elected government. Broader judicial reforms that would have increased the cabinet's influence over judicial appointments were adopted by the parliament in 2014, but the king never gave his assent.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 3 / 4

Due process provisions and safeguards against arbitrary arrest and detention are typically respected by the authorities. However, there is no mechanism to guarantee access to counsel for indigent defendants.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 3 / 4

Prison conditions are generally adequate, police brutality is rare, and crime rates remain relatively low. A number of police officers accused of misconduct have been investigated, dismissed, or convicted of crimes in recent years. However, rising public concern has focused on problems including the country's role as a transit point for drug trafficking, drug-related petty crime, and organized crime affecting the Chinese community.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4 (+1)

The constitution includes a general provision for equality before the law, and this is upheld in many respects. However, women still face some forms of discrimination, including in land and inheritance laws and with respect to employment in practice. Same-sex sexual activity is criminalized, but the ban is not actively enforced, and in recent years local LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) groups have worked to raise awareness of their cause and lobbied the government to adopt legal reforms.

Continued bias and instances of crime against members of the Chinese minority have been reported, though nothing approaching the scale of the 2006 riots—which targeted Chinese-owned businesses—has occurred since the state of emergency was lifted in 2011.

Score Change: The score increased from 2 to 3 due to long-term, incremental improvements in the environment for women, LGBT people, and the Chinese minority.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 12 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4

There are no significant constraints on freedom of movement or the ability to change places of residence or employment.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 3 / 4

The legal framework generally supports private business activity. However, individuals cannot own or sell land outright, as all land is technically the property of the king. Land rights, once granted by nobles or directly by the crown through an allotment system, can only be leased or inherited, and while women can obtain leases, they are not eligible to receive or inherit land allotments.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

Personal social freedoms are typically respected. However, domestic violence remains a problem despite state and civil society efforts to prevent it, and girls as young as 15—the legal minimum age for marriage—are sometimes compelled by their parents to marry.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

While much of the population has access to economic opportunities and protection from abusive working conditions, foreign household workers—many of them from Fiji—are vulnerable to exploitation and practices like passport confiscation, and East Asian women have been trafficked to the country for forced prostitution.

Trinidad and Tobago

Population: 1,400,000

Capital: Port of Spain

Political Rights Rating: 2

Civil Liberties Rating: 2

Freedom Rating: 2.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Since independence, Trinidad and Tobago has maintained a robust parliamentary democracy with a vibrant media and civil society. However, organized crime contributes to high levels of violence, and corruption among public officials and within state institutions remains a challenge. In addition, there is significant discrimination against the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) community.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- The murder rate remained high, with almost 500 killings reported during the year. Much of the violence is linked to organized crime and drug trafficking.
- In September, the Organized Crime Intelligence Unit was established “to pursue, target, dismantle, disrupt, and prosecute” organized criminal groups and networks.
- The Marriage Act, which raised the legal marriage age to 18, took effect in September, officially making child marriage illegal.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 33 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 11 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The president is chief of state, and is elected to a five-year term by a majority of the combined houses of Parliament. Anthony Carmona has held the presidential seat since 2013. The prime minister serves as head of government. Keith Rowley became prime minister in 2015, after parliamentary elections resulted in a win for his party, the People’s National Movement (PNM).

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

Parliament consists of the directly elected, 41-member House of Representatives and the 31-member Senate appointed by both Parliament and the president; members of both houses serve five-year terms. In 2015 parliamentary elections, the People’s Partnership (PP) government led by Kamela Persad-Bissessar was defeated by Keith Rowley’s PNM. Commonwealth election observers expressed confidence in the elections’ overall conduct.

Tobago is a ward of Trinidad, and is governed locally. The Tobago House of Assembly elections took place in January 2017, with the PNM taking a majority of seats.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4

Electoral laws are generally fair. The Elections and Boundaries Commission (EBC) is charge of organizing elections, and is generally trusted by the public to fulfill its mandate.

Following the 2015 elections, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Commonwealth election observation missions recommended that officials take steps to strengthen the transparency and accountability of campaign funding processes, and ensure that adequate training is provided for polling officials.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 13 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 3 / 4

Trinidad and Tobago has a number of political parties. While the PNM had dominated the political landscape for several decades following independence, it has weakened somewhat in the last two decades, allowing greater competition. The political arena is now largely divided between the PNM and the PP.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

There are opportunities for opposition parties to increase their support or gain power through elections, although the country's "first-past-the-post" system has made it difficult for less established parties to gain seats in the House of Representatives.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 3 / 4

People's political choices are generally free from external influences. However, ethnic identity is an important factor in politics.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

Political parties are technically multiethnic, though the PNM is favored by Afro-Trinidadians, while the United National Congress (UNC), the majority PP member, is affiliated with Indo-Trinidadians.

Women's political participation in national-level politics has increased somewhat in recent years, but women remain generally underrepresented. Discrimination against the LGBT community is widespread, which impacts their ability to fully engage in political and electoral processes.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 9 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4

The freely appointed and elected prime minister, cabinet, and members of Parliament generally determine government policies.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

Corruption remains a pervasive problem in Trinidad and Tobago, especially within the police force and among immigration officers. The government has sought to manage it through anticorruption legislation, but the laws are infrequently enforced.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 3 / 4

Public officials are required to disclose their assets, income, and liabilities, but penalties against those who refuse to comply are limited. The Integrity Commission, which is tasked with overseeing these financial disclosures, has been criticized for its lack of effectiveness.

The public has the right to access government documents by law, although numerous public institutions are exempt. Furthermore, there is no enforcement of a provision that requires the government to respond to information requests within 30 days. A 2015 public procurement law was created to oversee and regulate procurement, but had not been fully implemented as of November 2017.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 48 / 60**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 15 / 16****D1. Are there free and independent media? 4 / 4**

Freedom of speech and of the press are constitutionally guaranteed, and generally upheld in practice. Press outlets are privately owned and vigorously pluralistic.

Under the 2013 Defamation and Libel Act, “malicious defamatory libel known to be false” is punishable by up to two years in prison, as well as a fine.” However, at the end of 2017 it did not appear any journalists had been convicted under it in connection with their work.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4

The constitution guarantees freedom of religion, and the government generally honors this provision. However, some restrictions are placed on foreign missionaries; only 35 are allowed in the country at one time, and they cannot stay longer than three years.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is generally upheld.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

Individuals are free to express their opinions in private conversations, and the government is not known to monitor online communications.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 11 / 12**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4**

The constitution provides for freedom of assembly, and the government generally respects this right.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Civil society is robust, with a range of domestic and international interest groups engaged in political processes.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

Labor unions are well organized and politically active, though union membership has declined in recent years. Strikes are legal and occur frequently. In January 2017,

approximately 4,500 refinery union workers threatened to strike against the state-owned oil company Petrotrin, resulting in wage increases for the workers.

The law contains a provision allowing the labor minister to petition the courts to end any strike deemed detrimental to national interests. Walkouts by workers considered essential, including hospital staff, firefighters, and telecommunication workers, are punishable by up to three years in prison and fines of up to \$6,000.

F. RULE OF LAW: 9 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 3 / 4

The judicial branch is generally independent, but subject to some political pressure and corruption.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 2 / 4

Due process rights are provided for in the constitution, but are not always upheld. Rising crime rates and institutional weakness have produced a severe backlog in the court system. Corruption in the police force, which is often drug-related, is endemic, and inefficiencies have resulted in the dismissal of some criminal cases. Intimidation of witnesses and jurors has been reported by the judicial officials.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 2 / 4

The government has struggled in recent years to address violent crime, which is mostly linked to organized crime and drug trafficking. The murder rate remained high in 2017, with 494 killings recorded—the most in a single year since 2009. In September, the Organized Crime Intelligence Unit was established “to pursue, target, dismantle, disrupt and prosecute” organized criminal groups and networks, which were linked to many of the murders that occurred during the year.

The police have been criticized for excessive use of force and many abuses by the authorities go unpunished. The US State Department reported in 2017 that more than 70 Trinidadian nationals were identified as fighting with ISIS in Syria as of the previous year, and raised concerns regarding the potential impact of their return. The report added that information sharing among state agencies dealing with counterterrorism was poor, due to corruption and inefficiencies.

Lengthy pretrial detention is a problem, and approximately 60 percent of the prison population is made up of pretrial detainees or remand prisoners. Many prisons are overcrowded and have poor sanitation.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

Racial disparities persist, with Indo-Trinidadians comprising a disproportionate percentage of the country’s upper class. Human rights groups have criticized the government’s unwillingness to address discrimination and violence against the LGBT community. Immigration law does not adequately protect refugees, and cases of asylum seekers being forcibly returned to their country of origin (refoulement) have occurred due poor training of immigration officers.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 13 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4

Freedom of movement and people's the right to choose their place of education and employment are generally respected.

In November 2017, protesters blocked roads into Port of Spain—in part with burning debris—for several hours in protest of a police operation against suspected gang leaders.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or non-state actors? 3 / 4

While the government of Trinidad and Tobago actively supports both national and foreign investment in businesses in the country, insufficient transparency, weak institutions, and corruption contribute to difficulties in starting and operating businesses. Property rights are constitutionally protected, but there are issues with inefficient regulations and complicated registration.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

Violence against women remains a significant problem. Rape, including spousal rape, is illegal, but many occurrences of rape go unreported. There are no laws against sexual harassment, a problem that drew significant media attention in 2017.

The Marriage Act, which raised the legal marriage age to 18, was approved by lawmakers in June 2017 and took effect in September, officially making child marriage illegal.

Abortion is illegal in most cases, and a woman can be imprisoned for up to four years for obtaining an abortion.

Same-sex sexual relations are illegal, although in practice the relevant law is not often enforced. In March 2017, an LGBT activist filed suit against the law, claiming it is unconstitutional.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

Trinidad and Tobago is a destination and transit country for forced labor and sex trafficking. The government has taken some action in recent years to prevent and prosecute human trafficking offenses, and has boosted efforts to identify victims.

↓ Tunisia

Population: 11,300,000

Capital: Tunis

Political Rights Rating: 2 ↓

Civil Liberties Rating: 3

Freedom Rating: 2.5

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Ratings Change, Trend Arrow: Tunisia's political rights rating declined from 1 to 2 and it received a downward trend arrow due to further postponement of municipal elections and growing pressure on the political system from powerful elements of the former regime.

Overview: Since ousting a longtime autocrat from power in 2011, Tunisia is transitioning to democracy. Citizens enjoy unprecedented political rights and civil liberties. The influence of

old regime officials, endemic corruption, economic challenges, and security threats remain obstacles to full democratic consolidation.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In January, lawmakers approved amendments to the law on local elections, which granted the military and security services the right to vote and contained provisions aimed at boosting the political representation of women, young people, and people with disabilities.
- In May, the head of the Independent High Authority for Elections (ISIE) resigned, questioning the body's independence, and was replaced only after a months-long delay. Meanwhile, the ISIE once again pushed back long-delayed local elections, which at year's end were set for mid-2018.
- In September, lawmakers approved a controversial "reconciliation" bill that would grant amnesty to many former civil servants implicated in economic crimes under the former regime of autocrat Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali. The bill was met with resistance by civil society, with activists claiming that it would undermine justice processes taking place in the courts and through the postrevolutionary Truth and Dignity Commission.
- One person was killed amid a clash between protesters and police in Tataouine, where a series of demonstrations against economic inequality took place in the spring.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 30 / 40 (-6)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 10 / 12 (-1)

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The 2014 constitution lays out a semipresidential system in which a popularly elected president serves as head of state and exercises circumscribed powers, while the majority party in the parliament selects a head of government. International and local observers concluded that the 2014 presidential election was generally competitive and credible, despite widespread claims of vote-buying on behalf of the major candidates.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

Tunisia's 2014 constitution established a unicameral legislative body, the Assembly of the Representatives of the People (ARP), which consists of 217 representatives serving five-year terms, with members elected on party lists in 33 multimember constituencies. International and national observers declared the 2014 legislative elections generally competitive and credible, despite reports of vote buying and campaign finance violations.

Delays in holding elections for municipal and regional councils have left unelected local councils in place seven years after the 2011 revolution.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 2 / 4 (-1)

The Independent High Authority for Elections (ISIE), a neutral nine-member commission, is tasked with supervising parliamentary and presidential elections. Since its inception in 2011, the ISIE's political independence and conduct of elections had been well regarded by Tunisian and international observers. However, in 2017, a series of concerning events casts doubt upon the ISIE's impartiality and independence. In May, ISIE president Chafik

Sarsar resigned, saying he had faced political pressure, and publicly questioned the body's independence. Following four failed attempts by the ARP to replace him, Mohamed Mansri was elected as a consensus candidate of the Ennahda and Nidaa Tounes parties—which comprise Tunisia's governing coalition—in November.

As the parties struggled to elect a new ISIE head, the body announced in October that long-delayed local elections would be held in March 2018. Then, in December, the ISIE pushed them back to May 2018.

Meanwhile, amendments to a 2014 law on local elections were approved in 2017 after a long delay. Some observers attributed the delay to a reluctance by the major parties to approve it before they were better positioned to contest local races.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 due to the resignation of the ISIE president, who questioned the body's independence; delays in the election of a replacement; and the postponement of municipal and regional elections.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 14 / 16 (-2)

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4

Tunisia's numerous political parties represent a wide range of ideologies and political philosophies, and are generally free to form and operate. The 2014 parliamentary and presidential elections saw robust competition between political parties within electoral processes deemed generally free and credible by observers.

Campaign finance laws intended to prevent money from determining political outcomes are complex and often unclear, on occasion forcing parties to bend, if not break, the rules in order to campaign effectively; this contributes to tensions between parties. The U.S.-based International Republican Institute (IRI), in an assessment of the 2014 elections, found that ambiguous campaign financing laws helped facilitate vote buying "with little chance of penalty."

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

Opposition parties participate competitively in political processes. President Beji Caid Essebsi of Nidaa Tounes defeated the incumbent, Moncef Marzouki of the Congress for the Republic, in the 2014 presidential election. Meanwhile, Nidaa Tounes won a plurality in parliament in that year's legislative elections, displacing Ennahda, which had held the largest share of seats previously.

Local and regional elections, originally scheduled for 2015, have been repeatedly postponed, leaving unelected councils in place. The lack of elections has effectively prevented opposition groupings from winning political representation at those levels.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 3 / 4 (-1)

While electoral outcomes are the result of transparent balloting, domestic economic oligarchies have a high degree of influence over policymaking, particularly on economic issues. Following Essebsi's and Nidaa Tounes's electoral success in 2014, the new government introduced a controversial "reconciliation" bill that would grant amnesty to Ben Ali-era civil servants who are implicated in corrupt activity, but are deemed to have not

personally benefitted from it. The bill was met with resistance by civil society, with activists claiming that it would undermine justice processes taking place in the courts and through the Truth and Dignity Commission, which is tasked with examining political, economic, and social crimes committed since 1956. Analysts suggest that the bill was designed to reward powerful individuals linked with the Ben Ali regime who had supported Nidaa Tounes, and would have been negatively affected by the ongoing judicial and reconciliation processes. A version of the bill was approved in September 2017.

Meanwhile, geopolitical competition between Gulf states has had reverberations in Tunisia, frequently coming in the form of financial and other support to political parties. For example, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) controversially gifted two armored cars to Essebsi in the run-up to Tunisia's 2014 elections, and has reportedly pressured the party to crack down on Ennahda. Ennahda, in turn, is thought to receive support from Qatar, and in 2017 faced a lawsuit alleging illegal financial support from the emirate.

The 2014 elections, while deemed generally competitive by observers, were marred by allegations of vote-buying by the major parties.

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 because oligarchs linked to the previous regime have exerted influence over economic policymaking.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4 (-1)

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and international organizations continue working to increase the political participation of marginalized groups. The 2017 Law on Local and Regional Elections included measures aimed at boosting the political participation of people with disabilities.

However, only Muslims may run for president. Homosexuality remains illegal in Tunisia, effectively precluding openly gay candidates from participating in elections.

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 because non-Muslims may not run for president, and a law criminalizing homosexuality precludes openly gay people from running for elected office.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 6 / 12 (-3)

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 3 / 4 (-1)

The 2011 removal from power of Ben Ali and his close relatives and associates, who had used their positions to create private monopolies in several sectors, represented an important step in combating corruption and eliminating conflicts of interest. However, Essebsi has manipulated the national budget in such a way that legislative branch is deeply underfunded, leaving it with little ability or resources to craft legislation on its own in 2017. As a result, lawmaking is largely a function of the executive.

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 due because an inadequate legislative budget has allowed the executive to dominate policymaking processes.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4 (-1)

In 2017, Prime Minister Youssef Chahed launched a well-publicized war on corruption, frequently using powers granted under a state of emergency in force since late 2015 to detain those accused. The campaign has come under criticism for focusing in large part

on members of emerging elites, while leaving corrupt figures associated with the Ben Ali regime largely untouched.

In September 2017, the parliament passed the controversial Administrative Reconciliation law, which grants amnesty to individuals implicated in economic crimes under Ben Ali's regime, if they did not gain personally from those acts. The law undermines ongoing investigations, as well as the work of the Truth and Dignity Commission.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 due to the passage of legislation that can impede the prosecution of corrupt government officials from the Ben Ali administration.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4 (-1)

In 2016, the ARP adopted a freedom of information law, though it was criticized by watchdog groups for its security-related exemptions. Tunisian transparency advocates say the government failed to take adequate preparations for the law's implementation. Cabinet ministries have refused many requests.

Chahed has been criticized for a lack of transparency surrounding his 2017 anticorruption drive; officials have made few public statements about goals for the drive, nor have they released any guiding strategy for it.

Members of the governing coalition frequently craft policy behind closed doors, without seeking input from other parties.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 due to inadequate implementation of the freedom of information law, and a general lack of transparency surrounding government activity.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 40 / 60 (-2)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 12 / 16 (-1)

D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4 (-1)

The constitution guarantees freedom of opinion, thought, expression, information, and publication, subject to some restrictions. While independent media outlets exist in Tunisia, in 2017, journalists covering controversial topics continued to encounter pressure and intimidation from government officials in connection with their work. In May, officers from the National Guard interrogated Sami Ben Gharbia, cofounder of the investigative news website *Nawaat*, in connection with a story the outlet had published on the economic reconciliation bill; the police demanded that he reveal the sources for the story, as well as extensive information about the journalists who worked on it. While attending a legal hearing related to the issue days later, Gharbia reportedly discovered that authorities had been monitoring his phone. Officials also threatened to charge the outlet with the dissemination of false news. Separately, in September, Hamdi al-Souissi, a journalist for the local radio station Diwan FM, in Sfax, was attacked by police officers while covering a demonstration. He was then arrested and questioned for two hours before being released.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 due to the continued intimidation and harassment of journalists by public officials.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4

The constitution calls for freedom of belief and conscience for all religions, as well as for the nonreligious, and bans campaigns against apostasy and incitement to hatred and

violence on religious grounds. However, blasphemy remains illegal and police may invoke it as a pretext for arrests. The presidency is restricted to Muslims, and Islam is enshrined as the only religion of the state. Islamic education remains a required component of public education curriculum.

In June 2017, four men were arrested for smoking and eating in public, during the daytime, during Ramadan. While it is not illegal to smoke or eat during daylight hours of Ramadan, the state exercised its role as the guardian of Islam to justify the arrests.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 3 / 4

Article 33 of the constitution explicitly protects academic freedom, which continues to improve in practice. However, ingrained practices of self-censorship on the part of academics remain in some instances. Students have reported being unable to pursue dissertation research on topics including sexuality, gender identity, and critiques of Islam's role in violent extremism.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

Private discussion is generally open and free, though there is some reluctance to broach some topics, including criticism of the military. Homosexuality remains illegal, and the prohibition can discourage open discussion of issues affecting LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people.

A controversial draft law to strengthen the security services has been criticized for a provision that would provide legal grounds for prosecuting critics of the security sector. The bill was introduced in 2017, but had not passed at year's end.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 9 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 3 / 4

The constitution guarantees the rights to assembly and peaceful demonstration. Public demonstrations on political, social, and economic issues regularly take place, although a controversial counterterrorism law adopted in 2015, and successive states of emergency issued in response to a 2015 terrorist attack, have imposed constraints on public demonstrations.

In the spring of 2017, police and demonstrators clashed at a series of protests in Tataouine against economic inequality. One demonstrator was killed in such a melee, and many were injured.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 3 / 4

Tens of thousands of new NGOs began operating after the revolution, and such groups participated in conferences, trainings, and other gatherings throughout the country during 2017. However isolated cases of intimidation of Tunisian anticorruption groups continue. In April, a leaked recording surfaced in which a senior figure in Nidaa Tounes could be heard issuing a directive to staff to attempt to discredit I-Watch, an anticorruption group that had been publishing reports on tax evasion and advocating for better protections for whistleblowers.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

The constitution guarantees the right to form labor unions and to strike, though the landscape is dominated by General Tunisian Labor Union (UGTT). The Tunisian economy has

seen large-scale strike actions strikes across all sectors since the revolution, with participants demanding labor reform, better wages, and improved workplace conditions. Unions have reported that some employers have taken actions to discourage union activities, including dismissing union activists.

F. RULE OF LAW: 9 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 2 / 4**

While the constitution calls for a robust and independent judiciary, judicial reform since the revolution has proceeded slowly, with numerous Ben Ali–era judges remaining on the bench and successive governments regularly attempting to manipulate the courts. Legislation adopted in 2016 established the Supreme Judicial Council, a body charged with ensuring the independence of the judiciary and appointing Constitutional Court judges. Council members were elected in October 2016 by thousands of legal professionals. However, the court, which is intended to evaluate the constitutionality of decrees and laws, has not been established, nor its members formally appointed.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 2 / 4

In 2014, Tunisia established a Truth and Dignity Commission to examine political, economic, and social crimes committed since 1956. It has since registered tens of thousands of complaints and testimonies. However, the approval of the reconciliation bill in September 2017 threatens to undermine the commission’s work and other judicial processes by granting amnesty to Ben Ali–era civil servants who are implicated in corrupt activity, but are deemed to have not personally benefitted from it.

A state of emergency that has been renewed a number of times since it was first issued following deadly 2015 terrorist attacks gives police broad license to arrest and detain people on security- or terrorism-related charges, and arbitrary arrests continued to take place in 2017. The state of emergency was once again extended in November 2017, for a period of three months.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 3 / 4

Tunisia did not experience a large-scale terrorist attack in 2017, such as the ones two years previously that targeted a museum and a tourist resort, respectively, and resulted in the deaths of dozens of people.

Reports of the use of excessive force by security agents continued in 2017, as did reports of torture. Critics of draft legislation introduced in 2017 say it would effectively grant security officials the right to use lethal force without risking repercussions.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

The constitution prohibits all forms of discrimination and calls for the state to create a culture of diversity. However, LGBT people continue to face discrimination in law and society. Homosexuality remains illegal, and the penal code calls for a three-year prison sentence for “sodomy.”

Tunisia has no asylum law, leaving the United Nations as the sole entity processing claims of refugee status in the country. Irregular migrants and asylum seekers are often housed in informal detention centers, where they suffer from substandard living conditions. Delays in the issuance of residency permits make it impossible for many to work legally, forcing them to take informal jobs with no labor protections.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 10 / 16 (-1)

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4

Freedom of movement has improved substantially since 2011. The constitution guarantees freedom of movement within the country, as well as the freedom to travel abroad. Women do not require the permission of a male relative to travel. In 2017, lawmakers approved measures that require authorities to go through more rigorous processes in order to issue travel bans or restrict passports.

However, authorities still have broad license under the state of emergency to restrict individuals' movement without initiating formal charges, and thousands have been affected by such orders.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

The protection of property rights and establishment of new businesses continues to be an area of concern, closely linked to high levels of corruption as well as a large backlog of property disputes. The new investment code passed in 2016 has yet to lead to substantial improvements.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4 (-1)

Tunisia has long been praised for relatively progressive social policies, especially in the areas of family law and women's rights. However, women experience social discrimination, domestic abuse, and extremely high rates of harassment in public spaces, and are subject to unequal inheritance laws. In July 2017, lawmakers approved a Law on Eliminating Violence against Women, which addressed domestic violence and also included language intended to protect women from harassment in public, and from economic discrimination. However, the law is not consistent with the penal code—which, for example, does not criminalize spousal rape. Critics of the new law have noted as problematic a provision allowing accusers to withdraw charges, noting that women who experience domestic abuse may be susceptible to pressure from abusers and others to withdraw abuse allegations.

Separately, in September the Justice Ministry repealed a decree that had banned Tunisian women from marrying non-Muslim men.

Homosexuality and sodomy remain illegal. Public displays of affection can lead to charges of violating public morality laws, and jail time. In October 2017, a tourist and his Tunisian girlfriend were questioned by police who found them kissing in their car. Upon arguing with the police, they were sentenced to four months and three months in prison, respectively, in connection with various violations including public indecency and insulting an official.

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 based on realities women face, including domestic violence and high rates of public harassment.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Tunisian women and children are subject to sex trafficking and forced domestic work in both Tunisia and abroad. Refugees and other migrants are also susceptible to exploitation by traffickers. Cases of exploitation in the agriculture and textile sectors are prevalent; women often work long hours with no contracts, benefits, or legal recourse.

Turkey

Population: 79,500,000

Capital: Ankara

Political Rights Rating: 5 ↓

Civil Liberties Rating: 6 ↓

Freedom Rating: 5.5

Freedom Status: Not Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Status Change: Turkey's status declined from Partly Free to Not Free, its political rights rating declined from 4 to 5, and its civil liberties rating declined from 5 to 6 due to a deeply flawed constitutional referendum that centralized power in the presidency, the mass replacement of elected mayors with government appointees, arbitrary prosecutions of rights activists and other perceived enemies of the state, and continued purges of state employees, all of which have left citizens hesitant to express their views on sensitive topics.

Overview: President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) has been the ruling party in Turkey since 2002. After initially passing some liberalizing reforms, the government has shown growing contempt for political rights and civil liberties in recent years, perpetrating serious abuses in areas including minority rights, free expression, associational rights, corruption, and the rule of law.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Constitutional revisions that concentrated power in the presidency were adopted in an April referendum. The campaign featured a grossly uneven playing field, and last-minute changes to the criteria for validating ballots—made in contravention of the law—undermined the legitimacy of the vote count.
- A state of emergency first declared after the attempted coup of July 2016 was renewed every three months and remained in place at year's end, allowing the government to rule by decree and make decisions that dramatically undercut the rule of law.
- The government continued to take over opposition-controlled municipalities and expanded the practice to its own party by forcing independently elected AKP mayors to resign.
- In the context of a wider purge of the leadership's perceived enemies, authorities initiated prosecutions of key figures in Turkey's nongovernmental organization sector. The fear of arbitrary arrest stifled public discussion and weakened civil society.

Executive Summary

The Turkish government's sprawling crackdown on its real and suspected opponents, touched off by a coup attempt in July 2016, continued throughout 2017.

Using emergency powers and vaguely worded terrorism laws, the authorities had suspended or dismissed more than 110,000 people from public-sector positions and arrested more than 60,000 people by year's end. Extensive use of pretrial detention meant that many suspects were held behind bars for long periods without due process. There was increasing evidence of extrajudicial "disappearances" and routine torture of political detainees. In June and July, officials arrested a number of leading human rights activists on terrorism charges. Osman Kavala, perhaps Turkey's most prominent civil society leader, was detained in

October and eventually charged with attempting to overthrow the constitutional order. Since the attempted coup, at least 1,500 civil society organizations have been summarily closed and their property confiscated. The prosecution of journalists and closure of media outlets continues. Arrests based on messages shared via social media are common, leading to widespread self-censorship and a general chilling effect on political discourse.

In April 2017, a government-backed package of constitutional amendments was formally approved through a referendum. When fully implemented in 2019, the changes will radically increase the power of the presidency and reduce democratic checks and balances. The referendum was conducted on a manifestly uneven playing field, particularly in light of the ongoing state of emergency and related restrictions on the media, the opposition, and civil society. Moreover, the Supreme Electoral Council (YSK) intervened in ways that seemed to favor the government and cast serious doubt on the integrity of the tabulation process.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 16 / 40 (-2)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 6 / 12 (-2)

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4 (-1)

Erdoğan became the country's first popularly elected president in 2014, winning a once-renewable five-year term with 51.8 percent of the vote; presidents were previously chosen by the parliament. Some domestic and international observers, such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), pointed to irregularities in the election campaign, including media bias and self-censorship, misuse of state resources to support Erdoğan, lack of transparency in campaign finances, and cases of voter fraud.

Under the formal constitutional structure in place during 2017, Turkey had a semipresidential system of government. The prime minister is the head of government and is meant to hold most executive authority. The president is the head of state and has a legislative veto as well as power to appoint judges and prosecutors. However, Erdoğan has retained a dominant role since moving from the premiership to the presidency in 2014, and under the constitutional revisions adopted through the April 2017 referendum, the prime minister's post will be eliminated in favor of a more powerful presidency after the 2019 election.

Many elected executive officials at the municipal level have been replaced with government appointees since the 2016 coup attempt. Most were removed under an emergency decree issued in September 2016, which allowed appointed provincial authorities to take control of cities and towns whose elected leaders were suspected of supporting terrorism—a broadly defined term that is now commonly applied to Kurdish politicians. By March 2017, the mayors of 82 out of 103 municipalities controlled by an affiliate of the pro-Kurdish opposition Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) had been replaced. However, some mayors from other opposition parties have been removed as well. In December 2017, for instance, the government took control of an Istanbul municipality held by the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP), citing corruption allegations. In addition, the central government successfully pressured several directly elected mayors from the ruling AKP to resign during the year, including those leading major population centers like Ankara and Istanbul; they were replaced through votes by AKP-controlled city councils.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 due to the central government's mass replacement of elected mayors with appointed officials or other preferred substitutes.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

The unicameral parliament, the 550-seat Grand National Assembly, is elected by proportional representation for a four-year term. The most recent elections were in November 2015. They were called by President Erdoğan after no party won a majority in June 2015 elections and a coalition government could not be formed. In the November vote, the AKP won 49 percent of the ballots and 317 seats, giving it a clear parliamentary majority. The CHP won 134 seats with 25 percent of the vote, while the HDP and the Nationalist Action Party (MHP) won 59 and 40 seats, respectively.

Many reports cited irregularities in the 2015 electoral process. Erdoğan campaigned for the AKP in the June elections, in violation of the president's formally nonpartisan status at the time. Opponents of the government also alleged media bias and censorship, noting that the state-owned TRT television station provided extensive coverage of the AKP's campaign while giving far less time to opposition parties and rejecting some of their advertisements. The HDP suffered from terrorist attacks, arrests, and mob violence in the context of renewed fighting between security forces and Kurdish militants. The OSCE, while acknowledging that Turkish voters had a choice among parties and that the vote count was transparent, concluded that media restrictions and violence severely hindered the campaign.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 1 / 4 (-1)

Judges on the YSK oversee voting procedures. In June 2016, the parliament passed a judicial reform bill that allowed AKP-dominated judicial bodies to replace most YSK judges that September. In the April 2017 constitutional referendum, the new degree of AKP control apparently contributed to a series of YSK decisions that favored the "yes" campaign.

As detailed in the OSCE report on the referendum, voters lacked access to impartial information, individuals associated with the opposition "no" campaign were harassed and arrested, the government-controlled media strongly supported the "yes" campaign, and voting conditions were affected by the state of emergency and security operations in the largely Kurdish southeast, where hundreds of thousands of people had been displaced. The OSCE noted a number of serious problems with the tabulation process. For example, late on the day of the vote, the YSK "significantly changed the ballot validity criteria, undermining an important safeguard and contradicting the law." Specifically, it instructed electoral boards to accept as valid an unknown number of ballots that were improperly stamped by ballot box committees or had no committee control stamp at all.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 because a referendum on constitutional revisions to increase the power of the presidency was carried out under deeply flawed conditions that ensured the outcome sought by the government.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 7 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 2 / 4**

Turkey has a competitive multiparty system, with four parties represented in parliament. However, the rise of new parties is inhibited by the 10 percent vote threshold for parliamentary representation—an unusually high bar by global standards. Parties can be disbanded for endorsing policies that are not in agreement with constitutional parameters, and this rule has been applied in the past to Islamist and Kurdish-oriented parties. After a cease-fire with

the militant Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) collapsed in 2015, the government accused the HDP of being a proxy for the group. A 2016 constitutional amendment facilitated the removal of parliamentary immunity, and many of the HDP's leaders have since been jailed on terrorism charges; at the end of 2017, a total of nine HDP lawmakers were behind bars, as were much larger numbers of municipal officials from the HDP's regional affiliate party.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 1 / 4

Since coming to power in 2002, the ruling AKP has asserted partisan control over the YSK, the judiciary, the police, and the media, severely limiting the capacity of the opposition to build support among voters and gain power through elections. The AKP has aggressively used these institutional tools to weaken or co-opt political rivals in recent years. In 2016, for example, rulings by the YSK and the courts helped to quash an attempted leadership challenge within the MHP, effectively ensuring that longtime chairman Devlet Bahçeli remained in control. Bahçeli then endorsed a "yes" vote in the April 2017 constitutional referendum, drawing accusations of a quid pro quo.

In addition to the prosecution of HDP politicians on terrorism charges, the government has used law enforcement agencies to attack the country's largest opposition party, the CHP. Enis Berberoğlu, a CHP member of parliament, was on trial at the end of 2017 for allegedly leaking state secrets to journalists; he was sentenced to 25 years in prison in June, but an appellate court ordered a retrial. Prosecutors opened investigations into dozens of other CHP figures during the year, including party leader Kemal Kiliçdaroğlu, who was accused of insulting the president.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 3 / 4

The civilian leadership in recent years has asserted its control over the military, which has a history of intervening in political affairs. This greater control was a factor behind the failure of the 2016 coup attempt, and the government has since purged thousands of military personnel suspected of disloyalty. However, the AKP's institutional dominance threatens to make the state itself an extension of the party that can be used to change political outcomes.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 1 / 4

Critics charge that the AKP has a religious agenda favoring Sunni Muslims, evidenced by the expansion of the Directorate of Religious Affairs and the alleged use of this institution for political patronage and to deliver government-friendly sermons in mosques. Secular Turkish citizens are alienated by the government's expansion of religious schools and use of religious rhetoric, among other actions. The non-Sunni Alevi minority as well as non-Muslim religious communities have long faced political discrimination, though Alevis enjoy some political representation—largely through the CHP—and a small number of Christian and Yazidi politicians won seats in the parliament in 2015.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 3 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 2 / 4

Formally, Turkey will retain its mixed presidential-parliamentary system of government until all of the constitutional changes approved in the April 2017 referendum are

implemented after the 2019 elections. In practice, however, President Erdoğan and his inner circle make all meaningful political decisions. One constitutional revision that took immediate effect, the removal of a rule requiring presidents to be politically neutral, allowed Erdoğan to rejoin the AKP, but he had effectively led the party without interruption since moving to the presidency. His dominance was illustrated again in 2017 by the forced resignations of key AKP mayors. The state of emergency in place since 2016 grants additional powers to the president, including the authority to suspend civil liberties and issue decrees without oversight from the Constitutional Court.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

Corruption—including money laundering, bribery, and collusion in the allocation of government contracts—remains a major problem. The purge carried out since the 2016 coup attempt has greatly increased opportunities for corruption given the mass expropriation of targeted businesses and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Billions of dollars in seized assets are managed by government-appointed trustees, further augmenting the intimate ties between the government and friendly businesses.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 0 / 4

The political and legal environment created by the government's purge and state of emergency has made ordinary democratic oversight efforts all but impossible. In 2016 the Council of Europe criticized the state of emergency for bestowing "almost unlimited discretionary powers" on the government, which in practice arbitrarily withholds information on the activities of state officials and institutions. External monitors like civil society groups and independent journalists are subject to arrest and prosecution if they attempt to expose government wrongdoing.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 16 / 60 (-4)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 5 / 16 (-1)

D1. Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4

Although some independent newspapers and websites continue to operate, they face tremendous political pressure and are routinely targeted for prosecution. More than 150 media outlets were closed in the months after the attempted coup in 2016. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, a total of 73 journalists were behind bars as of December 2017, making Turkey the world's worst jailer of journalists for the second year in a row. Many more faced criminal charges. Government attempts to block news sites and other online information sources continued in 2017, most notably with a nationwide block on Wikipedia beginning in late April. The mainstream media, especially television, reflect government positions and routinely carry identical headlines.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 2 / 4

Although the constitution guarantees freedom of religion, increasingly the public sphere is dominated by Sunni Islam. Alevi places of worship are not recognized as such by the government, meaning they cannot access the subsidies available to Sunni mosques. The number of religious schools that promote Sunni Islam has increased under the AKP, and Turkish public education includes compulsory religious education courses that non-Muslims are generally exempted from but Alevis and nonbelievers have difficulty opting out of. Three non-Muslim religious groups—Jews, Orthodox Christians, and Armenian Christians—are officially recognized. However, disputes over property and prohibitions on training of clergy

remain problems for these communities, and the rights of unrecognized religious minorities are more limited.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 1 / 4

The tradition of academic freedom was never very strong in Turkey, and the effects of the purge have weakened it further. Schools affiliated with the movement of exiled Islamic preacher Fethullah Gülen—which the government has declared a terrorist organization and blamed for the 2016 coup attempt—have been closed, and teachers have been summarily dismissed for perceived leftist, Gülenist, or PKK sympathies. Fifteen universities have been closed, and more than 5,000 academics had lost their positions by early 2017. Many scholars are seeking positions overseas, but some have had their passports confiscated as they remain under investigation.

In July 2017, the government announced a new school curriculum that excluded the theory of evolution and included lessons on “jihad,” which it described in patriotic terms. The curriculum continued a trend of increasing religious and ideological content that matched the views of the AKP.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 1 / 4 (-1)

Many Turkish citizens continue to voice their opinions openly with friends and relations, but more now exercise caution about what they post online or say in public. Not every utterance that is critical of the government will be punished, but the arbitrariness of prosecutions, which often result in pretrial detention and carry the risk of lengthy prison terms, is increasingly creating an atmosphere of self-censorship.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 due to increased levels of self-censorship among ordinary people in the context of an ongoing government crackdown on perceived opponents.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 3 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 1 / 4

Although freedom of assembly is theoretically guaranteed in Turkish law, authorities have routinely disallowed gatherings by government critics on security grounds in recent years, while progovernment rallies are allowed to proceed. Restrictions have been imposed on May Day celebrations by leftist and labor groups, LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) events, protests by purge victims, and opposition party meetings. Police use force to break up unapproved protests. Authorities in Ankara imposed a blanket ban on demonstrations in late September 2017 that was later extended and remained in place at year’s end. Despite such obstacles, the CHP leadership organized a protest march from Ankara to Istanbul that ended with a large demonstration in July.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 1 / 4

The government has cracked down on NGOs since the coup attempt, summarily shutting down at least 1,500 foundations and associations and seizing their assets. The targeted groups worked on issues including torture, domestic violence, and aid to refugees and internally displaced persons. In June 2017, the chair of Amnesty International’s Turkey branch was arrested on terrorism charges, and he remained in detention at year’s end. In July, a raid

on a routine training session for human rights defenders resulted in the arrest of eight representatives from Turkey's major rights organizations, along with two foreign trainers. They were eventually released pending trial. Osman Kavala, perhaps Turkey's most prominent civil society leader and philanthropist, was detained in October. He was formally arrested in November and remained in pretrial detention.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 1 / 4

Union activity, including the right to strike, is limited by law and in practice; antiunion activities by employers are common, and legal protections are poorly enforced. A system of representation threshold requirements make it difficult for unions to secure collective-bargaining rights. Trade unions and professional organizations have suffered from mass arrests and dismissals associated with the state of emergency and the general breakdown in freedoms of expression, assembly, and association.

F. RULE OF LAW: 2 / 16 (-2)

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4

Although judges still occasionally rule against the government, the appointment of thousands of new, loyalist judges in recent years, the potential professional costs of ruling against the executive in a major case, and the effects of the ongoing purge have all severely weakened judicial independence in Turkey. This process was well under way before the July 2016 coup attempt, but by late 2017, more than 4,000 judges and prosecutors had been removed. Judges and trials in high-profile cases are transferred to ensure that the government's arguments are presented before a sympathetic court.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 0 / 4 (-1)

A long-term erosion of due process guarantees has accelerated under the state of emergency. Antiterrorism charges brought since the coup attempt often rely on the weakest of circumstantial evidence, secret testimony, or an ever-expanding guilt by association. A decree issued in December 2017 apparently removed requirements that defendants hear all the evidence brought against them and have a defense attorney present during trial. In many cases, lawyers defending those accused of terrorism offenses have been arrested themselves. Lengthy pretrial detention has become routine. An October report by Human Rights Watch detailed evidence that security forces were carrying out disappearances and using secret detention sites. Under emergency rules, suspects can be held for up to 14 days without judicial review, down from 30 in the initial aftermath of the coup attempt. Authorities can also detain individuals for up to 24 hours without access to a lawyer, though police have reportedly breached this limit in practice.

Score Change: The score declined from 1 to 0 due to the lack of basic due process protections for the growing number of people detained or charged with terrorism offenses during the state of emergency.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 0 / 4

Torture has become increasingly common, according to human rights organizations, and an emergency decree issued in December 2017 appears to grant legal immunity to any person, including civilians, who takes action against terrorists or others associated with the 2016 coup attempt.

More than 3,000 people have been killed in fighting between security forces and the PKK since the end of a cease-fire in July 2015. The conflict, which has included bombings and assassinations, is concentrated in the rural southeast, though until the second half of 2016 there was also significant urban fighting. Turkey faces a separate terrorist threat from the Islamic State (IS) militant group. A gunman linked to IS attacked an Istanbul nightclub in January 2017, killing 39 people.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4 (-1)

Although Turkish law guarantees equal treatment, women as well as ethnic and religious minority groups suffer varying degrees of discrimination. For example, Alevis and non-Muslims reportedly face discrimination in employment, particularly in senior public-sector positions, and gender inequality in the workplace is common.

While expression of Kurdish identity has been better tolerated in recent years than it was in the 1990s, the resurgence of the conflict with the PKK has been used to justify a crackdown on Kurdish political parties, media outlets, and civil society organizations, which has intensified under the state of emergency. In addition to carrying out arrests, dismissals, and closures, appointed state authorities have in some cases reversed Kurdish municipal officials' efforts to promote Kurdish language and culture.

Turkey has accepted more than 3.4 million Syrian refugees. While the government attempts to provide them with basic services, a large minority of refugee children lack access to education, and few adults are able to obtain formal employment. Local hostility toward Syrians was on the rise in 2017, according to the International Crisis Group, with at least 35 people killed in intercommunal violence.

Same-sex sexual activity is legally permitted, but LGBT people are subject to widespread discrimination, police harassment, and occasional violence. There is no legislation to protect people from discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. LGBT-related public events have increasingly been banned since 2015; police used force to disperse activists who defied a ban on Istanbul's pride march in June 2017.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 due to an escalation in repressive measures affecting the Kurdish population since the 2016 coup attempt.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 6 / 16 (-1)

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 1 / 4 (-1)

The conflict with the PKK has resulted in the forced relocation of hundreds of thousands of people, and there is evidence that the government is using curfews and cuts to utilities to push residents out of some areas.

Freedom of movement has also been affected by the expansion of purges in the civil service and higher education. Those who are suspended or dismissed have no effective avenue for appeal. Moreover, many are not able to find new employment in the private sector due an atmosphere of guilt by association, and they frequently have their passports confiscated, meaning they cannot seek employment abroad.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 due to the expansion of purges in the public sector and higher education that restrict affected individuals' access to alternative employment and international travel.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 1 / 4

There is a right to private property, but since 2013 many critics of the government have been subjected to intrusive tax and regulatory inspections. Companies associated with the Gülen movement have been confiscated, particularly since the 2016 coup attempt, and individuals have also had their private assets seized. In December 2017, for example, the Turkish assets of U.S.-based Turkey analyst and former CHP lawmaker Aykan Erdemir were confiscated. By mid-2017, authorities had seized a total of more than \$11 billion in property and companies ranging from corner stores to huge conglomerates. Assets of closed NGOs have also been turned over to the state.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

The government has shown increasing disinterest in protecting vulnerable individuals from forced marriage and domestic violence. Underage marriages are believed to be a widespread problem, with many formed through unofficial religious ceremonies; there is strong evidence of child marriages that victimize Syrian refugees. In November 2017, the parliament adopted a law allowing Muslim clerics to conduct civil marriages, which critics said could lead to more underage marriages. Despite legal protections, rates of domestic violence remain high; police are often unwilling to intervene in domestic disputes, and shelter space is both extremely limited and often geographically inaccessible.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

The weakness of labor unions and the growing political pressures on Turkish society have undermined equality of opportunity and protection from economic exploitation. Workplace accidents are frequent, and laborers have little recourse if injured. Refugee communities have provided a ready source of cheap, exploitable labor, including child labor, resulting in significant abuses.

Turkmenistan

Population: 5,400,000

Capital: Ashgabat

Political Rights Rating: 7

Civil Liberties Rating: 7

Freedom Rating: 7.0

Freedom Status: Not Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: Turkmenistan is a repressive authoritarian state where political rights and civil liberties are almost completely denied in practice. Elections are tightly controlled, ensuring nearly unanimous victories for the president and his party. The economy is dominated by the state, corruption is systemic, religious groups are persecuted, and political dissent is not tolerated.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov won reelection in February with 97.69 percent of the vote, according to official results. He faced eight token challengers who were supportive of his policy agenda.
- In May, the prosecutor general and a number of his subordinates were fired and then arrested over corruption allegations.
- In the run-up to the fifth Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games (AIMAG), which were held in Ashgabat in September, the government demolished thousands of homes without offering adequate compensation in order to make way for the construction of sports venues and related projects.
- In October, the president issued a decree to begin raising water fees as part of a broader plan to phase out subsidies for basic utilities and ease pressure on the state budget amid a faltering economy.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 0 / 40**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 0 / 12****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4**

The president is directly elected for an unlimited number of seven-year terms, extended from five years under a 2016 constitutional revision. Berdimuhamedov, the incumbent, was reelected for a third term in February 2017 with 97.69 percent of the vote amid turnout of more than 97 percent, according to official results. His eight token opponents were either nominees of state-backed parties or members of the ruling Democratic Party of Turkmenistan (DPT) who ran as independents. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) criticized the election process for failing to present voters with a genuine choice and noted that it took place in a strictly controlled political and media environment.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

The unicameral Mejlis is composed of 125 members elected from individual districts to serve five-year terms. Parliamentary elections are tightly controlled by the state and feature no genuine competition from opposition candidates. All parties and public associations allowed to participate are effectively subordinate to the DPT. In the 2013 elections, the DPT took 47 seats, followed by the Federation of Trade Unions with 33, the Women's Union with 16, the Party of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs with 14, and a youth organization and other "citizen groups" with 8 and 7, respectively.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 0 / 4

The legal framework for elections is neither fair nor impartially implemented. The Central Election Commission (CEC) is appointed by the president and operates with little transparency. The law allows virtually no opportunity for independent fund-raising or campaigning. In the 2017 presidential election, the CEC organized and funded campaign activities and produced all campaign materials, according to international monitors.

The constitution and electoral code were amended in 2016 to remove the upper age limit of 70 for presidential candidates, extend the presidential term from five to seven years, and eliminate the right of public associations to nominate presidential candidates.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 0 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 0 / 4**

The party system is dominated by the ruling DPT and controlled by the executive branch. The 2012 law on political parties specified the legal basis for citizens to form independent parties, but barred parties formed on professional, regional, or religious lines, and those created by government officials. Nevertheless, Berdimuhamedov subsequently announced plans to form two new groups—the Party of Entrepreneurs and Industrialists and the Agrarian Party. Both were then openly organized by sitting members of the DPT and formally registered in 2012 and 2014, respectively. These parties, plus the DPT, were the only groups to nominate presidential candidates in 2017.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 0 / 4

Turkmenistan has never experienced a peaceful transfer of power between rival parties through elections. Berdimuhamedov had served in the government of his late predecessor, Saparmurat Niyazov, who in turn had ruled the country since before its independence from the Soviet Union. The Soviet-era Communist Party became the DPT in 1991 and remains in power to date. All genuine opposition groups operate either illegally or in exile.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 0 / 4

The authoritarian political system offers voters no meaningful alternatives to the ruling party. At an informal level, politics within the regime are thought to be influenced by regional patronage networks, or “clans,” that control different parts of the state and economy.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 0 / 4

Members of the ethnic Turkmen majority and the president’s tribal subdivision in particular are favored for leadership positions. While women and ethnic or religious minorities formally have full political rights, no segment of the country’s population enjoys the practical ability to engage in independent political activity. Women hold about 25 percent of the seats in the Mejlis.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 0 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 0 / 4**

The president, who is not freely elected, has ultimate decision-making authority. The executive branch determines laws and policies with no meaningful input or oversight from the rubber-stamp legislature. In October 2017, Berdimuhamedov announced that the Council of Elders, an advisory body of village leaders, would be replaced by a revived People’s Council, a formally more powerful entity that had been abolished in 2008. The People’s Council, headed and convened by the president, would be considered the top representative body, further diminishing the parliament’s role.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 0 / 4

There are no independent institutions tasked with combating corruption, which is widespread in Turkmenistan. Checks on nepotism and conflicts of interest are also lacking; the president's son, a possible successor, has held a number of positions, including in the Foreign Ministry and the Mejlis. Crackdowns on corruption are typically selective and related to conflicts within the ruling elite. Several high-ranking officials were fired over corruption allegations during 2017. In May, for example, Prosecutor General Amanmurad Hallyyev and at least nine other prosecutors were fired and subsequently arrested on corruption charges. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) reported that the prosecutors had been tasked with extracting funds for the upcoming AIMAG from officials and businessmen, and had either failed to collect enough or were accused of keeping some for themselves. In June the president created the State Service for Combating Economic Crimes, tasked with preventing and investigating corruption-related offenses, though analysts said the service could be used to extort more revenue from wealthy targets.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 0 / 4

Decisions on monetary policy, large-scale contracts with foreign companies, and the allocation of state profits from hydrocarbon exports are largely opaque and ultimately controlled by the president, without effective legal limits or independent oversight. Government officials and state-owned companies are not required to disclose their basic financial information to the public.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 4 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 1 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 0 / 4

Press freedom is severely restricted in Turkmenistan. The state controls nearly all broadcast and print media. Independent journalists, particularly those who work with RFE/RL, are subject to harassment, detention, physical abuse, and prosecution on trumped-up charges. In 2017, the authorities revoked accreditations for a number of British journalists who had planned to come to the country to cover the AIMAG. The state-run internet service provider blocks websites that carry independent news coverage or opposition-oriented content.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 0 / 4

Legal restrictions, state monitoring and harassment, and the risk of penalties including fines and imprisonment have virtually extinguished the ability of individuals to freely practice religion. A 2016 law on religion maintained existing bans on religious activity outside state control, imposed a higher membership threshold for the registration of religious groups, and required all registered groups to reapply for registration. Senior Muslim clerics are appointed by the government, and Muslims who do not follow the officially approved interpretation of Islam are subject to persecution, including lengthy prison terms. Members of unregistered religious minority groups continue to face raids, beatings, and other forms of harassment. There have been numerous reports of Muslims and Jehovah's Witnesses being fired from state jobs for exercising their beliefs.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 0 / 4

The government places significant restrictions on academic freedom, limiting research on politically sensitive topics and imposing onerous obstacles to the recognition of degrees

from foreign institutions. In February 2017, a group of 18 men received harsh prison sentences for their alleged links to schools affiliated with the exiled Turkish preacher Fethullah Gülen, and another 40 men were reportedly sentenced on similar charges in July.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 1 / 4

Private discussion and the expression of personal views are highly restricted due to intrusive supervision by state security services, including physical surveillance, monitoring of telephone and electronic communications, and the use of informers. Social media users who post critical comments about the government are subject to intimidation and imprisonment.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 0 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 0 / 4

The constitution guarantees freedom of assembly, and the 2015 Law on Assemblies defines the right of individuals and groups to hold peaceful gatherings with prior authorization. However, the law grants officials broad discretion to block assemblies, and in practice the authorities do not allow antigovernment demonstrations.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 0 / 4

Onerous registration and regulatory requirements effectively prevent most independent nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) from operating legally or receiving foreign funding, and activities by unregistered groups can draw fines, detention, and other penalties. Individual activists face intimidation and harassment, as do the family members of human rights activists working in exile. In 2017, animal rights activist Galina Kucherenko, who had criticized the authorities' extermination of stray dogs and cats ahead of the AIMAG, was threatened and temporarily detained, and her internet service was disrupted.

One of the president's sisters controls the National Red Crescent Society of Turkmenistan and has been accused of using the organization for personal enrichment.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 0 / 4

Workers have a legal right to join trade unions, but there are no protections against anti-union discrimination, and strikes are prohibited. The government-controlled Association of Trade Unions of Turkmenistan is the only union organization permitted to operate.

F. RULE OF LAW: 0 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 0 / 4

The judicial system is subservient to the president, who appoints and dismisses judges unilaterally. In practice, the courts are commonly used to punish dissent and remove potential threats to the president's political dominance.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 0 / 4

Arbitrary arrests and detentions are common, particularly for dissidents, members of unapproved religious groups, activists, and journalists who work with foreign organizations. The authorities frequently deny defendants' basic rights of due process, including public trials and access to defense attorneys.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 0 / 4

Security forces routinely use torture to extract confessions or punish inmates. The lack of transparency surrounding many detentions amounts to enforced disappearance. Prison conditions are extremely harsh, and the deaths in custody of several disappeared detainees and prisoners convicted on religious extremism charges were reported during 2017.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 0 / 4

Employment and educational opportunities for ethnic minorities are limited by the government's promotion of Turkmen national identity, and activists who advocate for minority rights have faced persecution. Traditional social and religious norms help to restrict women's access to education and economic opportunity; there are no legal protections against sexual harassment in the workplace. The law does not protect LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people from discrimination, and sexual activity between men can be punished with up to two years in prison.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 3 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 1 / 4

Freedom of movement is restricted, with a reported blacklist preventing some individuals from traveling abroad. Internal passports and a system of residency permits obstruct travel within the country. The government imposed special border controls and travel restrictions in the run-up to the AIMAG in 2017; schools and universities in the capital were closed for the duration of the games.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 1 / 4

The constitution establishes the right to property ownership, but the deeply flawed judiciary provides little protection to businesses and individuals, and the president's relatives monopolize key sectors of the economy that are not directly state controlled. Arbitrary evictions and confiscation of property are common. Thousands of people were forcibly evicted to make way for the construction of AIMAG venues and related urban beautification projects. Those displaced were left with either no housing or inadequate alternatives.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 1 / 4

Domestic violence is reportedly common, but few victims file complaints with the authorities, and the government has not made significant efforts to monitor, prevent, or combat the problem. Reporting and prosecution of rape is similarly limited.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 0 / 4

The government forces thousands of students, public employees, and other citizens to participate in the annual cotton harvest without pay. Public employees are also compelled to work on other projects without compensation, including services surrounding the AIMAG in 2017. Impoverished residents of rural areas are especially vulnerable to trafficking abroad for forced labor or sexual exploitation, and the government does little to address the problem.

In October 2017, the president issued a decree to begin raising water fees as part of a broader plan to phase out subsidies for utilities and ease pressure on the state budget amid a faltering economy. Persistently low oil and gas prices have driven down vital export revenues in recent years, leading to reports of unpaid wages and shortages of basic goods. To raise funds, the government has increased various fees and pressured officials, businesspeople, and ordinary workers to make “voluntary” contributions.

Tuvalu

Population: 10,000

Capital: Funafuti

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 1

Freedom Rating: 1.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Tuvalu is a parliamentary democracy that holds regular, competitive elections. Civil liberties are generally upheld. Ongoing problems include a lack of antidiscrimination laws to protect women and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In July, a by-election was held to fill the seat of former prime minister Apisai Ielemia, who had been removed from Parliament in 2016 after a corruption conviction. However, the legitimacy of the vote was disputed, as Ielemia’s conviction had been overturned and he was challenging his removal in the courts. The case was unresolved at year’s end.
- The Ielemia dispute stirred speculation that Prime Minister Enele Sopoaga’s governing majority in Parliament was at risk, but he remained in office throughout the year.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 37 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

A governor general represents the British monarch as ceremonial head of state. The prime minister, chosen by Parliament, leads the government. Enele Sopoaga, who became prime minister after his predecessor was ousted in a no-confidence vote in 2013, secured a new term after the 2015 parliamentary elections, holding together his alliance of independent lawmakers.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The unicameral, 15-member Parliament is directly elected through contests in eight geographical constituencies, all but one of which have two members each. In the 2015 elections, all candidates ran as independents, and 12 of the incumbents returned to office. Each of the main inhabited islands in Tuvalu is also governed by an elected local council.

Apisai Ielemia, the prime minister from 2006 to 2010, was removed from his Parliament seat in 2016 following a corruption conviction earlier that year, even though the conviction had since been overturned. Ielemia maintained that his removal was invalid and that he was still a member of Parliament. Nevertheless, a by-election for his seat proceeded in July 2017, and the winner, Isaia Vaipuna Taape, was sworn in to fill it. Ielemia was pursuing an appeal in the courts as of late 2017.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

Tuvalu's legal framework provides for democratic elections, and the laws are fairly and impartially implemented.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 15 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4

There are no formal political parties, though no law bars their formation. Candidates typically run as independents and form loose, frequently shifting alliances once in office.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

Tuvalu has an established pattern of democratic transfers of power. Individual prime ministers and governments have seldom lasted a full term in office in recent decades, with intense political rivalries often prompting no-confidence votes in Parliament.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

Traditional elders and the main Protestant church play an influential role in society, but they do not exercise undue control over the political choices of voters and candidates.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

All Tuvaluans aged 18 and over who are present in the country on polling day but not imprisoned are eligible to vote. While women formally have full political rights, in practice their participation is somewhat inhibited by traditional biases. Three women ran for seats in the 2015 parliamentary elections, and one of them won office.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 10 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4

Tuvalu's elected officials are able to develop and implement government policies and legislation without improper interference from any unelected entity.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4

Corruption is not a severe problem in Tuvalu, and the country's independent auditing and law enforcement bodies are generally effective in combatting graft, though there have been some corruption scandals in recent years. Former prime minister Ielemia was convicted in 2016 for receiving over \$15,000 from Japanese and Taiwanese sources while in

office and depositing the money in a personal bank account. The conviction was overturned by a higher court a few weeks later, but the fact that Ielemia had begun to serve a prison term led to his disputed removal from Parliament.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 3 / 4

Government operations and legislative processes are generally transparent, though there is no freedom of information law to guarantee and regulate public access to official records. While officials are legally obliged to disclose their assets and income, the rules are not consistently enforced, according to the U.S. State Department.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 57 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 16 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 4 / 4

The constitution provides for freedom of the press, and there are no reported restrictions on this right, though the small media market does not support independent domestic news outlets. The government operates a radio station and a national newspaper. Many residents use satellite dishes to access foreign programming. Internet penetration has grown in recent years, approaching 50 percent of the population in 2017, though access is largely limited to the main island.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

The constitution and laws provide for freedom of religion, and this right is generally respected in practice, particularly on the main island of Funafuti. A Protestant church, the Congregational Christian Church of Tuvalu, has official status under the law, and about 97 percent of the population belongs. Traditional leaders are empowered to regulate local religious activities, and on smaller islands they sometimes discourage minority groups from proselytizing or holding public events.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is generally respected.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

There are no significant restrictions on freedom of expression. The government does not improperly monitor personal communications or social media activity.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 12 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4

The constitution provides for freedom of assembly, and the government typically upholds this right in practice.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Freedom of association is respected. Nongovernmental organizations operate without interference, providing a variety of health, education, and other services.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

Workers in the private sector have the right to organize unions, bargain collectively, and strike. Public-sector employees can join professional associations and engage in collective bargaining, but they are not permitted to strike. Most labor disputes are resolved through negotiations in practice. The only registered union represents seafarers.

F. RULE OF LAW: 15 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 4 / 4

The judiciary is independent. The chief justice is appointed by the head of state on the advice of the cabinet, and other judges are appointed in the same manner after consultation with the chief justice. Judges cannot be removed arbitrarily.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 4 / 4

The authorities generally uphold due process during arrests, detentions, and trials. A public defense lawyer is available to detainees and defendants. However, the limited capacity of the legal system can lead to delays in court proceedings and access to counsel.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 4 / 4

There were no reports of physical abuse by police or in the prison system during the year. Criminal activity does not pose a major threat to physical security.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

While women generally enjoy equality before the law, traditional customs and social norms can limit women's role in society, and there are no specific legal protections against gender discrimination in employment.

Sexual activity between men can be punished with imprisonment, though the law is not actively enforced. Discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity is not specifically banned.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 14 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4

Tuvaluans are free to travel within the country and abroad, and to relocate for purposes including employment and education.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 4 / 4

The legal framework and government policies are generally supportive of property rights and private business activity.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

Although personal social freedoms are generally respected, domestic violence often goes unreported because it is viewed as a private matter. There are no specific laws against spousal rape.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

Forced labor is prohibited, and the government mandates basic protections against exploitative or dangerous working conditions, though enforcement is not proactive or consistent. Most of the labor force works in the informal sector or in small-scale fishing and agriculture.

Uganda

Population: 36,600,000

Capital: Kampala

Political Rights Rating: 6

Civil Liberties Rating: 4↑

Freedom Rating: 5.0

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Status Change: Uganda's status improved from Not Free to Partly Free, and its civil liberties rating improved from 5 to 4, due to the resilience of the media sector and the willingness of journalists, bloggers, and citizens to voice their opinions, though the political environment remained tightly restricted under the regime of long-ruling president Yoweri Museveni.

Overview: While Uganda holds regular elections, their credibility has deteriorated over time, and the country has been ruled by the same party and president since 1986. The ruling party, the National Resistance Movement (NRM), retains power through the manipulation of state resources, intimidation by security forces, and politicized prosecutions of opposition leaders. Uganda's civil society and media sectors remain vibrant, despite suffering sporadic legal and extralegal harassment and state violence.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In December, Parliament approved and President Museveni signed into law a constitutional amendment that removed the presidential age limit of 75, allowing the president to run for reelection indefinitely. The amendment was widely criticized by the public, and by opposition parties and civil society groups.
- In October 2017, two people were killed during a violent police crackdown on a protest against the proposed amendment to repeal the presidential age limit. Kizza Besigye, the prominent opposition figure who led the protest, was charged with their murder.
- Stella Nyanzi, a feminist academic at Makerere University, was detained for a month on charges of cyberharassment and offensive communication after she posted a note critical of President Museveni on social media.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 11 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 3 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4

In the February 2016 presidential contest, President Museveni won with 60.6 percent of the vote, according to official results. Kizza Besigye of the opposition Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) placed second, with 35.6 percent. According to international and

regional observers, the 2016 elections were undermined by problems including the misuse of state resources and flawed administration by the Electoral Commission (EC).

In December 2017, the Ugandan Parliament passed and President Museveni signed into law a constitutional amendment bill that removed the presidential age limit of 75, allowing the president to run for reelection indefinitely. The amendment faced strong opposition by the public, opposition parties, and members of civil society.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4

The 2016 legislative elections were held concurrently with the presidential vote. A total of 426 members of Parliament (MPs) were chosen, including 289 elected in single-member districts, 112 elected to reserved seats for women, and 25 chosen to represent special interest groups (the military, youth, people with disabilities, and trade unions). The ruling party, the NRM, won an absolute majority with 293 seats. According to international and regional observers, the 2016 elections were undermined by problems including the misuse of state resources and flawed administration by the EC.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 1 / 4

Independent observers, civil society, and opposition leaders have long critiqued and called for substantive reforms to Ugandan electoral laws. Moreover, much of the public is wary of the EC; this was reflected in an Afrobarometer study released in December 2017, which found that only 42 percent of survey respondents had expressed confidence in its administration of the 2016 elections. On election day, the EC had experienced significant technical and logistical challenges, causing some citizens to wait for hours to cast their votes. The EC extended the voting time for polling stations that opened late, with voting in some areas continuing for an extra day even as counting was well under way. This fueled existing mistrust of the EC and raised suspicions of malfeasance.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 5 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 1 / 4

Opposition groups are hindered by restrictive party registration requirements and candidate eligibility rules, the use of government resources to support NRM candidates, a lack of access to state media coverage, state violence and harassment, and paramilitary groups that intimidate voters and government opponents. In July 2017, police raided a private home in Kampala and arrested dozens of members of the opposition FDC on charges of holding an illegal assembly.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 1 / 4

The ruling party dominates at all levels of government. However, there are numerous independents and several dozen opposition lawmakers in the parliament.

Throughout the 2016 electoral period, violence, intimidation, and harassment toward opposition parties—especially the FDC and its supporters—were particularly acute. Besigye, the leading opposition presidential candidate, was charged with treason following months of arrests, detentions, and periods of house arrest. In October 2017, he was charged with murder in connection with the deaths of two protesters at an antigovernment rally at

which participants had protested the proposed removal of the presidential age ceiling. Police had violently dispersed the demonstration, reportedly firing live rounds at participants.

Separately, Robert Kyagulanyi, a popular musician who ran as an opposition-leaning independent in a 2017 by-election in the urban Kyaddondo East Constituency, won a landslide victory, defeating both the NRM and the FDC candidates. His victory suggested that opposition candidates could potentially challenge the NRM in future elections, especially in urban constituencies.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 1 / 4

The military is closely aligned with Museveni and holds 10 seats in Parliament. During the 2016 election period, the military and police services worked to dissuade any protests against the results, mounting a visible armed security presence with heavy deployments in and around the capital.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 2 / 4

No group is systematically excluded from the electoral process. However, the dominant position and coercive tactics of the NRM impede free political participation and advocacy of interests by Uganda's various ethnic groups, including those affiliated with traditional kingdoms as well as smaller indigenous groups. An assessment of women's participation in the 2016 elections by the Women's Democracy Group, a coalition of Ugandan civil society organizations, noted a widespread perception that because a certain number of legislative seats are reserved for women, "they should not contest for direct positions so as to reduce on the competition for male contestants."

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 3 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 1 / 4

Power is concentrated in the hands of the NRM leadership, the security forces, and especially the president, who retains office through deeply flawed electoral processes. Ordinary lawmakers and civic groups have little practical ability to influence legislation or government policies.

In September 2017, several opposition MPs were attacked and forcibly removed from the parliament by plain-clothes security guards during the reading of the constitutional amendment bill that removed the presidential age limit.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

Despite high-profile scandals, investigations, intense media attention, and laws and institutions designed to combat corruption, malfeasance continues and top government officials are rarely prosecuted for such offenses.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 1 / 4

Many government departments deny requests for information under the country's Access to Information Act. Other laws related to national security and confidentiality also impede open access to information in practice. Public procurement procedures are generally opaque.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 37 / 60 (+2)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 11 / 16 (+2)

D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4 (+1)

Independent journalists and media outlets are frequently critical of the government, in spite of government restrictions and intimidation. More than a dozen journalists were arrested and beaten by state officials in 2016, in some cases during live broadcasts. The government in 2016 also banned journalists from reporting on opposition activities, threatening arrest or cancelation of their licenses if they failed to comply. In September 2017, after news outlets carried a live broadcast of a brawl in the parliament, the Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) issued a warning that the transmission of live broadcasts that did not comply with poorly defined “minimum broadcasting standards” could result in the suspension or revocation of broadcasting licenses.

There have been some improvements over the years in the legal protection of journalists, with leading journalists successfully turning to the courts to ensure that constitutional guarantees of freedom of expression are upheld. While spurious legal cases against journalists have continued, they rarely lead to convictions.

Score Change: The score improved from 1 to 2 because the media remains active and vibrant, and journalists have continued to provide critical coverage despite harassment.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4

There is no state religion, and freedom of worship is both constitutionally protected and generally respected in practice. However, the government has barred religious leaders from engaging in political debates and restricted religious groups whose members allegedly pose security risks. A series of Muslim clerics have been murdered in recent years, and in 2016 police raided mosques and carried out arrests in search of those responsible for the killings and other criminal activity, drawing complaints that the officers acted arbitrarily and unlawfully.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 3 / 4

Academic freedom has been undermined by alleged surveillance of university lectures by security officials, and by the need for professors to obtain permission to hold public meetings at universities. In 2017, Stella Nyanzi, a feminist academic at Makerere University, was detained for a month on charges of cyberharassment and offensive communication after she posted a note critical of President Museveni on social media. She was also suspended from the university.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4 (+1)

Communications online are subject to government surveillance. In June 2017, the country’s government-appointed regulator, the Uganda Media Centre, announced that it had inaugurated a new unit that would scan social media websites for posts that are critical of the government, prompting concern from rights advocates. In July, media reports claimed that the government had sought internet monitoring technology from the Chinese government. In August, the government announced plans to monitor for material deemed pornographic, and sanction those found possessing such material.

Nevertheless, private speech in Uganda is relatively unrestrained. According to an Afrobarometer survey conducted in 2016 and 2017, 80 percent of survey respondents in Uganda said they felt “somewhat” or “completely” free to say what they think, and 60 percent said they had more freedom to say what they think specifically about politics than they did a few years ago. Moreover, there is widespread discussion and vocal opposition to government policies, including the 2017 law that removed the presidential age limit. Criticism of the government, ruling party, and president on social media platforms is widespread.

Score Change: The score improved from 2 to 3 because there has been vibrant discussion among bloggers and citizens, especially on social media, on controversial topics including the removal of the presidential age limit, and because recent survey data from Afrobarometer showed an increasing willingness of Ugandans to speak their minds openly.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 4 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 1 / 4

Freedom of assembly is restricted by the 2013 Public Order Management Act (POMA), which requires groups to register with local police in writing three days before any gathering, public or private, to discuss political issues. The police have authority to deny approval for such meetings if they are not deemed to be in the “public interest,” and to use force to disperse assemblies judged unlawful.

In October 2017, two people were killed in a violent police crackdown on a protest against the government’s move to repeal the presidential age limit. Besigye, who led the rally, was charged with murder over the deaths. The crackdown prompted a statement of concern about “heavy-handed” police tactics from the US Embassy in Kampala.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 1 / 4

Civil society in Uganda is active, and several nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) address politically sensitive issues. However, their existence and activities are vulnerable to various legal restrictions and the manipulation of burdensome registration requirements. In September 2017, the organizations Action Aid, Solidarity Uganda, and the Great Lakes Institute (GLISS), faced police raids and equipment confiscation, with search warrants granted on suspicion of “illicit financial transactions” and “subversive activities to destabilize Uganda.” All of the groups had opposed the removal of presidential term limits.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

Workers’ rights to organize, bargain collectively, and strike are recognized by law, except for workers providing essential government services. However, legal protections can go unenforced.

F. RULE OF LAW: 4 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4

Executive and military influence undermines judicial independence, as does systemic corruption. The justice system’s handling of politically charged cases surrounding the 2016 elections underscored its lack of impartiality. In response to Besigye’s 2016 arrest and detention on treason charges, the president of the Uganda Law Society questioned the independence of the judiciary in dealing with political cases and cautioned that the courts should not be used to settle political disputes.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

Prolonged pretrial detention, inadequate resources, and poor judicial administration impede access to due process and justice.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 1 / 4

Rape, extrajudicial violence, and torture and abuse of suspects and detainees by security forces are persistent problems, and there are few examples of prosecution and accountability for serious crimes. In 2016, Ugandan security forces stormed the royal enclosures and palaces of the traditional Rwenzururu Kingdom in the Rwenzori region, after palace guards allegedly attacked police stations. The fighting left more than 100 people, including children, dead, and human rights groups cited evidence of indiscriminate violence and summary executions on the part of security forces. There has been no investigation of the events.

The prison system is operating at more than twice its intended capacity, with pretrial detainees constituting much of the prison population.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

The LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) community continues to face overt hostility from the government and much of society. Homosexuality remains effectively criminalized under a colonial provision banning “carnal knowledge” among people of the same sex. Men and transgender women accused of consensual same-sex conduct may be forced to undergo an anal exam that Human Rights Watch (HRW) says could amount to torture.

Over a million refugees live in Uganda, and the government has been praised for its progressive asylum policies. However, it struggles fund basic services for some refugee populations. In October 2017, there were riots among refugees in Adjumani District in response to temporary cuts to food assistance.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 7 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 2 / 4

Freedom of movement in Uganda is largely unrestricted. However, bribery is common in many facets of life, such as interacting with traffic police, gaining admittance to some institutions of higher education, and obtaining government jobs. Serious impediments to changing residence, employment, and education are largely financial.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

Customary land tenure is widespread in the north, and land disputes—some of them violent—are common, particularly when private development projects are at stake. In 2017, the government proposed a constitutional amendment that would give the government powers to seize land without providing timely compensation if the land were deemed necessary for public infrastructure projects.

The law gives women the right to inherit land, but local customs sometimes trump legal provisions in practice.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 1 / 4

Domestic violence is widespread and underreported. In August 2017, as part of its anti-pornography drive, the Ministry for Ethics and Integrity indicated that authorities would begin enforcing a ban against miniskirts on women and tight clothing on men, though by year's end it was unclear whether anyone had actually been penalized over their choice of clothing.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Poor enforcement of labor laws contributes to unsafe or exploitative conditions for some workers, though the majority of Ugandans are engaged in subsistence agriculture. Child labor in agriculture, domestic service, and a variety of other industries is a significant problem, as is sexual exploitation of minors.

Ukraine

Population: 42,700,000

Capital: Kyiv

Political Rights Rating: 3

Civil Liberties Rating: 3

Freedom Rating: 3.0

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Note: The numerical ratings and status listed above do not reflect conditions in Crimea, which is examined in a separate report. *Freedom in the World* country reports assess the level of political rights and civil liberties in a given geographical area, regardless of whether they are affected by the state, nonstate actors, or foreign powers. Disputed territories are sometimes assessed separately if they meet certain criteria, including boundaries that are sufficiently stable to allow year-on-year comparisons. For more information, see the report methodology and FAQ.

Overview: Ukraine continues to recover from the disorder that surrounded the ouster of Viktor Yanukovich from the presidency in 2014, as well as the related crisis sparked by Russia's occupation of Crimea and military support for separatists in the Donbas area of eastern Ukraine. The authorities' failure to prosecute extensive high-level corruption has undermined the popularity of the government and affected some reform efforts. In the sphere of civil liberties, political pressure and attacks on journalists have threatened freedom of the press.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- The government made progress in crafting and implementing a number of reforms during the year, including changes to the health care and education systems, as well as measures designed to empower local and regional administrations.
- Efforts to fight widespread corruption stalled, as the independent National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine (NABU) faced political interference, and the chair of a key parliamentary anticorruption committee was dismissed. New disclosure requirements were imposed on nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that focused on combating corruption. A much-anticipated anticorruption court had yet to be established at year's end.

- In May, new sanctions restricted Ukrainians' access to popular Russian social media platforms and news outlets.
- Intermittent fighting continued in Donbas. The United Nations reported in May that more than 10,000 people had been killed in the conflict since it erupted in mid-2014, more than a quarter of them civilians.

Executive Summary

The cabinet of Prime Minister Volodymyr Groysman, who was voted into office in a 2016 government shakeup, presided over a number of reforms in 2017. These included initiatives to increase the autonomy of regional and local administrations, overhaul the pension system, and improve the performance of hospitals and reduce corruption within them. Officials also made efforts to advance a stalled drive to streamline the operations of government ministries.

In September, President Petro Poroshenko signed a law aimed at aligning the country's education system with those found in the European Union (EU), but it drew criticism for provisions that by 2020 would mandate Ukrainian as the primary language of instruction in most publicly funded secondary schools. The weak majority coalition was unable to advance a number of other reform initiatives, which remained blocked in the parliament due in part to opposition from powerful business groups and other special interests.

Corruption is a serious problem, and there is little political will to combat it despite strong pressure from civil society. The NABU, tasked with investigating corrupt officials, faced pressure from high-level government figures as well as from law enforcement agencies, which late in the year arrested NABU officials and seized some of the bureau's files. While Poroshenko signed legislation in October to create a long-awaited anticorruption court, at year's end the body had yet to be established, and observers warned that its eventual operations could be hamstrung by other legislation. In December, the parliament's move to dismiss the chairman of an anticorruption committee prompted concern from the EU's ambassador to Ukraine, among others. Separately, Poroshenko signed a law in March that increased monitoring of NGOs focused on corruption by requiring their leaders, staff, and contractors to submit asset declarations.

While Ukraine's media environment has improved since the 2014 change in government, journalists face political interference as well as violence and harassment. Authorities continued to censor some Russian news sources and ban individual Russian journalists from entering the country in 2017. In May, sanctions targeting Russian media, which were initially issued in 2014 in response to propagandistic content designed to support the Russian occupation of Crimea, were applied to the popular Russian social networking sites Odnoklassniki and VK, the Russian state news agency RIA Novosti, and the search engine Yandex, among others.

At year's end, cease-fire deals had failed to bring about lasting peace in Donbas, where intermittent combat between Russian-backed separatist forces and the Ukrainian military continued. Several apparently conflict-related assassinations and assassination attempts occurred during the year. In a May report, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) found that at least 10,090 people, including over 2,700 civilians, had been killed, and nearly 24,000 injured, since the conflict's outbreak in April 2014. The fighting has also displaced over a million people, many of whom struggle to access public services elsewhere in Ukraine.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 26 / 40 (+1)**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 9 / 12****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4**

The president is elected to a maximum of two five-year terms. After Yanukovich fled the country in February 2014, a snap presidential election was held that May. Poroshenko won 54.7 percent of the overall vote and majorities in regions across the country. International observers deemed the vote competitive and credible, although polling could not take place in Crimea and separatist-held parts of Donbas.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

Early parliamentary elections held in October 2014 were generally deemed competitive and credible, but voting was again impossible in Crimea and separatist-held parts of Donbas. Consequently, the elections filled only 423 of the parliament's 450 seats. Petro Poroshenko's Bloc won 133 seats, former prime minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk's People's Front took 81, Self-Reliance 33, the Opposition Bloc 29, the Radical Party 22, and Fatherland 19. Several smaller parties and 96 independents divided the remainder.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 2 / 4

The current mixed electoral system for the parliament, in which half of the members are chosen by closed-list proportional representation and half in single-member districts, has been criticized as prone to manipulation and vote-buying. In November 2017, a measure providing for open-list proportional representation was approved on first reading in the parliament. Meanwhile, the mandates of 13 of the 15 members of the Central Election Commission had expired by late 2017.

Election monitors have expressed concern about courts' varying interpretations of electoral laws when faced with complaints regarding candidate registration and other topics, as well as about long delays in the adjudication of election-related cases.

Separately, the 2015 Law on Local Elections was adopted just weeks before that year's vote, in a process that election observers criticized as rushed.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 11 / 16 (+1)**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 3 / 4**

With the exception of a 2015 ban on the Communist Party, there are no formal barriers to the creation and operation of political parties. A number of new political parties have appeared in recent years. A law that came into force in 2016 provides parliamentary parties with state funding, but the provision effectively favors established parties over newcomers.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 3 / 4

Opposition groups are represented in the parliament, and their political activities are generally not impeded by administrative restrictions or legal harassment. Newer grassroots parties have difficulty competing with more established parties that enjoy the support and financial backing of politically connected business magnates, widely known as oligarchs.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 2 / 4 (+1)

Russia has been able to exert influence over the course of Ukrainian political life through its occupation of Crimea, involvement in the fighting in the east, imposition of economic sanctions on the rest of the country, and manipulation of the price Ukraine pays for natural gas. However, the Russian government's past ability to exert direct influence on Ukrainian politics was in part facilitated by links between it and Yanukovich and his Party of Regions. Since Yanukovich's ouster, Russian influence within Ukrainian politics has declined—though Moscow retains influence in some eastern and southern regions where the Opposition Bloc, a successor to the Party of Regions, performed well in the 2015 municipal elections. People living in occupied parts of Donbas are heavily exposed to Russian propaganda and other forms of control.

Ukraine's oligarchs exert significant influence over politics through their financial support for various political parties.

Score Change: The score improved from 1 to 2 due to a decrease in Russian influence over people's political choices in recent years.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

Members of minority groups are able to participate freely in political affairs in Ukraine. However, their voting and representation has been hindered by factors including the conflict in the east, illiteracy and lack of identity documents for many Roma, and rules against running as an independent for many local, district, and regional offices. The Law on Local Elections mandates a 30 percent quota for women on party lists, but it is not effectively enforced.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 6 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 3 / 4**

In recent years, elected lawmakers have demonstrated a capacity to craft and implement various reforms, though the process is ongoing and many initiatives stall due to opposition from powerful business groups and other special interests. Aside from the Donbas conflict, the main obstacle to effective governance in Ukraine is corruption.

Successful reform initiatives in 2017 included measures to increase the autonomy of regional and local administrations, overhaul the pension system, and improve the performance and anticorruption mechanisms of hospitals. Officials also made efforts to advance a stalled drive to streamline the operations of government ministries.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

Corruption remains a serious problem, and there is little political will to combat it despite strong pressure from civil society. The NABU, tasked with investigating corrupt officials, opened a criminal case against Ukraine's National Agency on Corruption Prevention (NAZK) in November 2017, prompted by a whistle-blower's allegations that NAZK officials had received large amounts of money they may have gained through an extortion scheme; the whistle-blower, who had headed the NAZK's financial control department, also claimed that she had been summoned to Poroshenko's office and informed that the agency's decision-making process was subject to presidential approval, a claim his administration denied. Meanwhile, the NABU continued to face pressure from high-level government

figures as well as from law enforcement agencies, which late in 2017 arrested NABU officials and seized some of the bureau's files in connection with its investigation of alleged wrongdoing within the country's migration service.

While Poroshenko signed legislation in October to create a long-awaited anticorruption court, at year's end the body had yet to be established, and observers warned that its eventual operations could be hamstrung by pending legislation. In December, the parliament's move to dismiss lawmaker Yehor Sobolyev as chairman of an anticorruption committee prompted expressions of concern from the EU's ambassador to Ukraine, among others. Corruption in the judiciary also remains a problem.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

Ukraine has made some progress in advancing transparency, for example by requiring that banks publish the identity of their owners, and by passing a 2016 law obliging politicians and bureaucrats to file electronic declarations of their assets. However, it is possible to bypass some regulations, in part because underdeveloped institutions are not fully capable of identifying and sanctioning violators.

A robust freedom of information law approved in 2011 is not well enforced.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 36 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 11 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4

The constitution guarantees freedoms of speech and expression, and libel is not a criminal offense. The media landscape features considerable pluralism and open criticism of the government. However, business magnates with varying political interests own and influence many outlets, using them as tools to advance their agendas. Poroshenko owns the television network Fifth Channel and has rebuffed press freedom groups' demands that he honor his earlier promise to sell it.

In 2014, the Interior Ministry banned the broadcast of over a dozen Russian channels, arguing that the country's information space had to be protected from Moscow's "propaganda of war and violence." Authorities continued to censor some Russian news sources and ban individual Russian journalists from entering the country in 2017. In May, sanctions were applied to the popular Russian social networking sites Odnoklassniki and VK, the Russian state news agency RIA Novosti, and the search engine Yandex, among others.

Journalists continue to face the threat of violence and intimidation. The independent Institute of Mass Information registered 274 media freedom violations during 2017, roughly the same number of incidents as in 2016. The most common violations included impeding journalists' activities, intimidation, and assaults.

The media environment in occupied parts of eastern Ukraine is marked by severe violations of free expression, including censorship by the de facto authorities.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4

The constitution and a 1991 law define religious rights in Ukraine, and these are generally respected. However, the conflict has increased friction between rival branches of the Orthodox Church, and smaller religious groups continue to report some discrimination. In the occupied eastern regions, separatist forces have reportedly persecuted Protestant and other non-Russian Orthodox denominations, forcing them to flee or operate underground churches.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 3 / 4

A 2014 law dramatically reduced the government's control over education and allowed universities much greater freedom in designing their own programs. Universities also gained an expanded ability to manage their own finances, and faculty members were permitted to devote more of their time to research activities.

A law adopted in 2017 was designed to align the country's education system with those found in the EU, but it drew criticism for provisions that mandate the use of Ukrainian as the primary language of instruction in most publicly funded secondary schools by 2020, affecting numerous schools that currently teach in minority languages.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4

Ukrainians generally enjoy open and free private discussion, although the polarizing effects of the conflict have weighed on political expression, and intimidation prevails in the separatist-held areas.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 9 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 3 / 4

The constitution guarantees the right to peaceful assembly but requires organizers to give the authorities advance notice of any demonstrations. While officials generally foster an open environment for public gatherings in practice, Ukraine lacks a law governing the conduct of demonstrations and specifically providing for freedom of assembly. Moreover, threats and violence by nonstate actors sometimes prevent certain groups from holding events, particularly those advocating equal rights for LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people.

A number of large antigovernment protests took place in Kyiv in 2017, many of which were led by former Georgian president Mikheil Saakashvili, a former Poroshenko ally and the ex-governor of Odesa, who has since accused the Ukrainian president of personally benefiting from corrupt activities and turning a blind eye to corruption within his own administration. While scuffles between protesters and police were frequently reported, none escalated into serious violence.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 3 / 4

Civil society has flourished since 2014, as civic groups with a variety of social, political, cultural, and economic agendas have emerged or become reinvigorated. Many groups are able to influence decision-making at various levels of government. However, in March 2017, Poroshenko signed a law that increased monitoring of NGOs focused on corruption by requiring their leaders, staff, and contractors to submit asset declarations.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

Trade unions function in the country, but strikes and worker protests are infrequent, as the largest trade union, stemming from the Soviet-era labor federation, lacks independence from the government and employers in practice. Factory owners are still able to pressure their workers to vote according to the owners' preferences. Some trade unions have limited or no access to oligarch-owned industrial enterprises in eastern Ukraine.

F. RULE OF LAW: 6 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4**

Ukraine has long suffered from corrupt and politicized courts, and recent reform initiatives aimed at addressing the issue have stalled or fallen short of expectations. In 2016, a competitive selection process for new Supreme Court judges was initiated. However, in 2017 the process came under heavy criticism from civil society and other observers. In particular, NGOs accused the High Qualification Commission of Judges of having failed to select Supreme Court candidates fairly and through transparent processes, neglecting to consider the opinion of the Public Integrity Council during the selection process, and ultimately recommending a number of incumbent or retired judges who were considered to be flawed candidates. Poroshenko formally appointed the 113 new Supreme Court judges in November 2017.

Meanwhile, Poroshenko signed legislation in October 2017 to create a key anticorruption court that would hear cases investigated by NABU. But at year's end the body had yet to be established, and observers warned that its eventual operations could be hamstrung if legislation Poroshenko submitted in December were adopted. Contrary to the recommendations of the Council of Europe, Poroshenko's bill would significantly reduce the role of Ukraine's international donors in the judicial selection process for the new anticorruption court. The bill would also expand the court's jurisdiction, creating the potential for backlogs.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 2 / 4

Although due process guarantees exist, in practice individuals with financial resources and political influence can escape prosecution for wrongdoing.

The Ukrainian government made little progress in meeting domestic and international demands to investigate and prosecute crimes committed during the last months of the Yanukovych administration in late 2013 and early 2014, which included the shooting of protesters.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 1 / 4

At the end of 2017, cease-fire deals had failed to bring lasting peace to Donbas, where intermittent combat between Russian-backed separatist forces and the Ukrainian military continued and frequently endangered civilians. In a May report, the OHCHR found that at least 10,090 people, including over 2,700 civilians, had been killed, and nearly 24,000 injured, since the conflict's outbreak in April 2014.

Several assassinations and assassination attempts occurred during the year. Denis Voronkov, a former Russian lawmaker, was shot dead in Kyiv in March. In October, Amina Okuyeva, the wife of a man accused by Russian authorities of involvement in an assassination plot targeting Russian president Vladimir Putin, was shot to death in Kyiv; her husband, Adam Osmayev, escaped with injuries. A number of car bombings have taken place in Ukraine since 2016, some of which appeared to target politicians. In October 2017, Ihor Mosiychuk of the far-right Radical Party was injured in such an attack as he left a television studio following an interview.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

Although the national government has generally protected the legal rights of minority groups, the Romany population continues to suffer from discrimination, and LGBT people

face bias and hostility. The law bans gender discrimination, but rights groups have reported that employers openly discriminate on the basis of gender, physical appearance, and age.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 10 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4

While freedom of movement is generally not restricted in areas under government control, the ongoing conflict with Russian-backed separatists in the east has displaced many residents from their homes and hampered freedom of movement in those regions.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

The government has taken steps to scale back regulation of private businesses in recent years. However, the business environment is negatively affected by widespread corruption. In addition, planned land reforms have stalled. In December 2017, the parliament voted to extend a measure banning the sale of agricultural land, citing the potential for land grabs by powerful figures.

In separatist-controlled areas, the de facto authorities have reportedly “nationalized” many enterprises and exert heavy control over business activities.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

The government generally does not restrict social freedoms, though same-sex marriages are not recognized in Ukraine. Separately, about 1.85 million Ukrainian women suffer domestic violence annually, according to the UN Population Fund, and police responses to the few who report such abuse are inadequate.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

The trafficking of women domestically and abroad for the purpose of prostitution remains a problem. Internally displaced persons are especially vulnerable to exploitation for sex trafficking and forced labor. Reports indicate that separatist commanders in the east have recruited children as soldiers and informants.

United Arab Emirates

Population: 9,300,000

Capital: Abu Dhabi

Political Rights Rating: 7 ↓

Civil Liberties Rating: 6

Freedom Rating: 6.5

Freedom Status: Not Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Ratings Change: Due to a methodological change affecting certain monarchies, the United Arab Emirates’ political rights rating declined from 6 to 7; for more information see the report methodology page.

Overview: The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a federation of seven emirates led in practice by Abu Dhabi, the largest by area and richest in natural resources. Limited elections are held for a federal advisory body, but political parties are banned, and all executive, legislative, and judicial authority ultimately rests with the seven hereditary rulers. The civil liberties of both citizens and noncitizens, who make up an overwhelming majority of the population, are subject to significant restrictions.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- The UAE cut diplomatic relations with neighboring Qatar in June and—together with Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Egypt—imposed transportation and trade sanctions on Doha, which it accused of supporting terrorist groups and generally pursuing a foreign policy that undermined those of its Arab partners.
- Also in June, the UAE’s attorney general issued a statement warning that residents who expressed sympathy for Qatar could face large fines and up to 15 years in prison.
- Arrests and convictions of human rights defenders and opposition activists continued during the year, and foreign scholars and students who were critical of UAE policy were denied entry to the country.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 5 / 40 (-2)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 1 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

The Federal Supreme Council, comprising the dynastic rulers of the seven emirates, is the country’s highest executive body. It selects a president and vice president from among its members, and the president appoints a prime minister and cabinet. The emirate of Abu Dhabi has controlled the federation’s presidency since its inception in 1971; the current president, Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed bin Sultan al-Nahyan, succeeded his father in 2004. In 2006, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktoum succeeded his late brother as ruler of the emirate of Dubai and as vice president and prime minister of the UAE.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4

The unelected Federal Supreme Council is also the country’s highest legislative authority, but it is advised by the 40-seat Federal National Council (FNC), which can review proposed laws and question government ministers.

Since 2006, half of the FNC’s members have been elected by an electoral college chosen by the rulers of each emirate, while the government directly appoints the other half. The size of the electoral college has expanded over time; in 2015, it grew to more than 224,000 members, some 34 times larger than in 2006, though this still represented less than half of the voting-age citizen population. Voter turnout in the 2015 elections remained low, at 35 percent of those eligible.

There are no elected legislative bodies in the individual emirates.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 0 / 4

The UAE’s electoral framework applies only to the advisory FNC, and it lacks universal suffrage. While the electoral college has expanded and overseas voting was permitted for the first time in 2015, there is no accountability for the procedures by which the rulers of each

emirate draw up the lists of eligible voters. The geographical allocation of FNC seats results in significant overrepresentation for the smaller emirates.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 2 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 0 / 4

Political parties are banned, and all electoral candidates run as independents.

Since 2011, the UAE has aggressively cracked down on opposition activists, particularly if they are suspected of belonging to the Association for Reform and Guidance (Al-Islah), a group formed in 1974 to advocate for democratic reform. The government has accused members of Al-Islah of being foreign agents of the Muslim Brotherhood intent on overthrowing the regime, and designated the Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist organization in 2014. Qatar's support for the Muslim Brotherhood was a factor in the UAE's efforts to isolate that country in 2017. Dozens of activists, civil society leaders, academics, and students remain imprisoned during the year as part of the broader crackdown, including those convicted in a 2013 mass trial of 94 dissidents.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 0 / 4

The political system grants the emirates' hereditary rulers a monopoly on power and excludes the possibility of a change in government through elections.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 1 / 4

Political choices in practice are severely limited, and the alignment of both voters and candidates are heavily influenced by tribal networks.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 1 / 4

More than 85 percent of the population of the UAE consists of noncitizens who lack political rights and electoral opportunities, including tens of thousands of stateless residents. There is no clear process for obtaining citizenship without Emirati parentage or marriage to an Emirati man; children of Emirati mothers and foreign fathers must apply for naturalization.

Women make up about 48 percent of the FNC electoral college, and 78 women ran as candidates in the 2015 elections. Only one woman was elected, and another eight were appointed by the government; one of them was named as speaker and president of the body, marking the first time that the position has been held by a woman. In practice, ordinary women have little opportunity to organize independently and advance their interests through the political system.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 2 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 0 / 4

Government policies are determined by the dynastic rulers of the seven emirates. The FNC exercises only advisory powers and has struggled to arrange hearings with government

ministers. In practice, policymaking authority has coalesced around the crown prince of Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed al-Nahyan, as his father, the UAE president, has mostly withdrawn from public life since suffering a stroke in 2014.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

The UAE is considered one of the least corrupt countries in the Middle East, and the government has taken steps to increase efficiency and streamline bureaucracy. Nevertheless, there are no genuinely independent anticorruption mechanisms, and senior members of the ruling families are able to shield themselves and their associates from public scrutiny.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 0 / 4

The government generally lacks transparency, and despite legal provisions, accessing public information remains difficult in practice. The State Audit Institution does not release public information about its reports, and its remit is limited to federal entities and state-owned companies, whereas most spending takes place in the individual emirates; the institution can conduct audits of an emirate's entities if asked by its ruler.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 12 / 60 (-1)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 3 / 16 (-1)

D1. Are there free and independent media? 0 / 4 (-1)

The 1980 Publications and Publishing Law, considered one of the most restrictive press laws in the Arab world, regulates all aspects of the media and prohibits criticism of the government. Journalists commonly practice self-censorship, and outlets frequently publish government statements without criticism or comment. Media operate with more freedom in certain “free zones”—areas in which foreign media outlets can produce news content intended for foreign audiences—but the zones remain subject to UAE media laws and have additional regulatory codes and authorities.

Emirati-owned and UAE-based media outlets participated actively in a government-backed media campaign against Qatar that began in May 2017. In June, the attorney general issued a statement warning that anyone who showed sympathy or favoritism toward Qatar in any medium could be punished with three to 15 years in prison and a fine of at least 500,000 dirhams (\$136,000) under the penal code and a highly restrictive 2012 cybercrime law. In July, the Dubai-based website and magazine *Arabian Business* was suspended for a month for publishing an allegedly inaccurate article about failed Dubai real-estate projects that was promoted by Qatari media.

A number of well-known commentators have been jailed in recent years for criticizing the authorities, expressing support for dissidents or human rights, or calling for political reform. In March 2017, leading human rights activist Ahmed Mansoor was arrested, prominent economist Nasser bin Ghaith was sentenced to 10 years in prison, and Jordanian journalist Tayseer al-Najjar was sentenced to three years in prison and a fine—all in connection with their social media posts.

Score Change: The score declined from 1 to 0 due to further arrests and prosecutions of critical journalists and commentators as well as the attorney general's threat of severe penalties for expressions of support for Qatar in any medium.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 1 / 4

Islam is the official religion, and the majority of citizens are Sunni Muslims. The General Authority of Islamic Affairs and Endowments provides regular guidance to Muslim preachers; it and a Dubai counterpart appoint the country's Sunni imams. Shiite clergy have their own council to manage religious affairs. There have been multiple reports of noncitizen Shiite Muslims facing discrimination or deportation in recent years. Christian, Hindu, and Sikh places of worship have been built on plots of land donated by ruling family members. Blasphemy is a criminal offense, as is proselytizing to Muslims by non-Muslim groups.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 1 / 4

The Ministry of Education censors textbooks and curriculums in both public and private schools. Islamic education is required in public schools and for Muslims in private schools. Several foreign universities have opened satellite campuses in the UAE, although faculty members are generally careful to avoid criticizing the government. At least 10 faculty members from New York University (NYU) have been denied entry to teach or conduct research at NYU's Abu Dhabi campus, including two professors whose visas were denied on security grounds in 2017. Students, staff, and support personnel have also been denied entry. The UAE authorities have placed scholars and students who have criticized aspects of government policy on a unified Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) security blacklist, barring them from the wider region. In addition to the prison sentence against bin Ghaith in March 2017, UAE authorities detained prominent political science professor Abdulkhaleq Abdulla for 11 days in January, apparently due to his online commentary.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 1 / 4

A number of laws adopted in recent years give authorities broad discretion to punish individuals' speech on sensitive topics. The 2012 cybercrime law, which amended and replaced one passed in 2006, introduced lengthy prison terms for vaguely worded offenses such as damaging "the reputation or the stature of the state or any of its institutions." A 2014 counterterrorism law prescribes punishments including the death penalty for offenses like "undermining national security" and possession of material that opposes or denigrates Islam. A 2015 law against hate speech and discrimination contained loosely worded definitions and criminalized a wide range of free speech activities. These and other criminal laws have been actively enforced, including against ordinary social media users.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 2 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 1 / 4

The government places restrictions on freedom of assembly. Public meetings require government permits, and unauthorized political or labor protests are subject to dispersal by police.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 0 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations must register with the Ministry of Social Affairs and can receive subsidies from the government, though they are subject to many restrictions. International human rights groups have been denied entry to the UAE. Local human rights activists are at serious risk of detention, prosecution, and mistreatment in custody.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 1 / 4

Workers—most of whom are foreign—do not have the right to form unions, bargain collectively, or strike. They can seek collective redress for grievances through state mediation or the courts, and the government sometimes arranges concessions and settlements. Workers occasionally protest against unpaid wages and poor working and living conditions, but such demonstrations are typically dispersed by security personnel, and noncitizens who participate risk deportation. Professional associations require government licenses and are closely monitored by the authorities.

F. RULE OF LAW: 3 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 0 / 4**

The judiciary is not independent, with court rulings subject to review by the political leadership. Judges are appointed by executive decree, and the judiciary as an institution is managed largely by executive officials. Many judges are foreigners working on short-term contracts.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

Detainees are often denied adequate access to legal counsel during interrogations, and lengthy detention without charge is not uncommon. Judges are empowered to extend such detention indefinitely. The mass trial of 94 political dissidents in 2013 was widely criticized for systematic violations of international due process standards, though serious violations have also been observed in other cases.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 1 / 4

Authorities have been criticized by international human rights organizations for failure to investigate allegations of torture and mistreatment in custody. In 2016, the UN special rapporteur on torture found credible evidence that a group of Libyan nationals charged with—and later acquitted of—terrorism offenses had been tortured in UAE custody. Other detainees regularly report abuse by the authorities. Sharia (Islamic law) courts sometimes impose flogging sentences for offenses including drug use, prostitution, and extramarital sex.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

Discrimination against noncitizens and foreign workers is common, and they are at risk of deportation for relatively minor offenses. Women face legal and societal discrimination on a variety of issues, including employment. Same-sex sexual relations can draw harsh criminal penalties, and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people are subject to widespread social stigma.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 4 / 16**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 1 / 4**

Emiratis face no apparent restrictions on freedom of movement within the UAE or on their type or place of employment, although under the country's *kafala* system, a migrant worker's legal status is tied to an employer's sponsorship, meaning they can be punished or deported for leaving employment without meeting certain criteria. Stateless residents' freedom of movement is limited by their lack of travel documents, and societal norms sometimes restrict a woman's ability to travel without the consent of her husband or father. Qatari nationals were expelled from the UAE in 2017.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 1 / 4

The UAE has enacted reforms in recent years to ease procedures for establishing and operating businesses. However, the government and ruling families exercise considerable influence over the economy and are involved in many of the country's major economic and commercial initiatives.

Women generally receive smaller inheritances than men under Sharia, and women are excluded from state benefits aimed at supporting home ownership.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 1 / 4

Muslim women are forbidden to marry non-Muslims, while Muslim men may marry Christian or Jewish women. Women are generally at a distinct disadvantage under laws governing marriage and divorce. All sexual relations outside legal marriage are criminal offenses, which deters victims from reporting rape. No laws protect against spousal rape, and men are permitted to physically discipline their wives.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

Foreign workers are often exploited and subjected to harsh working conditions, physical abuse, and withholding of passports with little to no access to legal recourse. A series of ministerial decrees issued in 2015 aimed to give migrant workers more flexibility to terminate employment under certain conditions. Foreign household workers were not covered by those decrees or by labor laws in general, leaving them especially vulnerable. A law adopted in 2017 guaranteed such household workers basic protections and benefits including sick leave and daily rest periods, though they were inferior to those in the national labor law, and household workers would still be unable to leave their employers without a breach of contract.

A competitive rivalry between Abu Dhabi and Dubai for eye-catching development projects masks deeper sensitivities in relations between these two emirates and the five less affluent emirates in the north. Economic disparities also persist among UAE citizens across the seven emirates and between citizens and the noncitizen majority.

United Kingdom

Population: 65,600,000

Capital: London

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 1

Freedom Rating: 1.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: The United Kingdom (UK)—comprised of England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Wales—is a stable democracy that regularly holds free elections and is home to a vibrant media sector. While the government enforces robust protections for political rights and civil liberties, recent years have seen concerns about increased government surveillance of residents, as well as rising Islamophobia and anti-immigrant sentiment. In a 2016 referendum,

UK voters narrowly voted to leave the European Union (EU), through a process known colloquially as “Brexit,” which will have political and economic reverberations both domestically and across Europe in the coming years.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- A snap general election in June returned a hung parliament. Prime Minister Theresa May’s Conservative Party was weakened, but remained in power with the support of the Northern Irish Democratic Unionist Party (DUP).
- A number of terrorist attacks took place during the year, including a May bombing attack at a concert in Manchester in which 22 people were killed. The Islamic State (IS) militant group claimed responsibility for the Manchester attack, as well as a separate strike in March on Westminster Bridge in London, which killed four.
- Hate crimes against immigrants and Muslims continued to rise, with many observers linking the increase to tensions prompted by terrorist strikes, as well as inflammatory rhetoric regarding refugees and migrants that accompanied the 2016 Brexit vote, and has persisted in its aftermath.
- Newspapers continued to oppose a government initiative to implement Section 40 of the Crime and Courts Act, which if formally enacted could saddle publications that fail to join a government regulator with high legal costs in court cases.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 40 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

Executive power rests with the prime minister and cabinet, who must have the support of the House of Commons. The leader of the majority party or coalition usually becomes prime minister, and appoints the cabinet. May stayed on as prime minister following free and fair elections held in June 2017.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

While a general election was not due until 2020, Parliament in April 2017 voted to approve a call for snap elections by Prime Minister May, who sought to strengthen her position to negotiate the UK’s exit from the EU.

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) sent a limited mission to observe the elections, and in its final report offered relatively minor recommendations without questioning the integrity of the polls’ results. The Conservative Party won 42 percent of the vote, which amounted to a loss of 13 seats, and resulted in a hung parliament. The Labour Party did better than expected, gaining 30 seats, with 40 percent of the vote. The Scottish National Party (SNP) lost 21 seats but still represented the third largest party in Parliament. The Liberal Democrats gained 4 seats, taking their share to 12 seats, and the Northern Ireland-based DUP increased its share of seats from 8 to 10. The Conservatives and the DUP forged an alliance whereby the DUP agreed to support May’s minority government on key matters including Brexit and national security legislation.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

The UK’s electoral framework is robust and well-implemented, though the limited OSCE mission that observed the 2017 snap polls urged lawmakers to consider an annual

cap on how much a single individual could donate to a party or candidate, as well as reforms that could boost transparency surrounding campaign financing.

The Conservative government has moved towards requiring voters to produce identification in order to vote, with a trial pilot scheme planned for five local areas in the May 2018 local elections. (Voter identification requirements already exist for elections that take place in Northern Ireland.) The Electoral Commission backs voter identification measures to prevent electoral fraud through impersonation, though some advocacy groups as well as the Labour Party maintain that it will discourage political participation among marginalized groups.

Separately, at year's end, the Electoral Commission was investigating claims that Russia had meddled in the 2016 Brexit vote by enlisting people to spread misinformation and divisive messages on social media platforms. In November 2017, Prime Minister May publicly accused Russian President Vladimir Putin of "planting fake stories" to "sow discord in the West."

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 16 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4

Parties do not face undue restrictions on registration or operation. The Conservative Party and the Labour Party have dominated British politics for decades, though several other parties regularly win seats in Parliament.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

Opposition parties operate freely, and have a realistic opportunity to increase their support and gain power through elections. The SNP supplanted the Liberal Democrats as the third-largest party in Parliament in the 2015 elections, a position it maintained after the 2017 elections.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

People's political choices are free from domination by powerful groups that are not democratically accountable, including the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, and economic oligarchies.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 4 / 4

Under Britain's system of "devolution," the UK Parliament has granted different degrees of legislative power to the Northern Ireland Assembly, the Welsh Assembly, and the Scottish Parliament, augmenting the political representation of regional populations.

Women, LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people, and members of racial or ethnic minority groups have been able to gain a political voice through their participation in the mainstream political parties. However, in late 2017, numerous allegations surfaced of sexual harassment of women in Parliament by other lawmakers, at least two of which prompted formal investigations. In the wake of the revelations, a number of current and former political figures and political journalists made statements recognizing sexual harassment as a problem within the Parliament.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 12 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4**

Britain's freely elected officials are able to make and implement national policy without significant influence from actors who are not democratically accountable.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 4 / 4

Large-scale corruption is not pervasive in domestic political and governance structures, and anticorruption bodies are generally effective. However, the UK is increasingly coming under scrutiny for the ways in which its banking and financial sectors, property market, and offshore services in overseas territories enable money laundering and facilitate corruption globally.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 4 / 4

Members of Parliament are required to disclose assets and sources of income, and this information is made available to the public. The country's Freedom of Information Law is reasonably well-implemented, and journalists have been able to access information under its provisions about topics of interest to the public. However, there are growing calls to extend the law's reach to private companies contracted by government departments and agencies.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 54 / 60 (-1)**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 14 / 16****D1. Are there free and independent media? 4 / 4**

Press freedom is legally protected, and the media are lively and competitive, and espouse viewpoints spanning the political spectrum. The state-owned British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) is editorially independent and competitive with its counterparts in the commercial market.

In 2017, newspapers continued to oppose a government initiative to formally implement Section 40 of the Crime and Courts Act, which stipulates that, in media-related court cases, publishers who are not members of a recognized self-regulator can be ordered to pay their opponents' legal costs, even if they win. These provisions were proposed to incentivize publishers to join a recognized self-regulator, but have been denounced by journalists.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Freedom of religion is protected in law and practice. A 2006 law bans incitement to religious hatred, with a maximum penalty of seven years in prison. Nevertheless, minority groups, particularly Muslims, continue to report discrimination, harassment, and occasional assaults. In March 2017, the Metropolitan Police released statistics for the previous 12 months, which showed an 18 percent increase in the number of victims of religious hate crimes in London compared to the same period in 2015–16. Representatives from some UK-based NGOs suggested that the increase was linked with hostile rhetoric regarding refugees and migrants that accompanied the 2016 Brexit campaign. There have also been concerns about rising Islamophobia in the wake of terrorist attacks.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 3 / 4

Academic freedom is generally respected. However, the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act of 2015 requires schools and universities to prevent students from being drawn

into terrorism and to vet the remarks of visiting speakers as part of that effort. The program has raised concerns that open debate and academic inquiry is being stifled. A bill to repeal provisions in the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act that require teachers and those caring for children to report evidence of extremism among children in preschool or primary school settings was not considered as planned in May 2017, because Parliament was dissolved on May 3 ahead of the year's snap elections.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4

Concerns about the effects of mass surveillance on free and open private discussion persisted in 2017. The 2016 Investigatory Powers Act (IPA), known by critics as the “snoopers’ charter,” requires communications companies to store metadata on customers’ activity for 12 months and, in some cases, allows this information to be accessed by police and other security officials without a warrant. However, judicial commissioners must review ministerial authorization of warrants for the actual interception of communications.

The British civil liberties group Liberty was granted leave by the High Court in June 2017 to challenge parts of the IPA, and the case was ongoing at year’s end.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 12 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4

Freedom of assembly is generally respected.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Civic and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) generally operate freely. However, groups identified as terrorist organizations can be banned, and there are concerns that the relevant legal provisions are broad enough that they could allow the ban or prohibition of legitimate associations and activism. In recent years, disclosures of surveillance of NGOs have drawn criticism. In 2016, Human Rights Watch filed a challenge with the European Court on Human Rights (ECHR) to force the Investigatory Powers Tribunal (IPT), a judicial body, to state whether or not the group had been subject to surveillance by the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ), and if so, whether such surveillance was legal. The ECHR had not issued a decision on the case at the end of 2017.

A lobbying law adopted in 2014 concerning third-party campaigning was heavily criticized by NGOs for limiting the amount of money they can spend during election years. In September 2017, the government rejected recommendations by a government commission to reduce the law’s scope.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

Workers have the right to organize trade unions, which have traditionally played a central role in the Labour Party. The rights to bargain collectively and strike are also respected.

F. RULE OF LAW: 14 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 4 / 4

The judiciary is generally independent, and governmental authorities comply with judicial decisions. A new Supreme Court began functioning in 2009, improving the separation of powers by moving the highest court out of the House of Lords.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 4 / 4

While due process generally prevails in civil and criminal matters, rights groups and some figures within the judiciary have criticized severe cuts in legal aid under reforms that took effect in 2013, which left many vulnerable people without access to formal legal counsel. The cuts notably affected those with immigration-related cases, and parties to cases heard in family courts.

The 2015 Counter-Terrorism and Security Act has been criticized for giving excessive powers to police, including the authority to seize travel documents of individuals attempting to leave the country if they are suspected of planning to engage in terrorist-related activities abroad, and to forcibly relocate terrorism suspects within the country up to 200 miles away from their homes.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 3 / 4

There were a number of terrorist attacks in the UK in 2017. In March, four people died and dozens were injured when an attacker drove a vehicle through a crowd of people on Westminster Bridge in London; the Islamic State military group claimed responsibility for the attack. A similar vehicle attack took place on London Bridge in June, after which the assailants stabbed a number of people; the attack resulted in a total of eight fatalities. In yet another vehicular attack, one person was killed in June when an attacker drove a van into a group of Muslim worshippers performing prayers near a London mosque. In the year's deadliest attack, 22 people including a number of children were killed in a May bombing attack at a concert in Manchester; IS claimed responsibility for the strike. And in September, two dozen people were injured in a bombing in the London Underground train system.

While prisons generally adhere to international guidelines, the problems of overcrowding, violence, and drugs in prisons have increasingly been raised, most recently by the Chief Inspector of Prisons for England and Wales in his 2016–17 annual report.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

Anti-immigrant rhetoric surrounding the 2016 EU referendum campaign appeared to fuel a spike in harassment of and physical attacks against foreigners in the UK. In October 2017, the UK Home Office said there had been 80,000 recorded hate crimes in England and Wales between April 2016 and March 2017, a 29 percent increase over the same period in 2015–16; it also reported spikes in hate crimes after the 2016 EU referendum and the Westminster Bridge attack in March 2017.

Immigrants and their descendants receive equal treatment under the law but frequently face living standards below the national average. Immigration laws that took effect in 2016 require landlords to check the immigration status of their tenants, obliges banks to perform background checks before opening an account, and makes it a criminal offense for migrants to obtain jobs without appropriate paperwork. It also allows police to seize vehicles belonging to migrants in the country illegally, and allows authorities to electronically track those released on bail while awaiting deportation.

Asylum seekers and migrants can be detained indefinitely, and there have been persistent reports of poor conditions and abuse in immigration detention centers. The government has continued to hold children in immigration detention centers.

The authorities actively enforce a 2010 law barring discrimination on the basis of factors including sexual orientation and gender reassignment.

While women receive equal treatment under the law, in practice gender discrimination persists in the workplace and elsewhere in society.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 14 / 16 (-1)

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4

Citizens generally enjoy freedom of travel and choice of residence, employment, and institution of higher education.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 4 / 4

Individuals may freely exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4 (-1)

The government generally does not place explicit restrictions on personal social freedoms. However, in Northern Ireland, abortion is allowed only to protect the life or the long-term health of the mother, meaning most women seeking legal abortions must travel outside the region.

Same-sex marriage became legal in 2013 in England, Scotland, and Wales, but the Northern Ireland Assembly has blocked a similar change in Northern Ireland. The DUP, whose support allows Prime Minister May's minority government to survive, has consistently used its power to veto or obstruct legislation on marriage equality, even as polling has shown widespread support for same-sex marriage in Northern Ireland.

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 due to the persistence in Northern Ireland of restrictions on personal social freedoms that have been removed elsewhere in the country, including a ban on same-sex marriage.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

Economic activity is not excessively influenced by the government, though a 2016 report by a government commission expressed concern about the social and economic isolation of many members of ethnic and religious minorities, and of the poor. The 2015 Modern Slavery Act increased punishments for human traffickers and provides greater protections for victims. However, its implementation has been weak. Children and migrant workers are among those most vulnerable to forced labor and sex trafficking.

United States

Population: 323,900,000

Capital: Washington, DC

Political Rights Rating: 2 ↓

Civil Liberties Rating: 1

Freedom Rating: 1.5

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Ratings Change: The United States' political rights rating declined from 1 to 2 due to growing evidence of Russian interference in the 2016 elections, violations of basic ethical standards by the new administration, and a reduction in government transparency.

Overview: The United States is arguably the world's oldest existing democracy. Its people benefit from a vibrant political system, a strong rule-of-law tradition, robust freedoms of expression and religious belief, and a wide array of other civil liberties. However, in recent years its democratic institutions have suffered erosion, as reflected in partisan manipulation of the electoral process, bias and dysfunction in the criminal justice system, and growing disparities in wealth, economic opportunity, and political influence.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Newly elected president Donald Trump, who took office in January, defied ethical standards observed by his recent predecessors, for instance by retaining and promoting his private business empire while in office, naming his daughter and son-in-law as presidential advisers, and refusing to divulge his tax records.
- The president repeatedly made major policy decisions with little prior consultation or transparency even within the executive branch—including a January executive order restricting travel to the United States from a group of Muslim-majority countries and a July directive that sought to ban transgender people from serving in the military—prompting legal challenges, revisions, and reversals.
- Investigations into Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election gathered force under the leadership of a special counsel, former Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) director Robert Mueller. Mueller was appointed in May after Trump fired FBI director James Comey, who had been overseeing the probe.

Executive Summary

Donald Trump entered the presidency pledging a wholesale transformation of Washington's priorities and approach to government. His administration set forth new policies on immigration, law enforcement, foreign policy, and international trade. He also deviated from established norms of ethics and transparency, verbally attacked crucial democratic institutions such as the news media and the judiciary, and made inflammatory and often inaccurate statements on a wide range of issues.

The result was a series of angry controversies pitting Trump against the Democratic opposition, the mainstream press, ethics watchdogs, representatives of minority groups, and leaders of his own Republican Party. One of the most serious centered on investigations into Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election. Trump repeatedly denied any collusion between his campaign and Russian representatives, denouncing a Justice Department probe as a "witch hunt" or a "hoax," and at times appeared to deny that any Russian interference had taken place. In May, Trump fired James Comey, the director of the FBI and the lead official in the Russia investigation, raising concerns that he was attempting to quash the probe. However, Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein then appointed a former FBI chief, Robert Mueller, to oversee the case as a special counsel. Attorney General Jeff Sessions had recused himself from any decisions about the investigation due to his own role in the Trump presidential campaign. Mueller's investigation was ongoing at year's end.

Despite his 2016 victory, Trump also continued to question the legitimacy of the American electoral process, asserting that between three and five million votes had been cast illegally in the previous year's balloting. On the basis of these assertions, he established a Presidential Advisory Commission on Election Integrity to investigate the risk of fraud in the election system and recommend remedies. The commission was led by a Kansas official who had repeatedly promoted claims of large-scale voter fraud, which experts insist have no grounding in fact.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 33 / 40 (-3)**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 10 / 12 (-1)****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4 (-1)**

The United States is a presidential republic, with the president serving as both head of state and head of government. Cabinet secretaries and other key officials are nominated by the president and confirmed by the Senate, the upper house of the bicameral Congress. Presidential elections are decided by an Electoral College, with electors apportioned to each state based on the size of its congressional representation. In most cases, all of the electors in a particular state cast their ballots for the candidate who won the statewide popular vote, regardless of the margin. Two states, Maine and Nebraska, have chosen to divide their electoral votes between the candidates based on their popular-vote performance in each congressional district. The Electoral College makes it possible for a candidate to win the presidency while losing the national popular vote, an outcome that took place in the most recent presidential election. In 2016, Trump won the Electoral College vote, 304 to 227, while finishing nearly three million votes behind Democratic Party nominee Hillary Clinton in the popular ballot.

Unlike previous presidential elections, the 2016 contest featured a significant amount of interference from a foreign power. The U.S. intelligence community concluded in October of that year that the Russian government was responsible for stealing and leaking internal documents from the Clinton campaign and the Democratic Party. In early January 2017, top U.S. intelligence agencies issued a more comprehensive assessment, finding that the Russian leadership had carried out a broad campaign to undermine public faith in the democratic process, denigrate Clinton, and aid Trump's election chances. It included hacking of multiple targets, such as both major political parties and some electoral boards, as well as propaganda disseminated by Russian state media. Revelations later in 2017 centered on Russian agents' alleged exploitation of leading social media platforms to spread divisive and misleading messages among U.S. voters. Facebook alone reported in October that tens of thousands of such Russian-linked posts may have reached 126 million Americans during the election cycle.

While there was no clear evidence that these tactics altered the outcome of the presidential election, they did alter the campaign environment and the content of the political debate, and harmed public confidence in the integrity of the election process.

Throughout 2017, the Justice Department investigated the possibility that the Trump campaign had colluded or coordinated with the Russian government's efforts. The probe was overseen by FBI director James Comey until May, when Trump fired him. It was then taken up by Mueller, the special counsel appointed by Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein.

As Mueller's investigation—and parallel investigations by congressional committees—continued, the White House denied that any collusion took place and sometimes cast doubt on whether the Russian government had interfered in the election at all. The new administration took no major steps during 2017 to prevent such interference in future elections.

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 due to growing evidence of Russian interference in the 2016 election campaign and a lack of action by the Trump administration to prevent a reoccurrence of such meddling.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The Senate consists of 100 members—two from each of the 50 states regardless of population—serving six-year terms, with one-third coming up for election every two years. The lower chamber, the House of Representatives, consists of 435 members serving two-year terms. All national legislators are elected directly by voters in the districts or states that they represent.

The capital district, Puerto Rico, and four overseas U.S. territories are each represented by an elected delegate in the House who can perform most legislative functions but cannot participate in floor votes.

Congressional elections are generally free and competitive, though partisan gerrymandering of House districts is a growing concern. In the 2016 elections, the Republican Party retained control of the Senate with 52 seats. Democrats hold 46 seats, and there are two independent senators who generally vote with the Democrats. Republicans also retained their majority in the House, taking 241 seats, versus 194 for the Democrats. At the state level, Republicans maintained control over the majority of legislatures and governors' posts. Turnout for the 2016 general elections was approximately 56 percent of voting-age citizens, roughly in line with past elections. While Russian interference may have had an indirect effect on congressional campaigns, its impact was most apparent in the presidential contest.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4

Critics have argued that the Electoral College system for presidential elections is undemocratic, as it violates the principle that each citizen's vote should carry equal weight. Similar complaints have been made regarding the Senate, which grants each state two seats regardless of population. Defenders of these systems argue that they are fundamental to the United States' federal structure, in which the states enjoy a substantial degree of autonomy, and that they ensure due political attention to all parts of the country's territory.

While state borders are permanent, the borders of House districts are redrawn regularly—typically after each decennial census. In a practice known as gerrymandering, House districts, and those for state legislatures, are often crafted to maximize the advantage of the party in power in a given state. The redistricting system varies by state, but in most cases it is overseen by elected officials, and observers have expressed alarm at the growing strategic and technical sophistication of partisan efforts to capture state legislatures, control redistricting processes, and apply the latest data analysis to redraw maps.

In May 2017, President Trump issued an executive order creating a Presidential Advisory Commission on Election Integrity, with a mission to study and report on the registration and voting processes used in federal elections—particularly those that could lead to improper or fraudulent voting. The commission, which was not tasked with examining issues such as foreign interference or gerrymandering, was widely seen as an effort to follow up on Trump's unsubstantiated assertion that between three and five million votes were cast illegally in the 2016 elections, costing him the popular vote. The commission, chaired by the vice president, included several prominent advocates of greater voting restrictions; its Republican vice chair and de facto leader, Kansas secretary of state Kris Kobach, has repeatedly asserted that voter fraud is a major problem in the United States. That claim is disputed by academic research and bipartisan state-level reports finding that fraud is extremely rare. Democratic members of the commission criticized its leadership for operating in secrecy and denying them basic information about its activities, in apparent violation of federal law.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 14 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4**

The intensely competitive U.S. political environment is dominated by two major parties, the right-leaning Republicans and the left-leaning Democrats. The country's "first past the post" or majoritarian electoral system discourages the emergence of additional parties, as do a number of specific legal and other hurdles. However, the two parties' primary elections allow for an array of views and candidates to enter the political system. In the 2016 primaries, Trump, himself an unorthodox Republican with no experience in government, defeated not only mainstream politicians but also opponents whose positions ranged from libertarian to Christian conservative. Clinton won her party's nomination after a powerful challenge by Senator Bernard Sanders, a socialist who subsequently secured changes to the party platform.

A number of independent or third-party candidates have significantly influenced presidential races or won statewide office, and small parties—such as the Libertarian Party and the Green Party—have also modestly affected state and local politics in recent years.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

Despite the domination of political affairs by the two major parties, the United States has one of the world's most dynamic political systems. Power changes hands regularly at the federal level, and while certain states and localities are seen as partisan strongholds, even they are subject to stiff competition and power transfers over time. As of 2017, the Democrats held 15 state governorships, while Republicans held 34, and the balance in state legislatures was similar. The Republicans' slim majority in the U.S. Senate was set to shrink to a single seat in early 2018, after Democrat Doug Jones defeated Republican Roy Moore in a December 2017 special election to fill the seat vacated by Jeff Sessions of Alabama when he became attorney general. The seat was last held by a Democrat in 1997.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 3 / 4

The influence of traditional party leadership bodies has steadily declined in recent decades, while various interest groups have come to play a potent role in the nominating process for president and members of Congress. This is partly because the expense and length of political campaigns places a premium on candidates' ability to raise large amounts of funds from major donors, especially at the early stages of a race. While there have been a number of attempts to restrict the role of money in political campaigning, most have been thwarted or watered down as a result of political opposition, lobbying by interest groups, and court decisions that protect political donations as a form of free speech.

During the full two-year cycle ahead of the 2016 election, Clinton's presidential campaign raised more than \$600 million, compared with Trump's \$400 million, according to the Campaign Finance Institute. However, their fundraising efforts were more closely matched during the general election period. While Trump was able to raise more than half of his campaign contributions in the form of donations of \$200 or less, outperforming Clinton in that respect, major donors provide an enormous share of U.S. campaign contributions that has grown over time. Fewer than 25,000 individuals reportedly supplied some 40 percent of

all contributions in 2016, and a far smaller number of extremely wealthy and prolific donors are especially sought after by candidates, raising concerns about undue influence.

In an unusual move, President Trump filed the initial documents for a 2020 reelection bid on the day of his inauguration in January 2017, and proceeded to raise funds and hold campaign events throughout the year.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

A number of important laws are designed to ensure the political rights of racial and ethnic minorities. However, in 2013 the Supreme Court invalidated portions of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, a measure adopted to deal with racial discrimination in voting procedures. As a result, certain states that previously had to submit legal changes for preclearance by federal authorities were able to adopt election laws without prior review. A number of states, including some that were never subject to the preclearance rule, have enacted laws that require voters to present specific forms of identification, rolled back innovations like early voting that contributed to higher rates of minority participation, or altered polling locations in ways that could disproportionately harm minority voters. Some of these state laws have been struck down by federal courts, but 14 states had new restrictive voting laws in place for the 2016 elections—the first presidential vote since the 2013 Supreme Court ruling.

Religious groups and racial or ethnic minorities have been able to gain a political voice through participation in the two main parties. Leaders of both parties have traditionally made an effort to appeal to all segments of the population and address issues of concern to each, or at a minimum to avoid alienating any major demographic group. The 2016 elections stood out for the unusually divisive rhetoric of candidate Trump. As president, he continued to make statements that were widely considered offensive to Latinos, Muslims, and women, among others, adding to concerns that the interests of these segments of the population were not being protected by the new administration.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 9 / 12 (-2)

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 3 / 4

Despite Republican control of both the presidency and Congress, the legislative process continued to be hampered by political dysfunction during 2017. The legislature again failed to accomplish its core task—drafting and passing the government’s annual appropriations bills; instead it adopted a series of short-term, stopgap spending measures to avoid a looming shutdown of government operations. The Trump administration was also unusually slow in filling vacant positions across the higher levels of government departments and agencies, making it difficult for them to operate as intended by law. According to the Partnership for Public Service and the *Washington Post*, the administration had yet to submit nominations for more than 250 out of 624 key positions requiring Senate confirmation as of mid-December 2017. Only 214 of the nominees for those posts had been confirmed, with the rest awaiting consideration by the Senate. Trump’s four most recent predecessors had all completed far more appointments by this time in their presidencies.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4 (-1)

American society is generally intolerant toward official corruption, and the media are aggressive in reporting on such malfeasance. However, Supreme Court rulings in recent

years have narrowed the legal definition of political corruption to include only a clear exchange of bribes for government action, making prosecutions more difficult.

In 2017, the Trump administration presented a number of new challenges to existing norms of government ethics and probity. Anticorruption watchdogs criticized President Trump for shifting management of his real-estate development empire to his children rather than divesting ownership or establishing a stronger structural barrier between himself and his businesses. This lack of separation raised concerns that the president was using his office for personal enrichment, or that his official decisions were influenced by his private business interests; pending lawsuits focused on a constitutional rule that forbids officeholders from receiving compensation from foreign governments, which Trump was accused of doing through his businesses. The president, his staff, and special interest groups all frequently visited and held events at Trump-branded properties in the United States during the year, generating publicity and income. Trump's decision to appoint his daughter and son-in-law as presidential advisers prompted similar concerns about their own business interests, as well as accusations of nepotism.

The Trump administration also notably undercut conflict-of-interest restrictions for White House and executive branch appointees. Although the president issued an executive order that limited appointees' ability to shift to lobbying work after leaving government, the same order eased restrictions on lobbyists moving into government, and the administration initially resisted efforts to disclose waivers allowing appointees to skirt the rules that remained. In practice, many Trump nominees received such waivers. Journalistic and congressional investigations routinely found conflicts of interest among appointees, and key officials including the national security adviser and the health and human services secretary were forced to resign over ethical violations; others, such as Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross, faced ongoing scrutiny but remained in office.

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 due to violations of basic ethical standards by the new administration, including the president's failure to divest himself of his business empire, his hiring of family members as advisers, and his appointment of cabinet members and other senior officials despite apparent conflicts of interest.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 3 / 4 (-1)

The United States was the first country to adopt a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), and the law is actively used by journalists, civil society groups, researchers, and members of the public. While government agencies' performance in responding to FOIA requests has been problematic in recent years, a 2016 reform law was designed to ease disclosures.

A substantial number of auditing and investigative agencies function independently of political influence; such bodies are often spurred to action by the investigative work of journalists. However, the positions that remained vacant during the first year of the Trump administration included nearly a dozen inspector general posts, including at the Defense and Interior Departments.

In 2017, President Trump and administration officials frequently made statements that were either misleading or untrue, and typically failed to correct the record when such statements were challenged by the press and others. The administration was also criticized for operating with greater opacity than its immediate predecessors, for example by making policy and other decisions without meaningful input from relevant agencies and their career civil servants, removing information on certain issues—such as climate change—from government websites, and denying public access to logs of White House visitors. After losing a lawsuit, the administration disclosed partially redacted visitor information for five

agencies within the White House complex, but refused to release logs for the White House itself, which had been public since 2009. The president continued to refrain from releasing his personal tax records; aside from Trump, all but one major-party presidential nominee had released at least one year's tax return since 1976, with one nominee releasing a full 30 years' worth of returns.

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 due to a reduction in government transparency, including an unusual pattern of false statements by the administration, the president's failure to disclose basic information such as his personal tax data, policy and other decisions made without meaningful input from relevant agencies and officials, and the removal of information on issues of public interest from government websites for political or ideological reasons.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 53 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 16 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 4 / 4

The United States has a free, diverse, and constitutionally protected press. While the print sector has been in economic decline for a number of years, the media environment retains a high degree of pluralism. Internet access is widespread and unrestricted, and news websites now constitute a major source of political news, along with cable television networks and talk-radio programs. News coverage has also grown more polarized, with particular outlets and their star commentators providing a consistently right- or left-leaning perspective.

During the 2016 presidential campaign, Trump was frequently critical of the mainstream media, often using inflammatory language to accuse them of bias. As president, he maintained a drumbeat of attacks on individual journalists and established outlets, describing them as—among other things—the “enemy of the American people.” The administration took no concrete action to implement the president's more specific threats, such as reducing legal protections for the press or revoking broadcast licenses, though some observers speculated that there were political motivations behind the Justice Department's decision to block a merger involving the parent company of CNN, a news network that had drawn the president's ire. The department said it was concerned about reduced competition and harm to consumers.

Despite increased hostility from political figures as well as their supporters on social media, the mainstream media—the principal national television networks and major newspapers—have devoted considerable resources to coverage of national politics. Outlets like the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and CNN have conducted investigations into the business affairs of Trump and his associates, closely examined allegations of collusion between the Trump presidential campaign and the Russian government, and regularly assessed the accuracy of the administration's claims. In the context of this robust coverage and growing public concern about pressure on media freedom, digital subscriptions for leading newspapers have increased, and ratings for cable news networks have surged.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

The United States has a long tradition of religious freedom. The constitution protects the free exercise of religion while barring any official endorsement of a religious faith, and there are no direct government subsidies to houses of worship. The debate over the role of religion in public life is ongoing, however, and religious groups often mobilize to influence

political discussions on the diverse issues in which they take an interest. The Supreme Court regularly adjudicates difficult cases involving the relationship between church and state.

Hate crimes and assaults based on religion are generally prosecuted vigorously by law enforcement authorities. FBI statistics have shown sharp increases in hate crimes against Muslims in recent years, though crimes targeting Jews still accounted for the largest share of incidents related to religion.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

The academic sphere has long featured a high level of intellectual freedom. While it remains quite robust by global standards, this liberty has come under some pressure in recent years. University students at a number of campuses have obstructed guest speakers whose views they find objectionable by shouting them down or holding strident protests. In the most highly publicized cases, students and nonstudent activists have physically prevented presentations by controversial speakers, especially those known for their views on race, gender, immigration, and other sensitive issues. University faculty have also reported instances of harassment—including on social media—related to curriculum content, textbooks, or statements that some students strongly disagreed with. As a consequence, some professors have allegedly engaged in self-censorship.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

Americans generally enjoy open and free private discussion, including on the internet. Civil libertarians, many lawmakers, and other observers have pointed to the real and potential effects of National Security Agency (NSA) data collection and other forms of government monitoring on the rights of U.S. citizens. However, the USA Freedom Act of 2015 banned the bulk collection of citizens' telephone and internet records, and in 2016 the FBI abandoned a controversial attempt to force the technology firm Apple to break through its own security features—designed to protect user communications—as part of a terrorism investigation. A broader debate about possible restrictions on encryption technology remains unresolved. Ongoing concerns about state surveillance have been partly displaced by new attention on foreign hacking as well as user intimidation on social media.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 10 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 3 / 4

In general, officials respect the right to public assembly. Demonstrations against government policies are frequently held in Washington, New York, and other major cities. In response to acts of violence committed in the course of some past demonstrations, local authorities often place restrictions on the location or duration of large protests directed at meetings of international institutions, political party conventions, or targets in the financial sector. In 2017, some local police departments continued to face allegations of excessive force against demonstrators protesting fatal police shootings of black suspects, particularly in and around St. Louis, Missouri, where a federal judge issued an injunction restraining police crowd-control tactics in November. Separately, authorities in Washington, DC, were criticized for bringing harsh criminal charges against dozens of people who were arrested during January protests against Trump's inauguration; prosecutors argued that many defendants were culpable for rioting and vandalism committed by a larger group even if there was no evidence of their individual participation in those acts.

In the year's most dramatic incident, an August rally of white supremacists in Charlottesville, Virginia, resulted in violent clashes with counterprotesters. One woman was killed when a participant in the white supremacist rally drove his car into a group of counterprotesters. An investigation found that local police were ill-prepared for the event and failed to prevent confrontations between the two groups. President Trump sparked further controversy when he argued that "both sides" bore responsibility for the violence and sympathized with the white supremacist groups' pretext for holding the rally: preventing the removal of statues depicting commanders who fought for the proslavery Confederacy during the Civil War.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

U.S. laws and practices give wide freedom to nongovernmental organizations and activists to pursue their civic or policy agendas. Organizations committed to the protection of civil liberties, immigrants' rights, equality for women and minority groups, and freedom of speech have become more active since Trump's election; they frequently mounted campaigns and filed lawsuits during 2017 to block actions by the administration that they considered harmful.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

Federal law guarantees trade unions the right to organize and engage in collective bargaining. The right to strike is also guaranteed. Over the years, however, the strength of organized labor has declined, and just 6.5 percent of the private-sector workforce were represented by unions in 2017. While public-sector unions have higher rates of membership, with 34.4 percent, they have come under pressure from officials concerned about the cost of compensation and pensions to states and municipalities. The overall unionization rate in the United States is 10.7 percent. The country's labor code and decisions by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) during Republican presidencies have been regarded as impediments to organizing efforts. Although the board was sympathetic to unionization during Barack Obama's presidency, its membership is now dominated by Republican appointees who have begun to reverse Obama-era rulings. Union organizing is also hampered by strong resistance from private employers. In 2017, Kentucky and Missouri became the 27th and 28th states to adopt "right-to-work" legislation, which weakens unions by allowing workers who benefit from union bargaining efforts to opt out of paying union dues or fees.

F. RULE OF LAW: 12 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 3 / 4

The American judiciary is largely independent, though politicization is a growing concern for a variety of reasons. The courts regularly demonstrated their autonomy during 2017, for instance by repeatedly blocking or limiting executive orders issued by the Trump administration. However, Trump in some cases responded by verbally attacking the judges responsible in strikingly personal terms. The president also issued a pardon for Joe Arpaio, a well-known former Arizona sheriff who had been convicted of contempt of court for defying a judge's order to cease racially discriminatory enforcement tactics affecting the Latino population.

The pace and quality of judicial appointments under Trump also raised questions about politicization. Republican leaders in the Senate had stalled many federal judicial nominations in the final years of the Obama administration, resulting in an unusually large number of vacancies at the beginning of 2017. The most prominent was a seat on the Supreme Court

that the Senate had held open during 2016 by refusing to hold hearings on Obama's nominee. In April, the Senate confirmed Trump's nominee for the position, Neil Gorsuch, but only after the Republican leadership changed Senate rules that had required a supermajority to end debate on Supreme Court nominations, allowing the confirmation to proceed with a simple-majority vote. By year's end, Trump had filled 12 vacancies on federal appellate courts as well, a record for the modern era that far exceeded the three and six appellate judges appointed by Obama and former president George W. Bush in their first years, respectively. A series of nominees for federal district judgeships withdrew in December after senators, civil society groups, and the media pointed to their lack of qualifications or extreme views, suggesting that the administration's vetting process was rushed or inadequate.

In many states, judges are chosen through either partisan or nonpartisan elections, and a rise in campaign fundraising for such elections over the last two decades has increased the threat of bias and favoritism in state courts.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 3 / 4

While the United States has a strong rule-of-law tradition, the criminal justice system's treatment of minority groups has long been a problem. Black and Latino inmates account for a disproportionately large percentage of the prison population. Civil liberties organizations and other groups have also argued more broadly that there are too many Americans in prison, that prison sentences are often excessive, that too many prisoners are relegated to solitary confinement or other maximum-security arrangements, and that too many people are incarcerated for minor drug offenses. Although the U.S. incarceration rate has declined somewhat in recent years, it remains easily one of the highest in the world.

A left-right political coalition calling for reforms to address mass incarceration emerged in recent years, but it has apparently fallen apart under the Trump presidency. In May 2017, Attorney General Sessions issued a directive ordering federal prosecutors to seek the most serious charges and lengthiest sentences available, including mandatory-minimum prison terms, in drug and other cases. This reversed an Obama administration policy that discouraged prosecutors from charging certain categories of defendants, including nonviolent drug offenders, with crimes that could lead to excessively long prison sentences.

Many critics of the incarceration problem point to abuses and deficiencies at other stages of the legal process. Media reports and analyses in recent years have drawn new attention to the extensive use of plea bargaining in criminal cases, with prosecutors employing the threat of harsh sentences to avoid trial and effectively reducing the role of the judiciary; deficiencies in the parole system; long-standing funding shortages for public defenders, who represent low-income criminal defendants; and the practice of imposing court fees or fines for minor offenses as a means of raising local budget revenues, which can lead to jail terms for those who are unable to pay. In December 2017, Sessions retracted a 2016 Justice Department document that had set constitutional guidelines to help state and local authorities reform abusive practices regarding fees and fines.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 3 / 4

Mass shootings and Islamist terrorist attacks remained a concern during 2017, as did high murder rates in certain cities. However, the overall U.S. homicide rate, 5.4 per 100,000 inhabitants as of 2016, is relatively low by regional and historical standards, and crime rates appeared to be falling in most large cities in 2017, in keeping with a long-term trend of declines since the 1990s. The year's deadliest shooting incident occurred in October, when a 64-year-old habitual gambler opened fire on a crowd in Las Vegas, Nevada, killing

58 people; his motive was unknown. In November, 24 people were killed while attending church in a small Texas community by a man with a history of violence and mental illness. In the most lethal attack linked to Islamist terrorism during 2017, an immigrant from Uzbekistan killed eight people with a rental truck in New York City in October, having declared allegiance to the Islamic State militant group in a note.

The increased policy focus on the criminal justice system in recent years has coincided with a series of widely publicized incidents in which police actions led to the deaths of suspects, many of whom belonged to racial and ethnic minorities. Most high-profile cases involved black civilians, though Native Americans are reportedly killed by police at a higher rate than any other group. A number of these confrontations have been captured on video, appearing to show unjustified use of force by the officers in question. When officers involved in fatal shootings have been brought to trial, however, the cases have typically ended in acquittals—a pattern that continued in 2017. Under President Obama, the Justice Department imposed changes in policing practices on a number of municipalities, but the Trump administration reversed this policy, with Sessions ordering a review of all such interventions on the grounds that they could harm police morale and safety and detract from crime-fighting responsibilities. Among other ongoing criminal justice concerns, the incidence of violence and rape in U.S. prisons and jails remains a serious problem.

Use of the death penalty has declined significantly in recent years. There were 23 executions, in eight states, in 2017—up from 20 in 2016 but down from a peak of 98 in 1999. The death penalty has been formally abolished by 19 states; in another 16 states where it remains on the books, executions have not been carried out for the past five years or more. The most recent federal execution was in 2003. Of particular importance in this trend have been the exoneration of some death-row inmates based on new DNA testing, states' inability to obtain chemicals used in lethal injections due to objections from producers, and legal challenges to the constitutionality of the prevailing methods of lethal injection. The Supreme Court has effectively ruled out the death penalty for crimes other than murder and in cases where the perpetrator is a juvenile or mentally disabled, among other restrictions.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

The United States is one of the world's most racially and ethnically diverse societies. In recent years, residents and citizens of Latin American ancestry have replaced black Americans as the largest minority group, and the majority held by the non-Latino white population has declined. An array of policies and programs are designed to protect the rights of individuals against discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender, and other categories, including in the workplace. However, women and some minority groups continue to suffer from disparities in various social indicators and overall economic standing. For example, although women constitute almost half of the U.S. workforce and are well represented in many professions, the average compensation for female workers is roughly 80 percent of that for male workers. A popular social media campaign in late 2017 encouraged victims of sexual harassment and assault in the workplace—mainly women—to speak out about their experiences. The phenomenon led to the sudden downfall of many powerful men in the worlds of politics, business, news, and entertainment, but it also underscored the scale of the problem in American society.

Federal antidiscrimination legislation does not explicitly include LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people as a protected class, though many states have enacted such protections. The government bans discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity in federal employment and among federal contractors. The Trump administration

reversed a 2016 guidance document that had directed schools to allow transgender students to use bathrooms and other facilities matching their gender identity, and argued that existing legal protections against sex discrimination did not cover sexual orientation or gender identity, as some courts and government agencies have claimed. In July 2017, Trump announced a ban on transgender people serving in the military, but federal courts blocked the move from taking effect in response to lawsuits, which were ongoing at year's end.

The Trump administration attempted to change U.S. immigration policy on a number of fronts. Beginning in January 2017, the president issued a series of three executive orders barring travel from a group of Muslim-majority countries on security grounds, twice revising the original order in response to lawsuits claiming that the bans were blatantly discriminatory. In December, the Supreme Court allowed the third version to take effect as legal challenges continued. It barred entry to most citizens of Iran, Libya, Syria, Yemen, Somalia, and Chad, as well as most citizens of North Korea and some officials from Venezuela. The administration also implemented stringent new refugee policies that resulted in the admission of far fewer refugees, and a smaller proportion of Muslim refugees, than before, and proposed new rules that would sharply reduce legal immigration. The administration's drive to deport undocumented immigrants had mixed results. By the end of the fiscal year in late September, total deportations had declined due to the continuation of a longer-term drop in apprehensions at the border, but deportations of those arrested within the country rose sharply, as the administration rescinded Obama-era enforcement priorities that focused on certain categories of undocumented immigrants, such as those with felony convictions. In September, Trump announced that in six months he would end an Obama policy protecting undocumented immigrants who entered the country as children from deportation, asking Congress to resolve the problem through legislation.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 15 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4

There are no significant restrictions on freedom of movement within the United States, and residents are generally free to travel abroad without undue obstacles.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 4 / 4

Property rights are widely respected in the United States. The legal and political environment are supportive of entrepreneurial activity and business ownership, which has contributed to the relatively successful integration of immigrants into American society.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 4 / 4

Individuals generally enjoy equal rights in divorce and custody proceedings, and there are no undue restrictions on choice of marriage partner, particularly after a 2015 Supreme Court ruling that all states must allow same-sex marriage. The practice had already become legal in most states through court decisions, legislative action, or referendums. Rape and domestic violence remain serious problems, and the applicable laws vary somewhat by state, though spousal rape is a crime nationwide. Numerous government and nongovernmental programs are designed to combat such violence and assist victims. In the past several years, a series of new state laws have reduced women's access to abortion without overtly breaching prior Supreme Court decisions protecting those rights, and some have survived judicial scrutiny, adding to state-by-state variation in access.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

The “American dream”—the notion of a fair society in which hard work will bring economic and social advancement, regardless of the circumstances of one’s birth—is a core part of the country’s identity, and voters tend to favor government policies that enhance equality of opportunity. In recent decades, however, studies have shown a widening inequality in wealth and a narrowing of access to upward mobility. One key aspect of inequality is the growing economic gap between Americans with university degrees and those with a high school degree or less; the number of well-compensated jobs for the less-educated have fallen over time as manufacturing and other positions are lost to automation and foreign competition, and successive governments have failed to improve access to education and training in response. Many states and municipalities have enacted substantial hikes in the minimum wage, but workers face a variety of obstacles to stable and remunerative employment, including inadequate public transportation, high costs of living in economically dynamic regions, and a preference among many companies for fragmented and unpredictable shift work. Employment and income statistics have slowly improved amid general economic growth in recent years, but the gains are clustered disproportionately at the highest income levels.

Uruguay

Population: 3,500,000

Capital: Montevideo

Political Rights Rating: 1

Civil Liberties Rating: 1

Freedom Rating: 1.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Uruguay has a historically strong democratic governance structure and a positive record of upholding political rights and civil liberties while also working toward social inclusion. Although all citizens enjoy legal equality, there are still disparities in treatment and political representation for women, Uruguayans of African descent, and the indigenous population.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Vice President, Raúl Sendic resigned amid corruption allegations, and was replaced by Lucia Topolansky, who became the first woman to serve as Uruguay’s vice president.
- IN an effort to combat gender-based violence, the Parliament in September voted to make femicide a special circumstance that can increase sentences, and authorities have begun confiscating guns from policemen who have been convicted of domestic violence.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 40 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 12 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The president is directly elected to a five-year term, and may hold nonconsecutive terms. The most recent general elections were held in 2014. The Tabaré Vázquez–Raúl Sendic ticket of the Frente Amplio captured the presidency after a run-off. The elections took place peacefully and the stakeholders accepted their results.

Sendic resigned as vice president in September 2017 amid a probe into his alleged misuse of a corporate credit card while head of a state-run oil company. Lucia Topolansky, a senator, assumed the vice presidency under constitutional procedures, and became the first woman to hold the post.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The bicameral General Assembly consists of the 99-member Chamber of Representatives and the 30-member Senate, with all members directly elected for five-year terms. In the 2014 elections, the Frente Amplio retained a majority in the parliament, winning 50 seats in the Chamber of Representatives and 15 seats in the Senate. The elections took place peacefully, and stakeholders accepted their results.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4

Uruguay's Electoral Court serves as the highest authority on elections, and supervises the National Electoral Office, which oversees voter registration. Electoral laws are generally fair and well implemented.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 16 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4

Uruguay's multiparty system is open and competitive. The major political parties are the Colorado Party, the National Party (also known as Blanco), the Independent Party, and the Frente Amplio coalition, which is currently in power.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

Opposition parties are regularly competitive in the national elections.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

People's political choices are generally free from undue influence from undemocratic actors.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 4 / 4

The small Afro-Uruguayan minority, comprising approximately 8 percent of the population, is significantly underrepresented in government. Indigenous peoples have no representation at the national level. Representation of women in national, regional, and local government is also low, though women hold about 20 percent of seats in the legislature and a number of mayorships. A gender quota system was implemented for the first time in the most recent national elections to increase the participation of women as candidates.

In October, Michelle Suárez of Frente Amplio became the first transgender senator in Uruguayan history upon replacing Senator Marcos Carámbula, who had stepped down. Her tenure was short, however, as she resigned over forgery allegations in December.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 12 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4

The head of government and national legislature determine the policies of the government without undue interference.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 4 / 4

The level of corruption in Uruguay is relatively low by regional standards. While former vice president Sendic faces corruption allegations, the investigation into the matter is ongoing and reflects a commitment by the government to its anticorruption platform.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 4 / 4

Government institutions have established a robust record of accountability to the electorate. Enforcement of the Transparency Law, which prohibits a range of offenses related to abuse of office, is relatively strong at the national level.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 58 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 16 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 4 / 4

Constitutional guarantees regarding free expression are generally respected. The press is privately owned; the broadcast sector includes both commercial and public outlets. There are numerous daily and weekly newspapers, some of which are connected to political parties. Despite the relatively open media environment, there have been reports of intimidation against journalists who report critically on the president.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Freedom of religion is legally protected and broadly respected.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is upheld.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

Private discussion is generally open and robust. However, the government operates an electronic surveillance system, and the circumstances under which it may be deployed are opaque.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 12 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4

Freedom of assembly is protected by law, and the government generally respects this right in practice. Protests are frequent.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

A wide array of community organizations and national and international human rights groups are active in civic life, and do not face government interference.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

Workers are free to exercise the right to join unions, bargain collectively, and hold strikes. Unions are well organized and politically powerful.

F. RULE OF LAW: 15 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 4 / 4

Uruguay's judiciary is generally independent.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 3 / 4

The courts in Uruguay remain severely backlogged. However, new criminal procedures have reduced pretrial detention.

Efforts to seek justice for human rights violations committed under the military regime that ended in 1985 have been slow and inconsistent. Civil society groups petitioned before the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights (IACHR) in September 2017 in protest against further delays in trials. A bill in October was approved to create a special prosecutor's office to investigate unresolved cases.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 4 / 4

Prisons are over capacity, and conditions in many facilities are inadequate.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 4 / 4

Transgender people have historically been discriminated against in Uruguay. However, in 2017 the government was considering legislation that would allow transgender people to change their names and gender on official documents without a judge's approval; provide scholarships to transgender people so that they may more easily receive schooling; and give transgender people born before 1975 a monthly pension in an effort to make up for hardships endured both during the country's dictatorship and afterward.

The Afro-Uruguayan minority continues to face economic and social inequalities. A 2013 affirmative action law included incentives to increase their graduation rates, and an 8 percent quota in government employment. The law has seen some success in raising the enrollment rate of Afro-Paraguayans, but other mandates have not been fully implemented. The government has initiated additional programs aimed at seeing it realized.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 15 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4

Freedom of movement is protected, and individuals are generally free to choose their residence, employment, and institution of higher education without interference.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 4 / 4

The right to own property and establish private business is respected.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 4 / 4

Women enjoy equal rights under the law but face discriminatory traditional attitudes and practices, including a persistent wage gap. Violence against women remains a serious concern, but the country is combatting gender-based violence; the Parliament in September 2017 voted to make femicide a special circumstance that can increase sentences, and has begun confiscating guns from policemen who have been convicted of domestic violence.

The parliament voted overwhelmingly to legalize same-sex marriage in 2013. Abortion for any reason during the first trimester has been legal since 2012. However, a case in February 2017 where an abortion was halted because of a male ex-partner's objections threatens the practical application of the country's abortion law.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

Individuals generally enjoy equality of opportunity. However, according to reports, the government is not doing enough to combat transnational trafficking, and laws do not prohibit internal trafficking. Forced labor can be found in a number of industries including agriculture, fishing, lumber processing, and in domestic services. The government does not provide adequate assistance for victims.

Uzbekistan

Population: 31,900,000

Capital: Tashkent

Political Rights Rating: 7

Civil Liberties Rating: 7

Freedom Rating: 7.0

Freedom Status: Not Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: Ongoing reforms under a new president, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, have led to improvements on some issues, but Uzbekistan remains a consolidated authoritarian regime. No genuine opposition parties operate legally, and domestic supporters of exiled opposition figures are persecuted. The legislature and judiciary effectively serve as instruments of the executive branch, and the media remain tightly controlled by the state. There is little accountability for endemic corruption or torture of detainees; despite some high-profile releases, the government still holds numerous prisoners on political or religious grounds.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- The government worked to improve freedom of travel and relations with neighboring states, resuming direct commercial flights with Tajikistan in April and signing a border agreement with Kyrgyzstan in September. Authorities also took steps to liberalize the exchange of currency and thereby stimulate private economic activity.
 - Authorities released some prisoners of conscience who had been jailed under the former president, Islam Karimov. They included journalist Muhammad Bekjon, who had been behind bars for 18 years.
 - Live discussion programs began appearing on television during the year, adding to a trend of more critical media commentary on corruption and other problems.
-

- A series of UN and nongovernmental human rights monitors were allowed to visit the country, including the first delegation from Human Rights Watch in seven years.
- Despite signs of progress, independent journalists, activists, and political figures remained subject to harassment and prosecution at the local and national levels, and major institutional reforms had yet to be enacted.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 1 / 40 (+1)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 0 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

The president, who holds most executive power, is directly elected for up to two five-year terms. Longtime prime minister Shavkat Mirziyoyev was named acting president through an irregular parliamentary process in September 2016, after Karimov, who had held the presidency since Uzbekistan's independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, suffered a stroke and died. The constitution called for the Senate chairman to serve as acting president. Mirziyoyev won a special presidential election in December, taking a reported 88.6 percent of the vote and defeating nominal challengers whose parties in some cases openly campaigned for the incumbent. Election monitors from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) concluded that "the dominant position of state actors and limits on fundamental freedoms undermine political pluralism and led to a campaign devoid of genuine competition."

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

Uzbekistan has a bicameral legislature. The lower house is composed of 150 seats, with 135 members directly elected in single-member constituencies and 15 representing the Ecological Movement of Uzbekistan, which holds separate indirect elections. The 100-member upper house, or Senate, has 84 members elected by regional councils and 16 appointed by the president. All members of the parliament serve five-year terms.

The 2014 lower house elections offered voters no meaningful choice, as all participating parties supported the government; observers from the OSCE reported that the elections "lacked genuine competition and debate." Karimov's Movement of Entrepreneurs and Businesspeople–Liberal Democratic Party (UzLiDeP) won the most votes and took 52 seats, while three loyalist parties split the remainder. Local human rights activists alleged serious disparities between reported turnout, which the government claimed was more than 88 percent, and the number of actual votes cast.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 0 / 4

The electoral laws and framework are implemented in ways that offer no opportunities for independent political actors or parties to participate in elections at any level. Election management bodies are closely controlled by the government and have not been reformed since Karimov's death, though Mirziyoyev has indicated that he plans to implement electoral reforms at the local and regional level, including the introduction of direct elections for local and regional executives. In August 2017, he signed legislation allowing the election of 11 district councils within Tashkent, in addition to the existing council for the city as a whole; Tashkent has the status of a region, and districts in the country's other regions

already had elected councils. The elections, which featured the debut of a single electronic voter list, were held in late December, though no new parties participated.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 0 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 0 / 4

Only four political parties are currently registered—UzLiDep, the People’s Democratic Party (PDP), the Adolat (Justice) Social Democratic Party, and the Milliy Tiklanish (National Revival) Democratic Party. They indulge in mild criticism of one another and occasionally of government ministers, but all are effectively progovernment.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 0 / 4

No genuine opposition parties operate legally. Unregistered opposition groups function primarily in exile. Domestic supporters or family members of exiled opposition figures have been persecuted, and they are barred from participating in elections.

B3. Are the people’s political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 0 / 4

Regional alliances of political elites hold the levers of government at all levels, creating economic oligarchies and patronage networks that stifle political competition. There is some intra-elite competition, but without the patronage of the established networks, political and economic advancement is all but impossible.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 0 / 4

No registered party represents the specific interests of ethnic or religious minority groups, and no other parties or actors have the opportunity to achieve political representation. Women formally enjoy equal political rights, but they are unable to organize independently to advance their political interests in practice, and they remain underrepresented in leadership positions. Women hold 16 percent of the seats in the parliament’s lower house and 17 percent of the seats in the Senate. No women ran for president in 2016.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 1 / 12 (+1)

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 0 / 4

The country’s leadership is not freely elected, and the legislature serves as a rubber stamp for the executive branch.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 0 / 4

Corruption is pervasive. Graft and bribery among low- and mid-level officials are common and at times even transparent. Media discussion of corrupt practices has cautiously expanded since Karimov’s death, but in some cases the journalists and commentators involved—rather than the corrupt officials—have come under pressure.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 1 / 4 (+1)

Government operations remain mostly opaque, but one of Mirziyoyev's first acts as president in late 2016 was the creation of new online mechanisms that offered citizens the opportunity to file complaints, report problems, and request services. The initial program was overwhelmingly popular and was quickly expanded to all ministries and local government offices, requiring local officials to interact with citizens and demonstrate responsiveness. The innovations contributed to a cultural change in governance, though they frequently encountered resistance at the local level.

Score Change: The score improved from 0 to 1 due to new complaint and petitioning mechanisms that have increased the accountability of government agencies and officials to citizens.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 6 / 60 (+3)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 1 / 16 (+1)

D1. Are there free and independent media? 0 / 4

Despite constitutional guarantees, freedoms of speech and the press remain severely restricted. The state controls major media outlets and related facilities, and independent outlets were mostly shuttered or blocked under Karimov. Several foreign reporters were granted press passes in 2017, and the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) announced plans to base a correspondent in Tashkent, but the presence of independent international outlets remained very limited. Domestic media, including news websites and new live television programs, began cautiously discussing social problems and criticizing local officials in 2017, though they continued to avoid openly criticizing the government.

The prisoners of conscience released during the year included journalists Muhammad Bekjon and Solijon Abdurahmonov, who had spent 18 and 9 years in prison, respectively. However, harassment and arrests of journalists continued. Freelance journalist Bobomurad Abdullayev was arrested in September and accused of attempting to overthrow the constitutional order after it was revealed that he had written sharply critical and sometimes satirical political articles for years under the pseudonym Usman Haqnazarov. In October, authorities detained another freelancer, Hayot Nasriddinov, on extremism charges.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 0 / 4

The government permits the existence of approved Muslim, Jewish, and Christian denominations but treats unregistered religious activity as a criminal offense. Suspected members of banned Muslim organizations and their relatives have faced arrest, interrogation, and torture. Arrested believers are frequently accused of founding previously unknown religious organizations, a charge that carries high penalties. In most cases, little evidence of the existence of such organizations is presented at the closed trials.

In a major reform in September 2017, Mirziyoyev announced that some 16,000 individuals had been removed from a blacklist of roughly 17,000 people who had been suspected or previously convicted of religious extremism and were kept under close surveillance or on probation. He said many of those removed had already been provided with jobs to help them reintegrate with society.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 0 / 4

The government limits academic freedom, in part by controlling contacts between universities or scholars and foreign entities. Professors reportedly practice self-censorship to avoid punishment by superiors or the authorities.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 1 / 4 (+1)

The freedom of private discussion has long been limited by *mahalla* committees, traditional neighborhood organizations that the government has transformed into an official system for public surveillance and control. The government also engages in extensive surveillance of electronic communications. However, through its various reforms since 2016, the Mirziyoyev administration has signaled a greater tolerance for public criticism, modestly improving the climate for expression of personal views on sensitive topics.

Score Change: The score improved from 0 to 1 due to greater tolerance for the expression of critical views under the new administration.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 1 / 12 (+1)

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 0 / 4

Despite constitutional provisions for freedom of assembly, authorities severely restrict this right in practice, breaking up virtually all unsanctioned gatherings and detaining participants.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 1 / 4 (+1)

Freedom of association is tightly constrained, and unregistered nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) face extreme difficulties and harassment. Yelena Urayeva, a veteran activist against forced labor in the cotton industry, was forcibly detained in March 2017 and confined to a psychiatric hospital ahead of planned meetings with a World Bank delegation. She was repeatedly detained later in the year, and in one case in October she was held along with photojournalist Temur Karpov and a correspondent from the German magazine *Stern* as they attempted to document forced labor.

However, in a significant break with past policy, in September an official delegation from Human Rights Watch was allowed to conduct its first fieldwork assessment in Uzbekistan in seven years. A number of international human rights officials, including the UN high commissioner for human rights, were also allowed to visit the country, and the prisoners of conscience released during the year included human rights activists Azamjon Farmonov and Agzam Turgunov, who had served 11 and 9 years in prison, respectively.

Score Change: The score improved from 0 to 1 due to greater access for international human rights monitors and the release of some jailed activists.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 0 / 4

The Federation of Trade Unions is controlled by the state, and no genuinely independent union structures exist. Organized strikes are extremely rare.

F. RULE OF LAW: 0 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 0 / 4

The judiciary is subservient to the president. In 2017, however, a number of judicial reforms were enacted through constitutional and legislative amendments, establishing

specific terms in office for judges and creating a Supreme Judicial Council to oversee appointments and disciplinary action, among other changes. The council, whose chairman would be approved by the Senate on the president's recommendation, replaced a commission that was directly subordinate to the president.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 0 / 4

Due process guarantees remain extremely weak. Law enforcement authorities have routinely justified the arrest of suspected religious extremists or political opponents by planting contraband, filing dubious charges of financial wrongdoing, or inventing witness testimony. The Lawyers' Chamber, a regulatory body with compulsory membership, serves as a vehicle for state control over the legal profession. The judicial reforms adopted in 2017 gave judges rather than prosecutors the authority to approve certain investigative steps, such as exhumations and some forms of surveillance.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 0 / 4

A 2016 law on police prohibits torture, and a November 2017 presidential decree bars courts from using evidence obtained through torture, but reports of such physical abuse against detainees remained common during the year. Prisons suffer from severe overcrowding and shortages of food and medicine. As with detained suspects, prison inmates—particularly those sentenced for their religious beliefs—are often subjected to torture and other ill-treatment.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 0 / 4

Although racial and ethnic discrimination are prohibited by law, the belief that senior positions in government and business are reserved for ethnic Uzbeks is widespread. Women's educational and professional prospects are limited by discriminatory cultural and religious norms. Women are also barred from certain jobs under the labor code.

Sex between men is punishable with up to three years in prison. The law does not protect LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people from discrimination, and traditional social taboos deter the discussion of LGBT issues.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 4 / 16 (+1)

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 1 / 4

Permission is required to move to a new city, and bribes are commonly paid to obtain the necessary documents. Bribes are also frequently required to gain entrance to and advance in exclusive universities. Restrictions on foreign travel continue to include the use of exit visas, though the Mirziyoyev administration has announced plans to abolish them in 2019. The government also took steps to ease travel within the country and to neighboring states in 2017, removing police checkpoints at internal borders, resuming direct flights to Tajikistan in April, and opening border crossings as part of an agreement with Kyrgyzstan in September.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 1 / 4

Widespread corruption and extensive state control over the economy limit private business opportunities and make property rights tenuous in practice.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 1 / 4

Victims of domestic violence are discouraged from pressing charges against perpetrators, who rarely face prosecution. Rape is also seldom reported or prosecuted, and spousal rape is not explicitly criminalized. Extralegal child marriage is reportedly practiced in some areas.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4 (+1)

Beginning in September 2017, the government gradually eased restrictions on access to foreign currency and allowed the official exchange rate to move closer to the black-market rate. The changes would help level the economic playing field, as the existing rules had privileged certain entities and industries.

Economic exploitation remains a serious problem, as does the trafficking of women abroad for prostitution. A 2009 law imposed stronger penalties for child labor, and in 2012, Mirziyoyev, then the prime minister, pledged to end the practice completely. In August 2017, the president issued a decree to formally ban forced agricultural labor by students, health workers, and teachers. During the subsequent cotton harvest, the government increased incentives for voluntary labor and granted access to international observers. Nevertheless, local officials still faced pressure to meet government quotas, and evidence of forced adult labor continued to be reported.

Score Change: The score improved from 0 to 1 due to a reduction in currency controls and efforts to decrease the use of forced labor in the cotton harvest.

Vanuatu

Population: 300,000

Capital: Port Vila

Political Rights Rating: 2

Civil Liberties Rating: 2

Freedom Rating: 2.0

Freedom Status: Free

Electoral Democracy: Yes

Overview: Vanuatu conducts democratic elections but suffers from a pattern of unstable coalition governments that do not complete their terms. Although political corruption is a problem, the largely independent judiciary has been able to hold elected officials accountable in high-profile cases. Other persistent problems include domestic violence and societal discrimination against women.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- A group of 14 former lawmakers who had been imprisoned for corruption in late 2015 were released on parole between April and October. They are prohibited from standing for political office until 2025.
- President Baldwin Lonsdale died suddenly of a heart attack in June, and an indirect election was held to replace him in July.

- The government of Prime Minister Charlot Salwai defeated a no-confidence vote in December, maintaining a robust majority in Parliament after nearly two years in office.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 33 / 40 (+1)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 10 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

The largely ceremonial president is elected to serve a five-year term by an electoral college consisting of Parliament and the heads of the country's provincial councils. A two-thirds majority is required, and multiple rounds of voting can be held to reach this threshold. In July 2017, Presbyterian pastor Tallis Obed Moses was elected to replace President Baldwin Lonsdale, who died the previous month.

The prime minister, who holds most executive authority and appoints his own cabinet, is chosen by Parliament from among its members. Charlot Salwai of the Reunification of Movements for Change (RMC) party was elected to the post in February 2016 and formed a coalition government consisting of 11 of the 17 parties and more than two-thirds of the members in Parliament.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

The 52-seat unicameral Parliament is directly elected for four-year terms in 18 constituencies ranging from one to seven members in size. The last elections were held in January 2016 after the president dissolved Parliament, citing the conviction of 14 sitting lawmakers on corruption charges and the remaining members' inability to form a new governing majority. Eight independents and 17 parties won seats. The largest groups were the Vanua'aku Pati, the Union of Moderate Parties, and the Graon mo Jastis Pati (Land and Justice Party), each with six seats, though the totals fluctuated after the initial count due to party switching and by-elections.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4

The electoral framework is generally fair, and elections are administered without bias, but international observers have noted problems including an inaccurate voter roll and understaffing of election management bodies. Moreover, the use of the single-nontransferable-vote system, particularly in larger multimember constituencies, is believed to weaken political parties and encourage fragmentation.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 15 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4

Numerous political parties operate without restrictions in Vanuatu. A total of 29 parties and dozens of independents contested the 2016 elections. Politicians frequently switch allegiances.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

The country has a record of frequent democratic transfers of power between rival parties.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 4 / 4

There are no major undue constraints on the choices of voters or candidates from outside the political system. Traditional chiefs—represented by the National Council of Chiefs, a consultative body for customary and language matters—exert some influence, but they do not control electoral decisions.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

Ethnic minorities enjoy equal political rights. Political groupings have traditionally been divided in part along linguistic lines, with an Anglophone majority and a Francophone minority. However, Prime Minister Salwai is from the Francophone community and leads a coalition of mostly Anglophone parties.

Women's political participation is impaired by customary biases, and they are badly underrepresented in elected offices. No women were elected to Parliament in 2016. Some seats are reserved for women at the municipal level, and women's rights groups have lobbied for a quota at the national level as well.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 8 / 12 (+1)

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 3 / 4

The elected prime minister and cabinet are able to determine and implement government policies without improper interference, and the legislature serves as a check on executive power. However, party fragmentation and frequent no-confidence votes have long disrupted governance. No government since 1995 has completed a full four-year term. The Salwai government defeated a no-confidence motion in December 2017, by which time it was already the longest-serving government since 2008.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

Abuse of office and corruption are serious problems, but prosecutors, the ombudsman, and other independent institutions are sometimes effective in combating them. The most dramatic corruption scandal in recent years occurred in 2015, when then deputy prime minister Moana Carcasses was convicted of bribing fellow lawmakers to help bring down the previous government. One of those found guilty, Parliament speaker Marcellino Pipite, attempted to pardon himself and 13 others while serving as acting head of state during an overseas trip by President Lonsdale, but the president revoked the pardons after his return. The 14 lawmakers in question, including Carcasses, were all released on parole between April and October 2017, but they will remain barred from public office until 2025.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 3 / 4 (+1)

The government largely operates with transparency. Parliament sessions are streamed live on the internet, and elected officials are required to submit financial disclosure reports that can be investigated by the ombudsman's office, though the documents are not made public.

A new freedom of information law that was adopted in November 2016 took effect in February 2017, and the government issued an order on implementation in August. The law was widely welcomed as a positive step, though observers remained concerned about the establishment of fees and other potential obstacles to timely fulfillment of information requests.

Score Change: The score improved from 2 to 3 due to the implementation of a new freedom of information law.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 48 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 15 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4

The government generally respects freedom of the press, though elected officials have sometimes been accused of threatening journalists for critical reporting. Publicly and privately owned newspapers publish in English and French. There are a small number of private broadcasters, but the state-owned broadcaster has a dominant position in the sector. Foreign news services are also available, and about a quarter of the population has access to the internet.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

The constitution's preamble states that the republic is founded on "Christian principles," but there is no official religion, and adherents of other faiths can worship freely. Authorities do not enforce a legal registration requirement for religious groups.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

There are no constraints on academic freedom.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

The government does not monitor personal communications, and individuals are able to discuss politics and other matters without interference.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 11 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4

The law provides for freedom of assembly, and the government typically upholds this right in practice. Public demonstrations generally proceed without incident.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

There are no significant constraints on the formation and operations of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), which are not required to register with authorities. In 2017, the government intervened to bring about the reestablishment of the Vanuatu Association of Non-Government Organisations (VANGO), which had not held an annual meeting since 2014. A new board of directors was elected in September. The government explained that the independent association could help individual NGOs to improve their work and provide important services to the public.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

Workers can join unions, bargain collectively, and strike. The right to strike is somewhat impaired by notification rules and the government's ability to bar such actions in essential services; violations can draw criminal penalties. The umbrella Vanuatu Council of Trade Unions is an affiliate of the International Trade Union Confederation.

F. RULE OF LAW: 11 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 3 / 4**

The judiciary is largely independent, but a lack of resources hinders the hiring and retention of qualified judges and prosecutors. The president appoints the chief justice after consulting with the prime minister and the opposition leader. Other judges are appointed by the president on the advice of the Judicial Service Commission. Tribal chiefs and island courts empowered to hear customary law cases adjudicate local disputes.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 2 / 4

Due process rights are guaranteed by law. However, police do not always uphold legal safeguards against arbitrary arrest and detention. Long periods of pretrial detention are not uncommon, largely due to case backlogs in the courts.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 3 / 4

The police paramilitary unit, the Vanuatu Mobile Force (VMF), has a reputation for heavy-handed treatment of citizens. Civilian authorities have not been effective in punishing and preventing cases of police brutality.

Prisons have suffered from overcrowding, violence, poor living conditions, and lax management that contributes to frequent escapes. A new correctional facility funded by New Zealand's government opened in 2017, but escapes from the site were reported later in the year.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

Women are guaranteed legal equality, but in practice they continue to face societal discrimination that affects their access to employment and economic opportunity. LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people are not protected by antidiscrimination laws. The rapid expansion of Chinese-owned businesses has sometimes fueled resentment toward Chinese residents. Certain occupations are reserved for ni-Vanuatu as part of a policy to boost employment for the native population.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 11 / 16**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4**

The constitution protects freedom of movement, which is also respected in practice.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 3 / 4

The legal framework is generally supportive of property rights and private business activity. However, irregularities surrounding land deals, and corruption in the Lands Ministry, are persistent problems. Legislation adopted in June 2017 was designed to strengthen oversight for the leasing of customary land.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Domestic violence is widespread. Social stigma and fear of reprisal inhibits reporting, particularly in more remote rural areas, and police and courts rarely intervene or impose strong penalties. Government and civil society efforts to combat the problem are inadequately funded. Spousal rape is not specifically criminalized. Women pursuing civil cases related to personal status matters face difficulties paying the required court fees. Only fathers can automatically pass citizenship to their children at birth.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Poverty is extensive, and the government does not properly enforce health and safety standards, leaving employees in construction, logging, and other industries exposed to hazardous working conditions. Children often perform agricultural work at the family level, and laws on child labor do not meet international standards.

Venezuela

Population: 31,000,000

Capital: Caracas

Political Rights Rating: 6

Civil Liberties Rating: 5

Freedom Rating: 5.5

Freedom Status: Not Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: Venezuela's democratic institutions have deteriorated since 1999, but conditions have grown sharply worse in recent years due to a concentration of power in the executive and harsher crackdowns on the opposition. Following a strong performance by the opposition in 2015 legislative elections, the legislature's powers were curtailed by a politicized judiciary, and in 2017 the body was supplanted by a new National Constituent Assembly that serves the executive's interests. Government corruption is pervasive, and law enforcement has proven unable to halt violent crime. The authorities have restricted civil liberties and prosecuted perceived opponents without regard for due process.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In March, the Supreme Tribunal of Justice (TSJ) stripped the National Assembly of its powers and assumed legislative functions. While the decision was reversed days later after domestic and international condemnation, the administration of President Nicolás Maduro later supplanted the National Assembly with a National Constituent Assembly, whose members were chosen in July elections that were boycotted by the opposition and widely rejected as illegitimate. Severely flawed gubernatorial and municipal elections were held in October and December, respectively.
- Citizens took to the streets in massive protests that rocked the country during the spring and summer. The demonstrations were met with harsh government repression that left over 100 people dead and more than 1,900 injured.

- Political persecution continued, with the number of political prisoners exceeding 600 at the end of July. Some were later released, leaving about 200 behind bars at year's end.
- Venezuelans suffered from a worsening humanitarian crisis characterized by acute food and medicine shortages and rampant crime.

Executive Summary

Venezuela's democratic outlook continued to worsen in 2017, as virtually every channel for political change was closed off. After more than a year of stonewalling the opposition-controlled National Assembly, the TSJ went a step further in March by limiting legislative immunity, holding lawmakers in contempt, and assuming legislative functions. While the decision was reversed days later following domestic and international condemnation, it set off a conflict that persisted for four months, culminating in elections at the end of July for a new 545-member National Constituent Assembly. Two weeks before that vote, more than 7 million people, according to opposition leaders, participated in an opposition-led plebiscite to express their rejection of the constituent assembly. The new body was packed with regime loyalists and tasked with drafting a new constitution.

Following the TSJ's decision in March, thousands of Venezuelans demonstrated against the Maduro government. Many protests featured violent clashes between demonstrators and security forces, leading to the deaths of 136 people between April and September, including at least 102 who were apparently killed directly by security forces or state-affiliated armed civilian groups known as *colectivos*. The number of political prisoners, many of whom were detained for involvement in protests, exceeded 600 at the end of July, though most were released by year's end, leaving about 200 in detention. The Organization of American States (OAS) secretary general condemned the repression of peaceful antigovernment protests in April, while the United States expanded sanctions against Venezuela in August.

The National Electoral Council (CNE) oversaw gubernatorial elections in October. The campaign environment strongly favored the ruling United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV), which won in 18 of 23 states. Widespread irregularities were reported, and many opposition leaders rejected the results as fraudulent. Three leading opposition parties boycotted December's municipal elections, claiming unjust conditions. The PSUV won those elections easily, and the National Constituent Assembly responded to the opposition boycott by effectively banning the parties involved from the 2018 presidential election, fulfilling a threat issued by Maduro.

Food and medication shortages persisted during the year, and runaway inflation intensified, but the Maduro administration proved unable or unwilling to meaningfully address the crisis. Unchecked street crime also made Venezuela one of the most violent countries in the world. Hundreds of thousands of people have fled abroad in recent years.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 8 / 40 (-3)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 2 / 12 (-3)

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4

The president serves six-year terms. Since 2009, neither the president nor other elected officials have been subject to term limits. The most recent presidential election was held in April 2013, after longtime incumbent Hugo Chávez died of cancer. Maduro, Chávez's vice president and handpicked successor, narrowly defeated opposition leader Henrique Capriles, 50.6 percent to 49.1 percent. The opposition accused the government of multiple violations, including election-day abuses and the rampant misuse of state resources during

the campaign, and for the first time since 2005 it refused to accept the outcome's legitimacy without a more complete audit. Protests in the election's immediate aftermath left nine people dead and hundreds injured. A limited audit conducted by the CNE revealed few discrepancies, while the TSJ rejected the opposition's petitions in August 2013, concluding the electoral process.

Gubernatorial elections that took place in October 2017 had been set for December but were abruptly moved up. The campaign and voting were marred by significant restrictions on opposition candidates' participation, changes to polling locations without proper notice, diminished access to polling stations in opposition-oriented neighborhoods, government abuse of public resources, vote buying, and intimidation of voters and election observers affiliated with the opposition. PSUV candidates won in 18 of 23 states. Opposition leaders accused the PSUV of fraud, though disillusionment with the political process among opposition figures and supporters may also have influenced the results.

The PSUV dominated the December 2017 mayoral elections, as three of the main opposition parties boycotted the polls, alleging unjust conditions. The National Constituent Assembly responded by effectively banning those parties from participating in the presidential election planned for 2018, fulfilling a threat made by Maduro. Meanwhile, the PSUV captured the Zulia state governorship in a rerun vote after the opposition candidate who won in October refused to be sworn in by the constituent assembly.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4 (-2)

The unicameral, 167-seat National Assembly is popularly elected for five-year terms, using a mix of majoritarian and proportional-representation voting. Three seats are reserved for indigenous representatives. The 2015 elections were marred by a campaign environment that clearly favored the ruling PSUV. Nevertheless, the opposition Democratic Unity Roundtable (MUD) coalition won 109 seats, and MUD-aligned candidates won the three indigenous seats, leaving the PSUV with 55.

In late 2015, government challenges against certain opposition victories—and specifically the TSJ's decision to block the swearing-in of four representatives, three of whom were members of the opposition—deprived the MUD of a two-thirds majority in the assembly that would have allowed it to remove or appoint various executive and judicial officials, among other powers.

After repeatedly nullifying legislation passed by the National Assembly during 2016, the TSJ moved to further cripple the opposition-controlled body in 2017. A ruling in March effectively disbanded the legislature and granted its constitutional powers to the TSJ, limited lawmakers' immunity, and held them in contempt. While the decision was reversed a few days later following domestic and international condemnation, the Maduro administration followed through with a proposal to convene a National Constituent Assembly that would be superior to and effectively replace the National Assembly while drafting a new constitution. Elections to the new assembly at the end of July did not give voters the option to reject its establishment; they were widely derided as unconstitutional, and were dismissed by the opposition, which boycotted the vote. The government loyalists elected to the National Constituent Assembly were sworn in shortly afterward, and many observers expressed concern that they would ultimately hand greater power to Maduro.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 0 due to creation of a National Constituent Assembly that effectively replaced the elected legislature, and whose members were elected under undemocratic conditions.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 0 / 4 (-1)

Venezuela's electoral system is heavily influenced by political manipulation and institutional interference, mainly in favor of the ruling party. The CNE consists of five members, four of whom are openly aligned with the PSUV. The body rarely finds the party out of compliance with any rules, leading to a system in which the opposition is heavily regulated while the government enjoys significant leeway.

Recent election cycles have been characterized by disqualifications of prominent opposition candidates, government abuse of public resources, uneven access to the state-dominated media, the diminished presence of international observers, isolated incidents of violence, and intimidation of state employees and others. These inequities were on display in October 2017 gubernatorial elections, alongside a last-minute decision by the CNE to move 205 polling stations from areas with high levels of opposition support to areas that tend to support Maduro. The CNE also presided over the highly orchestrated elections for the National Constituent Assembly in July, which did not offer voters the opportunity to oppose the new body's creation and were boycotted by the opposition.

Score Change: The score declined from 1 to 0 due to the severe deterioration of the electoral system.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 6 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 1 / 4

Members of the opposition continue to be harassed, imprisoned, and otherwise impeded from participating in the political process. Opposition leader Leopoldo López was moved to house arrest in July 2017 after spending more than three years in prison on spurious charges. Dozens of other political leaders have been subjected to harassment, including Capriles, who in April was banned from holding public office for 15 years due to alleged financial "irregularities." López and former Caracas mayor Antonio Ledezma, who was also under house arrest, were taken from their homes by security officials in August for speaking publicly against the vote for the National Constituent Assembly, which violated the terms of their detention; both were eventually returned to house arrest, though Ledezma was able to flee to Spain in November. At least five mayors were removed from office in August for failing to stop protesters from blocking roads earlier in the year; they included David Smolansky, mayor of El Hatillo in Caracas, who was also sentenced to 15 months in jail.

The number of political prisoners increased from 103 at the end of 2016 to over 600 in July 2017. Most were later released, leaving about 200 behind bars at year's end.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 1 / 4

The MUD's victory in the 2015 legislative elections demonstrated that it had improved its ability to compete for voters. However, the aftermath of the elections underscored the fact that for the opposition, victory at the polls does not necessarily translate into governing power or influence over policymaking. In 2017, the de facto replacement of the National Assembly with the National Constituent Assembly effectively removed opposition members from their democratically elected posts. The opposition expressed its disapproval of the National Constituent Assembly by holding a plebiscite two weeks before the assembly's

elections so that voters could express their rejection of the new body; opposition leaders said their vote, which was largely symbolic, drew over 7 million participants.

The PSUV dominated the October gubernatorial elections, which the opposition called fraudulent. Three of the main opposition parties boycotted the December municipal elections, a move that prompted the National Constituent Assembly to prohibit those parties from competing in the 2018 presidential election.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 1 / 4

State-affiliated *colectivos* routinely commit acts of violence against civilians with impunity, particularly at antigovernment protests, and carry out government efforts to intimidate voters. Public-sector employers exert influence over workers' political choices. In 2017, there were reports that state workers were driven to polling stations by employers and threatened with dismissal if they failed to vote in the gubernatorial elections. Meanwhile, authorities made statements indicating that they could monitor individuals' voting behavior, which carried an implied threat for citizens who depend on state benefits and subsidies.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

Venezuela's constitution provides specific protections for women and minorities, and government officials have been vocal in supporting the rights of indigenous people. However, historically marginalized groups have been particularly affected by the country's economic and health crises, which have undermined their ability to participate politically.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 0 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 0 / 4

Venezuela does not function as a representative democracy. The opposition-controlled legislature had no practical ability to carry out its constitutional mandate after the 2015 elections, and in August 2017 it was supplanted by a body packed with regime loyalists who were elected under undemocratic conditions. While the National Assembly was not formally dissolved, the new National Constituent Assembly granted itself sweeping legislative powers, essentially leaving the old assembly with no functional role. In a show of force in July, regime supporters stormed the National Assembly building, beating and injuring several legislators.

Military officials, many of them in active service, occupy a number of top positions in government ministries and state-level administrations, and the armed forces perform routine government duties, blurring the lines between civilian and military functions.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 0 / 4

Corruption is rampant in Venezuela. The government's economic policies—particularly its currency and price controls—have greatly increased opportunities for corruption, black-market activity, and collusion between public officials and organized crime networks, which have thrived in recent years. The government loses billions of dollars in revenue each year to gasoline smuggling. Continued restrictions on foreign currency and imports have greatly affected poor and middle-class Venezuelans and exacerbated the effects of the economic crisis, while elite groups and favored entities such as the military benefit from valuable exemptions and privileges.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 0 / 4

There is little transparency regarding government spending. The government has consistently failed to publish vital economic data, including monthly inflation statistics.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 18 / 60 (-1)**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 8 / 16****D1. Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4**

The Maduro government maintains a state communications infrastructure that is used to propagate its political and ideological program. Laws such as the 2004 Law on Social Responsibility of Radio and Television give the government the authority to control media content, and because the judiciary and regulatory agencies lack political independence, the legal framework is effectively used to control or punish any media owner or journalist whom the leadership perceives as an adversary. Critical media also face harassment in the form of tax penalties, equipment confiscation, and withdrawal of government advertising. A series of private news outlets have changed ownership under financial pressure in recent years, and their coverage subsequently grew more favorable to the authorities.

In November 2017, the National Constituent Assembly passed a hate-speech law mandating fines and up to 20 years' imprisonment for anyone who disseminates information deemed "intolerant" via radio, television, or social media. Rights advocates condemned the vaguely written law, saying it could be used to penalize government critics.

Obstruction, intimidation, physical attacks, confiscations of equipment, and detentions and arrests of media workers continued in 2017. Journalists seeking to cover the October gubernatorial elections were reportedly denied access to polling sites. Journalist Braulio Jatar, who was arrested in September 2016 on specious charges, was transferred to house arrest in May after eight months in prison.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4

Constitutional guarantees of religious freedom are generally respected, though tensions between the government and the Roman Catholic Church remain high. Government relations with the small Jewish community have also been strained at times.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 2 / 4

Academic freedom came under mounting pressure during Chávez's tenure, and a school curriculum developed by his government emphasizes socialist concepts. More recently, budget cuts and other funding problems have undermined universities' autonomy. The lack of resources has prompted an exodus of academics from the country.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 2 / 4

In recent years, the government has repeatedly aired illegally intercepted conversations of opposition members. Ordinary Venezuelans have become more reticent about calling attention to their political views in situations where they might be overheard.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 2 / 12 (-1)**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 0 / 4 (-1)**

Although freedom of peaceful assembly is guaranteed in the constitution, in practice this right is not protected. Widespread antigovernment protests in 2017 gave way to violent

clashes with security forces, leading to injuries for more than 1,900 people and, according to the nongovernmental organization (NGO) Foro Penal, the deaths of 136 people between April and September, at least 102 of whom were apparently killed directly by security forces or state-affiliated *colectivos*. At year's end, many of those arrested at the demonstrations remained in custody.

Score Change: The score declined from 1 to 0 due to a crackdown on antigovernment protests, including mass arrests and the killing of dozens of demonstrators by security forces and state-affiliated armed groups.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 1 / 4

Activists and NGOs are routinely harassed, threatened, and subject to legal and administrative sanctions for their work. The government has sought to undermine the legitimacy of human rights organizations and other civil society groups by questioning their international ties. Dozens of civil society activists have been physically attacked in recent years.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 1 / 4

Workers are legally entitled to form unions, bargain collectively, and strike, with some restrictions on public-sector workers' ability to strike. Control of unions has shifted from traditional opposition-allied labor leaders to new workers' organizations that are often aligned with the government. The competition has contributed to a substantial increase in labor violence as well as confusion and delays during industry-wide collective bargaining.

F. RULE OF LAW: 1 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 0 / 4

Politicization of the judicial branch increased dramatically under Chávez and has progressed even further under Maduro. High courts generally do not rule against the government, and a number of recent judicial decisions—particularly by the TSJ—have crippled the political power of the opposition. The outgoing PSUV-controlled legislature stacked the TSJ with its own appointees in late 2015, before the opposition-controlled National Assembly took office.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 0 / 4

Opponents of the government and ruling party are routinely detained and prosecuted without regard for due process.

In recent years, the Bolivarian National Intelligence Service (SEBIN) has increasingly carried out policing functions and arrested opposition politicians and journalists without informing the Public Ministry or presenting official charges. The military has also assumed roles previously reserved for civilian law enforcement institutions, and foreign governments allege that the military has adopted a permissive attitude toward drug trafficking.

In August 2017, the National Constituent Assembly dismissed prosecutor general Luisa Ortega, a former Maduro ally who in the preceding months had become critical of his administration, denouncing the TSJ's attempts to undermine the elected legislature and speaking out in defense of antigovernment protesters. She fled the country following her dismissal, saying she feared for her life.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 0 / 4

Venezuela's violent crime rates rank among the highest in the world, and Insight Crime, a foundation that studies organized crime in Latin America, has reported rising murder rates in recent years. The police and military have been prone to corruption, widespread torture of suspects, and extrajudicial killings. Prison conditions in Venezuela remain among the worst in the Americas.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

The formal and constitutional rights of indigenous people, who make up about 2 percent of the population, improved under the 1999 constitution, but such rights are seldom enforced by local authorities. Although discrimination based on sexual orientation is barred, LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) Venezuelans face widespread discrimination and are occasionally subjected to violence. Women also suffer from violence and discrimination in practice—including a wage gap with men doing similar work—despite legal protections. Segments of the population that were already disadvantaged or marginalized appear to have suffered disproportionately from the lack of food and health care associated with Venezuela's economic crisis.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 7 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 2 / 4

The country's currency controls and other economic policies, combined with a decline in the number of flights to and from Venezuela and periodic border closures, have made it extremely difficult for Venezuelans to travel abroad.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 1 / 4

Property rights have been affected by years of price controls, nationalizations, over-regulation, and corruption. Accusations of mismanagement, underinvestment, graft, and politicized hiring practices within state-owned enterprises are common.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

The government generally does not restrict social freedoms. A 2007 law was designed to combat violence against women, but domestic violence and rape remain common and are rarely punished in practice.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

Venezuelan women and children are vulnerable to sex trafficking both within Venezuela and in neighboring countries, particularly amid worsening economic conditions. Migrants to Venezuela have also been subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking.

With job opportunities growing scarce and wages not keeping up with hyperinflation, more citizens have turned to jobs in the informal economy, where they are more exposed to dangerous or exploitative working conditions. Meanwhile, hundreds of thousands of people have fled the country in recent years due to a lack of employment opportunities, severe shortages of basic goods, and escalating violence. Over 52,000 Venezuelans sought asylum abroad in the first six months of 2017 alone, an almost 100 percent increase from the previous year's 12-month total.

Vietnam

Population: 92,700,000

Capital: Hanoi

Political Rights Rating: 7

Civil Liberties Rating: 5

Freedom Rating: 6.0

Freedom Status: Not Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: Vietnam is a one-party state, dominated for decades by the ruling Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV). Although some independent candidates are technically allowed to run in legislative elections, most are banned in practice. Freedom of expression, religious freedom, and civil society activism are highly restricted. The authorities have increasingly cracked down on citizens' use of social media and the internet.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Arrests, criminal convictions, and physical assaults against journalists, bloggers, and human rights activists continued in 2017. At the end of the year, more than 100 people were in prison for criticizing the government, protesting, or joining unsanctioned religious or civil society organizations, according to Human Rights Watch (HRW).
- In May, a senior Politburo member was dismissed as head of the state firm Petro-Vietnam in connection with allegedly illegal business deals, and was arrested in connection with the matter in December.
- Amendments to the penal code approved in June include a provision under which defense lawyers can be held criminally liable for failing to report certain types of serious crimes committed by their own clients.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 3 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 0 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

The CPV is the country's only state-recognized political party, and its Politburo and Central Committee are effectively the country's top decision-making bodies. The president is elected by the National Assembly for a five-year term, and is responsible for appointing the prime minister, who is confirmed by the legislature.

Nominees for president and prime minister were chosen at the CPV's 12th Party Congress in January 2016, which also featured the reelection of Nguyễn Phú Trọng as the party's general secretary. In April 2016, the National Assembly formally confirmed Trần Đại Quang as president and Nguyễn Xuân Phúc as prime minister.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

Elections to the National Assembly are tightly controlled by the CPV, which took 473 of the body's 500 seats in May 2016 polls. Candidates vetted by the CPV, but technically independent, took 21 seats. More than 100 independent candidates, including many young

civil society activists, were barred from running in the elections. Voter turnout of over 99 percent was recorded by the government, but there were reports that authorities stuffed ballot boxes in order to inflate this figure.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 0 / 4

The electoral laws and framework ensure that the CVP dominates every election and controls the political system.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 1 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 0 / 4

The CPV enjoys a monopoly on political power, and no other parties are allowed to operate legally. Splits between factions within the party exist, but they are not openly aired. Members of illegal opposition parties are subject to arrest and imprisonment.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 0 / 4

Opposition parties are illegal. The Vietnam Fatherland Front (VFF), responsible for vetting all candidates for the National Assembly, is ostensibly an alliance of organizations representing the people, but in practice it acts as an arm of the CPV. Independent candidates vetted by the CPV are allowed to run for election. The body banned numerous reform-minded candidates from running in the 2016 elections.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 0 / 4

The overarching dominance of the CPV effectively excludes the public from any genuine and autonomous political participation.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 1 / 4

Although ethnic minorities are represented within the CPV, they are rarely allowed to rise to senior leadership positions, and the CVP leadership's dominance prevents effective advocacy on issues affecting minority populations. While Vietnam has enacted policies and strategies aimed at boosting women's political participation, in practice the interests of women are poorly represented in government, and societal biases discourage women from running for office.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 2 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 0 / 4

The CPV leadership determines and implements government policy, but it is not freely elected or accountable to the public.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

CPV and government leaders have acknowledged growing public discontent with corruption, and there was an increase in corruption-related arrests and prosecutions against

senior officials in 2017. Notably, in May, a senior Politburo member was dismissed as head of the state firm PetroVietnam, in connection with allegedly illegal business deals and loans which led to financial losses; he was arrested in connection with the matter in December. This punishment for a top Politburo member was extremely unusual.

Generally, enforcement of anticorruption laws is selective and often linked to political rivalries, and those who attempt to independently expose corruption continue to face censorship and arrest.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 1 / 4

The CPV leadership operates with considerable opacity. The National Assembly passed an access to information law in 2016, which is set to take effect in 2018. It bars disclosure of information on “politics, defense, national security, foreign relations, economics, technology, or any other areas regulated by the law.” Information can also be withheld if it could harm state interests or the well-being of the nation.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 17 / 30

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 4 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4

Although the constitution recognizes freedom of expression, journalists and bloggers are constrained by numerous repressive laws and decrees. Those who dare to speak out on controversial issues also risk intimidation and physical attack.

The criminal code prohibits speech that is critical of the government, while a 2006 decree prescribes fines for any publication that denies revolutionary achievements, spreads “harmful” information, or exhibits “reactionary ideology.” Decree 72, issued in 2013, gave the state sweeping new powers to restrict speech on blogs and social media. Websites considered reactionary are blocked, and internet service providers face fines and closure for violating censorship rules. The state controls all print and broadcast media.

Authorities actively silence critical journalists and bloggers, and new arrests and criminal convictions against them continued to be reported throughout 2017. In June, prominent blogger Nguyễn Ngọc Như Quỳnh, known as Mother Mushroom, was convicted to ten years in jail. In July, another blogger, Trần Thị Nga, was sentenced to nine years in jail; both were jailed for disseminating antigovernment propaganda. Police often use violence, intimidation, and raids of homes and offices to silence journalists who report on sensitive topics. At year’s end there were 10 journalists and bloggers in Vietnamese jails, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ).

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 1 / 4

Religious freedoms remain restricted. All religious groups and most individual clergy members are required to join a party-controlled supervisory body and obtain permission for most activities. A 2016 Law on Belief and Religion expected to take effect in 2018 reinforced registration requirements, will allow extensive state interference in religious groups’ internal affairs, and gives authorities broad discretion to penalize unsanctioned religious activity. Members of unregistered Christian, Hoa Hao, Cao Dai, and other groups also face regular arrests and harassment from local and provincial authorities, and dozens of people are believed to be behind bars in connection with their religious beliefs.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 1 / 4

Academic freedom is limited. University professors must refrain from criticizing government policies and adhere to party views when teaching or writing on political topics. There have been reports that university students who participated in human rights advocacy have been prevented from graduating.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 1 / 4

Although citizens enjoy more freedom in private discussions than in the past, authorities continue to punish those who openly criticize the state. The government conducts surveillance on private online activity.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 1 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 1 / 4

Freedom of assembly is tightly restricted. Organizations must apply for official permission to assemble, and security forces routinely use excessive force to disperse unauthorized demonstrations. The use of social media platforms to organize protests has prompted the government to periodically block access to them.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 0 / 4

A small but active community of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) promotes environmental conservation, land rights, women's development, and public health. However, human rights organizations are generally banned, and those who engage in any advocacy authorities perceive as hostile or unwanted risk arrest and imprisonment. At the end of 2017, approximately 100 people were in prison for criticizing the government, protesting, or joining religious or civil society organizations that were not approved by the government.

Violence against activists persisted in 2017. A June 2017 HRW report detailed over 30 attacks on activists between January 2015 and April 2017, and urged the government to hold the assailants responsible.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 0 / 4

The Vietnam General Conference of Labor (VGCL) is Vietnam's only legal labor federation and is controlled by the CPV. In recent years the Vietnamese government has permitted hundreds of independent "labor associations" without formal union status to represent workers at individual firms and in some service industries.

F. RULE OF LAW: 4 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4

Vietnam's judiciary is subservient to the CPV, which controls the courts at all levels.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

Constitutional guarantees of due process are generally not upheld. Defendants have a constitutional right to counsel, but lawyers are scarce, and many are reluctant to take on human rights and other sensitive cases for fear of state harassment and retribution. Defense lawyers do not have the right to call witnesses, and often report insufficient time to meet with their clients. In national security cases, police can detain suspects for up to 20 months without access to counsel.

Amendments to the penal code approved in June 2017 included a provision under which defense lawyers can be held criminally liable for failing to report certain kinds of crimes committed by their own clients. The new code will take effect in 2018.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 1 / 4

There is little protection from the illegitimate use of force by state authorities, and police are known to abuse suspects and prisoners, sometimes resulting in death or serious injury. Prison conditions are poor and in 2017, a government website unexpectedly published a report revealing a very high execution rate in the country's prisons: 429 prisoners were executed from August 2013 to June 2016. The report also revealed a high rate of other kinds of detainee deaths, and that jailed rights activists were engaged in "vocational programs" thought to amount to forced labor.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

The law does not prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity, and societal discrimination remains a problem. However, the government has been somewhat receptive to calls for equal rights for LGBT people in recent years. Annual LGBT pride events were held across the country for a sixth year in September 2017.

Ethnic minorities face discrimination in mainstream society, and some local officials restrict their access to schooling and jobs. Minorities generally have little input on development projects that affect their livelihoods and communities.

Women generally have equal access to education, and men and women receive similar treatment in the legal system. Although economic opportunities have grown for women, they continue to face discrimination in wages and promotion.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 8 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 2 / 4

Although freedom of movement is protected by law, residency rules limit access to services for those who migrate within the country without permission, and authorities have restricted the movement of political dissidents and ethnic minorities on other grounds. Vietnamese citizens who are repatriated after attempting to seek asylum abroad can face harassment or imprisonment under the penal code.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 1 / 4

All land is owned by the state, which grants land-use rights and leases to farmers, developers, and others. Land tenure has become one of the most contentious issues in the country. The seizure of land for economic development projects is often accompanied by violence, accusations of corruption, and prosecutions of those who protest the confiscations. In April 2017, farmers clashed with authorities in Dong Tam over a land dispute, resulting in the police arresting some of the farmers. In retaliation, some of the villagers detained over 30 policemen, and the standoff lasted a week before authorities agreed to revisit the farmers' complaints.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

The government generally does not place explicit restrictions on social freedoms. In 2015, Vietnam repealed a legal ban on same-sex marriage, but the government still does not officially recognize such unions. A revised civil code passed in 2015 recognized transgender people's right to legally change their gender identity, but only after undergoing sex reassignment surgery.

Domestic violence against women remains common, and the law calls for the state to initiate criminal as opposed to civil procedures only when the victim is seriously injured.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Human trafficking remains a problem in Vietnam. The U.S. State Department's 2017 *Trafficking in Persons Report* noted that while the Vietnamese government was working to identify more victims and provide guidance to local authorities to implement an antitrafficking plan, a lack of coordination between agencies, insufficient statistics, and inadequate funding are significant issues in Vietnam's fight against trafficking. Vietnamese women seeking work abroad are subject to sex trafficking in nearby countries, and internationally brokered marriages sometimes lead to domestic servitude and forced prostitution. Male migrant workers are also vulnerable to forced labor abroad in a variety of industries. Enforcement of labor laws covering child labor, workplace safety, and other issues remains poor.

Zambia

Population: 15,900,000

Capital: Lusaka

Political Rights Rating: 4

Civil Liberties Rating: 4

Freedom Rating: 4.0

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: While numerous political parties compete in regular elections, the opposition faces onerous legal and practical obstacles in their operations. The government regularly invokes the law to restrict freedom of expression and ban peaceful demonstrations.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In April, the government imprisoned opposition leader Hakainde Hichilema and charged him with treason after his convoy failed to yield to President Edgar Lungu's motorcade. He was released and legal proceedings against him were halted after authorities came under international pressure, but a judge indicated that Hichilema had not been acquitted, and could be rearrested at any time.
- Following a series of arson attacks in the capital, ruling-party lawmakers voted to approve a restrictive 90-day state of emergency. The vote took place in the absence of 48 opposition lawmakers who had been suspended from the parliament after they boycotted Lungu's annual address.
- In October, the Judicial Complaints Commission ruled that the Constitutional Court had misinterpreted the constitution when it "abruptly terminated" consideration of

an opposition petition against Lungu's 2016 reelection before a required two-week review period had elapsed.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 22 / 40 (-1)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 6 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4

The president is elected to up to two five-year terms. In 2016, Edgar Lungu of the Patriotic Front (PF) was narrowly reelected with 50.35 percent of the vote, defeating Hakainde Hichilema of the United Party for National Development (UPND), who took 47.67 percent; Lungu has indicated a desire to serve a third term despite the two-term limit. The 2016 polls were marred by election-related violence between PF and UPND supporters, restrictions on opposition-aligned media, misuse of public resources by the ruling PF, and the use of the Public Order Act to restrict opposition rallies. While expressing serious concern over these issues, international election monitors deemed the results of the election credible.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4

The unicameral National Assembly is comprised of 156 elected members, with 8 members appointed by the president. The 2016 legislative polls were held concurrently with the presidential election and were marred by the same issues, though as with the presidential election, international monitors found the polls generally credible. The PF won the majority of seats, followed by the UPND.

A number of Lungu's cabinet members ran for legislative seats in 2016, and drew legal complaints over their failure to vacate their cabinet offices when parliament was dissolved before the polls. (Election monitors and other critics said that by remaining in office during the campaign period, the ministers had improperly retained access to government resources.) The Constitutional Court in August 2016 ordered them to vacate their offices and surrender back pay for the three months they were deemed to have been illegally in office.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 2 / 4

Some elements of a new electoral law passed in 2016 were not fully applied during that year's presidential and legislative polls, in part because stakeholders did not have enough time to thoroughly review the law's provisions, and due to discrepancies between its contents and elements of the constitution.

The Electoral Commission of Zambia (ECZ) is responsible for managing the election process, but lacks capacity. The U.S.-based Carter Center, which was among groups that monitored the 2016 polls, criticized the ECZ for "ineffective" management of vote tabulation and verification.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 10 / 16 (-1)

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 2 / 4

Political parties are registered under the Societies Act and do not regularly face onerous registration requirements; independent candidates may also run for office.

The major political parties are the PF and the UPND, but the opposition UPND faces harassment and significant obstacles in accessing media coverage. Repression and

harassment of opposition figures continued in 2017. In June, following a boycott of Lungu's annual address to Parliament, 48 opposition parliamentarians were suspended without pay for 30 days. Later in the year, President Lungu claimed that the UPND was behind a string of arson attacks, saying they were carried out to "make the country ungovernable."

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 2 / 4 (-1)

Despite intense pressure on opposition media, and the use of the Public Order Act to restrict opposition events, the opposition UPND almost doubled its representation in parliament in the 2016 elections, while the PF lost several seats. However, political violence and government restrictions on opposition activities ahead of the elections created an environment in which voters were less able to freely elect representatives to determine government policies.

Opposition party leaders also face harassment and arrest on trumped-up charges, and the sidelining of such key figures can seriously hamper the ability of opposition parties to gain power in elections. In April 2017, UPND leader Hakainde Hichilema was arrested for treason after his convoy failed to move aside for President Lungu's motorcade. He was detained for four months before the prosecution against him was terminated in August, following an intervention from high-level Commonwealth officials. However, a High Court judge told Hichilema that the decision was conditional, that he had not been acquitted, and that he could be rearrested for the same offense at any time.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 due to the politically motivated arrest of the leader of the main opposition party, and threats to rearrest him after proceedings against him were terminated.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 3 / 4

The people's political choices are for the most part free from domination by groups that are not democratically accountable. However, public-sector employers at times have made employment conditional on support for the ruling party, and several cases of forced retirement of opposition-aligned government employees were reported in 2017.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

Suffrage in Zambia is universal for adult citizens. Women have equal political rights according to the constitution, but only occupy 30 of 156 seats in parliament, and few hold key positions in government. A requirement that elected officials be educated at least through high school in effect precludes many women from declaring political candidacies.

Presidents since independence have failed to honor the 1964 Barotseland Agreement, which promised the Western Province, which is home to the Lozi ethnic group, limited local self-governance. Several people accused of leading a separatist movement there remained in prison for treason charges at the end of 2017.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 6 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 2 / 4

Restrictions on the opposition during the 2016 elections benefit the PF, somewhat reducing the legitimacy of their decisions. In response to a string of arson attacks in 2017,

ruling-party lawmakers approved a 90-day state of emergency. The vote was held in the absence of the 48 opposition lawmakers who were suspended over their decision to boycott Lungu's annual address.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

Corruption in government is widespread, and impunity is common. Prosecutions and court decisions on corruption cases, when they do occur, are often thought to reflect political motivations. Limited funding and enforcement restricts the efficacy of institutional safeguards against corruption.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

Zambia continues to struggle with government accountability. There is no access to information law, and while the Anti-Corruption Act requires some public officeholders to make financial declarations, it is only loosely enforced. However, government ministers in recent years have made more unprompted statements to the parliament, and Lungu has held a handful of press conferences, including one in July 2017.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 33 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 10 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4

Freedom of the press is constitutionally guaranteed, but restricted in practice. Outlets perceived as aligned with the opposition are subject to arbitrary closure by authorities, journalists risk trumped-up lawsuits and harassment by the government and political party supporters, and self-censorship remains common. Public media report along progovernment lines and neglect coverage of the opposition, though some private outlets carry sharp criticism of the government.

A longstanding harassment campaign against prominent journalist Fred M'Membe continued in 2017. In February, police attempted to arrest M'Membe, but he was overseas at the time. During the raid on his home, police harassed and arrested his wife, the *Mast* newspaper owner, Mutinta Mazoka M'Membe. (The government shut down the popular *Post* weeks before the 2016 elections, allegedly for tax debt, and the *Mast* was opened to continue the work of the *Post*.) In April, authorities threatened to shut down the *Mast*, pointing to unverified claims that the *Mast* was using *Post* assets.

Separately, journalist Chanda Chimba III, who was suffering from a terminal illness, was pardoned by Lungu and unconditionally released from prison in April. Chanda Chimba had been convicted of failing to register a business and possessing illegally obtained assets, charges that were both related to his role in producing a 2011 television series critical of the PF.

The 90-day state of emergency imposed in July 2017 gave the government the authority to impose broad media restrictions, and was seen as a threat to press freedom.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4

Constitutional protections for religious freedom are generally respected. However, the government has been criticized for engaging in activities that blur the separation of church and state, including backing a National Day for Prayer and Fasting, and building an interdenominational church. Attacks on those suspected of witchcraft are an issue, and non-Christians are sometimes discriminated against or labeled as "Satanists."

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 3 / 4

The government generally does not restrict academic freedom. However, authorities have placed pressure on student unions in response to protests. In 2017, student union activities at the University of Zambia were suspended, and some students were reportedly evicted from student housing, after protests over controversies surrounding the payment of student stipends.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4

Private discussion is generally free in Zambia, though the government appears to monitor and periodically restricts access to opposition websites. Ordinary people risk arrest for online speech deemed critical of the government.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 7 / 12**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 2 / 4**

Freedom of assembly is guaranteed under the constitution, but is not consistently respected by the government. Peaceful protests against the government are frequently restricted under the Public Order Act. Police must receive advance notice before all demonstrations, and in 2017 police continued to deny permission for rallies, political meetings, and other demonstrations even after organizers had met legal requirements to host them.

In September, police in Lusaka broke up an anticorruption protest and arrested the organizers. PF supporters also attempted to intimidate participants, though they eventually assented to police requests that they leave.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 2 / 4

Freedom of association is guaranteed by law, but is not always respected in practice. NGOs are required to register every five years under the 2009 NGO Act. The government in the past indicated a willingness to allow NGOs to self-regulate, but the government does not recognize any such mechanism, and NGOs still must adhere to the 2009 law.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

The law provides for the right to join unions, strike, and bargain collectively. Historically, Zambia's trade unions were among Africa's strongest, but the leading bodies, including the Zambia Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), have faced marginalization under PF rule.

F. RULE OF LAW: 8 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 2 / 4**

Judicial independence is guaranteed by law, but in practice the judiciary is subject to political pressure, including by Lungu, who in November 2017 warned the Constitutional Court that chaos would erupt in the country if it attempted to block his bid to run for a third term in 2021.

Separately, in October, the Judicial Complaints Commission ruled that the Constitutional Court had misinterpreted the constitution when it "abruptly terminated" consideration of an opposition petition against Lungu's 2016 reelection before the required two week review period had elapsed. The UPND had filed a petition with the Constitutional Court

disputing the election results, saying that the PF and the ECZ had worked together to manipulate the poll.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 2 / 4

Pretrial detainees are sometimes held for years under harsh conditions, and many of the accused lack access to legal aid, owing to limited resources. In rural areas, customary courts of variable quality and consistency—whose decisions often conflict with the constitution and national law—decide many civil matters. Zambia’s courts lack qualified personnel and resources, and significant trial delays are common. Bail is frequently denied to detainees.

During the 90-day state of emergency that began in July 2017, police were awarded increased powers to effect arrests and lengthy detentions without the need for a warrant. Several individuals were arrested and held for the maximum seven days allowed during a state of emergency without charge or trial.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 2 / 4

Allegations of police brutality are widespread, and security forces generally operate with impunity. In March 2017, a Zambian air force officer was brutally beaten and killed while being detained for a minor traffic violation, in an incident the Human Rights Commission ruled amounted to his torture. The police officers and inmates responsible were arrested and charged for his murder.

Conditions in pretrial detention facilities and prisons are poor, and reports of forced labor, abuse of inmates by authorities, and deplorable health conditions continue.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

Consensual sexual activity between members of the same sex is illegal and punishable by between 15 years and life in prison. Activists promoting LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) rights face arrest or harassment. Women are constitutionally guaranteed the same rights as men, but in practice discrimination and sexual harassment of women are prevalent.

Refugees are protected under local and international law and as of December 2017, approximately 65,000 refugees were residing in Zambia. However, there were issues with refugees’ access to education, conditions in detention centers, and gender-based violence, among others.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 8 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4

The government generally respects the constitutionally protected right to free internal movement and foreign travel. However, internal movement is often impeded by petty corruption, such as police demands for bribes at roadblocks.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

Most agricultural land is administered according to customary law. However, the president retains ultimate authority over all land, and can intercede to block or compel its sale or transfer. Women frequently experience discrimination in matters involving property and

inheritance rights. The process of meeting requirements for starting and operating businesses can be opaque and time-consuming.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4 (+1)

Societal discrimination, low literacy levels, and violence remain serious obstacles to women's rights. Domestic abuse is common, and traditional norms inhibit many women from reporting assaults. Rape is widespread and punishable by up to life in prison with hard labor, but the law is not frequently enforced.

The rate of child marriage has decreased significantly in recent year, due in large part to the enactment of a 2016 national action plan to eliminate early marriage, which has had an effect on local and customary laws that permitted the practice.

Score Change: The score improved from 1 to 2 because the rate of child marriage has declined, due in part to a national action plan designed to address the problem.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4 (-1)

Labor exploitation, child labor, and human trafficking remain prevalent despite laws meant to prevent them. Zambia significantly scaled back antitrafficking efforts in 2017, and, because no trafficking cases were prosecuted, almost no victims were identified or received victim services.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 because antitrafficking efforts were scaled back, resulting in a lack of prosecutions and services for victims of human trafficking.

Zimbabwe

Political Rights Rating: 6 ↓

Civil Liberties Rating: 5

Freedom Rating: 5.5

Freedom Status: Not Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Status Change, Ratings Change: Zimbabwe's status declined from Partly Free to Not Free and its political rights rating declined from 5 to 6 due to the process by which elected president Robert Mugabe was compelled to resign in November 2017 under pressure from the military.

Overview: Robert Mugabe and his Zimbabwe African National Union–Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) have dominated Zimbabwean politics since independence in 1980, in part by carrying out severe and often violent crackdowns against the political opposition, critical media, and other dissenters. However, in recent years the ZANU-PF has fragmented, as politicians maneuvered for position to succeed the aging Mugabe as president. In 2017, Mugabe was removed from power through a military intervention, and Emmerson Mnangagwa, the former vice president, was installed as president. He promised that elections would be held in 2018, as scheduled.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In November, Mugabe was compelled to resign under pressure from the military, and Mnangagwa became president. Mnangagwa's subsequently appointed several high-ranking military figures to his cabinet.
- Following the events in November, several high-profile figures aligned with Mugabe were arrested and detained, with military officials refusing to disclose the charges against them and in some cases, where they were being held.
- Earlier, in September, lawmakers approved and Mugabe signed into law a measure restoring the president's discretionary power to appoint individuals to the three highest offices of the judiciary, reducing the transparency of the selection process and threatening judicial independence.
- In September, a reproductive health and rights advocacy group released an exposé about underage girls engaged in commercial sex work, prompting the Ministry of Public Service, Labour, and Social Welfare to place dozens of girls in statutory care.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 10 / 40 (-2)**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 2 / 12 (-1)****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4 (-1)**

The president is directly elected, and limited to two five-year terms under the 2013 constitution, which also devolved some previously presidential powers to the parliament and the provinces. Mugabe won the 2013 presidential election with 61 percent of the vote. The opposition, the Zimbabwe Electoral Coalition, and international observers reported widespread electoral violations, but monitors from the African Union (AU) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) deemed the irregularities not severe enough to have affected the result.

In 2017, Mugabe was forced to resign after a military intervention. The crisis broke open in November, when Mugabe fired Mnangagwa as vice president, claiming that he was preparing to seize power. The event was widely viewed as a signal that the G40 grouping, a faction of the ZANU-PF associated with Mugabe's wife, Grace Mugabe, would subsequently control the presidential succession process. A few days later, the military announced in a state broadcast that it had temporarily taken power in order to "[target] criminals around [Mugabe] who are committing crimes that are causing social and economic suffering in the country in order to bring them to justice." The military quickly moved to legitimize their actions constitutionally, even as the SADC and AU condemned the intervention.

Mugabe resigned later in November, after the ZANU-PF dismissed him as the party's president, and impeachment proceedings against him began in Parliament. The ruling party then selected Mnangagwa as Mugabe's successor, and he was inaugurated as the new president of Zimbabwe. The High Court ruled that the military takeover was not a coup, as did the AU. President Mnangagwa announced that elections would be held in 2018 as planned, and would be "free and fair."

Score Change: The score declined from 1 to 0 due to the process by which elected president Robert Mugabe was compelled to resign in November under pressure from the military.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4

Zimbabwe has a bicameral legislature. In the lower chamber, the 270-seat National Assembly, 210 members are elected through a first-past-the-post system with one member per constituency, and 60 female members are elected by proportional representation. The 80-seat Senate includes 6 members from each of Zimbabwe's 10 provinces who are elected through proportional representation, and 20 appointed members, including 18 traditional leaders and 2 members representing people with disabilities. Members in both houses serve five-year terms.

Like the concurrent presidential election, the 2013 parliamentary elections were marred by serious irregularities, though monitors from the AU and SADC endorsed the results. The ZANU-PF captured 197 of the 270 National Assembly seats, followed by 70 for Morgan Tsvangirai's opposition Movement for Democratic Change-Tsvangirai (MDC-T).

Several by-elections were held in 2017, including in Bikita West and Chiwundura constituencies, where ZANU-PF candidates won by substantial margins. The opposition alleged electoral irregularities as well as that the ZANU-PF engaged in serious voter intimidation, including assaults. Separately, following the ousting of Mugabe in November, the ZANU-PF-dominated parliament voted to expel several ZANU-PF legislators aligned with the G40 faction; they were also stripped of party membership.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 1 / 4

The 2012 Electoral Amendment Act reconstituted the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) with new commissioners nominated by all political parties. However, its independence from ZANU-PF has been questioned. In 2017, opposition figures objected that its chairwoman, Rita Makarau, also served as secretary of the Judicial Service Commission, and that she was appointed in the absence of constitutionally required consultations with the parliamentary Committee on Standing Rules and Orders. However, she resigned as ZEC chairperson in December, without offering any explanation for the decision.

Makarau's resignation contributed to uncertainty about the ZEC's ability to manage ongoing voter registration processes ahead of the planned 2018 elections. The polls are expected to feature the use of a biometric voter registration system, which is intended in large part to prevent the duplication of names and other inaccuracies on voter rolls—issues the opposition and election observers have identified as a serious problem in past elections.

Additionally, the ZEC was criticized in 2017 for providing fewer voter registration centers in urban areas, which are perceived strongholds of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC).

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 6 / 12

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 2 / 4

Political parties may generally form without interference, and there were some 75 registered political parties in Zimbabwe at the end of 2017, many of which had newly formed ahead of the 2018 general elections. However, new and opposition parties face obstacles in their operations. State newspapers and broadcasting institutions tend not to cover opposition candidates. Opposition gatherings often draw a heavy police presence compared to the ruling party's rallies, and police often impose restrictions on opposition activities. In March 2017, the police banned the opposition from marching through Harare's business district. However, ZANU-PF supporters were able to march through the city center with minimal

police presence in August, in support of Grace Mugabe. ZANU-PF supporters have reportedly attacked opposition supporters, premises and homes.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 2 / 4

Opposition parties face obstruction of their activities, curtailing their ability to challenge the ZANU-PF in elections. The main opposition party, the MDC, has split into multiple factions. The MDC-T remains the largest opposition grouping. In August 2017, several opposition parties including MDC splinter groups formed a coalition ahead of the 2018 elections. However, the coalition is viewed as weak due to the appearance of divisions between the parties.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 1 / 4

In November 2017, the military forced Mugabe's resignation and Mnangagwa, their favored candidate, became president. Mnangagwa's subsequently appointed several high-ranking military figures to his cabinet, raising fears of deepened military involvement in civilian affairs.

Militia groups linked to the ZANU-PF have intimidated the party's political opponents, opposition supporters, and critical activists.

The constitution states that institutions such as the country's traditional leaders (as well as the military) shall remain nonpartisan. However, in October 2017, the Chief's Council president publicly called on all chiefs to support the ruling party.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 1 / 4

Zimbabwe's ethnic Shona majority dominates ZANU-PF and the MDC-T, and in the past, members of the Ndebele minority have complained of political marginalization by both parties. The Constitution guarantees 60 reserved seats for women in the National Assembly, boosting women's representation in parliament after the 2013 elections to around 35 percent. The provision expires in 2023, raising concerns about whether progress in women's representation will be sustained.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 2 / 12 (-1)

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 0 / 1 (-1)

Zimbabwe lacked a freely elected head of government at the end of 2017. After Mugabe was removed from power by the military in November, President Mnangagwa was installed by the ruling party in the absence of elections.

In the past, the commanders of the highly partisan military, police, and intelligence agencies played a central role in government decision making. The military takeover in November and the subsequent appointment of several military members into cabinet has made the military's role in government more evident.

In recent years, much everyday government activity has come to a standstill due to the succession crisis that has been ongoing in the ruling ZANU-PF.

Score Change: The score declined from 1 to 0 because President Mugabe was removed from power by the military, and Emmerson Mnangagwa was then installed as president by the ruling party in the absence of an election.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

Corruption is endemic, and the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission (ZACC) has little independent investigative or enforcement capacity. Annual reports by the country's auditor general revealing large-scale corruption in government have not been acted upon.

During Mugabe's rule, the ZACC had reportedly fallen prey to ZANU-PF factionalism, with different groups attempting to persuade it to prosecute members of rival factions. Following Mugabe's ouster, many of ZACC's investigations appeared to selectively target perceived allies of the G40 faction associated with Grace Mugabe.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 1 / 4

Government processes are generally opaque. While the constitution protects the right to access information, a number of restrictive laws make it very difficult for the media and public to access information from the government.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 20 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 8 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4

The constitution protects freedoms of the media and expression. However, the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) and the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act (CLCRA) severely limit what journalists may publish and mandate harsh penalties—including long prison sentences—for violators. Journalists risk arrest and assault in connection with their work. In July 2017, three journalists and a photographer were attacked by police and arrested as they covered police attacks on protesters in the capital.

The state-controlled Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) dominates broadcast media, and in a country where many people rely on the radio for information, media diversity is limited by authorities' sustained refusal to grant licenses to community radio stations. Commercial radio licenses have generally gone to state-controlled companies or individuals with close links to ZANU-PF. The government also controls the two main daily newspapers, though there are several independent print outlets.

In September 2017, the High Court ruled that the Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe (BAZ) must grant a license to Kwese TV, a private television channel the BAZ had previously declared illegal.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4

Freedom of religion is generally respected in Zimbabwe. However, congregations perceived to be critical of the government have faced harassment. Separately, in January 2017, a pastor was arrested for prophesying Mugabe's death, on the grounds that predicting someone's death was an insult against practitioners of Christianity and African tradition. The Constitutional Court in October dismissed the pastor's challenge that his fundamental rights, including the freedom of expression, had been violated.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 2 / 4

The Ministry of Higher Education supervises education policy at universities, and Mugabe, as president, served as the chancellor of all eight state-run universities. In December, Mnangagwa was installed as the new chancellor of Midlands State University.

There has been widespread criticism of the University of Zimbabwe's 2014 move to award a doctorate to Grace Mugabe two months after she enrolled there. Students who heckled her at a 2016 graduation ceremony were detained by authorities. Nevertheless, political pressure on teachers and academics has eased in recent years.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 2 / 4

Zimbabweans enjoy some freedom and openness in private discussion, but official monitoring of public gatherings, prosecution of offenses like insulting or undermining the president, and the threat of political violence serve as deterrents to unfettered speech. In October 2017, the ministry for Cyber Security, Threat Detection, and Mitigation was established, with the government saying it was needed to respond to threats against the state posed by the purported abuse of social media. Soon after, police arrested Martha O'Donovan, a project manager for the online station Magamba TV and a U.S. citizen, for a tweet that allegedly insulted Mugabe. She was charged under the CLCRA with subversion and insulting the president, and was free on bail at year's end.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 4 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 1 / 4

Freedom of assembly and association are guaranteed in the constitution, but poorly upheld in practice. Repressive pieces of legislation such as the POSA—which requires police approval for demonstrations and proscribes civil and criminal penalties for violations—are used to restrict demonstrations.

Antigovernment demonstrations were not as widespread in 2017 as in 2016, when authorities had responded to a popular protest movement with massive crackdowns. Nevertheless, a number of demonstrations took place in 2017 and state security forces continued to employ excessive force to disperse protestors. Opposition and civil society activists were arrested and charged with crimes such as “subversion” and “insulting the office of the president.”

In November, after Mugabe was placed on house arrest by the military, thousands of people took to the street to demand his resignation without incident. But in December, several people in Matabeleland were assaulted and arrested by security forces for demonstrating against President Mnangagwa, raising concerns about continued repression following Mugabe's fall from power.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 2 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are active, but remain subject to legal restrictions under the POSA, the CLCRA, and the Private Voluntary Organisations Act, despite the rights laid out in the constitution.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 1 / 4

Due to unemployment and increasing informal employment accompanying Zimbabwe's economic crisis, trade unions are grossly underfunded and many face dissolution. The Labour Act allows the government to veto collective bargaining agreements it deems harmful to the economy. Strikes are allowed except in “essential” industries. In response to

a weeklong doctors' strike in February 2017, the military deployed army medics to work at affected hospitals.

Authorities responded harshly to a 2016 general strike that shut down normal activity in large parts of the country, and was accompanied by antigovernment protests.

F. RULE OF LAW: 3 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 2 / 4

Over the years, pressure from the executive has substantially eroded the independence of the judiciary. While some judges and magistrates have ruled against the government, several controversial developments in 2017 pointed to the continued influence of the executive. In a November judgment widely viewed as unconstitutional, a High Court judge upheld the intervention by the military to oust Mugabe. Earlier, in September, lawmakers approved and Mugabe signed into law Constitution Amendment Bill No. 1, which restored the president's discretionary power to appoint individuals to the three highest offices of the judiciary, reducing the transparency of the selection process and further threatening judicial independence. A constitutional challenge involving claims of irregularities in the parliamentary vote to approve the amendment was pending at year end. Corruption has also seriously undermined the functioning the judiciary.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 0 / 4

Due process protections contained within the constitution are not enforced. Security forces frequently ignore basic rights regarding detention, searches, and seizures, and accused persons are often held and interrogated for hours without legal counsel and without being notified of the reason for their arrest. Following the events in November 2017, several high-profile figures aligned with Mugabe were arrested and detained, with military officials refusing to disclose the charges against them and in some cases, where they were being held.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 0 / 4

Security forces backed by the ZANU-PF have long engaged in acts of violence, including against opposition supporters, for which they enjoy impunity. Police brutality is common.

Despite some improvements in recent years, prison conditions are harsh and sometimes life-threatening. Overcrowding, poor sanitation, and food shortages have contributed to the spread of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and other illnesses among inmates.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

While discrimination on the basis of a broad range of characteristics is prohibited under the 2013 constitution, discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity is not expressly prohibited. Sex between men is a criminal offense and can be punished with a fine and up to a year in prison. The country's land and indigenization policies have been criticized for discriminating against the white Zimbabwean minority.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 5 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 2 / 4

Police roadblocks within and between cities, at which police frequently stop motorists to demand bribes, have become a serious inconvenience. In December 2017, the government issued a directive to reduce police roadblocks and abolish spot fines.

Passport offices, which in the past were characterized by long queues and instances of bribery, have since become more efficient. However, in September 2017, the registrar's office temporarily suspended applications for emergency passports, citing a backlog of over 2,000 applications.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 1 / 4

Land rights in Zimbabwe are poorly protected. In rural areas, the nationalization of land left both commercial farmers and smallholders with limited right to their land. In a move meant to address the scarcity of formal titles to land, the Minister of Lands announced in October 2017 that resettled black farmers would be given 99-year leases and white farmers, 5-year leases. Separately, in March, over 100 families who had lived on a parcel of land for nearly two decades were forcibly evicted by riot police, reportedly because Grace Mugabe wanted to establish a wildlife preserve there. The Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission condemned the evictions as unconstitutional because they were not sanctioned by the courts, and alternative accommodation was not provided to those evicted.

The government has targeted the many vendors who have set up shop on the streets of Harare and elsewhere in the wake of the economic crisis. In October 2017, Mugabe ordered the removal of street vendors operating outside of designated selling points in Harare. Police seized goods, and reportedly attacked some vendors. The new government continued the campaign against vendors in cities around the country.

In response to the country's severe foreign currency shortages, some banks have restricted the amount of cash that can be withdrawn per day, as well as that can be involved in some international transactions.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 1 / 4

Women enjoy extensive legal protections, but societal discrimination remains high and domestic abuse is a problem. Sexual abuse is widespread, especially against girls. Child marriages are illegal but factors such as poverty, religion and lack of strong enforcement mechanisms have prolonged the practice. The Termination of Pregnancy Act makes abortion illegal except in very limited circumstances.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

Due to the prevailing economic crisis, many workers are not adequately compensated, and some have gone for months without pay. A 2017 assessment by the International Trade Union Confederation Global Rights Index found that Zimbabwe was among the worst countries in the world to work in.

The Zimbabwean government has made significant progress in its efforts to combat human trafficking, which women and girls are particularly vulnerable to. In September 2017, Katswe Sisterhood, a reproductive health and rights advocacy group, released an exposé about underage girls engaged in commercial sex work, which prompted the Ministry of Public Service, Labour, and Social Welfare to place 54 girls in statutory care.

Territory Reports

Abkhazia

Population: 240,000

Political Rights Rating: 4

Civil Liberties Rating: 5

Freedom Rating: 4.5

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Overview: Abkhazia, a breakaway region of Georgia, has held de facto independence since the end of a civil conflict in 1993. The government is financially dependent on Russia, which maintains a military presence in Abkhazia and is one of a handful of states that recognizes Abkhazia's independence. The political system features significant opposition and civil society activity. Ongoing problems include a flawed criminal justice system, discrimination against ethnic Georgians, and a lack of economic opportunity.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Parliamentary elections in March saw the election of many independent deputies. As in past elections, ethnic Georgians living in Abkhazia but lacking Abkhaz documents were excluded from the vote.
- In March, separatist authorities closed two pedestrian crossing points over the Inguri River into territory controlled by the Georgian government. Only two such crossing points now remain.
- A European Union (EU) report on human rights in Abkhazia—kept internal by the EU but released by its authors in the summer—concluded that unresolved conflict issues still had a “severe impact” on residents. The report described costs including displacement, restrictions on physical movement and economic mobility, and a widespread sense of isolation among residents.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 18 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 6 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

Abkhazia's 1999 constitution established a presidential system, in which the president and vice president are elected for five-year terms.

A snap election was held in 2014 after President Aleksandr Ankvab resigned amid protests. While most established election observers do not monitor Abkhazia's elections due to the disputed nature of the territory, informal observations indicated that the election was largely peaceful and transparent. Among four candidates, Raul Khajimba won with 51 percent of the vote, followed by former security head Aslan Bzhanias, with 36 percent.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4

The parliament, or People's Assembly, comprises 35 members elected for five-year terms from single-seat constituencies. March 2017 parliamentary elections were marked by some instances of intimidation, with violent attacks on two candidates. The election was voided and rescheduled in one district due to ballot irregularities. The election saw victories by many independent deputies.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 1 / 4

Although the 2017 elections were quite competitive, elections are predicated on the exclusion of ethnic Georgians, leaving elections dominated by ethnic Abkhaz.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 8 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 2 / 4

A large number of political parties participate in Abkhazia's fractious politics, and freedom of association with these movements is generally respected. However, corruption within parties hampers their democratic operation. In March 2017 parliamentary elections, 112 of 137 candidates ran as independents and the remainder represented political parties.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 3 / 4

Because political parties tend to be weak, many opposition candidates prefer to register as independents. Consequently, these candidates are less able to draw on the sort of support or infrastructure associated with membership in a formal political party.

However, opposition and independent candidates run competitive campaigns in Abkhazia. The March 2017 elections saw victories for opposition candidates including Almas Japua, an opponent of Russian ownership of Abkhazian real estate. Outgoing government ministers lost seats. Despite initial fears that the Central Election Commission would refuse to register his candidacy, ousted president Aleksandr Ankvab returned to politics and gained a seat in parliament.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 2 / 4

While the citizenry's choices influence domestic politics, the functioning of Abkhazia's institutions are almost entirely dependent on economic and political support from Moscow. In 2017, 4.7 billion rubles (\$78 million) of the annual 5.4 billion ruble (\$90 million) budget was contributed by Moscow.

An EU report on human rights in Abkhazia, which EU authorities decided not to publish but whose authors released on their own accord, noted "a concern among some people that Abkhazia may be assimilated into the Russian space."

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 1 / 4

Under the constitution, only ethnic Abkhaz can be elected to the presidency. The ethnic Georgian population is routinely excluded from elections and political representation; in 2017, authorities argued that the majority of Gali's residents were Georgian citizens and therefore not permitted to vote. The Armenian and Russian communities traditionally have an informal agreement whereby parties nominate ethnic minority candidates in districts where they predominate. A handful of cabinet-level positions are held by women. However, societal norms discourage women from running for office.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 4 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 1 / 4**

While Abkhazia's president sets the tone for most domestic policy, the ability of elected authorities to set and implement policies is limited by the economic and political influence of Moscow. In 2017, Russia had several thousand troops permanently stationed in the territory. However, there has been significant pushback against a 2014 Russian-Abkhaz treaty, provisions of which critics say threaten Abkhazian autonomy. Separately, analysts have reported that the high number of independents in parliament lead to a lack of substantive policy debates.

Abkhazia entered 2017 after a tense standoff between opposition protesters and the government. A December 2016 agreement to stabilize the situation said that Khajimba would remain in power but nominate opponents to key posts in the constitutional court and electoral commission. In May, opposition leaders accused him of not fulfilling the terms of the agreement and declared a renewed political crisis.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

Corruption is believed to be extensive and is tolerated by the government, despite promises to combat it. In recent years, Russian officials have voiced concern at the large-scale embezzlement of funds provided by Moscow.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

Legal amendments from 2015 allow citizens to request information about any government decisions not classified as state secrets, and to receive a response within a month. Nevertheless, the territory's political culture is nontransparent, and social stigmas prevent citizens from requesting information. Government officials are not required to provide declarations of income.

In May 2017, the opposition sent an open letter demanding that Abkhazia's parliament have access to all information on the activities and funding of a new Abkhazia-Russia joint law enforcement center.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 41 / 60**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 8 / 16****D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4**

Broadcast media are largely controlled by the government, which operates the Abkhaz State Television and Radio Company (AGTRK). Abkhaz journalists have criticized AGTRK for failing to air material that could be perceived as unflattering to the government. Two state-owned newspapers compete with privately owned papers. The internet and social media have become increasingly popular sources of information. Some legal restrictions apply to both traditional and online media, including criminal libel statutes.

Major Russian television stations broadcast into Abkhazia, and residents of the Gali district have access to 20 Georgian channels. Many local publications have difficulty competing with Russian media.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 2 / 4

Orthodox Christianity is the dominant religion in Abkhazia, but the Georgian Orthodox Church faces discrimination and limitations. Most practicing people adhere to one of the branches of the Abkhazian Orthodox Church.

Muslims are allowed to practice freely, but some community leaders have been attacked in the past. Jehovah's Witnesses are banned by a 1995 decree.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 1 / 4

Russian- and Armenian-language schools generally operate without interference. However, Georgian-medium schools in Gali have been undergoing reorganization since 2015 in order to Russify them.

Universities in the capital have recently become more lenient about Gali Georgians without Abkhaz passports enrolling as students. Nevertheless, bureaucratic complications in obtaining a diploma still arise.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4

Social media has become a vibrant space for discussion on political and other topics. However, a number of taboos prompt self-censorship, especially relating to Georgians in Abkhazia and relations with Tbilisi.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 6 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 3 / 4

Freedom of assembly is largely respected, and opposition and civil society groups mount regular protests. In 2017, protests connected to the parliamentary elections took place without incident. In a sensitive case involving human rights in Russia, around 300 protesters demonstrated in September, demanding that Moscow respect the rights of ethnic Circassian activist Ruslan Gvashev. Violent confrontations between protesters and police have occurred in the past, however.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 2 / 4

Civil society, particularly groups representing Abkhazia's veterans, exerts influence on government policies. Several hundred nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are registered, though few are active. Many groups struggle to secure sustainable funding, in part because partnerships with foreign or international NGOs are complicated by Abkhazia's territorial status. NGOs that receive funding from governments or entities that do not recognize Abkhazia face criticism from journalists and authorities.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 1 / 4

Trade unions exist, but unions and labor activists have struggled to effectively defend the rights of workers.

F. RULE OF LAW: 4 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4

Nepotism and corruption, often based on clan and ethnic ties, reportedly have a significant impact on Abkhazia's judiciary. Implementation of judicial decisions remains inconsistent.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

The criminal justice system is undermined by limited defendant access to qualified legal counsel, violations of due process, and lengthy pretrial detentions.

In 2016, Abkhazian border guard Rashid Kandzhi-Ogly killed a Georgian internally displaced person, Giga Otkhozoria. A Georgian court sentenced Kandzhi-Ogly for murder in absentia. However, a Sukhumi court dismissed evidence provided by Tbilisi, and dropped all charges against Kandzhi-Ogly in June 2017.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 1 / 4

Isolated acts of criminal and political violence occurred across Abkhazia in 2017, and many observers concur that crime is increasing. In December, businessman Pavel Ardzinba was assassinated; Ardzinba had been implicated in one of several attempts on the life Aleksandr Ankvab. At least three Russian tourists were killed and several more were injured in attacks during the year. Prison facilities are insufficient.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

Ethnic Georgian residents of the Gali region continue to face discrimination. In April, Sukhumi began issuing residence permits to Gali Georgians for five-year renewable terms. Permit holders may retain Georgian citizenship, reside in Gali, and cross the border into Georgia proper. However, in July, the separatist authorities stated that they would grant Abkhazian citizenship to any Georgian willing to “rediscover their Abkhaz ethnic heritage.” Local officials warned Gali Georgians against attempting to hold both passports amidst complaints of bureaucratic hurdles in obtaining the residency permits.

LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people do not enjoy comprehensive legal protections.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 5 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 1 / 4

Travel and choice of residence are limited by the ongoing separatist dispute. Travel permits remain expensive and burdensome to obtain. About 90 percent of Abkhazia’s residents hold Russian passports, as Abkhaz travel documents are not internationally recognized.

In March 2017, separatist authorities closed two pedestrian crossing points over the Inguri River into territory controlled by the Georgian government, leaving just two such crossing points. This has created a burden on residents in border villages.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 1 / 4

The rise in criminal activity across Abkhazia has raised concerns among owners of small- and medium-sized businesses. Foreigners, including Russians, are barred from buying property in Abkhazia. Uncertainty continues over property rights for ethnic Georgians in Gali, whose residency permits do not allow them to officially own or inherit property. The legal status of properties of those expelled from Abkhazia during the 1990s continues to be fraught, as internally displaced persons cannot return to claim them.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Social mores in Abkhazia are conservative; taboos remain against “nontraditional” lifestyles, including homosexuality and gender nonconformity. A 2016 law banned abortions in all circumstances apart from prior fetal death.

NGOs have expressed concern about honor killings of young women. Domestic violence and rape are serious problems, and victims have few avenues for recourse.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

Equality of opportunity is limited by corruption, crime, and economic reliance on Russia. The EU human rights report on Abkhazia leaked in 2017 noted that complications arising from Abkhazia's unresolved status were viewed as a significantly harming economic opportunity.

In January, Abkhazia introduced a new labor code that makes employment contracts compulsory and fines employers who violate workers' rights. However, observers reported that in late 2017, not all workers were aware of their new rights, and implementation of the code was incomplete.

NGOs have expressed concern about human trafficking in Abkhazia.

Crimea

Population: 2,300,000

Political Rights Rating: 7

Civil Liberties Rating: 6

Freedom Rating: 6.5

Freedom Status: Not Free

Overview: In early 2014, Russian forces invaded the autonomous Ukrainian region of Crimea and quickly annexed it to the Russian Federation through a referendum that was widely condemned for violating international law. The occupation government severely limits political and civil rights, has silenced independent media, and employs antiterrorism and other laws against political dissidents. Members of the indigenous Crimean Tatar minority, many of whom vocally oppose the Russian occupation, have faced particularly acute repression by the authorities.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- The Office the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights issued a report on Crimea in September, accusing Russian authorities of numerous human rights violations—including arbitrary arrests and torture—since the occupation began in 2014.
- In April, the International Court of Justice in The Hague ruled that Russia must reverse its policies of discrimination against ethnic Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars, including suppression of Ukrainian-language education and a ban on the Mejlis, the official but nongovernmental representative body of the Crimean Tatar people. Nevertheless, these policies remained in place at year's end.
- Akhtem Chiygoz and Ilmi Umerov, deputy chairmen of the Mejlis, were sentenced to prison terms in September on charges of organizing mass riots and separatism, respectively. However, they were unexpectedly released in October and departed for Turkey and then Kyiv, joining other Crimean Tatar leaders in exile.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: -1 / 40**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 0 / 12****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4**

Under the administrative system established by Russia, the Crimean Peninsula is divided into the Republic of Crimea and the federal city of Sevastopol, a port of roughly 380,000 residents that had also been governed separately under Ukrainian control. Sevastopol's political institutions largely mirror those of Crimea proper.

The head of the Republic of Crimea is elected by its legislature, the State Council of Crimea, for up to two consecutive five-year terms. Lawmakers choose the leader based on a list of nominees prepared by the Russian president. In October 2014, they unanimously elected Sergey Aksyonov as the head of the republic, and he simultaneously served as prime minister. Aksyonov had been the acting leader of Crimea since February 2014, when a group of armed men forced legislators to elect him prime minister at gunpoint.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

The State Council consists of 75 members elected for a term of five years. Two-thirds of the members are elected by party list and one-third in single-member districts. Legislative elections under the Russian-organized Crimean constitution took place in September 2014. All of the parties allowed to participate supported the annexation, pro-Ukraine parties were excluded, and the Crimean Tatar minority boycotted the voting. The ruling party in Russia, United Russia, took 70 seats, and the ultranationalist LDPR (formerly known as the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia) secured the remainder. The elections received little international recognition.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 0 / 4

The Russian occupation authorities have tailored the electoral system to ensure maximum control by Moscow. Legislators electing the chief executive are limited to candidates chosen by the Russian president. In the legislative elections, legitimate opposition forces are denied registration before the voting begins, leaving voters with the choice of either abstaining or endorsing pro-Russian candidates.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 0 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 0 / 4**

Ukrainian political parties are not able to operate legally, allowing Russia's ruling party and other Kremlin-approved factions to dominate the political system. Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB), the local police, and "self-defense" units made up of pro-Russian residents use intimidation and harassment to eliminate any public criticism of the current government or Russia's annexation of Crimea.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 0 / 4

As in Russia, the authorities consistently crack down on opposition political activity, though the Crimean Tatars are the only organized group that has continued to voice dissent and openly oppose the Russian occupation. Many opposition figures have been jailed or

forced into exile. Ilmi Umerov, a Mejlis official who has vocally rejected the annexation, was convicted on separatism charges by Russian-appointed judges in Simferopol and sentenced to two years in prison in September 2017. He was unexpectedly released and left for Kyiv a month later, but activists reported that Russian authorities were holding 57 Crimean political prisoners—including Crimean Tatars and ethnic Ukrainians—on the peninsula or in Russia as of November.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 0 / 4

The current chief executive in Crimea was originally installed by Russian security forces, and subsequent elections have been carefully controlled by the Russian government. Among other abuses, during 2016 elections for the Russian parliament in Crimea, local activists reported that public- and private-sector workers were threatened with dismissal from their jobs if they failed to vote, and some municipal officials were pressured to attend a preelection rally for United Russia.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 0 / 4

Russia's occupation authorities deny full political rights to all Crimea residents, but ethnic Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars are regarded with particular suspicion and face greater persecution than their ethnic Russian counterparts. The headquarters of the 33-member Mejlis, the Crimean Tatars' representative body, was seized and closed by the authorities in 2014. The Mejlis's incumbent chairman, Refat Chubarov, and Crimean Tatar leader Mustafa Dzhemilev have been banned from the territory since then. In 2016, Crimea's Supreme Court formally banned the Mejlis, and the Russian Supreme Court confirmed the decision later the same year. In April 2017, the International Court of Justice ordered Russia to "refrain from maintaining or imposing limitations on the ability of the Crimean Tatar community to conserve its representative institutions, including the Mejlis." However, the Mejlis remained banned at year's end.

Women formally have equal political rights, but they remain underrepresented in leadership positions in practice, and government officials demonstrate little interest in or understanding of gender-equality issues. Women hold about a fifth of the seats in the State Council.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 0 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 0 / 4

All major policy decisions are made in Moscow and executed by Russian president Vladimir Putin's representatives in Crimea or the local authorities, who were not freely elected and are beholden to the Kremlin.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 0 / 4

Corruption is widespread in the territory, and some elements of the Russian-backed leadership, including Aksyonov, reputedly have ties to organized crime. In recent years, the FSB has arrested a number of Crimean officials as part of an ostensible campaign against graft; many of the arrests were related to allegations that local authorities embezzled Russian funds meant to support the occupation. However, infighting between Crimean and Russian officials has also been linked to competition for control of the peninsula's assets.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 0 / 4

With strict controls on the media and few other means of holding officials accountable, residents have little ability to gain information about the functioning of their government. Budget and financial processes are rarely made public in ways that would allow for significant input by civil society, which is itself subject to tight restrictions.

ADDITIONAL DISCRETIONARY POLITICAL RIGHTS QUESTION

Is the government or occupying power deliberately changing the ethnic composition of a country or territory so as to destroy a culture or tip the political balance in favor of another group? -1 / 0

Russian and local pro-Russian officials' policies and actions in Crimea have led to an influx of tens of thousands of Russian troops, additional civilian personnel, and their families. People displaced by fighting and deprivation in eastern Ukraine—home to many ethnic Russians—have also come to Crimea. At the same time, political persecution has led to an outflow of ethnic Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 10 / 60**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 3 / 16****D1. Are there free and independent media? 0 / 4**

Free speech is severely limited in Crimea. In addition to other restrictive Russian laws, a provision of the penal code prescribes up to five years in prison for public calls for action against Russia's territorial integrity, which has been interpreted to ban statements against the annexation, including in the media.

A 2015 reregistration process overseen by the Russian media and telecommunications regulator Roskomnadzor effectively reduced the number of media outlets in Crimea by more than 90 percent. The occupation authorities have cut the territory off from access to Ukrainian television, and Crimea's internet service providers must operate under Russia's draconian media laws. Independent and pro-Ukraine media no longer function openly on the peninsula, nor do outlets serving the Crimean Tatar community.

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty journalist Mykola Semena was sentenced in September 2017 to a suspended two-and-a-half-year jail term and a three-year ban on journalistic activity for criticizing Russia's occupation and annexation of Crimea and supporting a blockade of the peninsula. Crimea's Russian-controlled Supreme Court confirmed the sentence in December, but cut the ban on journalistic activity to two years.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 1 / 4

The occupation authorities have forced religious organizations to reregister. At the time of annexation, there were approximately 1,400 registered religious groups in Crimea and 674 additional communities operating without registration. As of September 2017, there were 818 locally registered religious organizations. In June, all 22 Jehovah's Witnesses congregations were deregistered after the Russian Supreme Court ruled that the group had violated laws against extremism. Mosques associated with the Crimean Tatars have been denied permission to register. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church did not reregister under Russian law; members face pressure from occupation authorities, who have confiscated some of the church's property.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 1 / 4

Schools must use the Russian state curriculum. Instruction in the Ukrainian language has been almost completely eliminated. In its April 2017 ruling, the International Court of Justice ordered Russia to ensure the availability of education in Ukrainian, but there was no sign during the year that this order would be implemented. Access to education in the Crimean Tatar language has been more stable, declining only slightly since 2014.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 1 / 4

The FSB reportedly encourages residents to inform on individuals who express opposition to the annexation, and a climate of fear and intimidation seriously inhibits private discussion of political matters. Social media comments are reportedly monitored by authorities. In July 2017, a Crimean Tatar man was sentenced to a year and three months in prison for a series of Facebook posts criticizing the occupation and the oppression of Crimean Tatars.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 1 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 0 / 4

Freedom of assembly is severely restricted. Public events cannot proceed without permission from the authorities, and the Crimean government lists only 366 locations where they can be held. Akhtem Chiyyoz, one of the Mejlis deputy chairmen, was sentenced to eight years in prison in September 2017 for “inciting a mass riot” by organizing protests in 2014; like Umerov, he was released in October and left for Kyiv. Also during the year, numerous Crimean Tatars were detained and punished for holding one-person protests. About 70 were tried in December for mounting such demonstrations in October to protest searches and arrests targeting their community, and at least 45 were ordered to pay fines.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 0 / 4

The de facto authorities, including the FSB, repress all independent political and civic organizations. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are subject to harsh Russian laws that enable state interference and obstruct foreign funding. In April 2017, a Russian military court sentenced Ruslan Zeytullayev to 12 years in prison based on claims that he had established a branch of the Islamist group Hizb ut-Tahrir in Crimea. The group is banned in Russia, but not in Ukraine. Zeytullayev and three other Crimean Tatars had previously been sentenced to prison terms of five to seven years for allegedly being members of the organization. The Russian Supreme Court further extended Zeytullayev’s sentence to 15 years in July.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 1 / 4

Trade union rights are formally protected under Russian law, but limited in practice. As in both Ukraine and Russia, employers are often able to engage in antiunion discrimination and violate collective-bargaining rights. Pro-Russian authorities have threatened to nationalize property owned by labor unions in Crimea.

F. RULE OF LAW: 0 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 0 / 4

Under Moscow’s rule, Crimea is subject to the Russian judicial system, which lacks independence and is effectively dominated by the executive branch. Russian laws bar dual citizenship for public officials, and Crimean judges were required to receive Russian citizenship in order to return to their positions after the annexation.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 0 / 4

Russia has replaced Ukrainian law with the laws of the Russian Federation, often using measures that were ostensibly adopted to fight terrorism, extremism, and separatism to restrict the liberty of regime opponents. Arbitrary arrests and detentions remain common, according to a September 2017 report from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and many detainees and prisoners have been transferred from occupied Crimea to Russia in violation of international law. In one prominent case, Ukrainian film director Oleh Sentsov, who actively opposed Russia's annexation of Crimea, and his codefendant, activist Oleksandr Kolchenko, both received lengthy prison sentences in 2015 and remained behind bars in Russia in 2017.

Lawyers who are willing to represent defendants in politically sensitive cases risk harassment by the authorities. In January 2017, attorneys representing Chygoz and Umerov were separately detained; while one was released after several hours, the other was sentenced to 10 days of administrative detention for a supposedly extremist social media post.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 0 / 4

The Russian occupation authorities have engaged in torture and other ill-treatment of detainees, according to the 2017 UN report. Enforced disappearances have also been documented; while most of the incidents occurred shortly after the occupation in 2014, between 10 and 20 people remained missing as of late 2017.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 0 / 4

In addition to official discrimination and harassment against ethnic Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars, women face de facto discrimination in the workplace, and the legal situation for LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people has grown worse under the Russian occupation. After 2014, Crimea became subject to Russia's 2013 law banning dissemination of information that promotes "nontraditional sexual relationships," which tightly restricts the activities of LGBT people and organizations.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 6 / 16**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 1 / 4**

The occupation authorities have sought to compel Crimea's residents to accept Russian citizenship and surrender their Ukrainian passports. Those who fail to do so face the threat of dismissal from employment, loss of property rights, inability to travel to mainland Ukraine and elsewhere, and eventual deportation as foreigners.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 1 / 4

Property rights are poorly protected, and the Russian annexation has resulted in a redistribution of assets in favor of Russian and pro-Russian entities. The property rights of deported Crimean Tatars who returned in the 1990s and built houses without permits are particularly vulnerable. During 2017, the Sevastopol authorities asked courts to approve the confiscation of 3,800 plots of land, mostly along the coast; judgements had been rendered in about 900 cases by October. The city claimed that the land was illegally transferred to private ownership in 2006–10.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Domestic violence remains a serious problem in Crimea, and Russian laws do not offer strong protections. In February 2017, Putin signed legislation that partly decriminalized domestic abuse, prescribing only small fines and short administrative detention for acts that do not cause serious injuries. Russian law does not recognize same-sex marriage or civil unions.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Economic opportunity has been impaired by various repercussions of the occupation, including international sanctions, restrictions on trade via mainland Ukraine, and reliance on trade with Russia despite the lack of a land connection. Residents' access to goods and services remains constrained, and vital industries like tourism and agriculture have stagnated.

As in both Ukraine and Russia, migrant workers, women, and children are vulnerable to trafficking for the purposes of forced labor or sexual exploitation.

Gaza Strip

Population: 1,753,000

Political Rights Rating: 7

Civil Liberties Rating: 6

Freedom Rating: 6.5

Freedom Status: Not Free

Note: The numerical ratings and status listed above do not reflect conditions in Israel or the West Bank, which are examined in separate reports. Prior to its 2011 edition, *Freedom in the World* featured one report for Israeli-occupied portions of the West Bank and Gaza Strip and another for Palestinian-administered portions.

Overview: The political rights and civil liberties of Gaza Strip residents are severely constrained by multiple layers of interference. Israel's de facto blockade of the territory, along with its periodic military incursions and rule of law violations, has imposed serious hardship on the civilian population, as has Egypt's tight control over the southern border. The Islamist political and militant group Hamas governs Gaza without democratic legitimacy, and its unresolved schism with the Palestinian Authority (PA) in the West Bank has contributed to legal confusion and repeated postponement of overdue elections.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Israel imposed tighter restrictions during the year on the movement of people and goods into and out of Gaza, including nongovernmental organization (NGO) and humanitarian workers, pushing the number of crossings to their lowest level since 2014—the year of the most recent major conflict between Hamas and Israeli forces.
- In June, Israel reduced the power supply to the Gaza Strip after the PA cut back its payments in what was seen as a bid to put political pressure on Hamas. Residents were left with just a few hours of electricity service per day for the remainder of the year, disrupting access to water and sanitation, among other problems.

- Hamas continued to persecute critical journalists and other perceived opponents during the year, and persisted in its application of the death penalty without due process.
- In October, Egypt brokered a reconciliation agreement between Hamas and the PA, raising the possibility of presidential and legislative elections across the Palestinian territories, but implementation of the deal had stalled by year's end due partly to disagreements about control over internal security in the Gaza Strip.
- Confrontations between Palestinian protesters and Israeli troops near the border fence escalated following the U.S. decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital in December, leading to several Palestinian fatalities.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 3 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 0 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

The PA has not held a presidential election since 2005, when the Fatah faction's Mahmoud Abbas won with 62 percent of the vote. Hamas seized control of the Gaza Strip in a violent rift with Fatah and the West Bank-based PA in 2007, and it has largely rejected Abbas's authority to date. Abbas's electoral mandate expired in 2009, though he continued to govern in the West Bank.

Under PA laws, the prime minister is nominated by the president and requires the support of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC). However, the PLC elected in 2006 was unable to function due to the break between Fatah and Hamas and Israel's detention of many lawmakers, and Hamas did not recognize Abbas's dismissal of Prime Minister Ismail Haniya in 2007. Despite repeated attempts to form new PA unity governments with Fatah, Hamas officials have exercised de facto executive authority in the Gaza Strip since then.

In February 2017, Yahya Sinwar was chosen in a closed election by Hamas members to serve as the head of government in Gaza. In October, Hamas and Fatah signed a renewed reconciliation agreement brokered by Egypt, but implementation remained stalled at year's end amid disputes over security responsibilities and other issues, and no schedule for presidential elections was set.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

The PA has not held elections for the 132-seat PLC since 2006, when Hamas won 74 seats and Fatah took 45. Although the two factions initially formed a unity government headed by Haniya of Hamas, the 2007 schism left that government and the PLC itself unable to function, and the legislature's mandate expired in 2010. Moreover, Israeli forces have repeatedly detained many PLC members since 2006, and up to 13 were in detention during 2017.

The PA held municipal council elections in the West Bank in May 2017, but Hamas refused to participate, and no voting was held in Gaza. The Gaza Strip was also excluded from the last municipal elections in 2012.

The 2017 reconciliation pact raised the prospect of new parliamentary elections, but no timetable had been established by year's end.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 0 / 4

Hamas officials implement the Palestinian Basic Law and PA electoral laws selectively, and no open elections for any office have been held in Gaza since 2006. Hamas refused to participate in the 2017 municipal elections on the grounds that the Fatah-led PA had organized them unilaterally and undermined national unity.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 2 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 1 / 4**

Since 2007, Gaza has functioned as a de facto one-party state under Hamas rule, though restrictions on Fatah are sometimes eased depending on the state of reconciliation talks. Smaller factions are also tolerated to varying degrees. In October 2017, not long before the signing of the reconciliation deal, West Bank–based PA prime minister Rami Hamdallah of Fatah was allowed to visit the Gaza Strip. Also during the year, Fatah and other groups were able to hold public demonstrations in support of Palestinian hunger strikers in Israeli prisons.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 0 / 4

The indefinite postponement of elections in Gaza has prevented any opportunities for a change in the political status quo. Implementation of the 2017 reconciliation agreement, which would have eventually led to elections, faltered in part over the issue of control over Gaza’s internal security, with Hamas seeking to retain its independent armed wing and a dominant security position in the territory despite a lack of political and legal legitimacy.

B3. Are the people’s political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 0 / 4

Israel’s ongoing blockade of Gaza continued to hamper the development of normal civilian political competition, partly by providing a pretext for most political factions to maintain armed wings, seek patronage from foreign powers with their own political agendas, and neglect basic governance concerns. During 2017, the West Bank–based PA reduced payments for electricity supplies and salaries for government employees in the Gaza Strip as part of an apparent effort to anger the public and increase political pressure on Hamas.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 1 / 4

Hamas makes little effort to address the rights of marginalized groups within Gazan society. Women enjoy formal political equality under PA laws, and some women won seats in the PLC in 2006. However, women are mostly excluded from leadership positions in Hamas and absent from public political events in practice. Gazan women do actively participate in civil society gatherings that touch on political issues. There were no meaningful openings in the highly repressive environment for LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people during 2017.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 1 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 0 / 4**

The expiration of the presidential and parliamentary terms has left Gaza's authorities with no electoral mandate, and in 2017 Hamas continued to govern unilaterally, including through its own ad hoc executive, legislative, and judicial bodies.

The ability of Palestinian officials to make and implement policy in Gaza is severely circumscribed by Israeli and Egyptian border controls, Israeli military actions, and the ongoing schism with the internationally recognized PA structure in the West Bank. Israel maintains a heavy security presence around Gaza's land and sea perimeters, using live fire to keep anyone from entering buffer zones near these boundaries, which further reduces local control over the territory.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

Hamas has been accused of corrupt practices related public services and its controls on the distribution of aid, which is crucial to daily life in Gaza given that about 80 percent of the population depends on international assistance due to the blockade. No new anticorruption safeguards were announced when PA officials deployed to the border crossings in November 2017 as part of the reconciliation deal.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 0 / 4

The Hamas-controlled government has no effective or independent mechanisms for ensuring transparency in its funding, procurements, or operations. It relies in large part on opaque foreign patronage, reportedly receiving increased support for its armed wing from Iran during 2017.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 9 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 4 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 0 / 4

The media are not free in Gaza. The Palestinian Center for Development and Media Freedoms (MADA) documented 35 press freedom violations by Palestinian authorities in Gaza during 2017, including eight arrests, several detentions and interrogations, and at least four physical attacks. In one prominent case, a Gaza court convicted journalist Hajar Abu Samra of libel for a television investigation of corruption in the health sector, issuing a sentence of six months in jail plus fines; she was tried secretly and in absentia while she sought cancer treatment in Jordan, and the verdict was suspended after an appeal. In addition to journalists, Hamas operatives have detained or harassed bloggers and well-known social media users for critical posts. Comedian and singer Adel al-Mashoukhi was detained in January when he posted complaints about Hamas on Facebook.

The Israeli blockade and Egyptian controls on the Rafah crossing generally restricted the movement of journalists into and out of Gaza.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 1 / 4

Freedom of religion is restricted. The PA Basic Law declares Islam to be the official religion of Palestine. Hamas authorities have enforced conservative Sunni Islamic practices and attempted to exert political control over mosques.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 1 / 4

Hamas has taken over the education system, aside from schools run by the United Nations, and has reportedly intervened in some cases to uphold its views on Islamic identity

and morality. Thousands of teachers have been subject to irregular pay as part of the broader financial problems affecting civil servants. Israeli and Egyptian restrictions on trade and travel limited access to educational materials and academic exchanges, and university students have difficulty leaving the territory to study abroad, due partly to exit-permit requirements imposed by Hamas.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 2 / 4

Intimidation by Hamas militants and other armed groups has some effect on open and free private discussion in Gaza, and the authorities monitor social media for critical content.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 3 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 1 / 4

Hamas significantly restricts freedom of assembly, with security forces violently dispersing unapproved public gatherings. In 2017, authorities allowed demonstrations to protest the blockade and other Israeli actions, as well as the U.S. decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital in December. Hamas tried to suppress protests triggered by the electricity crisis and other governance failures, but about 10,000 people reportedly participated in one particularly large demonstration in January.

Israeli forces regularly fire on demonstrations near the border fence, often resulting in casualties. In December 2017, Israeli fire killed at least seven people amid protests that included stone-throwing.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 1 / 4

There is a broad range of Palestinian NGOs and civic groups, and Hamas operates a large social-services network. However, Hamas has restricted the activities of aid organizations that do not submit to its regulations, and many civic associations have been shut down for political reasons since the 2007 PA split. Aid and reconstruction efforts after the 2014 conflict with Israel have been held up in part by disagreements over international and PA access to the territory and control over border crossings. In April 2017, Human Rights Watch released a report detailing tighter Israeli restrictions on access to Gaza for human rights researchers and NGO staff in recent years.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 1 / 4

Independent labor unions in Gaza continue to function, and PA workers have staged strikes against Hamas-led management. The Fatah-aligned Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions, the largest union body in the territories, has seen its operations curtailed. It still negotiates with employers to resolve labor disputes, but workers have little leverage due to the dire economic situation, extremely high unemployment, and the dysfunctional court system, which impedes enforcement of labor protections.

F. RULE OF LAW: 0 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 0 / 4

The laws applied in the Gaza Strip derive from Ottoman, British Mandate, Jordanian, Egyptian, PA, and Islamic law, as well as Israeli military orders. Hamas maintains an ad hoc judicial system that is separate from the PA structures. The system is subject to political control, and Palestinian judges lack proper training and experience.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 0 / 4

Hamas security forces and militants continued to carry out arbitrary arrests and detentions in 2017. The court system overseen by Hamas generally failed to ensure due process, and in some cases civilians are subject to trial by special military courts.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 0 / 4

The Hamas-led authorities persisted in their application of the death penalty without due process or adequate opportunity for appeals, and without the legally required approval from the PA president. A total of 16 death sentences were issued during 2017, and three suspects in the assassination of a Hamas commander in March were executed in May after a short military trial.

There were 320 Palestinian security detainees and prisoners from Gaza in Israeli prisons as of November 2017, according to the Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem, which notes that transporting prisoners outside of occupied territory is a breach of international law. The inmates' contact with family members is extremely limited.

B'Tselem reported that Israeli forces killed a total of 22 Palestinians in Gaza during 2017, including civilian protesters near the border fence and at least one fisherman in coastal waters. Some deaths also resulted from Israeli air strikes and exchanges of fire with Gaza-based militants, who launch rockets into Israel sporadically.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 0 / 4

The legal system operating in Gaza offers few protections against harassment and discrimination for women and other vulnerable groups, including LGBT people. Laws dating to the British Mandate authorize up to 10 years in prison for sexual acts between men.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 2 / 16**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 0 / 4**

Freedom of movement for Gaza residents is severely restricted, and conditions have continued to worsen in recent years. Both Israel and Egypt exercised tight control over border areas in 2017, and Hamas imposed its own restrictions, for example by temporarily shutting down the Erez crossing point in response to the assassination of a Hamas commander in March. Hamas allowed PA officials to deploy to Gaza's border crossings in November, but this apparently did not lead to any change in freedom of movement in practice. Overall in 2017, the average number of people crossing between Gaza and Israel each month fell to its lowest level since 2014—the year of the most recent major conflict between Hamas and Israeli forces. The Rafah border crossing with Egypt was opened only sporadically during 2017.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 1 / 4

Roughly 20,000 homes were destroyed or rendered uninhabitable, and nearly 500,000 people were displaced during the 2014 conflict. Only a fraction of the damaged or destroyed homes had been reconstructed by the end of 2017. Agricultural exports via Israel increased during the year, aiding local producers, but Israeli bans on imports of many raw materials continued to impair other forms of private enterprise in Gaza.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 1 / 4

Palestinian laws and societal norms, derived in part from Sharia (Islamic law), put women at a disadvantage in matters such as marriage and divorce. Rape and domestic violence remain underreported and frequently go unpunished, as authorities are allegedly reluctant to pursue such cases. So-called honor killings reportedly continue to occur, though information on the situation in Gaza is limited. The Hamas authorities have enforced restrictions on personal attire and behavior that they deem immoral.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 0 / 4

The blockade of the Gaza Strip's land borders and coastline has greatly reduced economic opportunity in the territory. The unemployment rate, at about 43 percent, remained among the highest in the world in 2017. Israel's intermittent restrictions on the entry of construction materials have hampered the economy. Israeli forces also prevent farming near the border fence and limit Gazan fishermen's access to coastal waters. Hamas has imposed price controls and other rules that may further dampen economic activity. A report released by the United Nations in July 2017 found that the deterioration of living conditions in Gaza was accelerating. In June, Israel reduced the power supply to the Gaza Strip after the PA cut back its payments; residents were left with just a few hours of electricity service per day for the remainder of the year, disrupting access to water and sanitation, among other problems.

↓ Hong Kong

Population: 7,400,000

Political Rights Rating: 5

Civil Liberties Rating: 2

Freedom Rating: 3.5

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Trend Arrow: Hong Kong received a downward trend arrow due to the expulsion of four prodemocracy lawmakers from the legislature, jail sentences against protest leaders, and other apparent efforts by pro-Beijing authorities to stamp out a movement calling for local self-determination.

Overview: The people of Hong Kong, a special administrative region of China, have traditionally enjoyed substantial civil liberties and the rule of law under their local constitution, the Basic Law. However, the chief executive and half of the Legislative Council are chosen through indirect electoral systems that favor pro-Beijing interests, and the territory's freedoms and autonomy have come under threat in recent years due to growing political and economic pressure from the mainland.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- A July ruling by the High Court removed four prodemocracy and localist members of the Legislative Council (Legco) from their posts on the grounds that they had improperly altered their oaths of office after winning election in 2016. In August, the Court of Final Appeal upheld the earlier disqualification of two other would-be lawmakers for similar reasons.

- In an unusual move in August, an appellate court granted prosecutors' request to revisit the 2016 convictions of three student leaders of the 2014 Umbrella Movement protests, increasing their sentences from community service to six to eight months in prison.
- Space for academic freedom continued to shrink as Hong Kong universities issued a joint statement in September to condemn student expressions of support for Hong Kong's political independence from the mainland.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 15 / 40 (-1)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 2 / 12 (-1)

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

Under 2010 electoral reforms, the chief executive, who serves a five-year term, is chosen by a 1,200-member election committee. Some 200,000 "functional constituency" voters—representatives of elite business and social sectors, many with close Beijing ties—elect 900 of the committee's members, and the remaining 300 consist of Legco members, Hong Kong delegates to China's National People's Congress (NPC), religious representatives, and Hong Kong members of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), a Chinese government advisory body.

In March 2017, Carrie Lam, a former deputy to outgoing chief executive Leung Chun-ying and Beijing's favored candidate, was chosen as Hong Kong's fourth—and first female—chief executive, with 777 election committee votes. Her main opponent, former financial secretary John Tsang, received just 365 votes despite drawing far more support than Lam in public opinion polls. As in the past, the selection process featured reports of heavy lobbying by central government representatives.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4 (-1)

Of the Legco's 70 seats, 30 are elected by functional constituency voters, 35 are chosen through direct elections in five geographical constituencies, and the remaining five are directly elected after nominations by Hong Kong's 18 district councils from among their own members. Members serve four-year terms.

In the September 2016 elections, a growing movement emphasizing localism and self-determination emerged to compete with existing pro-Beijing and prodemocracy camps. Candidates from this movement, which grew out of the 2014 Umbrella Movement, captured six seats. Other prodemocracy parties took 23 seats, while pro-Beijing parties won 40; an independent took the remaining seat.

In October 2016, after several localist and prodemocracy Legco members altered their oaths of office as a form of protest, the oaths of two newly elected localists—*Sixtus Baggio Leung Chung-hang* and *Yau Wai-ching*—were rejected. The NPC in Beijing issued an unusual Basic Law interpretation in November, requiring oaths to be taken "sincerely and solemnly," and the High Court then affirmed the two representatives' disqualifications. In August 2017, Hong Kong's Court of Final Appeal upheld the decision.

In July 2017, a court granted the government's request to remove four other Legco members who made political statements during their 2016 swearing-in ceremonies—localist-affiliated Nathan Law Kwun-chung and Lau Siu-lai, along with the prodemocracy politicians Edward Yiu Chung-yim and Leung Kwok-hung—even though their oaths had been accepted by the Legco at the time. In September 2017, Lau and Leung indicated their intent to appeal the decision, meaning by-elections to fill their seats would be postponed.

By-elections for the remaining four seats left vacant by oath-related disqualifications were scheduled for March 2018.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 due to the expulsion of four opposition members from the legislature and the confirmation of two earlier disqualifications as part of an effort by the authorities to stamp out a movement calling for local self-determination.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 1 / 4

While universal suffrage is the “ultimate aim” under the Basic Law, only incremental changes to the electoral system have been permitted to date. Moreover, the system, which already favored pro-Beijing interests and prevented direct elections for many offices, has grown more hostile to dissenting views in recent years. Prior to the 2016 Legco elections, the Electoral Affairs Commission (EAC) required all candidates to attest in writing to their belief that Hong Kong is unquestionably a part of China, based on certain Basic Law provisions. The EAC invalidated the nominations of six localist candidates for failure to comply, preventing them from running. The NPC’s November 2016 Basic Law interpretation concerning “sincerity” and “solemnity” in oath-taking appears to bolster the EAC’s authority to block future candidates on similar grounds.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 7 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 2 / 4

Hong Kong residents’ political choices are limited by the semidemocratic electoral system, which ensures the dominance of pro-Beijing parties and candidates. Some 18 political parties are currently represented in the Legco. The largest pro-Beijing party is the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong. The main parties in the prodemocracy camp are the Civic Party and the Democratic Party, and key localist groupings include Youngspiration and Civic Passion. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is not formally registered in Hong Kong but exercises considerable influence. In 2016, the Hong Kong Companies Registry refused to register the new Hong Kong National Party on the grounds that its proindependence platform constituted illegal activity.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 1 / 4

Prodemocracy legislators have historically enjoyed substantial minority representation alongside their pro-Beijing counterparts. However, the EAC’s disqualification of some localist candidates for the 2016 Legco elections, and the subsequent ouster of six other prodemocracy candidates who won seats—including two who were not associated with the localist movement—demonstrated the limits of Beijing’s tolerance for movements that threaten its influence. The subjective nature of the NPC’s “sincere” and “solemn” standard for oath-taking raised the possibility of further disqualifications and a broader chilling effect on opposition politics.

B3. Are the people’s political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 1 / 4

The CCP leadership in Beijing exerts a powerful influence on politics in Hong Kong through a variety of channels, including the NPC's ability to issue interpretations of the Basic Law, the cooptation of Hong Kong business leaders through their mainland assets and membership in the NPC or CPPCC, and lobbying or harassment of election committee members and other political figures to ensure favorable electoral outcomes.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4

While there are no restrictions on women or ethnic minorities voting or running for office, just 12 women and no ethnic minority candidates were elected to the Legco in 2016. Hong Kong's first and only openly gay Legco member, initially elected in 2012, was reelected in 2016.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 6 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 1 / 4

Directly elected officials have little ability to set and implement government policies under the territory's political system, and mainland authorities are highly influential. The Basic Law restricts the Legco's lawmaking powers, prohibiting legislators from introducing bills that would affect Hong Kong's public spending, governmental operations, or political structure.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 3 / 4

Hong Kong is regarded as having generally low corruption rates, and some high-ranking officials have been successfully prosecuted for graft-related offenses in the past. However, residents perceive the government to be lagging in the fight against corruption. The Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) has been criticized for failing to appoint a permanent head of operations since 2016; the last official in that post was dismissed in the middle of an investigation into then chief executive Leung, stirring discontent among the ICAC staff.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

Hong Kong has no freedom of information (FOI) law. Although an administrative code—the Code of Access to Information—is intended to ensure open access to government records, it includes broad exemptions and official adherence is inconsistent, prompting local journalists and watchdog groups to urge the government to give freedom of information requirements the force of law. The Law Reform Commission has been studying the subject since 2013, but it had yet to issue any reports as of 2017.

Consultations between Hong Kong officials and the Beijing government, represented by a Liaison Office in the territory, are largely opaque, leaving the extent of Beijing's influence on the local government's decisions unclear to the public.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 44 / 60 (-1)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 12 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4

The Basic Law protects press freedom. Residents have access to a variety of print, broadcast, and digital news sources, and foreign media generally operate without interference. The mainland's internet censorship regime does not apply in Hong Kong. However, in recent years the Hong Kong and Chinese governments, alongside businesses with close

Beijing ties, have increased political and economic pressure on media independence, resulting in self-censorship among journalists. Journalists have also faced physical assaults in the course of or in retaliation for their work, and the detention of five Hong Kong booksellers by mainland authorities in late 2015 has had a chilling effect on the territory's previously freewheeling book-publishing business.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4

Religious freedom is generally respected in Hong Kong.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 2 / 4

University professors can generally write and lecture freely, and political debate on campuses is lively. However, a series of incidents in recent years have stoked concerns about growing interference by the Hong Kong government and mainland authorities with Hong Kong's colleges and universities. For example, a controversy in 2016 centered on the chief executive's appointment of a pro-Beijing official to lead the governing council of the University of Hong Kong. Separately, in September 2017, student posters and signs calling for Hong Kong's independence from mainland China appeared across university campuses, causing an uproar among mainland and pro-China students and scholars. In response, the heads of all 10 Hong Kong universities issued a joint statement condemning the signs and posters as "abuses" of the Basic Law and declaring that "freedom of expression is not absolute." At least some of the universities ordered the removal of the displays.

Government-led revisions of history curriculums and textbooks, and attempts to instill Chinese patriotism over the past decade, have stirred accusations of a pro-Beijing agenda in primary and secondary education, but such efforts typically face resistance from educators and the public.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

Private discussion is open and free, though mainland security agencies are suspected of monitoring the communications of prodemocracy activists.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 8 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 2 / 4

The Basic Law guarantees freedom of assembly. The Public Order Ordinance requires organizers to give police seven days' notice before protests and to obtain official assent, which is rarely denied. However, developments surrounding the 2014 Umbrella Movement protests have raised concerns that the government is growing less tolerant of political demonstrations, particularly by groups calling for greater democracy, self-determination, or independence for Hong Kong. Increased use of baton charges, pepper spray, and arrests by police as they attempted to break up that year's protest camps drew criticism, and the encampments also faced assaults by counterdemonstrators, many of whom were later found to have links with criminal gangs.

While most of the hundreds of protesters arrested in 2014 were quickly released, dozens were officially charged with unlawful assembly and related offenses. In 2016, student leaders Joshua Wong, Nathan Law, and Alex Chow were found guilty of charges including "taking part in an unlawful assembly" and "inciting others to take part in an unlawful

assembly” and sentenced to penalties ranging from community service to a suspended three-week jail term.

In August 2017, following a rare government appeal seeking harsher punishments, the three received sentences of six to eight months in jail, with the Court of Appeal instructing lower courts to give greater weight to the need for deterrence when considering similar cases in the future. The Court of Appeal also imposed five-year bans from public office on the defendants. Wong, Law, and Chow were later released on bail pending a review by the Court of Final Appeal, with a hearing scheduled for 2018. Also in August, in a case related to a separate 2014 protest, the Court of Appeal similarly increased the penalties against 13 defendants from community service to between eight and 13 months in jail following an appeal by prosecutors. Other cases related to the events of 2014 were still making their way through the legal system.

While a number of assemblies, including an annual vigil marking the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre in June, proceeded without incident during 2017, others encountered obstacles. In July, a small group of demonstrators protesting the 1997 handover of Hong Kong from Britain to China was attacked by a pro-Beijing mob and forcibly removed by police.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Hong Kong hosts a vibrant and largely unfettered nongovernmental organization (NGO) sector, including a number of groups that focus on human rights in mainland China.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

Trade unions are independent, but collective-bargaining rights are not recognized, and protections against antiunion discrimination are weak.

F. RULE OF LAW: 11 / 16 (-1)

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 2 / 4

The judiciary is largely independent, but the NPC reserves the right to make final interpretations of the Basic Law, limiting the independence of the Court of Final Appeal. The NPC’s 2016 interpretation regarding oaths of office was unusual in a number of respects, particularly the fact that it was issued without a request from the Hong Kong government and before the local courts had ruled on the matter in question. It was therefore seen as a blow to the autonomy of the territory’s legal system. Critics also noted that the interpretation introduced subjective concepts like “sincerity” and “solemnity” that could lead to politicized enforcement.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 3 / 4 (-1)

The courts generally adjudicate civil and criminal matters fairly and efficiently. However, the Court of Appeal’s August 2017 decisions to reconsider and substantially increase the penalties handed down to 2014 protesters in response to unusual government requests raised serious concerns about political motivation and due process protections. In seeking jail terms in the cases, Justice Secretary Rimsky Yuen had reportedly overruled the recommendations of several senior prosecutors in his department.

In another questionable case, police filed charges in March 2017 against nine organizers of the 2014 protest movement, including the three regarded as its founders: academics Benny Tai Yiu-ting and Chan Kin-man, and Baptist minister Chu Yiu-ming. The charges, which carried penalties of up to seven years in prison, came immediately after Lam was elected as chief executive, leading observers to speculate that the case had been delayed

to avoid harming her candidacy. Defense lawyers challenged the constitutionality of the charges, which included claims that the defendants had “incited others to incite public nuisance,” meaning they were twice removed from the core offense. A preliminary decision on the matter was pending at year’s end.

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 due to multiple cases against protest leaders in which the timing, nature, or severity of the charges and penalties sought by authorities apparently violated legal norms and raised suspicions of political motivation.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 3 / 4

Police are forbidden by law to employ torture, disappearance, and other forms of abuse. They generally respect this ban in practice, and complaints of abuse are investigated. For example, in February 2017, seven police officers were sentenced to two years in prison for beating a protester in an incident that was captured on video in 2014.

However, the 2015 disappearances of five Hong Kong booksellers into police custody on the mainland continue to cast doubt on the local government’s capacity to protect residents from abuses by Chinese authorities. One of the five, Lee Bo, was allegedly seized in Hong Kong and smuggled across the border to the mainland. He and three others were eventually released, but they reportedly faced surveillance and harassment; the fifth, Swedish citizen Gui Minhui, remained in some form of detention on the mainland in 2017. Separately, in January 2017, Chinese billionaire Xiao Jianhua was apparently abducted by Chinese officials from a Hong Kong hotel and escorted across the border to the mainland.

In December, Hong Kong and mainland officials reached agreement on an improved reciprocal notification system for detentions of their respective residents, pledging to inform each other within seven working days when a resident is arrested, detained, or prosecuted on minor charges, or when residents suffer unnatural deaths. Notification periods of 14 days and 30 days would apply to more serious criminal cases and cases involving terrorism or national security, respectively.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

Citizens are generally treated equally under the law, though South Asian minorities face language barriers and de facto discrimination in education and employment. Women are also subject to some employment discrimination in practice. Antidiscrimination laws do not specifically protect LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people.

Roughly 9,000 asylum seekers were thought to be in Hong Kong as of 2017, mostly from South or Southeast Asia. While the government does not accept refugees for settlement, it does offer protection from refoulement, and those deemed eligible can be referred to UN officials for third-country resettlement. Some applicants reportedly wait as long as 10 years for resolution of their cases, and only a tiny percentage of claims are approved. Asylum seekers are not permitted to work and receive small cash allowances.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 13 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4

Hong Kong residents generally enjoy freedom of movement, though authorities periodically deny entry to visiting political activists and Falun Gong practitioners, raising

suspicious of Beijing-imposed restrictions. Some Hong Kong activists and politicians have also faced difficulty traveling to the mainland.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 3 / 4

While property rights are largely respected, collusion among powerful business entities with political connections is perceived as an impediment to fair competition.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 4 / 4

Hong Kong residents are legally protected from rape and domestic abuse, and police generally respond appropriately to reports of such crimes. Men and women enjoy equal rights in personal status matters such as marriage and divorce.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 3 / 4

Hong Kong's roughly 330,000 foreign household workers are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. Since they may face deportation if dismissed, many are reluctant to bring complaints against employers. There have been reports of abuses against sex workers by law enforcement officers.

Indian Kashmir

Population: 12,500,000

Political Rights Rating: 4

Civil Liberties Rating: 4

Freedom Rating: 4.0

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: Control of Kashmir has been divided between India and Pakistan since 1948, and Indian-administered Kashmir enjoys substantial autonomy under Article 370 of India's constitution. However, separatist and jihadist militants continue to wage a protracted insurgency against the government. Competitive elections are held, but they are often marred by violence. Indian security forces are frequently accused of human rights violations, but few are punished. Civil liberties are curtailed, particularly during times of unrest.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- The security situation continued to deteriorate, with the deaths of some 200 militants, 75 police officers and soldiers, and at least 40 civilians marking the region's most violent year since 2010.
 - In July, violent clashes occurred and curfews were imposed on the anniversary of the death of a popular separatist militant leader who was killed by Indian security forces in 2016.
 - In April, in response to ongoing street demonstrations, authorities instituted a block on more than 20 social media sites, which lasted about a month.
 - An April by-election for a seat in the Indian parliament was accompanied by separatist calls for a boycott and election-related violence, and saw just 7 percent
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turnout. A second by-election scheduled for May was suspended due to ongoing unrest.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 22 / 40**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 9 / 12****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4**

A chief minister—typically the head of the largest party in the lower house—is entrusted with executive power. The process for selecting the executive is an internal party matter. Mehbooba Mufti, president of the ruling People’s Democratic Party (PDP), became the state’s first female chief minister in 2016, following the death of Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, her father.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

Elections for national parliamentary seats and the state assembly in 2014 were broadly free and fair, with reduced levels of voter intimidation, harassment, and violence compared with past elections. However, in the April 2014 national elections, turnout was less than 40 percent in all districts in the Kashmir Valley due in part to threats of violence. State assembly elections held in November and December 2014 were marked by higher turnout.

A by-election held in April 2017 was held amid heightened tensions related to activism by separatists, who called for a boycott of the polls. Despite a heavy security presence, several people were killed in election-related violence, including attacks on polling stations. Turnout was just 7 percent. A by-election for a national parliament seat, scheduled for May, was canceled due to ongoing insecurity.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4

The legal framework governing elections is broadly perceived as fair. Elections are overseen by the Election Commission of India, a well-respected and largely independent body. However, intimidation of election workers and electoral authorities by militant groups can interfere with the orderly implementation of electoral laws and regulations.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 9 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 2 / 4**

The state is governed under a multiparty system. While new political parties must register with the Electoral Commission, parties may generally form freely, and there are mechanisms by which independent candidates may stand for office. However, normal party politics are often disrupted by militant violence, intimidation, and separatist boycotts. Moreover, parties are heavily dynastic, making it difficult for independent candidates and less established outsiders to gain political influence.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 3 / 4

For more than a decade, state-level power has rotated between the two largest Kashmiri parties, the PDP, and the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference (JKNC). The ruling

coalition formed by the PDP and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in early 2015 marked the first time that the Hindu nationalist BJP entered government in this Muslim-majority state.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 2 / 4

Militant violence, intimidation, and separatist boycotts negatively affect the ability of people in many areas to assert their right to participate in political processes.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 2 / 4

The state constitution allows all permanent residents over 18 the right to vote in state assembly elections. However, refugees from Pakistan are not entitled to permanent residency rights, and may not vote in state elections. They may vote in parliamentary elections.

While Kashmir's chief minister is a woman, women are generally underrepresented in politics.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 4 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 2 / 4

India has never held a referendum on allowing Kashmiri self-determination, as called for in a 1948 UN resolution. However, Jammu and Kashmir enjoys substantial autonomy under Article 370 of India's constitution. All laws passed by the Indian parliament, except those related to defense, foreign affairs, and financial matters, require the assent of the Kashmiri legislature to come into force in the state.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

Corruption in Jammu and Kashmir is widespread, and while the government has taken some steps to combat it, these have yet to bring about lasting improvements. A 2011 law established an anticorruption commission with far-reaching investigatory powers. The commission has processed more than a thousand complaints since the first commissioners were appointed in 2013, and has filed a handful of bribery charges against public officials. However, few corruption cases result in convictions.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 1 / 4

The government of Mehbooba Mufti has asserted a commitment to transparency, and has introduced some systems to increase accountability among public-sector workers. However, the state administration generally operates with opacity.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 27 / 60 (-1)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 9 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4

Print media thrive in Jammu and Kashmir, and online media have proliferated, providing new platforms for public discussion. However, threats of government reprisal, including the detention of journalists under the Public Safety Act, continue to intimidate the media. Journalists also face threats from militant groups.

In December 2017, French documentary filmmaker Comiti Paul Edwards was arrested while taking footage for a documentary about people injured by the use of pellet guns at

demonstrations. He was released on bail in late December, having apparently been charged with violating the provisions of his business visa.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 2 / 4

Freedom of worship is generally respected by the authorities. However, communal violence between Muslims and Hindus periodically flares up, and many have been injured and killed as a result. In January 2017, more than 20 people were killed in clashes between Muslims and Hindus. In July, seven Hindu pilgrims were killed when their tour bus became caught in a shootout between militants and security forces. The annual pilgrimage event, the Amarnath Yatra, was considered sensitive and had reportedly drawn militant threats before it took place.

Separately, a ban against Muharram processions, which take place during a Shia period of mourning at the Islamic New Year, has been upheld for decades.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 2 / 4

Academic freedom is often circumscribed. Authorities monitor the research produced at Kashmiri universities, and a combination of official and self-censorship discourages students and professors from pursuing sensitive topics of inquiry. Colleges and universities were closed for over half of 2016 owing to unrest. Further closures took place in 2017.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4

While private discussion is often robust, fear of reprisals by government or militant forces can serve as a deterrent to uninhibited speech. Free expression was seriously curbed between April and May 2017, when the government issued a sweeping clampdown on social media; 22 platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp, were blocked. Mobile internet services were also suspended. Two UN special representatives deemed the actions “collective punishment” against the people of Kashmir and Jammu.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 5 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 1 / 4

Freedom of assembly is frequently restricted during times of unrest. Requests for permits for public gatherings submitted by the separatist All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) are often denied. Separatist leaders are frequently arrested prior to planned demonstrations. Curfews were repeatedly imposed in parts of the state in 2017 in response to unrest and militant violence. Thousands of protesters defied a curfew in May to attend the funeral of Sabzar Ahmad Bhat, a commander killed by Indian security forces.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 2 / 4

Although local and national civil rights groups are permitted to operate, they are sometimes harassed by security forces. The separatist APHC is technically allowed to function, but its leaders are frequently subjected to short-term detention.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

Although workers have the right to form unions and engage in collective bargaining under Indian law, protection of union rights in Kashmir are inconsistently enforced.

F. RULE OF LAW: 5 / 16 (-1)**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4**

Courts are politicized, and act as an extension of Indian executive and military authority. The government and security forces frequently disregard court orders.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 2 / 4

The courts in Jammu and Kashmir, already facing large backlogs of cases, are further hampered by intermittent lawyers' strikes.

Broadly written legislation, such as the unpopular Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) and the Disturbed Areas Act, allow security forces to search homes and arrest suspects without a warrant, shoot suspects on sight, and destroy buildings believed to house militants or arms. Under the AFSPA, prosecutions of security personnel cannot proceed without the approval of the central government, which is rarely granted. The state's Public Security Act allows detention without charge or trial for up to two years, though 2012 amendments barred the detention of minors under the law.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 1 / 4 (-1)

Indian security personnel have continued to carry out arbitrary arrests and detentions, torture, forced disappearances, and custodial killings of suspected militants and their alleged civilian sympathizers, and generally enjoy impunity.

Militant groups based in Pakistan have killed pro-India politicians, public employees, suspected informers, members of rival factions, soldiers, and civilians. The militants also engage in kidnapping, extortion, and other forms of intimidation in Jammu and Kashmir. After several years of relative stability, the situation in the state deteriorated sharply in 2016 after the killing of Burhan Muzaffar Wani, a popular separatist militant leader. The situation worsened in 2017, when more than 300 civilians, security personnel, and militants were killed in militant-related violence.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 due to an increase in militant-related violence during the year.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

A pattern of violence targeting Pandits, or Kashmiri Hindus, has forced several hundred thousand Hindus to flee their homes in the region over the years, and many continue to reside in refugee camps. Other religious and ethnic minorities, such as Sikhs and Gurjars, have been targeted in the past, but such reports have been less frequent in recent years.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 8 / 16**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 2 / 4**

Freedom of movement is curtailed by both state and federal authorities. Curfews were repeatedly imposed in parts of the state in 2017 in response to unrest and militant violence. Thousands of protesters defied a curfew in May to attend the funeral of Sabzar Ahmad Bhat, a commander killed by Indian security forces.

While the Indian government has loosened restrictions on the travel of foreigners to some areas within Jammu and Kashmir, internal movement is disrupted by roadblocks,

checkpoints, and periodic protest-related shutdowns or curfews. Kashmiri residents face delays of up to two years to obtain and renew passports due to heightened levels of scrutiny.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

Property rights are undermined by displacement and military activity related to the conflict, and the regulatory environment constrains the establishment and operation of new businesses. While Jammu and Kashmir permanent residents can exercise property rights, outsiders are prohibited from acquiring property in the state.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Women face some societal discrimination as well as domestic violence and other forms of abuse. Female civilians continue to be subjected to harassment, intimidation, and violent attacks, including rape and murder, at the hands of both the security forces and militant groups.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

Affirmative action in areas such as employment exists for members of several marginalized social groups. Child labor is reportedly prevalent in the region, but the government has taken few steps to combat it.

Nagorno-Karabakh

Population: 146,600

Political Rights Rating: 5

Civil Liberties Rating: 5

Freedom Rating: 5.0

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Overview: Nagorno-Karabakh, also known as Artsakh, has enjoyed de facto independence from Azerbaijan since 1994, when it reached a cease-fire agreement with Azerbaijani forces following a six-year war, though its independence is not internationally recognized. The territory's population is mostly ethnic Armenian, and it retains close political, economic, and military ties with Armenia. The tense security situation, with regular cease-fire violations and an ongoing threat of war, has had a negative effect on political rights and civil liberties and provided authorities with a pretext to consolidate their own power.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Exchanges of fire across the Line of Contact (LoC) continued during the year, resulting in small numbers of fatalities on both sides.
- In February, referendum voters overwhelmingly approved constitutional changes that replaced the territory's semipresidential system with a fully presidential structure, combining the roles of head of state and head of government. Some irregularities were reported.
- Despite earlier assurances that an extension of incumbent president Bako Sahakyan's tenure was not on the agenda, the parliament voted in July to retain

him as president for a transitional three-year period, after which the terms of the president and parliament would be concurrent under the revised constitution.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 12 / 40 (-3)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 4 / 12 (-2)

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4 (-1)

Under the constitutional system in place at the beginning of 2017, the president was directly elected for up to two five-year terms and appointed the prime minister. President Sahakyan, the incumbent since 2007, was reelected in 2012 with 66.7 percent of the vote. His main opponent, former deputy defense minister Vitaly Balasanyan, received 32.5 percent. The two main candidates had nearly identical foreign-policy goals—primarily, achieving international recognition of Nagorno-Karabakh’s independence—though Balasanyan also focused on social justice and accused the government of tolerating corruption and fiscal mismanagement. Balasanyan claimed that administrative resources were misused to aid Sahakyan during the campaign.

In accordance with changes to the constitution that were approved in a February 2017 referendum, the parliament was obliged to elect a transitional president who would hold office until the expiration of the current parliament’s term, so that the presidential and parliamentary terms would be concurrent after 2020. Sahakyan, whose second term was coming to an end, was elected as transitional president in July with 28 votes in the 33-seat chamber, far more than the two-thirds majority required to win in the first round. He defeated Eduard Agabekyan, leader of the opposition party Movement 88.

Under the new constitution, the president was both head of state and head of government, with full authority to appoint and dismiss cabinet members. After Sahakyan was inaugurated in September, the office of prime minister was abolished.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 due to constitutional changes that permitted incumbent president Bako Sahakyan to serve beyond the two-term limit through an indirect election by the parliament.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4

Of the unicameral National Assembly’s 33 members, 11 are elected through single-mandate constituencies and 22 by party list. The most recent parliamentary elections were held in 2015. Seven parties participated, and five passed the threshold to gain seats. The Free Motherland (Azat Hayrenik) party maintained its dominant position in the legislature, winning 15 seats. The Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF)—Dashnaktsutyun and the Democratic Party of Artsakh (AZhK), both part of Free Motherland’s ruling coalition, won seven and six seats, respectively. Two opposition parties gained representation: Movement 88 took three seats, while National Revival captured one. An independent candidate won the remaining seat.

International observers reported that the elections were an improvement over the 2010 vote, which was marred by the absence of opposition candidates and the use of state resources to support progovernment candidates. Political parties reported minor intimidation during the campaign process.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 1 / 4 (-1)

Amendments passed in 2014 led to some improvements to the electoral code. Among other changes, the number of parliamentary seats under the proportional system increased, and the vote threshold for representation decreased to 5 percent for political parties and 7 percent for electoral coalitions, allowing for broader political participation.

However, the constitutional referendum of February 2017 was criticized by opposition groups as a means to consolidate the power of the governing parties and extend the tenure of President Sahakyan beyond the constitutional limit of two five-year terms. With his indirect election as transitional president in July, Sahakyan effectively gained greater authority without a direct mandate from voters, and he would apparently be able to seek two more full terms after 2020. Supporters of the constitutional changes argued that a stronger presidency was necessary in light of Nagorno-Karabakh's security situation.

The election commission reported that 87.6 percent of referendum participants endorsed the changes, with turnout at 76.5 percent. Opposition groups and some civil society activists complained that state resources were used to promote the referendum, and observers noted suspicious results in some areas, with one of the 11 districts reporting 99 or 100 percent figures for both turnout and "yes" votes in most of its polling locations.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 due to the constitutional referendum, which featured some irregularities and established procedures that allowed the incumbent president to increase his powers without a fresh mandate from voters.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 5 / 16 (-1)

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 2 / 4

There are few formal restrictions on the freedom to form and join political parties, but the political landscape is constrained in practice. Given the territory's contested status, open dissent and vigorous competition are often regarded as signs of disloyalty or even as a security risk.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 1 / 4 (-1)

The leading political parties tend to form broad coalitions and co-opt potential rivals, leaving little room for genuine opposition. In the 2015 parliamentary elections, opposition parties won just four seats, though this represented an improvement. President Sahakyan appointed Balasanyan, his challenger in the 2012 election, as secretary of Nagorno-Karabakh's security council in November 2016. In another example of co-optation, the president named his 2007 opponent, Masis Mayilyan, as foreign minister in September 2017. Sahakyan's easy election as transitional president, with 28 votes from the 32 lawmakers present, illustrated the extent of political cohesion even regarding a de facto breach of term limits.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 due to a pattern in which all major parties band together in a governing coalition and use government appointments to draw in possible opposition figures.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 1 / 4

Politics in Nagorno-Karabakh are heavily influenced by the leadership in Armenia and by the threat of military aggression from Azerbaijan.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 1 / 4

The population is almost entirely ethnic Armenian as a result of wartime displacement, and the constitution mandates a policy of preserving the Armenian character of the territory, partly by granting citizenship to ethnic Armenians who choose to reside there.

Women have equal political rights, but social constraints limit their participation in practice, and they are poorly represented in leadership positions. While the 2014 electoral code requires parties to ensure a minimum of 22 percent female representation on candidate lists, only five women hold seats in the parliament.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 3 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 1 / 4

The ability of locally elected officials to set and implement government policies is limited in practice by security threats along the cease-fire line, warnings from Baku, and the dominant role played by the Armenian government and other regional actors. The constitution calls for close cooperation with Armenia on political, economic, and military policy.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

Nagorno-Karabakh continues to suffer from significant corruption, particularly in the construction industry. Officials practice favoritism in filling civil service positions.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 1 / 4

A freedom of information law was adopted in 2004, but the government operates with little transparency in practice. Key decisions are negotiated by political actors, with few meaningful opportunities for public input.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 18 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 6 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4

The government controls many of Nagorno-Karabakh's media outlets, and the public television and radio stations have no local competition. Most journalists practice self-censorship, particularly on subjects related to the peace process. The internet penetration rate is low but expanding, and social media platforms are increasingly used by the public and by government officials for the dissemination and discussion of news.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 1 / 4

The constitution guarantees religious freedom but allows for restrictions in the name of security, public order, and other state interests. The charter also recognizes the Armenian Apostolic Church as the "national church" of the Armenian people. The religious freedom of other groups is limited in practice. A 2009 law banned religious activity by unregistered groups and proselytism by minority faiths, and made it more difficult for minority groups to register.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 1 / 4

Schools and universities are subject to political influence and pressure to avoid dissenting views on sensitive topics, particularly those related to the territory's status and security. Educators engage in a degree of self-censorship on such issues.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4

Private discussion is generally open and free, though expression of dissent may be inhibited somewhat by the prevailing nationalist sentiment in politics and society.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 3 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 1 / 4

Protests are relatively rare in practice, and the authorities have blocked gatherings and demonstrations that they deem to be threats to public order, including events planned by Armenian opposition activists. Protests supporting the territory's diplomatic and security interests, or addressing specific economic grievances, are more likely to be tolerated.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 1 / 4

Freedom of association is limited. The few NGOs that are active in the territory suffer from poor funding and competition from government-organized groups.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 1 / 4

Trade unions are allowed to organize, but in practice they are weak and relatively inactive, with little practical ability to assert workers' interests. There is political and social pressure to avoid major labor disputes that might harm national solidarity.

F. RULE OF LAW: 4 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4

The judiciary is not independent in practice, and the courts are influenced by the executive branch as well as by powerful political, economic, and criminal groups.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

The constitution guarantees basic due process rights, but police and the courts do not always uphold them in practice. The human rights ombudsman received a dozen complaints regarding the right to a fair trial during 2017, up from five the previous year. Outspoken political dissidents are subject to harassment by the authorities.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 1 / 4

The security of the population is affected by regular incidents of violence along the cease-fire line. Soldiers as well as civilians on both sides are killed or injured each year, and casualties continued to be reported during 2017, particularly in the spring and summer.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

The constitution guarantees equal rights for women and bans discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, religion, and other categories. However, women are underrepresented in

the public and private sectors and remain exposed to discrimination in practice. Only men are subject to military conscription. To preserve the Armenian character of the territory, state policies promote Armenian language and culture and encourage ethnic Armenians to migrate to Nagorno-Karabakh, partly through housing and other subsidies.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 5 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 1 / 4

Freedom of movement within Nagorno-Karabakh and travel around the territory are hindered by its ambiguous legal and diplomatic status, the instability of the cease-fire, and the presence of land mines, which continue to cause deaths and injuries.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 1 / 4

Most major economic activity is tightly controlled by the government or a small group of powerful elites with political connections. The property rights of displaced Azerbaijanis have yet to be adequately addressed.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Men and women have equal legal rights with respect to marriage and divorce, though the constitution defines marriage as a union between a man and a woman, precluding same-sex marriage. The government offers material incentives to encourage couples to have children, with the goal of repopulating the territory. Domestic violence is common and not effectively prosecuted.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

Employment opportunities remain scarce and are mostly confined to the state sector or state-subsidized businesses.

Northern Cyprus

Population: 300,000

Political Rights Rating: 2

Civil Liberties Rating: 2

Freedom Rating: 2.0

Freedom Status: Free

Overview: The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) is a self-declared state recognized only by Turkey. It has a democratic, multiparty political system, and civil liberties are generally upheld. Ongoing concerns include undue political and economic influence from Turkey, corruption, discrimination against minority communities, and human trafficking.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In January, nine Turkish army colonels were detained in the TRNC and deported to Turkey on suspicion of involvement with the organization of U.S.-based Islamic preacher Fethullah Gülen. After the 2016 coup attempt in Turkey, the TRNC had

- declared the group a terrorist organization; a small number of related arrests were reported in 2017, but nothing on the scale of the crackdown in Turkey.
- After UN-brokered reunification talks with Cyprus collapsed in July, partly over the issue of the Turkish military's presence on the island, the Turkish Cypriot side adopted a strategy of unilateral moves to change the status quo, including plans to open three Maronite villages in the north for resettlement by their former residents.
 - In November, under pressure from the opposition to hold early elections, the ruling coalition agreed to move the legislative balloting forward from April 2018 to January 2018.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 31 / 40 (-1)**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 11 / 12****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4**

The president, who serves as head of state and represents the TRNC internationally, is popularly elected to five-year terms. In 2015, Mustafa Akıncı—backed by the social democratic Communal Democracy Party (TDP)—prevailed in a runoff election with just over 60 percent of the vote, defeating incumbent Derviş Eroğlu, who was supported by the right-wing National Unity Party (UBP).

The president appoints the prime minister and cabinet members, who must have the support of a legislative majority. During 2017, Prime Minister Hüseyin Özgürün of the UBP headed a governing coalition with the center-right Democratic Party (DP). In 2016 the UBP had broken with its previous coalition partner—the center-left Republican Turkish Party (CTP), which seeks reconciliation with the Greek Cypriots and European Union membership—to pursue policies that were seen as more closely aligned with Ankara.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

For elections to the 50-seat Assembly of the Republic, the TRNC employs a proportional representation system with a 5 percent vote threshold for parties to win seats. Members serve five-year terms. In the 2013 elections, the CTP led the voting with 21 seats, followed by the UBP with 14, the DP with 12, and the TDP with 3. In November 2017, the governing parties yielded to opposition pressure and agreed to move the next elections, initially scheduled for April 2018, forward to January 2018. Campaigning was under way at year's end.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 3 / 4

The Supreme Election Committee is an independent body composed of judges, and elections in the TRNC are generally considered free and fair.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 13 / 16 (+1)**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4 / 4**

Turkish Cypriots are free to organize in political parties, and several parties compete in practice, with four represented in the legislature as of 2017. Under a 2015 law, parties that receive at least 3 percent of the vote may obtain state funding.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

There have been multiple democratic transfers of power between rival parties in both the presidency and the premiership over the past 15 years, with Akıncı ousting the incumbent president in the 2015 election. Opposition parties maintained a strong presence in the legislature as of 2017.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 3 / 4 (+1)

Although Turkey continues to exercise considerable influence over the TRNC, it has little direct control over voters, many of whom have recently supported candidates and parties that display independence from Ankara. Even Turkish settlers with TRNC citizenship have reportedly distributed their votes among a variety of parties. The opposition's push for early elections and other criticism in 2017 illustrated its willingness to defy a government that had moved closer to Turkey.

Score Change: The score improved from 2 to 3 because many Turkish Cypriot voters and politicians have displayed relative independence from Ankara in recent years.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 2 / 4

All adult citizens may vote, but minority rights remain a concern. The few hundred Maronite and Greek Cypriots living in the TRNC are issued special identity cards and are unable to vote in TRNC elections. In 2017, President Akıncı opened one Maronite village to resettlement and announced plans to open two more, while a team began discussions with Maronite leaders that included the possible expansion of their political rights.

Women have full political rights, and a 2015 law requires 30 percent of a party's parliamentary candidate list to consist of women. However, women's political participation is limited in practice, particularly in leadership positions, and just four women won seats in the legislature in the last elections.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 7 / 12 (-2)**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 3 / 4**

While elected officials generally develop and implement policies and legislation without direct interference from Ankara, the TRNC remains diplomatically and financially dependent on Turkey—which also maintains a military presence—and this dependence affects policymaking. In recent years Ankara has pushed for austerity and privatization measures that opponents said would shift control over key assets from the TRNC government to Turkish companies that are close to the Turkish state. A dispute over such changes contributed to the breakup of the CTP-UBP coalition government in 2016.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4 (-1)

Corruption, cronyism in the distribution of civil service jobs, and nepotism are serious impediments to good governance, and the media have exposed a number of scandals in recent years. Among other cases in 2017, Serdar Denktaş, the finance minister and deputy prime minister, approved a plan to transfer public land to his son, Rauf Denktaş, for the construction of a university to be named after the finance minister's father, founding TRNC

president Rauf Denktaş. The government appeared to backtrack on the plan in the face of public criticism, though it was not clear at year's end that the project had been abandoned.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 due to a series of corruption scandals, including a 2017 case involving the allocation of public land to the finance minister's son.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4 (-1)

Although there is a law providing for access to information, there has been very little progress in making government records available to the public in practice. Information is not always kept in an accessible form, and officials reportedly withhold data on sensitive topics such as naturalization of Turkish settlers as TRNC citizens. In 2017, the government was accused of improperly granting citizenship to individuals including the prime minister's girlfriend. Officials must periodically disclose their personal assets, but the disclosures are not made public.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 due to the government's failure to properly implement constitutional and legal guarantees on public access to information.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 50 / 60 (+2)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 15 / 16 (+1)

D1. Are there free and independent media? 4 / 4 (+1)

Freedom of the press is guaranteed by law, and TRNC authorities generally respect it in practice. Journalists sometimes face obstruction or threats from the subjects of their reporting, and the owners of certain outlets are believed to influence coverage. Nevertheless, the media often carry sharp criticism of both the TRNC and Turkish governments. For example, the newspaper *Afrika* has reported critically on Turkey's treatment of its Kurdish minority despite police questioning of its staff, and in December 2017 it carried a Greek cartoon of the Turkish president, drawing protests and threats of legal action from Ankara.

Score Change: The score improved from 3 to 4 due to the media's pattern of critical reporting on the local and Turkish governments despite some pressure from authorities.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4

The TRNC is a secular state and legally guarantees freedom of worship, which is mostly respected in practice. However, authorities continue to impose some restrictions on access to churches and otherwise interfere with church services. Christians and non-Sunni Muslims have complained that the government favors Sunni Islam in its policies on religious education and places of worship. The government's Religious Affairs Department staffs Sunni mosques with imams.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4

Academic freedom is generally respected. While large numbers of teachers and professors have been fired or jailed for political reasons in Turkey since 2016, no similar purges had occurred in the TRNC as of late 2017.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4

There are no significant restrictions on freedom of private discussion, and individuals generally do not face repercussions for expressing their political views on social media. However, in one prominent case in January 2017, Turkish fashion designer Barbaros Şansal was arrested and deported to Turkey for a social media post in which he used vulgar language to denounce corruption and human rights abuses in Turkey.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 11 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4

Freedom of assembly is guaranteed by the constitution and generally upheld in practice.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 4 / 4

Numerous nongovernmental organizations are registered in the TRNC, and they typically operate without restrictions. Many such groups have worked with Greek Cypriot partners to advance reunification efforts.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

Workers may form independent unions, bargain collectively, and strike, and collective bargaining is reportedly common in the public sector. However, the government can limit strikes in ill-defined essential services, and employers are reportedly able to obstruct unionization in the private sector without legal repercussions.

F. RULE OF LAW: 13 / 16 (+1)

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 4 / 4 (+1)

The judiciary is independent, and courts have often ruled against the government in recent years. The system is overseen by the Supreme Council of Judicature, which is headed by the president of the Supreme Court and includes that court's seven judges as well as one member each appointed by the president, the legislature, the attorney general, and the bar association. The council is responsible for judicial appointments, promotions, assignments, and disciplinary measures.

Score Change: The score improved from 3 to 4 because the judicial system is structurally independent and has displayed its autonomy in practice in recent years.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 3 / 4

Although due process rights are typically respected, police have been accused of violating protections against arbitrary detention and coerced confessions in some cases, for example by improperly denying suspects access to a lawyer.

There were no large-scale purges of security forces or other public employees in connection with the 2016 coup attempt in Turkey as of 2017, but due process was a concern in the cases that were reported. Nine Turkish army colonels were arrested and deported to Turkey in January for alleged links to the banned Gülen movement. A small number of Turkish Cypriot civilians were arrested on similar charges during the year, and dozens of police officers were screened or investigated. Use of the encrypted messaging application ByLock was often enough to raise authorities' suspicions.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 3 / 4

The population is generally free from threats to physical security, but police have been accused of abusing detainees, and prisons feature overcrowding and other harsh conditions.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4

Women enjoy legal equality, but in practice they encounter some discrimination in employment, education, housing, and other areas.

The tiny Greek and Maronite minorities live in enclaves and face social and economic disadvantages. In September 2017, the TRNC government began taxing UN aid deliveries to the enclaves. The small Kurdish minority reportedly suffers from discrimination in employment. Both groups have complained of surveillance by TRNC authorities.

LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people reportedly face social stigmatization, though same-sex sexual activity was decriminalized in 2014, and discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity is prohibited by law. Gay pride events were held without interference in 2017.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 11 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4

Movement within the TRNC territory is generally unrestricted. However, travel abroad is hampered somewhat by the TRNC's lack of international recognition. The only direct flights from the TRNC are to Turkey. Most governments do not accept TRNC travel documents, so many Turkish Cypriots carry Republic of Cyprus passports, for which they are eligible. Movement across the UN buffer zone dividing the island has improved since 2004 due to a growing number of border crossings.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 3 / 4

The authorities recognize the rights to own property and establish businesses. The TRNC formed the Immovable Property Commission (IPC) in 2006 to resolve claims by Greek Cypriots who owned property in the north before the island's 1974 division. In 2010, the European Court of Human Rights recognized the commission as an "accessible and effective" mechanism. However, its work has been seriously impaired in recent years by a lack of funding from the government and Ankara.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4

Personal social freedoms are generally respected, though women's organizations have criticized the government for failing to adequately address the problems of rape and domestic violence. According to a 2017 poll, one in three women have experienced violence in the home.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 2 / 4

While TRNC citizens generally have access to economic opportunity and protections from abusive working conditions, noncitizens often experience exploitation and lack mechanisms for appeal. Human trafficking and forced prostitution are serious problems, despite a nominal legal ban on prostitution. Thousands of African students pursuing higher education in the TRNC are vulnerable to labor and sex trafficking. The TRNC lacks adequate antitrafficking legislation and does not fund antitrafficking efforts. Observers also report that some authorities are complicit in trafficking.

Pakistani Kashmir

Population: 5,800,000

Political Rights Rating: 6

Civil Liberties Rating: 5

Freedom Rating: 5.5

Freedom Status: Not Free

Overview: Pakistani Kashmir is administered as two territories: Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB). Each has an elected assembly and government with limited autonomy, but they lack the parliamentary representation and other rights of Pakistani provinces, and Pakistani federal institutions have predominant influence over security, the courts, and most important policy matters. Politics within the two territories are carefully managed to promote the idea of Kashmir's eventual accession to Pakistan. Freedoms of expression and association, and any political activity deemed contrary to Pakistan's policy on Kashmir, are restricted.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- A Pakistani parliamentary committee reviewing the constitutional status of GB submitted its report to the federal government in March, recommending greater integration but not full provincial status. The government was still considering the proposal at year's end.
- The authorities renewed a crackdown on small nationalist parties in GB, arresting 12 activists and accusing them of an Indian-financed conspiracy to sabotage the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) infrastructure project.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 9 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 4 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4

Both AJK and GB have locally elected executive leaders. However, the Pakistani government also controls—directly and indirectly—key executive functions, and it is not accountable to voters in the two territories.

Under AJK's 1974 interim constitution, a president elected by the Legislative Assembly serves as head of state, while the elected prime minister is the chief executive. After the 2016 elections, the new assembly elected the local leader of Pakistan's ruling Pakistan Muslim League–Nawaz (PML-N), Raja Farooq Haider, as prime minister, and Masood Khan, formerly a senior Pakistani diplomat, as president.

An AJK Council is based in Pakistan's capital, Islamabad, consisting of both Kashmiri and Pakistani officials and chaired by the Pakistani prime minister. The council holds a number of executive, legislative, and judicial powers, such as control over the appointment of superior judges and the chief election commissioner.

GB's basic law, the 2009 Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Self-Governance Order (GBESGO), can only be amended by the Pakistani government. Executive functions are shared between a Pakistani-appointed governor and a chief minister chosen by the GB Legislative Assembly (GBLA). The governor signs legislation and has significant power over judicial appointments; his decisions cannot be overruled by the GBLA. After the 2015

elections in GB, Hafiz Hafeezur Rehman of the PML-N became chief minister. Later that year, the federal government installed Mir Ghazanfar Ali Khan, also of the PML-N, as governor.

A 15-member Gilgit-Baltistan Council (GBC), headed by the Pakistani prime minister and vice-chaired by the GB governor, includes six members of the GBLA and nine Pakistani parliament members appointed by the governor. The GBC retains control over strategically important subjects and key fiscal matters.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4

Of the AJK Legislative Assembly's 49 seats, 41 are filled through direct elections: 29 with constituencies based in the territory and 12 representing Kashmiri "refugees" throughout Pakistan. Another eight are reserved seats: five for women and one each for representatives of overseas Kashmiris, technocrats, and religious leaders. In the 2016 elections, the PML-N won with 31 seats. The local branch of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) won three seats, as did the Muslim Conference, and the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) secured two. The remaining two seats were won by the Jammu Kashmir Peoples Party and an independent. The election process was largely peaceful, though both the PPP and the local PTI leader complained of preelection manipulation, including the use of federal development funds to boost support for the PML-N.

The 33-member GBLA is composed of 24 directly elected members, six seats reserved for women, and three seats reserved for technocrats; the reserved seats are filled through a vote by the elected members. The GBESGO sets limits on the assembly's legislative power, allowing it to introduce bills on 61 subjects. GBLA elections were held in 2015. In keeping with the well-established pattern of victory by the party in power in Islamabad, the PML-N took 15 of the 24 directly elected seats. No other party won more than two seats, including the previously governing PPP.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 1 / 4

The electoral framework in both territories facilitates indirect control by the Pakistani authorities. For example, the AJK Council appoints the chief election commissioner, and the electoral system for the AJK Legislative Assembly disproportionately favors nonresident refugees over AJK residents. The nonresident elections are more vulnerable to manipulation by federal Pakistani authorities, and the party in office at the federal level tends to win these seats. Candidates in the AJK elections must formally endorse "the ideology of Pakistan" and Kashmir's accession to Pakistan.

Elections in GB are governed by Pakistani election law and a code of conduct drawn up by the local election commission. The first clause of the code of conduct dictates that parties and candidates must refrain from any action or speech which could be deemed contrary to the ideology of Pakistan or the country's security. This vague provision can be used to exclude candidates associated with nationalist parties or those disapproved of by the Pakistani authorities.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 4 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 1 / 4

Politics are dominated in both AJK and GB by local branches of the main Pakistani parties and some local parties, such as AJK's Muslim Conference, that are closely allied with the Pakistani establishment. Small nationalist parties that are opposed to union with Pakistan are actively marginalized or barred outright from the political process. Activists accused of opposition to Pakistani rule have been subject to surveillance, harassment, and sometimes imprisonment. The interim constitution of AJK bans political parties that do not endorse the territory's eventual accession to Pakistan, and similar rules prevail in GB.

In January 2017, police in GB announced the arrest of 12 activists associated with the Balawaristan National Front (BNF) and charged them under Schedule 4 of Pakistan's Anti-Terrorism Act with conspiracy and possession of weapons. They were accused of receiving Indian funds to undertake armed subversion against CPEC projects. The activists joined a number of other political prisoners in GB, including Baba Jan, a leader of the left-wing Awami Workers Party.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 1 / 4

There is ample precedent for transfers of power between the major parties, though these are typically dictated by parallel changes at the federal level in Pakistan. The PML-N Pakistani government's decision to replace the GB governor in early 2015 was criticized as a bid to ensure the party's victory in the GBLA elections, and federal authorities were similarly accused of working to manipulate the 2016 AJK Legislative Assembly elections in favor of the PML-N.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 1 / 4

Because voters in GB and AJK cannot participate in Pakistani elections, Pakistani federal officials and entities are not democratically accountable to them. Security agencies operating in both territories are federal institutions. They work to block and suppress any parties or politicians that adopt positions deemed to conflict with Pakistani interests.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 1 / 4

Men and women have the right to vote in both territories. Although there is no bar on women contesting general seats, prevailing norms mean that women rarely exercise this right. Instead, general seats tend to be filled by men. The seats reserved for women in the two legislative assemblies are filled proportionally from party lists based on the general vote, meaning the parties themselves determine who will represent women's interests.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 3 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 1 / 4

The powers of the elected chief executives in AJK and GB are limited by the fact that the Pakistani prime minister, the Pakistani minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan, and through them the federal civil service, exercise effective control over government operations in both territories. As in Pakistan, federal military and intelligence agencies also play a powerful role in governance and policymaking.

The territories lack any meaningful fiscal autonomy, as federal taxes are imposed on both, and they receive a share of the resulting funds from the federal government. The

territories' local representatives are excluded from the Pakistani bodies that negotiate inter-provincial resource allocation.

During 2017, debate continued on the idea of enhancing GB's status in the Pakistani constitution by designating it a provisional province and granting its legislators powers on par with those delegated to Pakistan's four existing provinces. Proponents claimed that this would reduce any legal concerns that could hamper Chinese investment as part of the CPEC project. However, figures associated with the struggle against Indian control of Kashmir criticized the GB proposal as a weakening of the commitment to full Kashmiri accession to Pakistan.

A Pakistani parliamentary committee reviewing the constitutional status of GB submitted its report to the federal government in March, recommending greater integration but not full provincial status. A supplementary report with further detail was submitted in September, but at year's end the federal ministry responsible for GB affairs had yet to present the proposal to the cabinet for approval.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

Both territories have formal safeguards against official corruption, and GB is within the jurisdiction of Pakistan's National Accountability Bureau, which has an office in Gilgit. However, as in Pakistan, corruption is believed to remain endemic, with enforcement actions subject to political influence.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 1 / 4

Transparency and access to government information are limited in practice. The AJK government has made a gesture toward transparency by posting basic information about its departments online. The GB chief minister in 2017 similarly committed his administration to adopting an e-governance approach, according to which departments will post a record of their proceedings online, but it was unclear when the plan would be implemented.

ADDITIONAL DISCRETIONARY POLITICAL RIGHTS QUESTION

Is the government or occupying power deliberately changing the ethnic composition of a country or territory so as to destroy a culture or tip the political balance in favor of another group? -2 / 0

The Sunni Muslim share of the population in GB—historically a Shiite-majority region—has increased significantly in the decades since a pre-1947 rule was abolished to allow immigration from different parts of Pakistan. State agencies are suspected of deliberately encouraging this migration to engineer a demographic change. Under the 2009 GBESGO, settlers were given formal citizenship rights in GB. The pre-1947 restrictions on acquiring residency and citizenship are still in place in AJK.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 19 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 6 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4

AJK and GB are subject to laws that curb freedom of expression, particularly related to the political status of the regions. Media houses need permission from the AJK Council and the federal Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan to operate. A wide range of media are present and active. However, coverage of news and politics does not diverge from official Pakistani narratives, including that India's hold over the Kashmir Valley is illegitimate and all Kashmiris aspire to Pakistan accession. This compliance is achieved

through a mixture of censorship, self-censorship, and harassment. A number of outlets have faced closure by authorities in recent years.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 1 / 4

Both territories have a predominantly Muslim population, and there is no official or social tolerance of nonbelief. Tools used to compel expressions of belief and conformity with official interpretations of religious doctrine include laws criminalizing blasphemy, rules requiring observance of Ramadan, and an obligation to denounce the heterodox Ahmadi sect to obtain a Pakistani passport. Although there is a history of Sunni-Shiite sectarian violence in GB, there were no major outbreaks in 2017.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 2 / 4

Each territory is home to a growing education system, and education is much valued as a path to migration and employment. However, in academia there are acute sensitivities around the issue of constitutional status and no tolerance of debate or materials questioning Pakistan's claims over Kashmir. Student union activity has long been under state surveillance for signs of nationalist political views. Local languages and scripts are not taught in government schools.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 2 / 4

Federal intelligence agencies maintain a prominent and intrusive presence in both territories. Expression of heterodox political or religious views consequently carries significant risks. The authorities have increased their monitoring of social media and sporadically punish expression of anti-Pakistan or separatist opinions. For example, activists attributed the August 2017 arrest of Hasnain Ramal, a member of the leftist Awami Action Movement, to his social media postings.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 4 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 1 / 4

The authorities' observance of freedom of assembly is highly discretionary. Protests that do not directly challenge Pakistani control or the territories' constitutional status tend to be tolerated. For example, a series of tax protests by GB traders from October to December 2017 ended with concessions by the government. In AJK there is official encouragement of demonstrations to condemn Indian atrocities on the other side of the Line of Control (LoC). However, protests and other activity by local nationalist groups are harshly punished.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 1 / 4

Humanitarian nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are subject to strict registration requirements and thus operate at the pleasure of the authorities. NGOs working on political or human rights issues face more intrusive government scrutiny and, in some cases, harassment.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

AJK is subject to labor laws similar to those in Pakistan. However, unions and professional organizations are frequently barred. Labor laws and union activities are poorly developed in GB.

F. RULE OF LAW: 3 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4

Both territories have nominally independent judiciaries, but the Pakistani federal government plays a powerful role in judicial appointments. On politically sensitive issues, the AJK and GB courts are not considered to operate independently of the executive in Pakistan.

The president of AJK, in consultation with the AJK Council, appoints the chief justice of the territory's Supreme Court. Other judges of the superior courts are appointed by the AJK president on the advice of the council, after consultation with the chief justice. The chief judge and other judges of GB's Supreme Appellate Court are appointed on a contractual basis by the prime minister of Pakistan in his capacity as chairman of the GBC, on the recommendation of the governor.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

The civilian court system in both territories features basic due process guarantees, including defense lawyers and a right to appeal, but arbitrary arrests and other violations are not uncommon, particularly in security-related cases. Since 2015, the Pakistani government has allowed civilians facing charges of terrorism or sectarian violence to be tried in military courts, which have fewer due process protections and can impose the death penalty.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 1 / 4

Torture and deaths in custody at the hands of security forces have been reported, especially for independence supporters and other activists. Separately, extremist groups devoted largely to attacks on Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir operate from AJK and GB and have links with similar factions based in Pakistan and Afghanistan. The threat of death and destruction from intermittent shelling across the LOC persisted in 2017. AJK officials reported that 46 civilians were killed and 262 injured during the year.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 0 / 4

As in Pakistan, women in the territories face economic discrimination, disadvantages under personal status laws, and abusive customary practices, the perpetrators of which often enjoy impunity. LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people, ethnic minorities, and non-Sunni religious groups also suffer from discrimination, and Afghan refugees have encountered increased harassment and pressure to return to Afghanistan since 2015. Pakistani authorities have been reluctant to offer citizenship to migrants displaced from Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir. Periodically these refugees have been subjected to abuse and arbitrary arrest for demanding greater rights.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 6 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 2 / 4

The people of AJK and GB have Pakistani national identity cards and passports. They are internationally recognized as Pakistani nationals. However, there are reports of passports being denied or not renewed for citizens suspected of questioning Pakistani control over the

region. The territories' heavy military presence and the threat of shelling and other violence along the LoC restricts internal movement for civilians.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

AJK's pre-1947 state subject law, which bars outsiders from seeking permanent residency, allows only legal residents to own property. Procedures for establishing private enterprises are onerous in practice.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 1 / 4

In both territories, the legal framework criminalizes domestic violence and so-called honor killing, but harmful traditional practices often prevail amid weak enforcement of formal protections, especially in more conservative areas. Informal justice mechanisms operating at the village level are often the first point of recourse for incidents involving sexual or domestic violence against women, and their judgments can inflict further harm on victims.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

Both territories, but particularly GB, have historically been less economically developed than Pakistan, and their population has depended on labor migration to supplement incomes. The lack of local control over extractive industries prompts periodic complaints that residents are being deprived of the benefits of natural resources. There are divergent views in GB regarding the extent to which local people stand to gain from economic activity generated by the centrally managed CPEC.

Somaliland

Population: 3,500,000

Political Rights Rating: 4 ↑

Civil Liberties Rating: 5

Freedom Rating: 4.5

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Ratings Change: Somaliland's political rights rating improved from 5 to 4 due to the holding of a long-delayed presidential election.

Overview: Elections in Somaliland—whose self-declared independence from Somalia is not internationally recognized—have been relatively free and fair, but years-long delays have meant that elected officials serve well beyond their original mandates. Journalists face pressure from authorities, and police have employed excessive force and engaged in arbitrary detention. Minor clans are subject to political and economic marginalization, and violence against women remains a serious problem.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- In March, the upper legislative chamber, the Guurti, voted to further postpone the presidential election until November and the parliamentary and local elections until April 2019.

- The presidential election, originally due in 2015, proceeded in November. Ruling party candidate Muse Bihi Abdi won with 55 percent of the vote and took office in December.
- Harassment of journalists remained a problem, with the Somaliland Human Rights Centre (HRC) reporting that 25 journalists were detained during the year.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 19 / 40 (+4)**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 5 / 12 (+3)****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4 (+3)**

The president is directly elected for a maximum of two five-year terms and appoints the cabinet. The electoral mandate of incumbent president Ahmed Mohamed Mohamoud “Silanyo” of the Peace, Unity, and Development Party (Kulmiye) expired in 2015, but the presidential election due that year was not held until November 2017. Bihi, the Kulmiye candidate, won the contest with 55 percent of the vote, followed by Abdurahman Mohamed Abdullahi of the opposition Wadani party with 40 percent and Faisal Ali Warabe of the For Justice and Development (UCID) party with 4 percent.

International monitors identified some irregularities in the process—including unstamped ballot papers and underage voting—and there was an outbreak of violence while results were being finalized, with police firing on pro-Wadani protesters amid suspicions of fraud. However, the observers concluded that such problems did not significantly affect the final result, which Wadani ultimately accepted in the public interest.

Score Change: The score improved from 0 to 3 because Somaliland held a competitive presidential election, ending a two-year period in which the chief executive lacked an electoral mandate.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

Members of the 82-seat lower legislative chamber, the House of Representatives, are directly elected for five-year terms, while members of the 82-seat upper chamber, the Guurti, are clan elders indirectly elected for six-year terms. Members of the current Guurti were chosen for an initial term in 1997, but due to a lack of legal clarity on how new elections are to be held, their mandates have been repeatedly extended. In practice, seats have been passed to family members when a member dies or retires. The last lower house elections were held in 2005, and new elections due in 2010 have been repeatedly postponed since then. In March 2017, the Guurti voted to postpone House of Representatives elections until April 2019, along with local council elections that were last held in 2012.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 2 / 4

The legal and administrative framework for elections is largely fair, but ambiguities in some laws as well as technical and logistical challenges have led to chronic election delays. International observers noted flaws in the voter registration process that preceded the 2017 presidential election.

The National Electoral Commission (NEC) consists of seven members, with two nominated by the president, two by the Guurti, and one each by the three registered political parties; all are then appointed through a majority vote in the House of Representatives. The

NEC is generally considered impartial, but Wadani accused it of bias in the aftermath of the presidential vote.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 10 / 16 (+1)

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 3 / 4

The constitution allows for a maximum of three officially recognized political parties. The three groups that receive the most votes in local council elections are declared eligible to contest subsequent national elections, and they compete freely in practice. The system is meant to encourage alliances across clan-based divisions, but clan and party affiliation are still closely aligned.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 3 / 4 (+1)

The political system allows democratic transfers of power between rival parties, with the most recent such handover at the presidential level occurring in 2010. Opposition forces continue to hold positions in the legislature and in subnational governments. Long-running election delays have impaired the ability of opposition parties to challenge incumbent leaders, but the presidential vote held in 2017 removed one important obstacle.

Score Change: The score improved from 2 to 3 because the opposition was able to compete in the overdue presidential election.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 2 / 4

Clan elders play an influential role in politics, both directly with their kinsmen and through the currently unelected Guurti, which has the authority to extend officials' terms in office and approve election dates. There were isolated reports of partisan violence and intimidation during the 2017 election period.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 2 / 4

Women and various clan groups formally enjoy equal political rights. However, the larger, higher-status clans tend to dominate political offices and leadership positions, marginalizing smaller and lower-status groups. Cultural barriers also limit women's political participation, and only two women had seats in the House of Representatives in 2017. Women are generally excluded from the Guurti, as clan elders are traditionally men, though women have occasionally inherited seats from their husbands. The constitution requires that candidates for the presidency, vice presidency, and House of Representatives be Muslim.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 4 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 1 / 4 (+1)

The 2017 election improved the democratic legitimacy of the president in determining government policy, and decisions made by the national authorities are implemented in most of Somaliland's claimed territory. However, clan leaders in the eastern border regions of

Sool, Sanaag, and a portion of Togdheer maintain a separatist administration known as the Khatumo State, over which Somaliland does not exercise full control.

Score Change: The score improved from 0 to 1 because an elected president took office, partially restoring the national leadership's democratic legitimacy.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4 (-1)

There are almost no institutional safeguards against corruption and nepotism. Former president Silanyo took some measures to combat corruption earlier in his tenure, but the anticorruption commission he created in 2010 has been largely ineffective in recent years, and prosecutions of officials for malfeasance are rare. The government's opaque 2016 decision to award a 30-year port management concession in Berbera to the Emirati company DP World raised concerns about corruption. Under a related agreement in 2017, the United Arab Emirates began construction of a military base near the port.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 because the anticorruption commission and other mechanisms for combating graft have proven ineffective in recent years.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

The government operates with relative transparency in many respects, but it is more opaque regarding contracts for major projects. Journalists and civil society activists who attempt to scrutinize government activities often face harassment.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 25 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 7 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4

A variety of print, television, and online news outlets operate, but many have political affiliations, and the state-run broadcaster has a monopoly in the radio sector. The penal code criminalizes defamation and other vaguely defined press offenses, such as circulation of "false, exaggerated, or tendentious news." The government has restricted the registration of new newspapers, and in 2017 it obtained court orders to block several websites for allegedly carrying false news. Social media were blocked for several days after the presidential election. According to the HRC, a total of 25 journalists were detained during the year, though most were released without charges; one remained in prison as of December, serving an 18-month sentence for defamation and publishing false news.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 2 / 4

Islam is the state religion. The constitution allows for freedom of belief, but it prohibits conversion from Islam and proselytizing by members of other faiths. Places of worship must obtain government permission to operate, though there are no clear penalties for noncompliance, and there is no mechanism to register religious organizations. In 2017, citing pressure from Muslim leaders and residents, the government reversed an earlier decision to allow the reopening of the only Roman Catholic church in Hargeisa, the de facto capital, which had been closed for decades.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 2 / 4

Teachers and professors are often able to pursue academic activities of a political and quasi-political nature without fear of intimidation. While funds allocated for public schools are uneven across the regions, they are generally free from overt political manipulation.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 2 / 4

While individuals can express themselves with relative freedom on political matters, remarks on sensitive social and cultural issues are increasingly subject to censure and retribution from nonstate actors.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 5 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 1 / 4

The constitution allows for freedom of assembly, but organized public demonstrations are infrequent, and the authorities have sometimes employed violence to disperse protests. Shortly after the presidential election in November 2017, security forces used live ammunition against opposition supporters protesting alleged fraud, killing at least four people and injuring several others.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 2 / 4

Local and international nongovernmental organizations often operate without serious interference, but such groups can face harassment for their work. In February 2017, the leader of the HRC was interrogated by police, and its spokesperson was arrested, after the organization launched a petition for police reform. They were accused of defamation and disseminating false news. Activists gathering signatures for the petition also faced intimidation. The spokesperson was released and the charges were dropped after the HRC discontinued its campaign.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

The constitution does not explicitly protect the right to strike, though it does permit collective bargaining. The right to belong to a union is generally respected.

F. RULE OF LAW: 7 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 2 / 4

The judiciary lacks independence, sufficient funding, and proper training. Judges are usually selected on the basis of clan or political affiliation and are subject to interference from the government. The chief justice appointed in 2015 has made some progress in reforming the judicial system.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 2 / 4

Due process is observed unevenly. Poverty and political factors play a role in how cases are charged and investigated, and whether there is adequate and timely representation for the defendant. Both customary law and Sharia (Islamic law) are in use alongside civil law, which complicates adherence to statutory procedure. In practice, police often engage in arbitrary arrests and hold detainees without charge for longer than the legal limit of 48 hours. Lawyers are frequently denied access to detained clients.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 1 / 4

Somaliland's police and security forces have been accused of using excessive force, and any cases against them must be adjudicated in military courts, which contributes to impunity for abuses. Conditions for detainees at police stations are harsh and overcrowded. In the contested eastern border area, security forces have periodically clashed with local separatists or the forces of the neighboring Puntland region.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

Members of smaller, marginalized clans face societal discrimination, limited access to public services, and prejudice in the justice system. Clan connections play a critical role in securing employment. Women also suffer from inequality, including in the Sharia and customary legal systems. Same-sex sexual activity is a criminal offense, and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people generally do not acknowledge their sexual orientation or gender identity publicly.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 6 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 2 / 4

Freedom of movement is respected to some extent, but traffic between Somaliland and Puntland is restricted, and the Somaliland government limits travel to and from Somalia's federal capital, Mogadishu. Individuals' ability to relocate within the territory is impaired by clan divisions.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

Individuals are able to own property and operate private businesses without undue interference from the government. However, land disputes are common, as tenure is often complicated by lack of documentation and inconsistencies among different legal systems and state authorities. Corruption is also a concern. In the wake of the 2016 agreement with the United Arab Emirates to develop the port of Berbera, publicly owned land in the area has allegedly been sold to wealthy investors or those with personal connections to officials.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 1 / 4

Personal social freedoms are constrained by a number of factors. Marriages between members of major and minor clans are stigmatized. There is no law to address widespread domestic violence, and rape is rarely reported to authorities due to social pressures against such complaints. The practice of female genital mutilation is common, and no law prohibits it.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

The informal sector, including traditional pastoral activities, accounts for much of the economy, and many households rely on remittances from relatives working in other countries. Trafficking in persons for forced labor or sexual exploitation abroad is a serious problem. Refugees from neighboring countries including Yemen and Ethiopia are also vulnerable to exploitation within Somaliland.

South Ossetia

Population: 50,000

Political Rights Rating: 7

Civil Liberties Rating: 6

Freedom Rating: 6.5

Freedom Status: Not Free

Overview: Large parts of South Ossetia, a breakaway territory of Georgia, enjoyed de facto independence after a civil conflict ended in 1992. A 2008 war that drew in Russian forces resulted in the expulsion of the remaining Georgian government presence and of many ethnic Georgian civilians. Only Russia and a handful of other states have since recognized South Ossetia's independence. The territory remains almost entirely dependent on Russia, and Moscow exerts a decisive influence over its politics and governance. Local media and civil society are largely controlled or monitored by the authorities, and the judiciary is subject to political influence and manipulation.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Anatoly Bibilov defeated the incumbent, Leonid Tibilov, in April's presidential election.
- A simultaneous referendum on changing the territory's name to "Republic of South Ossetia–State of Alania" passed by a large majority. The move was viewed as a precursor to potential constitutional changes to allow union with North Ossetia–Alania, which is a federal subject of Russia.
- Authorities began to phase out Georgian-medium education in schools, and banned Jehovah's Witnesses as an "extremist" group.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 2 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 2 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

Although South Ossetia holds elections regularly, they are severely restricted at all stages of the process, and are not monitored by independent observers or recognized by the international community. In the most recent presidential election, in April 2017, former military leader Anatoly Bibilov was elected to a five-year term with 58 percent of the vote; he defeated the incumbent, Leonid Tibilov, who took 30 percent, and KGB official Alan Gagloyev, who took 11 percent.

Political analysts said that the conduct of the 2017 election was an improvement on the 2011 poll, the results of which had been disputed. Nevertheless, political debate and competition only occurred within a narrow field of candidates allowed by Russia and pro-Russian authorities. Moscow's open backing of Tibilov and significant political influence over the territory's politics generally calls into question the ability local authorities to hold a free and fair presidential election.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4

Parliamentary elections held in 2014 were an improvement from previous ones. Unlike in 2009, in which only three parties were able to participate, candidates from nine parties succeeded in registering in 2014. The opposition United Ossetia, led by Bibilov, won 20 seats, followed by the Unity of the People party with 6 seats. Smaller parties captured four seats. However, South Ossetia's legislative elections are not internationally recognized, and the extent of Russian influence in the territory's politics precludes truly competitive legislative elections.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 1 / 4

In April 2017, President Bibilov declared that the 2019 legislative elections would be conducted by a mixed proportional and majoritarian system, instead of the fully proportional system that is currently in place. The decision was made without public input.

In a referendum held alongside the 2017 presidential election, over 80 percent of voters approved adding "The State of Alania" to the territory's name. The move was viewed as a precursor to potential constitutional changes to allow union with North Ossetia–Alania, which is a federal subject of Russia.

According to electoral laws, candidates must have permanently resided in South Ossetia for 10 years. Former president Eduard Kokoity, the only candidate who openly opposed annexation by Russia, was barred from running due to his failure to meet the residency requirement. The Supreme Court rejected Kokoity's appeal, in which he claimed that the evidence put forth by the Central Election Commission (CEC) was falsified.

Authorities reportedly continue to restrict voting rights of remaining Georgian residents of South Ossetia. Russian political influence continues to call into question the independence of the CEC.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 2 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 1 / 4

Moscow exerts a decisive influence over politics and governance, in effect placing significant restrictions on the ability of political parties outside of a narrow political spectrum to operate freely. However, a number of new political parties have been able to register in recent years. These include Bibilov's United Ossetia, which won the most seats in the 2014 elections. As of 2017, over a dozen political parties existed, though only four were represented in parliament. In October, the Ministry of Justice began a process to disband inactive or barely active political parties, in a move opposition activists considered politically motivated.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 1 / 4

In the 2017 presidential election, opposition candidate Anatoly Bibilov challenged and defeated the incumbent president. However, the success or failure of the territory's opposition politicians is largely determined by Moscow. South Ossetian government sources implied that banned presidential candidate Kokoity was not in Moscow's favor.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 0 / 4

The functioning of South Ossetia's institutions are almost entirely dependent on economic and political support from Moscow. There are few avenues for people to meaningfully participate in political processes if they wish to advocate for interests that fall outside of the narrow political spectrum defined by Russia and the territory's Russian-aligned authorities.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 0 / 4

The interests of women and minority groups are not represented politically. Most ethnic Georgian residents have either declined or have been denied the ability to participate in elections.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 0 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 0 / 4

The ability of elected officials to determine and implement policy is heavily influenced by the Russian government. A sweeping 2015 treaty on alliance and integration between Russia and South Ossetia closely integrates the territory's defense, security, and customs mechanisms with those of Russia, charging Moscow with protection of South Ossetia's borders; it is binding for 25 years with the possibility of extension. Russian aid comprises almost the entirety of South Ossetia's budget.

According to leaked private emails from a Russian businessman in 2016, Moscow mandated 13 working groups to review legislation drafted by the authorities in Tskhinvali, South Ossetia's de facto capital, and had a timetable for the bills' approval by the territory's legislature. Some of Bibilov's ministerial appointments reflect a long trend in the territory to nominate Russian citizens to key roles, including the territory's security services.

Like his predecessor, President Bibilov has spoken repeatedly of formally uniting the territory with Russia's North Ossetia–Alania, or joining the Russian Federation as a separate region.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 0 / 4

Official corruption is widespread in South Ossetia, and there is little to no systematic attempt to fight it.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 0 / 4

Due in part to the significant level of Russian influence on domestic politics and decision-making, South Ossetia's government does not operate with transparency. Officials have not identified a lack of transparency as a policy priority.

ADDITIONAL DISCRETIONARY POLITICAL RIGHTS QUESTION:

Is the government or occupying power deliberately changing the ethnic composition of a country or territory so as to destroy a culture or tip the political balance in favor of another group? -2 / 0

During the 2008 war, Ossetian forces seized or razed property in previously Georgian-controlled villages, and large numbers of ethnic Georgians fled the fighting. Authorities in South Ossetia have since barred ethnic Georgians from returning to the territory unless they renounce their Georgian citizenship and accept Russian passports. Of approximately 20,000 ethnic Georgians displaced from their homes in South Ossetia, most have not been able to return. However, conditions for local residents have largely stabilized since the war,

particularly due to the absence of open conflict across the administrative line separating the territory from Georgia.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 8 / 40 (-1)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 3 / 16 (-1)

D1. Are there free and independent media? 0 / 4

Local media are almost entirely controlled by the authorities. Self-censorship is pervasive, and defamation charges are used against critical media. South Ossetia's state broadcasters are subject to frequent blackouts and technical interruptions. An increasing number of residents rely on online outlets for news and other information, and foreign media, including broadcasts from Russia and Georgia, remain accessible.

Journalist and activist Tamara Mearakishvili was questioned on several occasions in 2017, during which investigators expressed interest in the nature of her work with international media outlets. In August, police searched her home. The same month, criminal slander charges case were brought against her as a result of an interview she gave to Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) about alleged corruption among local officials. In December, a court rejected Mearakishvili's appeal.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 1 / 4 (-1)

While the majority of the population is Orthodox Christian, there is a sizeable Muslim community. Followers of Russian Orthodoxy and Ossetian neopaganism also inhabit the territory. Some property of the Georgian Orthodox Church is controlled by the South Ossetian Orthodox Church (called the Eparchy). In November, Bibilov said the Eparchy should come under the jurisdiction of the Russian Orthodox Church.

In October 2017, South Ossetia's de facto Supreme Court outlawed Jehovah's Witnesses as an "extremist" organization; the group had been banned in Russia in April.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 due a court ruling that categorizes Jehovah's Witnesses as an extremist organization, effectively banning the group.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 1 / 4

The government exerts strong influence over the education system. In 2017, the ministry of education began to phase out Georgian-medium education, starting with the first to fourth grades, with an additional grade to transfer to Russian-language education each subsequent year. In explaining the move, state officials cited the need to integrate the Georgian community, the lack of locally produced Georgian-language materials, and the advantage of Russian-language skills in pursuing higher education.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 1 / 4

Private discussion is constrained by the sensitivity of certain topics, particularly the territory's geopolitical standing. Speaking of the property rights and expulsion of the Georgian population is assumed to attract unwanted attention.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 1 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 1 / 4

Since the 2008 war, residents have demonstrated against corruption and the sluggish pace of postwar reconstruction, but freedom of assembly is limited. Small groups of supporters of banned candidate Kokoity held protests in Tskhinvali before and during the 2017 election. Authorities deemed a group picketing government buildings in March as an unsanctioned gathering and brought cases against 23 protesters, though Bibilov closed the cases in June.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 0 / 4

Although some nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operate in the territory, most are subject to government influence and are financially backed by Russia. Legislative amendments in 2014 increased the oversight capacity of local authorities over NGO activity and subjected organizations with foreign funding to broader and more frequent reporting requirements.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 0 / 4

Trade unions in South Ossetia largely defer to the policies of the separatist government. Conflict with Georgia has left trade unions weak and geographically divided.

F. RULE OF LAW: 1 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 0 / 4

South Ossetia's judiciary is not independent. The justice system has been manipulated to punish perceived opponents of the separatist leadership.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 0 / 4

Government allies reportedly continue to violate the law with relative impunity. Russian prosecutors have attempted to curb malfeasance by local officials, but the Russian court system itself remains deeply flawed. Justice structures are undermined by a lack of qualified lawyers.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 0 / 4

Victims of human rights violations committed during the 2008 conflict have few avenues for legal recourse.

Physical abuse and poor conditions are reportedly common in prisons and detention centers. In July, all inmates at a Tskhinvali prison declared a hunger strike, complaining that their rights, including access to medical treatment and to receive visitors, were not being respected.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

Discrimination against ethnic Georgians remains a cause for concern. Reports of arbitrary discrimination and detention of ethnic Georgians continue to arise. There are no initiatives to support the rights of sexual minorities in this very conservative society.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 3 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 1 / 4

Freedom of movement in and out of South Ossetia from Georgian-government controlled territory is restricted, though travel to Russia remains largely unimpeded. The South Ossetian security services closed the border with Georgia entirely on several occasions in 2017, and arbitrary arrest and detention of Georgian citizens along the border continued throughout 2017. Since 2015, Russian servicemen have slowly moved South Ossetia's administrative border into Georgian territory.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 0 / 4

The territory's political and military situation has negatively affected protections for property rights, particularly for residents close to the administrative border. The separatist authorities have consistently refused to countenance the return of ethnic Georgians expelled from their homes before or during the 2008 war.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

While no laws officially regulate individuals' public appearance, statements by public officials reflect the conservative nature of the society. No laws or government programs specifically protect victims of domestic violence.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 0 / 4

There is very little economic opportunity in South Ossetia. Populations living along the administrative border with Georgia face additional economic uncertainty due to divisions created by shifting and uncertain borders.

Tibet

Population: 3,200,000 [Note: This figure covers only the Tibet Autonomous Region.]

Political Rights Rating: 7

Civil Liberties Rating: 7

Freedom Rating: 7.0

Freedom Status: Not Free

Note: This report assesses the Tibet Autonomous Region and areas of eastern Tibet that are incorporated into neighboring Chinese provinces.

Overview: Tibet is ruled by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) government based in Beijing, with local decision-making power concentrated in the hands of Chinese party officials. Residents of both Chinese and Tibetan ethnicity are denied fundamental rights, but the authorities are especially rigorous in suppressing any signs of dissent among Tibetans, including manifestations of uniquely Tibetan religious belief and cultural identity. State policies encourage migration from other parts of China, reducing the ethnic Tibetan share of the population.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- An already heavy security presence increased ahead of the 19th Party Congress in October, during which foreigners were barred from visiting the Tibet Autonomous

Region (TAR). At the congress, Chen Quanguo, the TAR party secretary from 2011 to 2016, was promoted to the Politburo in an apparent reward for his repressive approach to governance.

- Censorship and surveillance on the popular instant-messaging platform WeChat increased during the year.
- Large-scale demolitions and evictions of monks and nuns continued at two prominent Tibetan Buddhist academies in Sichuan Province, and six CCP cadres were given control over the management of one of the sites, Larung Gar.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: -2 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 0 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

The Chinese government rules Tibet through administration of the TAR and 12 Tibetan autonomous prefectures or counties in the nearby provinces of Sichuan, Qinghai, Gansu, and Yunnan. Under the Chinese constitution, autonomous areas have the right to formulate their own regulations and implement national legislation in accordance with local conditions. In practice, however, decision-making authority is concentrated in the hands of unelected ethnic (Han) Chinese officials of the CCP, which has a monopoly on political power. In 2016, Wu Yingjie replaced Chen Quanguo as TAR party secretary.

The few ethnic Tibetans who occupy senior positions serve mostly as figureheads and echo official doctrine. In January 2017, Che Dalha, an ethnic Tibetan and party cadre, replaced Lobsang Gyaltsen as the chairman (governor) of the TAR. The position is formally elected by the regional people's congress, but in practice such decisions are predetermined by the CCP.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

The regional people's congress of the TAR, which is formally elected by lower-level people's congresses, chooses delegates to China's 3,000-member National People's Congress (NPC) every five years, but in practice candidates are vetted by the CCP.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 0 / 4

As in the rest of China, direct elections are only permitted at the lowest administrative levels. Tight political controls and aggressive state interference ensure that competitive races with independent candidates are even rarer in Tibet than in other parts of the country. Regulations published in 2014 placed significant restrictions on candidates for village elections, excluding those who have attended religious teachings abroad, have communicated with overseas Tibetans, or have relatives studying at monasteries outside China.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 0 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 0 / 4

All organized political activity outside the CCP is illegal and harshly punished, as is any evidence of loyalty to or communication with the Tibetan government in exile, based in Dharamsala, India.

The exile government includes an elected parliament serving five-year terms, a Supreme Justice Commission that adjudicates civil disputes, and a directly elected prime minister, also serving five-year terms. Votes are collected from the Tibetan diaspora around the world. The unelected Dalai Lama, the Tibetan spiritual leader who also traditionally served as head of state, renounced his political role in 2011. Lobsang Sangay was elected prime minister in the same year, replacing a two-term incumbent and becoming the exile government's top political official; he was reelected in April 2016.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 0 / 4

As in the rest of China, the one-party system rigorously suppresses the development of any organized political opposition.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 0 / 4

The authoritarian CCP is not accountable to voters and denies the public any meaningful influence or participation in political affairs.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 0 / 4

Political opportunities for ethnic Tibetans within Tibet remain limited by the dominance of ethnic Chinese officials at all levels of the CCP. The ethnic Tibetan population's objections to party policies are actively suppressed. Women are well represented in many public-sector jobs and CCP posts within the TAR, though most high-level officials are men, and women are unable to organize independently to advance their political interests.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 1 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 0 / 4

Unelected CCP officials determine and implement government policies in Tibet.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

As in the rest of China, corruption is believed to be extensive, though little information is available on the scale of the problem. There have been moves in recent years to curb graft among the region's officials as part of Chinese president Xi Jinping's nationwide anticorruption campaign. However, many prosecutions are believed to be politically selective or amount to reprisals for perceived political and religious disloyalty.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 0 / 4

Governance is opaque in all of China, but even more so in Tibet. A study by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences published in March 2017 ranked cities and counties nationwide by their level of government transparency; Lhasa scored lowest among the cities, and the TAR's Nang County was the lowest among the counties under examination.

ADDITIONAL DISCRETIONARY POLITICAL RIGHTS QUESTION

Is the government or occupying power deliberately changing the ethnic composition of a country or territory so as to destroy a culture or tip the political balance in favor of another group? -3 / 0

The Chinese government's economic development programs in Tibet have strongly encouraged ethnic Chinese migration to the region, disproportionately benefited ethnic Chinese residents, and exacerbated the marginalization of ethnic Tibetans, who have also been displaced by mass resettlement campaigns within Tibet. Ethnic Tibetans account for some 90 percent of the permanently registered population of the TAR, but many ethnic Chinese migrants have moved to the region without changing permanent residency. In recent years, officials have announced major new urbanization projects that risk further diluting the region's Tibetan population; one such plan aims to increase the "permanent urban population" of Tibet by approximately 30 percent by 2020, with many new settlers likely to be ethnic Chinese.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 3 / 60**D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 0 / 16****D1. Are there free and independent media? 0 / 4**

Chinese authorities tightly restrict all news media in Tibet. Individuals who use the internet, social media, or other means to disseminate dissenting views or share politically sensitive news content face arrest and heavy criminal penalties. Tibetan cultural expression, which the authorities associate with separatism, is subject to especially harsh restrictions; those incarcerated in recent years have included scores of Tibetan writers, intellectuals, and musicians. During 2017, Tibetans reportedly continued to be detained or sentenced to prison for actions like disseminating flyers or verbally expressing support for the Dalai Lama and freedom for Tibet, sharing images of the Dalai Lama or the Tibetan flag on WeChat, or sending information abroad about recent self-immolation protests. In June, two monks from Sogtsang Monastery in Aba (Ngaba) Prefecture, Sichuan Province, were sentenced to four and five years in prison, respectively, for offenses including passing information to contacts outside of Tibet.

Deliberate internet blackouts are common in Tibet, including in areas where public demonstrations have occurred. International broadcasts are jammed, and personal communication devices are periodically confiscated and searched. The online censorship and monitoring systems in place across China are applied even more stringently in the TAR, while censorship of Tibet-related keywords on WeChat has become more sophisticated.

Access to the TAR is highly restricted for foreign journalists, who are also regularly prevented from entering Tibetan areas of Sichuan and other provinces, though no permission is technically required to travel there. Tibetans who communicate with foreign media without permission risk arrest and prosecution. Businessman Tashi Wangchuck was detained in early 2016 on charges of inciting separatism after giving an interview to the *New York Times* in 2015 about his efforts to use the Chinese legal system to challenge the lack of Tibetan-language education; his case was resubmitted to a court in January 2017, and a trial was pending at year's end.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 0 / 4

Freedom of religion is harshly restricted in Tibet, in large part because the authorities interpret reverence for the Dalai Lama and adherence to the region's unique form of Buddhism as a threat to CCP rule. In March 2017, authorities used cash prizes and threats of punishment in an effort to dissuade monks and nuns from making pilgrimages to India or Nepal. In August, the Chinese government promulgated revised regulations on religious affairs. The new rules reiterated many existing restrictions while strengthening controls on

places of worship, travel for religious purposes, and children's religious education, including in Tibetan areas.

Religious Affairs Bureaus control who can study in monasteries and nunneries. Officials enforce a minimum age requirement of 18 for those who wish to become monks or nuns, although some institutions continue to accept younger children without registration. Monks and nuns are required to sign a declaration rejecting Tibetan independence, expressing loyalty to the government, and denouncing the Dalai Lama. Since 2012, the CCP has set up committees of government officials within monasteries to manage their daily operations and enforce party indoctrination campaigns. Police posts are increasingly common even in smaller monasteries.

Ideological education campaigns reach most monasteries and nunneries in the region. Such campaigns typically force participants to recognize the CCP claim that China "liberated" Tibet and to denounce the Dalai Lama. The effort has also been extended to the lay population in recent years, with students, civil servants, and farmers required to participate in discussions, singing sessions, and propaganda film screenings. Possession of Dalai Lama-related materials—especially in the TAR—can lead to official harassment, arrest, and punishment, including restrictions on commercial activity and loss of welfare benefits.

In June 2016, authorities ordered a sharp reduction in the size of Larung Gar—a major center for Tibetan Buddhist learning located in the Garzê Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan Province—to a maximum of 5,000 occupants, down from an estimated 10,000 to 30,000 occupants. Demolitions at the site began that July, and many of the evicted monks and nuns were reportedly forced to undergo political "reeducation" before being sent to their home districts. The process continued in 2017, and in August the Chinese government appointed six CCP cadres to take over the management of Larung Gar. The campaign of intensified evictions and demolitions has also affected Yachen Gar, another Tibetan Buddhist religious community in Sichuan Province.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 0 / 4

University professors cannot lecture on certain topics, and many must attend political indoctrination sessions. The government restricts course materials to prevent circulation of unofficial versions of Tibetan history, and has reduced use of Tibetan as the language of instruction in schools in recent years.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 0 / 4

Freedom of private discussion is severely limited by factors including the authorities' monitoring of electronic communications, the heavy security presence, and regular ideological campaigns in Tibetan areas. Surveillance and deployments of security forces intensified during 2017 in preparation for the 19th Party Congress in October. In September, authorities in a Tibetan area of Qinghai Province held a meeting of over 200 managers of WeChat groups, warning them to keep discussions "appropriate" and in compliance with laws and regulations, and requiring them to sign a pledge to uphold their responsibilities.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 0 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 0 / 4

Chinese authorities severely restrict freedom of assembly as part of the government's intensified "stability maintenance" policies in Tibet. A 2016 Human Rights Watch report documented a significant increase in control and surveillance of public gatherings in rural

areas in recent years, expanding the tightest restrictions beyond major towns. Even non-violent protesters are often violently dispersed and harshly punished. Nevertheless, Tibetans continue to seek ways to express dissatisfaction with government policies; several individuals held solo protests in public places during 2017, briefly calling for the return of the Dalai Lama and freedom in Tibet before being seized by police. As in the rest of China, authorities have occasionally responded to environmental protests with minor concessions, such as temporary suspension of mining operations.

An estimated six Tibetans set themselves on fire to protest Chinese rule during 2017, and one man apparently cut his own throat, but instances of self-immolation have generally declined in recent years, due in part to state-imposed deterrents. Officials respond to self-immolation incidents with information blackouts, a heightened security presence, increased surveillance, and large-scale arrests of those associated with the self-immolators. Official guidelines state that engaging in self-immolation and organizing, assisting, or gathering crowds related to such acts should be considered criminal offenses, including intentional homicide in some cases. The government employs collective-punishment tactics to discourage and punish both self-immolations and other forms of protest, including financial penalties on protesters' families, canceling public benefits for their households, and ending state-funded projects in their communities.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 0 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations, including those focused only on apolitical issues like development and public health, operate under highly restrictive agreements and periodically face closure. In August 2017, the Braille Without Borders preparatory school for the blind in Lhasa, headed by German and Dutch cofounders, said it had been threatened with closure without any official explanation after operating for 19 years.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 0 / 4

As in the rest of China, independent trade unions are illegal. The only legal union organization is the government-controlled All-China Federation of Trade Unions, which has long been criticized for failing to properly defend workers' rights.

F. RULE OF LAW: 0 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 0 / 4

The CCP controls the judicial system, and courts consequently lack independence. Courts at all levels are supervised by party political-legal committees that influence the appointment of judges, court operations, and verdicts and sentences.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 0 / 4

Defendants lack access to meaningful legal representation. Trials are closed if state security interests are invoked, and sometimes even when no political crime is listed. Chinese lawyers who offer to defend Tibetan suspects have been harassed or disbarred. Security forces routinely engage in arbitrary detention, and detainees' families are often left uninformed as to their whereabouts or well-being.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 0 / 4

Detained suspects and prisoners are subject to torture and other forms of abuse. Tibetan prisoners of conscience have died in custody under circumstances indicating torture, and

others have been released in poor health, allegedly to avoid deaths in custody. According to a partial database maintained by the U.S. Congressional-Executive Commission on China, there were still hundreds of Tibetan political prisoners behind bars as of 2017.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 0 / 4

Ethnic Tibetans face a range of socioeconomic disadvantages and discriminatory treatment by employers, law enforcement agencies, and other official bodies. The dominant role of the Chinese language in education and employment limits opportunities for many Tibetans; Tibetans receive preferential treatment in university admission examinations, but this is often not enough to secure entrance. Gender bias against women remains widespread, as in the rest of China, despite laws barring workplace discrimination. LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people suffer from discrimination, though same-sex sexual activity is not criminalized. Social pressures discourage discussion of LGBT issues.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 3 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 0 / 4

Obstacles including troop deployments, checkpoints, roadblocks, required bureaucratic approvals, and passport restrictions impede freedom of movement within and beyond Tibetan areas, particularly for travel to and from the TAR. Increased security efforts and Nepalese government cooperation have made it difficult for Tibetans to cross the border into Nepal. Obtaining a passport for foreign travel is extremely difficult for Tibetans. In January 2017, many Tibetans were prevented from traveling to India to attend a Kalachakra teaching by the Dalai Lama.

Authorities continue to restrict access to the TAR for human rights researchers, as well as for some tourists. Foreigners are often denied entry surrounding politically sensitive dates, such as before and during the 19th Party Congress in 2017. During other periods, tourists must travel in groups and obtain official permission to visit the TAR, and even then, last-minute travel bans are periodically imposed.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 1 / 4

The economy is dominated by state-owned enterprises and private businesses with informal ties to officials. Tibetans reportedly find it more difficult than ethnic Chinese residents to obtain permits and loans to open businesses. Since 2003, the authorities have intensified efforts to resettle rural and nomadic Tibetans—forcibly or with incentives—into permanent-housing areas that often have little economic infrastructure. As in the rest of China, land expropriation for development projects is regularly carried out with little consultation and inadequate compensation.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 1 / 4

China's restrictive family-planning policies are formally more lenient for Tibetans and other ethnic minorities. Officials limit urban Tibetans to two children and encourage rural Tibetans to stop at three. As a result, the TAR is one of the few areas of China without a skewed sex ratio. Nevertheless, the authorities continue to regulate reproduction, and related abuses are occasionally reported. State policies actively encourage interethnic marriages with financial and other incentives, and couples must designate a single ethnicity for their

children. Separately, Tibetan women are vulnerable to human trafficking schemes that result in forced marriage.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

Exploitative employment practices are pervasive in many industries, as is the case across China, though ethnic Tibetans reportedly face additional disadvantages in hiring and compensation. Human trafficking that targets Tibetan women can lead to prostitution or exploitative employment in domestic service and other sectors elsewhere in China.

Transnistria

Population: 510,000

Political Rights Rating: 6

Civil Liberties Rating: 6

Freedom Rating: 6.0

Freedom Status: Partly Free

Overview: Transnistria is a breakaway region of Moldova in which ethnic Russians and Ukrainians together outnumber ethnic Moldovans. The territory has enjoyed de facto independence since a brief military conflict in 1992, though it is internationally recognized as a part of Moldova. Its government and economy are heavily dependent on subsidies from Russia, which maintains a military presence and peacekeeping mission in the territory. Political competition is limited, and the dominant party is aligned with powerful local business interests. Impartiality and pluralism of opinion in media is very limited, and authorities closely control civil society activity.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- Former president Yevgeniy Shevchuk faced corruption charges that were widely viewed as politically motivated, and fled the territory.
- A key bridge between Transnistria and Moldova was opened in November, facilitating the easier movement of people and goods between the two and raising hopes for future agreements.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 10 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 3 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4

The president is elected to up to two five-year terms. Parliament speaker Vadim Krasnoselsky, an independent closely associated with the Obnovleniye (Renewal) Party, defeated incumbent Yevgeniy Shevchuk in the 2016 presidential election, following a campaign characterized by corruption allegations traded between the two. Shevchuk was defeated even as his campaign drew significantly on public resources, including the state media, which heavily favored him and sought to portray Krasnoselsky as a crony of Sheriff Enterprises, the powerful business conglomerate that dominates the economy and backs the Renewal Party; Krasnoselsky had previously served as the company's security chief. Given Transnistria's political status, established election monitors did not send missions to oversee the contest.

Constitutional amendments approved in 2011 created a relatively weak post of prime minister. The president appoints the prime minister, who is approved by the parliament. Krasnoselsky tapped Alexander Martynov to serve as prime minister in late 2016.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4

Members of the 43-seat, unicameral Supreme Council are elected to five-year terms. Renewal won a landslide victory in 2015 elections, due in large part to poor economic conditions and dissatisfaction with then president Shevchuk's government. A small group of Shevchuk's allies and supporters demonstrated against the results of the elections, claiming vote manipulation. As Transnistria is not internationally recognized, no established election monitor sent a mission to observe the election's conduct.

The winners of 2017 by-elections for seats left vacant by resignations were considered allies of Sheriff Enterprises. Several candidates were reportedly impeded from registration, including one who was favored to win his district.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 1 / 4

In recent years, actors from various political camps have alleged that the Electoral Commission is subject to political pressure. In 2015, ahead of that year's elections, authorities unsuccessfully tried to evict the Electoral Commission from its offices, in what was viewed as an attempt to interfere with its operations.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 5 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 1 / 4

Transnistria's entire political establishment, including nominal opposition parties and civil society organizations, supports the separatist system and Russia's role as patron. In the 2015 Supreme Council elections, Renewal won overwhelmingly with 35 of 43 seats; Proryv (Breakthrough) and the Communist Party each won 1 seat. Several independent deputies gained seats, but they are strongly affiliated with Renewal. With the 2016 election of Krasnoselsky as president, the entire political establishment is now controlled by Renewal. However, the Communist Party is able to hold some events and speak out against the government in a limited way.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 2 / 4

The Renewal Party has long dominated the legislature. In recent years, opposition candidates have occasionally faced difficulties registering to compete in elections.

While the main candidates in the 2016 election to the country's powerful presidency were independents, the post effectively rotated between power bases when Shevchuk was defeated by Krasnoselsky.

A number of corruption cases were initiated against Shevchuk in 2017, and he has since fled the territory, and is reportedly living in Moldova. In October 2017, the Renewal-controlled parliament passed an amendment allowing him to be tried in absentia.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 1 / 4

The Transnistrian political establishment is dominated by the monopolistic conglomerate Sheriff Enterprises. Moscow's political influence in Transnistria is undergirded by the presence of 1,500 Russian troops, who are stationed to guard a Soviet-era ammunition depot and uphold a 1992 cease-fire between Transnistria and Moldova. The Moldovan government periodically calls for Russia to withdraw its forces.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 1 / 4

Few women are included in the political elite (for example, there are only 3 women in the 43-seat Supreme Soviet¹). However, women are able to exercise some political rights and participate in campaigns.

While Transnistria has three official languages—Russian, Ukrainian, and Moldovan—Russian is the de facto language used by the government. Authorities do not allow voting in Moldovan elections to take place in Transnistrian-controlled territory, but residents with Russian citizenship had access to two dozen polling stations during Russia's tightly controlled 2012 presidential election.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 2 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 1 / 4

Elected representatives are promptly inaugurated following elections. Sheriff Enterprises exerts a strong influence on government policies, which are also closely monitored by the Russian political establishment.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 0 / 4

Transnistrian politics have long been built on nepotism and favoritism. In 2017, several prosecutions for abuse of power were initiated against Shevchuk; beyond this, there are few visible safeguards against official corruption.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 1 / 4

Although the authorities publish information on websites and are interviewed on television about their policies,² many governmental discussions are not open to the media and governmental openness and transparency are limited.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 14 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 5 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 0 / 4

Authorities closely monitor and control the public media, and Sheriff dominates private broadcasting, leading to widespread self-censorship. There are few independent print outlets and they have limited circulation. Critical reporting draws harassment by the government, which also uses bureaucratic obstruction and the withholding of information to inhibit independent media.

¹ <https://novostipmr.com/ru/content/rasklad-v-verhovnom-sovete-pmr>

² <https://tv.pgtrk.ru/news/20171105/63165>

In 2016, the parliament passed legislation giving itself greater authority over state media outlets, including the power to appoint editorial staff. The legislation also enabled officials to limit media access to their activities and bar the use of recording devices.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 2 / 4

More than 95 percent of the population is Christian Orthodox, and authorities have denied registration to several smaller religious groups, which face harassment by police and Orthodox opponents. A 2016 law imposed restrictions or penalties related to unauthorized distribution of religious literature, preaching in public spaces, and organized religious activities in residential buildings.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 1 / 4

While professors may take part in international forums, since civil society organizations in Moldova signed a Declaration on Red Lines in the Transnistrian settlement conflict in 2016³, there has been an informal understanding that Transnistrian academics will not participate in forums organized by groups in Moldova. This has caused self-imposed limitations in academic dialogue with peers in Moldova.

The eight Latin-script schools in Transnistria governed by the Moldovan authorities continue to face pressure from local authorities and are limited to substandard facilities.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 2 / 4

People do share their opinions in private settings, including on sensitive developments. However, expression is inhibited somewhat in public spaces by concerns about surveillance or retribution for voicing dissent.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 2 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 1 / 4

Authorities limit freedom of assembly through measures such as rejection on administrative grounds of applications for permits to hold meetings and protests. Reportedly, only two protests actions have received formal permission in the past five years, both in 2015. Participants in unsanctioned actions have faced administrative penalties

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 1 / 4

Nongovernmental and civic work remains a challenge. Organizations working on human rights or which are perceived as threatening authorities face harassment. The Coordination Council of Technical Aid must approve governance-related work.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 0 / 4

Trade unions in Transnistria are unreformed since the Soviet era, and they are not independent. Local and regional authorities manipulate trade unions for political gain.

F. RULE OF LAW: 2 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 0 / 4

³ <http://www.e-democracy.md/files/pr/2016-08-22-declaratie-societate-civila-linii-rosii-transnistria.pdf>

The judiciary serves the interests of the authorities. The 2017 conviction of Yuriy Ger-vazyuk, head of the Customs Service under the previous administration, of abuse of office by a court was widely viewed as a politically motivated decision; he was sentenced to 10 years in prison and issued a fine of \$226,000.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 0 / 4

Justice is applied arbitrarily and to serve the political interests of those in power. The criminal cases filed against former president Shevchuk in 2017 are widely viewed as a government manipulation of the criminal justice system. Separately, in the fall, a 15-year old pedestrian was killed, allegedly by a speeding driver who was the wife of an influential businessman. Only after public outrage was a criminal investigation announced.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 1 / 4

Transnistrian authorities adopted an Action Plan in 2015 to end torture in custody, but the practice is still reported, and prison conditions remain poor.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

The Transnistrian constitution guarantees rights and freedoms of persons and citizens “without distinction as to sex, race, nationality, language, religion, social origin,” and others, but these are not uniformly upheld.⁴ The Moldovan-speaking minority faces discrimination and harassment. According to a 2016 report from the nongovernmental organization Promo-Lex, people have been fined for using Latin script instead of Cyrillic; the language and alphabet issue is associated with the reasoning underpinning Transnistrian claims of independence. Same-sex activity is illegal in Transnistria, and the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) community has been forced underground as a result of widespread government and societal discrimination.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 5 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 2 / 4

Approximately 300,000 people in Transnistria hold Moldovan citizenship and can travel freely to European Union (EU) countries. A large majority of them hold Russian or Ukrainian passports as well. Without a foreign passport, residents of Transnistria cannot move freely outside the territory, and cars with local license plates cannot cross the border to Moldova. Many Transnistrians travel to Moldova or Russia to pursue higher education.

A key bridge between Transnistria and Moldova was opened in November, facilitating the easier movement of people and goods between the two and raising hopes for future agreements.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 1 / 4

Private property is only allowed for housing in Transnistria; other property rights, including land ownership, remain restricted. Procedures for establishing a private business are hampered by bureaucratic impediments.

⁴ Constitution of Transnistria, available via <http://mfa-pmr.org/en/bht>

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 1 / 4

Same-sex marriage is not permitted. Many women are pressured to have large families. Domestic violence is a growing concern, with no law criminalizing it. However, the problem has become more public, including through television reports. Dedicated services, including psychological aid, a hotline for victims, and shelters are operated by civil society organizations.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

Economic opportunity remains very limited. Despite increased international aid to ensure better opportunities for women, many still fall victim to traffickers who subject them to forced labor or sex work.

West Bank

Population: 2,698,000 [Note: This figure represents the Palestinian population only.]

Political Rights Rating: 7

Civil Liberties Rating: 5

Freedom Rating: 6.0

Freedom Status: Not Free

Note: The numerical ratings and status listed above do not reflect conditions in Israel or the Gaza Strip, which are examined in separate reports. Prior to its 2011 edition, *Freedom in the World* featured one report for Israeli-occupied portions of the West Bank and Gaza Strip and another for Palestinian-administered portions.

Overview: The West Bank is under Israeli military occupation and is subject to the partial jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority (PA), which is operating under an expired presidential mandate and has no functioning legislature. The Israeli occupation entails onerous physical barriers and constraints on movement, demolitions of homes and businesses, severe restrictions on political and civil liberties, and expanding Jewish settlements. The PA itself has grown more authoritarian, engaging in crackdowns on the media and human rights activists who criticize its rule.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- The PA and Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip, signed a renewed reconciliation deal in October, raising the possibility of future presidential and legislative elections, but the agreement stalled on the issue of control over internal security in Gaza.
 - PA municipal elections were held in May, but Hamas and some other parties refused to participate, and the ruling Fatah faction ran unopposed in the majority of municipalities.
 - In June, the PA adopted the Electronic Crimes Law as part of a broader crackdown on the media, granting authorities ample discretion to punish dissent with high fines and imprisonment.
 - The Israeli authorities continued efforts to expand Jewish settlements in the West Bank, adopting a law in February that would allow the formal seizure of private
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Palestinian land where settlements had been built illegally, and proposing a bill—which later stalled—to absorb a number of West Bank settlements into Israel’s Jerusalem municipality.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 5 / 40**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 2 / 12****A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4**

The PA has not held a presidential election since 2005, when Fatah’s Mahmoud Abbas won with 62 percent of the vote. His four-year term expired in 2009, but he has continued to rule with the support of the Fatah-led Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). The primary obstacle to new Palestinian elections is the ongoing rift between the West Bank–based PA government and the Islamist political and militant group Hamas, which seized control of the Gaza Strip in 2007.

Under PA laws, the prime minister is nominated by the president and requires the support of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC). However, the PLC elected in 2006 was unable to function due to the break with Hamas and Israel’s detention of many lawmakers, and Abbas has since appointed prime ministers and cabinets without legislative approval.

In October 2017, Fatah and Hamas recommitted to a reconciliation agreement brokered by Egypt, which raised the prospect of elections. However, there had been little progress on implementation by year’s end. A series of similar reconciliation deals have failed in recent years.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

The PA has not held elections for the 132-seat PLC since 2006, when Hamas won 74 seats and Fatah took 45. Although the two factions initially formed a unity government headed by Prime Minister Ismail Haniya of Hamas, the 2007 schism left that government and the PLC itself unable to function, and the legislature’s mandate expired in 2010. Moreover, Israeli forces have repeatedly detained many PLC members since 2006, and up to 13 were in detention during 2017.

Local council elections, originally due in 2016, were held in May 2017. However, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) decided not to participate, and just 145 municipalities—fewer than half of the West Bank’s total—featured competitive races. Some two-thirds of those council seats went to independents, while Fatah captured nearly 28 percent and smaller groups divided the remainder. In 181 municipalities, a single candidate list ran unopposed and won automatically; Fatah won 75 percent of the seats in those locations.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 2 / 4

The PA’s laws provide a credible framework for elections, but they have not been fully implemented for more than a decade. The 2017 local council elections were organized by the Palestinian Central Elections Commission. The body’s nine commissioners are appointed by the president, and the electoral law requires them to be experienced and politically impartial judges, academics, or lawyers. Voting did not take place in East Jerusalem, whose de facto annexation by Israel is not recognized internationally, or in Gaza.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 4 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 1 / 4

The PA and Israeli forces in the West Bank have sought to suppress Hamas, periodically engaging in mass arrests and closures of affiliated institutions. Some other factions with militant wings face similar crackdowns.

Abbas and his government have also taken administrative and bureaucratic actions to marginalize potential political rivals within Fatah; he was reelected as Fatah's leader by handpicked delegates at a November 2016 party conference.

A number of smaller Palestinian parties continue to operate, including through membership in the PLO.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 0 / 4

The prolonged and indefinite postponement of presidential and PLC elections has prevented any rotation of power, and the PA leadership has been accused of avoiding any contest that could lead to a Hamas victory. Moreover, Hamas's boycott of the 2017 local elections left it unrepresented in any West Bank municipal office.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 1 / 4

In addition to its detentions and harassment of political figures from Hamas and some other factions, Israel effectively impedes Palestinian political activity through its restrictions on freedom of movement, including an elaborate system of checkpoints, roadblocks, and permit restrictions, as well as the continuous barrier it has constructed along the West Bank side of the pre-1967 border.

International donors—including the United States and a number of Arab governments—sometimes exert influence over the PA to promote or marginalize certain politicians or political factions.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 2 / 4

Women and religious or ethnic minorities enjoy formal political equality under PA laws, and both women and Christians have held PLC seats and cabinet positions. However, they tend to be underrepresented in such posts, and their particular interests are not necessarily addressed by the political system. About a fifth of the council seats in the 2017 municipal elections went to women.

Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem can participate in Israeli municipal elections, but since most are not Israeli citizens, they cannot vote in elections for the Israeli Knesset (parliament), which governs them. They are formally entitled to vote in PA presidential and legislative elections according to the 1993 Oslo Accords, but Israel has refused to allow PA municipal elections in East Jerusalem, as it considers the area part of the Israeli municipality of Jerusalem.

The roughly 600,000 Jewish settlers in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, are Israeli citizens with full political rights in Israel.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 2 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 0 / 4**

The PA lacks an elected executive and legislature, and its ability to implement policy decisions is limited in practice by direct Israeli military control over much of the West Bank, including the movement and travel of PA officials, staff, and related personnel and contractors. Israel periodically withholds the transfer of tax revenues to the PA.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

The PA's Anti-Corruption Commission is responsible for implementing an anticorruption strategy it developed for the years 2015–18. The Coalition for Accountability and Integrity (AMAN) reported in 2016 that there was increased public awareness of anticorruption mechanisms, but noted continuing government corruption in a number of areas, including favoritism in the allocation of public-sector jobs and contracts and a lack of transparency in budgetary matters. Israeli movement and access restrictions foster opportunities for bribery and corruption in the West Bank.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 1 / 4

In February 2017, Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah released a five-year National Policy Agenda that emphasized improved efficiency, transparency, and accountability in government and promised a number of economic and social development initiatives. However, critics said the plan was disconnected from the realities of the Israeli occupation and the serious fiscal and economic challenges faced by the PA. In 2016, a coalition of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), including AMAN, formed a crisis management cell to monitor the PA's executive decision-making, citing opaque procedures for the formation of policies and legislation. Some independent Palestinian media outlets have also endeavored to monitor PA governance.

ADDITIONAL DISCRETIONARY POLITICAL RIGHTS QUESTION**Is the government or occupying power deliberately changing the ethnic composition of a country or territory so as to destroy a culture or tip the political balance in favor of another group? -3 / 0**

The growth of Jewish settlements, related seizures of Palestinian land, and the demolition of Palestinian homes in the West Bank continued in 2017, which marked the 50th year of the occupation. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) reported that Israeli authorities demolished 423 structures during the year, including in East Jerusalem, citing the lack of building permits. At least a third of all Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem lack an Israeli building permit, which are extremely difficult for Palestinians to obtain. The 2017 demolition figure, though high, represented a decline after a major spike in 2016. Such demolitions displace hundreds of people each year.

Construction starts in Jewish settlements and tenders for settlement construction both increased sharply in 2017 compared with the previous year, according to the Israeli NGO Peace Now. With support and incentives from the Israeli government and private organizations, the number of settlers in the West Bank has increased steadily for decades.

In February, the Knesset adopted a law that authorized the formal seizure of private Palestinian land where settlements had been built illegally, though its implementation was suspended pending a review by the Israeli Supreme Court. In October, Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu endorsed a proposed bill to absorb a number of West Bank settlements

into Israel's Jerusalem municipality, effectively annexing the territory. The measure had not advanced through the Knesset by year's end.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 23 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 8 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4

The news media are generally not free in the West Bank. Under a 1995 PA press law, journalists may be fined and jailed, and newspapers closed, for publishing "secret information" on PA security forces or news that might harm national unity or incite violence. In June 2017, President Abbas used an executive decree to issue the Electronic Crimes Law, which prescribes heavy fines and lengthy prison terms for a range of vaguely defined offenses, including the publication or dissemination of material that is critical of the state. Other offenses involve content that could disturb public order or national unity, or harm family and religious values. Leaks of information by whistle-blowers or journalists can also draw fines or imprisonment under the law, as can use of online circumvention tools to access blocked websites. Separately during June, the PA attorney general ordered service providers to block at least 29 websites, including those belonging to opposition and independent media outlets.

Media outlets are routinely pressured to provide favorable coverage of the PA and Fatah. Journalists and bloggers who criticize the PA or Fatah have faced arbitrary arrests, threats, and physical abuse. Reporters are also subject to administrative detention and assault by Israeli forces. PA security forces engaged in a crackdown on the media during 2017, arbitrarily arresting a number of journalists, including five in one day in August. One photojournalist, Fadi Arouri, was arrested and interrogated over Facebook posts that officials said "could lead to disorder in society." In October, Israeli forces raided and shut down several media facilities that were accused of providing services to Hamas-affiliated outlets.

The Palestinian Center for Development and Media Freedoms (MADA) reported a total of 119 press freedom violations by Palestinian forces in the West Bank in 2017, up from 86 the previous year. Many involved arbitrary detentions and interrogations, website blocking, or arrests. Israeli authorities were responsible for 375 violations in the Palestinian territories, according to the group, up from 249 in 2016. The most serious incidents involved physical attacks on journalists as they covered Israeli military actions or clashes with Palestinian protesters.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 2 / 4

The PA Basic Law declares Islam to be the official religion of Palestine and states that "respect and sanctity of all other heavenly religions (Judaism and Christianity) shall be maintained." Blasphemy is a criminal offense. The 2017 Electronic Crimes Law criminalizes expression aimed at harming moral and religious values without defining those values, allowing for arbitrary enforcement.

Security-related restrictions on movement, and vandalism or physical assaults against worshippers or places of worship, affect Jewish, Muslim, and Christian residents of the West Bank to varying degrees. The Israeli authorities regularly prevent Palestinian Muslims from reaching Jerusalem to pray, and generally restrict access for young adult males to the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif compound on Fridays. In July 2017, after Palestinian attackers killed two Israeli police officers near the site, authorities decided to install metal detectors and other new security structures at the entrances to the compound, setting off clashes between Palestinian protesters and Israeli police that led to several fatalities. The unrest subsided after Israeli officials reversed the changes later that month.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 2 / 4

The PA has administrative authority over Palestinian education. Some academic self-censorship has been reported. Israeli movement restrictions limit access to schools and academic institutions; schools have sometimes been damaged during military incursions, and student travel between the West Bank and Gaza Strip has been curtailed. According to the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, East Jerusalem's schools are badly underfunded compared with schools in West Jerusalem.

Political activism is common on university campuses. In May 2017 student council elections at Birzeit University, Hamas supporters won 25 seats, Fatah won 22, and the PFLP placed third with 4 seats. The results were considered an indication of political views among West Bank Palestinians more broadly.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4

Private discussion is relatively free, though Israeli and PA security forces are known to monitor online activity and arrest individuals for alleged incitement or criticism of Palestinian authorities, respectively. The adoption and enforcement of the Electronic Crimes Law in 2017 increased concerns about the freedom of personal expression online.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 5 / 12**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 1 / 4**

The PA requires permits for demonstrations, and those held to protest against PA policies are generally dispersed. Israel's Military Order 101 requires a permit for all "political" demonstrations of more than 10 people; demonstrations are routinely broken up with force, occasionally resulting in fatalities. Such clashes continued in 2017, as Israeli forces sought to restrict and disperse sometimes violent demonstrations, declaring certain protest areas to be closed military zones. After the U.S. government recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel in December, Israeli personnel were accused of using excessive force to quell both peaceful and violent demonstrations against the move, with reports of injuries from tear-gas canisters, rubber-coated bullets, or live ammunition.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 2 / 4

A broad range of NGOs operate in the West Bank. However, Israeli restrictions on movement impede civil society activity, human rights NGOs reportedly face harassment and threats from settlers and right-wing Israeli groups, Hamas-affiliated groups have been periodically shut down by Israeli or PA officials, and activists who criticize the PA leadership can face harassment and abuse by security services. In March 2017, the Knesset approved a law that bars entry for any foreign groups that publicly support a boycott of Israel or its West Bank settlements, which could affect Palestinian organizations' access to Israel and foreign organizations' access to both Israel and the West Bank.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

Workers may establish unions without government authorization, but labor protections in general are poorly enforced. Palestinian workers seeking to strike must submit to arbitration by the PA Labor Ministry, and various other rules make it difficult to mount a legal strike. Palestinian workers in Jerusalem are subject to Israeli labor law.

F. RULE OF LAW: 5 / 16**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 2 / 4**

The PA judicial system is partly independent. The legal framework in the West Bank derives from Ottoman, British Mandate, and Jordanian law; Israeli law and military orders; and the PA's Basic Law and ordinary legislation. The PA courts are administered by the High Judicial Council, which consists of Supreme Court judges, the heads of appellate courts, the attorney general, and the deputy justice minister. Enforcement of judicial decisions is impeded by PA noncompliance as well as lack of Palestinian jurisdiction in so-called Area C, a portion of the West Bank—covering 60 percent of its territory but a small share of its Palestinian population—where the Israeli military exerts exclusive control. Israeli settlers are subject to the independent Israeli civilian courts. Palestinians can appeal Israeli military orders and actions before the Israeli Supreme Court.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 2 / 4

In addition to its civilian courts, the PA has a military court system that lacks almost all due process guarantees, including the right to appeal sentences, and can impose the death penalty. No executions have been carried out since 2005, however. The PA military courts handle cases on a range of security offenses, on collaborating with Israel, and on drug trafficking. Human rights groups regularly document allegations of arbitrary detention by PA security forces.

Palestinians are also subject to Israel's military court system for a variety of offenses, from terrorism to "illegal entry into Israel" and traffic violations. Palestinians are regularly detained without charges for extended periods. Petitions challenging administrative detentions and sentences are reviewed in secrecy. Most convictions in Israeli military courts are based on confessions; the widespread use of pretrial detention encourages defendants to enter plea deals rather than remain in custody through a lengthy trial process. According to the Israeli human rights group B'Tselem, there were 5,561 Palestinian security detainees and prisoners from the West Bank held in Israeli prisons as of November 2017.

According to Defense for Children International (DCI) Palestine, 313 Palestinian children (aged 12–17) from the occupied territories were being held in Israeli military detention as of November 2017. Although Israeli law prohibits the detention of children younger than 12, some are occasionally held. Most Palestinian child detainees are serving sentences—handed down by a special military court for minors created in 2009—for throwing stones or other projectiles at Israeli troops in the West Bank; acquittals on such charges are very rare, and the military courts have been criticized for a lack of due process protections. East Jerusalem Palestinian minors are tried in Israeli civilian juvenile courts.

Jewish settlers are tried in Israeli civilian courts, which generally provide due process protections.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 0 / 4

Allegations of torture and other abuse by PA security forces are common, and officers are rarely punished for such violations. Human rights groups have criticized Israeli interrogation methods, which allegedly include some forms of physical abuse and other measures such as isolation, sleep deprivation, psychological threats and pressure, painful binding, and humiliation.

Militant Jewish settlers continued to attack Palestinian individuals and property in 2017. Most perpetrators of such activity enjoy impunity. Israeli soldiers accused of excessive force or abuse of Palestinian civilians are subject to Israeli military law, though

convictions, which are rare, typically result in light sentences. In one prominent case, soldier Elor Azaria was sentenced in February 2017 to 18 months in prison for manslaughter, having killed a Palestinian attacker who had already been subdued; the penalty was reduced to 14 months in September.

Israeli security personnel and civilians face small-scale terrorist attacks in the West Bank; some 12 people were killed in such attacks during 2017, according to B'Tselem. Meanwhile, 38 Palestinians were killed by Israeli security forces and three others were killed by settlers; in at least some of these cases, the Palestinians apparently posed no imminent lethal threat.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

The legal arrangements operative in the West Bank are fundamentally discriminatory in that Israelis and Palestinians who reside or commit crimes in the same location are subject to different courts and laws.

Palestinian women are underrepresented in most professions and encounter discrimination in employment, though they have equal access to universities. Women are legally excluded from what are deemed dangerous occupations.

Although LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people in the West Bank do not face prosecution for same-sex activity, they are reportedly subject to harassment and abuse by PA authorities and members of society.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 5 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 1 / 4

Israeli checkpoints, roadblocks, travel permits, and other restrictions continue to seriously constrain freedom of movement, stunt trade, and limit Palestinian access to jobs, hospitals, and schools.

The Israeli separation barrier, 85 percent of which lies in West Bank territory and which was declared illegal in 2004 by the International Court of Justice, continues to divide families and communities and cause general hardship and disruption of services.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 1 / 4

While Palestinians are able to own property and engage in business activity, their rights are seriously undermined by Israel's movement and access restrictions and the expansion of Israeli settlements, which is encouraged by the Israeli government and private groups. Israeli authorities also employ a variety of methods to prevent Palestinians from developing their privately owned land, particularly in Area C, for example by declaring nature reserves or denying permit requests; development carried out without permits is subject to demolition. Palestinian property is also illegally damaged or occupied by Israeli settlers.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Palestinian laws and societal norms, derived in part from Sharia (Islamic law), put women at a disadvantage in matters such as marriage and divorce. For Christians, personal status issues are governed by ecclesiastical courts. Rape and domestic abuse remain underreported and frequently go unpunished, as authorities are allegedly reluctant to pursue such cases. So-called honor killings continue to be reported; a provision in the penal code allows

PA judges to show leniency in “extenuating circumstances,” a loophole that has traditionally been used in such cases.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

The PA has no law focused on combating trafficking in persons. Some Palestinians—both children and adults—reportedly work in exploitative conditions in Israeli settlements, where the PA has no jurisdiction. Israeli labor laws are rarely applied to protect such workers.

Western Sahara

Population: 600,000

Capital: Laâyoune

Political Rights Rating: 7

Civil Liberties Rating: 7

Freedom Rating: 7.0

Freedom Status: Not Free

Electoral Democracy: No

Overview: Morocco has claimed authority over Western Sahara since 1975, but the United Nations does not recognize Morocco’s control, calling Western Sahara a “non-self-governing territory.” While the United Nations brokered a cease-fire in 1991, a long-promised referendum on the territory’s status has yet to be held. Elections are severely restricted, as are civil liberties, particularly as they relate to independence activism or topics that are also sensitive in Morocco.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017:

- A standoff between the Polisario Front and Moroccan forces that began in 2016 ended in February as the latter withdrew from the UN buffer zone between the areas controlled by each side. The crisis began when the Polisario Front accused Morocco of breaking the terms of the cease-fire by attempting to build a road in the buffer zone.
- In July, a Rabat court of appeals sentenced 23 Sahrawis to prison terms ranging from two years to life over the killing of 11 Moroccan security personnel in 2010. The court allowed evidence that included confessions allegedly obtained through torture.

POLITICAL RIGHTS: -3 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 0 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

Morocco controls more than two-thirds of Western Sahara and allows no pro-independence candidates to run for office. The remaining portion of the country is controlled by the Polisario Front, which is based in Algeria and leads a nationalist movement comprised of members of the Sahrawi ethnic group. The constitution of the government-in-exile states that the leader of the Polisario Front is the territory’s president, but it does not hold elections within the territory.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

In the Moroccan-controlled portion of the territory, voters elect 13 representatives to the Moroccan parliament. The Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, the breakaway government, has a 51-member legislature called the Sahrawi National Council (SNC), which is indirectly elected by the General Popular Congress of the Polisario Front. Most voting occurs in refugee camps in Algeria. The Polisario Front organizes the elections and does not allow any political parties to compete.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 0 / 4

The electoral framework is not fair, given the constraints on representation in the territory and the prohibition of any candidate who challenges Moroccan control of the territory to run for parliament.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 0 / 16**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 0 / 4**

The Polisario Front, which controls the government-in-exile, does not allow other political parties to compete. In the Moroccan-controlled areas, the Polisario Front is banned, and pro-independence parties are not allowed to form.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 0 / 4

Since political parties that advocate for Sahrawi independence cannot function in Moroccan-controlled areas, the most salient opposition elements cannot gain power through elections. No credible opposition exists in the territory controlled by the Polisario Front due to the ban on other political parties.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 0 / 4

People's political choices are dominated by Morocco and a government-in-exile; under the territory's current UN status as a "non-self-governing territory," Sahrawis are unable to elect an independent government.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 0 / 4

Due to Western Sahara's lack of sovereignty, no segment of the population has full political rights or electoral opportunities. However, women play a significant role in the Polisario Front. Many women are leaders in the independence movement and organize the refugee camps in Algeria.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 0 / 12**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 0 / 4**

Western Sahara, which has not yet achieved self-determination, has no freely elected leaders. However, the 13 members of parliament in the Moroccan-controlled portions of

the territory participate in the legislative process in Rabat, and the Polisario Front governs portions of the territory in its control.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 0 / 4

Corruption among both Moroccan authorities and the Polisario Front is widespread and investigations are rare. Corruption occurs primarily to facilitate the exploitation of natural resources—phosphates, hydrocarbons, and fisheries—by Moroccan and international interests. Military officers frequently use government contacts to attain fishing licenses and win contracts for quarries.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 0 / 4

Moroccan laws on access to information apply to Western Sahara. Information about Western Sahara is nearly nonexistent, which severely limits transparency. The Moroccan government publishes budget and financial information online, and public officials—including parliament members, judges, and civil servants—are required to declare their assets. However, transparency nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) assert that many officials do not provide this information, and the law provides no sanctions for noncompliance.

ADDITIONAL DISCRETIONARY POLITICAL RIGHTS QUESTION:

ADD Q: Is the government or occupying power deliberately changing the ethnic composition of a country or territory so as to destroy a culture or tip the political balance in favor of another group? -3 / 0

Before and since the establishment of the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) in 1991, Rabat has endeavored to tip the population's balance in Morocco's favor. Morocco also works to challenge the conduct of a referendum that would determine the territory's final status. By some counts, Moroccans now outnumber Sahrawis in Western Sahara. Morocco constructed a sand berm to divide territory under its control from the smaller territory to the east that is under Sahrawi control.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 7 / 60

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 3 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 0 / 4

Some pro-Sahrawi media outlets do operate, such as the all-volunteer Equipe Media group, but they face regular harassment by Moroccan authorities, who ensure that reporting does not dispute Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara. Exiled groups provide coverage from the outside; reporting by foreign journalists is sharply constrained. Internet access is limited throughout the territory.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 2 / 4

Moroccan authorities generally do not interfere with religious practices, though as in Morocco proper, mosques are monitored by authorities. Moroccan law prohibits any efforts to convert a Muslim to another faith. It is illegal to publicly criticize Islam.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 0 / 4

Educators must practice self-censorship around the status of Western Sahara, as Moroccan law criminalizes debate that calls this into question. Other sensitive topics include the

monarchy and Islam. The University of Tifariti was established in 2013 as the first university in the area claimed by the Polisario.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 1 / 4

As in Morocco proper, there is concern about state surveillance of online activity and personal communications, and people do not feel free to speak privately about the status of Western Sahara and other sensitive topics. Freedom of expression is constrained in Polisario-controlled areas as well.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 0 / 4

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 0 / 4

Demonstrations and protests are broken up regularly, particularly on sensitive issues such as self-determination and Sahrawi prisoners held by Morocco, and protesters are frequently arrested and beaten. In April 2017, police violently dispersed a pro-independence protest in El-Aaiún, assaulting dozens of peaceful protesters.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 0 / 4

NGOs that advocate for independence or question Islam as the state religion are denied official registration by the Moroccan government. Organizations that meet the government's criteria are frequently denied registration as well. Foreign NGO representatives who traveled to Moroccan-controlled areas of Western Sahara to observe the human rights situation were expelled on several occasions in 2017.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 0 / 4

Moroccan unions have a presence in Western Sahara, but they are largely inactive. Government restrictions limit the right to strike. Most people in unions work for the Moroccan government. The Polisario Front has a trade union called the Sahwari Trade Union, which is also inactive.

F. RULE OF LAW: 0 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 0 / 4

Courts in Western Sahara are controlled by Morocco and their rulings reflect Rabat's interests. Executive interference and corruption significantly impede judicial independence.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 0 / 4

Due process rights are not respected. In July 2017, a Rabat court of appeals sentenced 23 Sahrawis to prison sentences ranging from two years to life for the 2010 deaths of 11 Moroccan security personnel during an uprising at the Gdeim Izik protest camp. Evidence at the trial included confessions allegedly obtained by torture. The court did not investigate these allegations.

Pro-independence advocates and other civil society leaders are often arbitrarily arrested, particularly in the aftermath of demonstrations. International human rights groups view many Sahrawis in Moroccan prisons, including human rights activists and pro-independence advocates, as political prisoners.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 0 / 4

Tensions remain between the Moroccan military and the Polisario Front, with periodic mobilization of forces. A military standoff began in 2016 when the Polisario Front accused Morocco of breaking the terms of the cease-fire by attempting to build a road in the UN buffer zone. The standoff ended in February 2017 when Morocco withdrew its troops.

Torture and degrading treatment by Moroccan authorities continues to be a problem, especially against pro-independence advocates.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 0 / 4

Sahrawis experience discrimination in access to education and employment. According to Sahrawi activists, Moroccan settlers are favored by employers in the phosphate mining industry, which is one of the predominant sources of jobs.

Although women play leadership roles at the Sahrawi camps in Algeria, cultural norms often dictate that women stay at home and manage the household. Moroccan law prohibits same-sex sexual acts.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 4 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 1 / 4

Morocco and the Polisario Front both restrict free movement in Western Sahara. The sand berm, constructed by Morocco in the 1980s, is 1,700 miles long. The wall is surrounded on both sides by land mines, and constitutes what may be the longest continuous land mine field in the world.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 1 / 4

The territory's occupied status leaves property rights insecure. No credible free market exists within the territory. The SADR government routinely signs contracts with firms for the exploration of oil and gas, although these cannot be implemented given the territory's status, and no credible free market exists within the territory.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

In the Polisario-controlled territory and in Tindouf, women have a relatively higher social status than in Morocco. However, social freedoms are curtailed. Moroccan law criminalizes both adultery and premarital sex. Spousal rape is not considered a crime.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 0 / 4

Economic opportunity is inhibited by the territory's undetermined status. The economic activity generated by companies that exploit the country's natural resources generally does not benefit the Sahrawi population. Sex trafficking, often affecting young girls, takes place in coastal fishing villages.

Freedom in the World 2018

Methodology

INTRODUCTION

Freedom in the World is an annual global report on political rights and civil liberties, composed of numerical ratings and descriptive texts for each country and a select group of territories. The 2018 edition covers developments in 195 countries and 14 territories from January 1, 2017, through December 31, 2017.

The report's methodology is derived in large measure from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948. *Freedom in the World* is based on the premise that these standards apply to all countries and territories, irrespective of geographical location, ethnic or religious composition, or level of economic development. *Freedom in the World* operates from the assumption that freedom for all people is best achieved in liberal democratic societies.

Freedom in the World assesses the real-world rights and freedoms enjoyed by individuals, rather than governments or government performance per se. Political rights and civil liberties can be affected by both state and nonstate actors, including insurgents and other armed groups.

Freedom House does not believe that legal guarantees of rights are sufficient for on-the-ground fulfillment of those rights. While both laws and actual practices are factored into scoring decisions, greater emphasis is placed on implementation.

Territories are selected for assessment in *Freedom in the World* based on the following criteria: whether the area is governed separately from the rest of the relevant country or countries, either de jure or de facto; whether conditions on the ground for political rights and civil liberties are significantly different from those in the rest of the relevant country or countries, meaning a separate assessment is likely to yield different ratings; whether the territory is the subject of enduring popular or diplomatic pressure for autonomy, independence, or incorporation into another country; whether the territory's boundaries are sufficiently stable to allow an assessment of conditions for the year under review, and whether they can be expected to remain stable in future years so that year-on-year comparisons are possible; and whether the territory is large and/or politically significant. Freedom House typically takes no position on territorial or separatist disputes as such, focusing instead on the level of political rights and civil liberties in a given geographical area.

HISTORY OF FREEDOM IN THE WORLD

Freedom House's first year-end reviews of freedom began in the 1950s as the Balance Sheet of Freedom. This modest report provided assessments of political trends and their implications for individual freedom. In 1972, Freedom House launched a new, more comprehensive annual study called *The Comparative Study of Freedom*. Raymond Gastil, a Harvard-trained specialist in regional studies from the University of Washington in Seattle, developed the methodology, which assigned political rights and civil liberties ratings to 151 countries and 45 territories and categorized them as Free, Partly Free, or Not Free. The findings appeared each year in Freedom House's bimonthly journal *Freedom at Issue* (later

titled *Freedom Review*). *Freedom in the World* first appeared in book form in 1978 and included short narratives for each country and territory rated in the study, as well as a series of essays by leading scholars on related issues. *Freedom in the World* continued to be produced by Gastil until 1989, when a larger team of in-house analysts was established. In the mid-1990s, the expansion of the country and territory narratives necessitated the hiring of outside analysts—a group of regional experts from the academic, media, and human rights communities—and the project has continued to grow in size and scope in the years since.

A number of modest updates have been made to the methodology over time to adapt to evolving ideas about political rights and civil liberties. These changes are introduced incrementally in order to ensure the comparability of the ratings from year to year.

METHODOLOGY REVIEW, 2016–17

In 2016–17, Freedom House engaged a team of external experts to assist the staff in a thorough review of the *Freedom in the World* methodology. This represented the first such review since 2002. Approximately 20 experts with global, regional, and issue-based expertise participated in the exercise.

Following the review, the methodology's basic structure and most methodology questions remained the same. The review therefore does not affect the integrity of the *Freedom in the World* time-series data. Notable improvements include greater precision in the definition of each indicator, additional guidance on the handling of various real-world situations, and further detail on the interplay of new technological developments and fundamental freedoms. The review also led to the important step of including gender-related guidance questions under all relevant indicators.

One structural change that affected a very small number of countries was the elimination of Additional Discretionary Political Rights Question A. This indicator had awarded points to traditional monarchies that had no political parties or significant electoral processes but provided for some form of consultation with the public. Such consultation will now be addressed elsewhere in the methodology.

The revised methodology questions, appended below, were first used for the 2018 edition of *Freedom in the World*.

RESEARCH AND RATINGS REVIEW PROCESS

Freedom in the World is produced each year by a team of in-house and external analysts and expert advisers from the academic, think tank, and human rights communities. The 2018 edition involved more than 100 analysts and more than 30 advisers. The analysts, who prepare the draft reports and scores, use a broad range of sources, including news articles, academic analyses, reports from nongovernmental organizations, individual professional contacts, and on-the-ground research. The analysts score countries and territories based on the conditions and events within their borders during the coverage period. The analysts' proposed scores are discussed and defended at a series of review meetings, organized by region and attended by Freedom House staff and a panel of expert advisers. The final scores represent the consensus of the analysts, advisers, and staff. Although an element of subjectivity is unavoidable in such an enterprise, the ratings process emphasizes methodological consistency, intellectual rigor, and balanced and unbiased judgments.

RATINGS PROCESS

Freedom in the World uses a three-tiered system consisting of **scores**, **ratings**, and **status**. The complete list of the questions used in the scoring process, and the tables for converting scores to ratings and ratings to status, appear at the end of this essay.

Scores – A country or territory is awarded 0 to 4 points for each of 10 political rights indicators and 15 civil liberties indicators, which take the form of questions; a score of 0 represents the smallest degree of freedom and 4 the greatest degree of freedom. The political rights questions are grouped into three subcategories: Electoral Process (3 questions), Political Pluralism and Participation (4), and Functioning of Government (3). The civil liberties questions are grouped into four subcategories: Freedom of Expression and Belief (4 questions), Associational and Organizational Rights (3), Rule of Law (4), and Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights (4). The political rights section also contains an additional discretionary question. For the discretionary question, a score of 1 to 4 may be subtracted, as applicable (the worse the situation, the more points may be subtracted). The highest overall score that can be awarded for political rights is 40 (or a score of 4 for each of the 10 questions). The highest overall score that can be awarded for civil liberties is 60 (or a score of 4 for each of the 15 questions). The scores from the previous edition are used as a benchmark for the current year under review. A score is typically changed only if there has been a real-world development during the year that warrants a decline or improvement (e.g., a crackdown on the media, the country’s first free and fair elections), though gradual changes in conditions—in the absence of a signal event—are occasionally registered in the scores.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties Ratings – A country or territory is assigned two ratings—one for political rights and one for civil liberties—based on its total scores for the political rights and civil liberties questions. Each rating of 1 to 7, with 1 representing the greatest degree of freedom and 7 the smallest degree of freedom, corresponds to a specific range of total scores (see tables 1 and 2).

Free, Partly Free, Not Free Status – The average of a country or territory’s political rights and civil liberties ratings is called the Freedom Rating, and it is this figure that determines the status of Free (1.0 to 2.5), Partly Free (3.0 to 5.0), or Not Free (5.5 to 7.0) (see table 3).

Trend Arrows – A country or territory may be assigned an upward or downward trend arrow to highlight developments of major significance or concern. These developments may include a positive or negative shift over multiple years, an especially notable change in a single year, or an important event in a country that is particularly influential in its region or the world. A trend arrow must be linked to a specific change or changes in score, and cannot be assigned if the country had no net change in score. Most score changes do not warrant trend arrows. Decisions on whether a country or territory should receive a trend arrow are made by Freedom House staff, after consultation with the analyst and expert advisers.

Electoral Democracy – *Freedom in the World* assigns the designation “electoral democracy” to countries that have met certain minimum standards for political rights and civil liberties; territories are not included in the list of electoral democracies. According to the methodology, an electoral democracy designation requires a score of 7 or better in the Electoral Process subcategory, an overall political rights score of 20 or better, and an overall civil liberties score of 30 or better. (The civil liberties threshold was added as part of the 2016–17 methodology review.) Freedom House’s “electoral democracy” designation should not be equated with “liberal democracy,” a term that implies a more robust observance of democratic ideals and a wider array of civil liberties. In *Freedom in the World*, most Free countries could be considered liberal democracies, while some Partly Free countries might qualify as electoral, but not liberal, democracies.

RATINGS AND STATUS CHARACTERISTICS

Political Rights

1 – Countries and territories with a rating of 1 enjoy a wide range of political rights, including free and fair elections. Candidates who are elected actually rule, political parties are competitive, the opposition plays an important role and enjoys real power, and the interests of minority groups are well represented in politics and government.

2 – Countries and territories with a rating of 2 have slightly weaker political rights than those with a rating of 1 because of such factors as political corruption, limits on the functioning of political parties and opposition groups, and flawed electoral processes.

3, 4, 5 – Countries and territories with a rating of 3, 4, or 5 either moderately protect almost all political rights or strongly protect some political rights while neglecting others. The same factors that undermine freedom in countries with a rating of 2 may also weaken political rights in those with a rating of 3, 4, or 5, but to a greater extent at each successive rating.

6 – Countries and territories with a rating of 6 have very restricted political rights. They are ruled by authoritarian regimes, often with leaders or parties that originally took power by force and have been in office for decades. They may hold tightly controlled elections and grant a few political rights, such as some representation or autonomy for minority groups.

7 – Countries and territories with a rating of 7 have few or no political rights because of severe government oppression, sometimes in combination with civil war. While some are draconian police states, others may lack an authoritative and functioning central government and suffer from extreme violence or rule by regional warlords.

Civil Liberties

1 – Countries and territories with a rating of 1 enjoy a wide range of civil liberties, including freedoms of expression, assembly, association, education, and religion. They have an established and generally fair legal system that ensures the rule of law (including an independent judiciary), allow free economic activity, and tend to strive for equality of opportunity for everyone, including women and minority groups.

2 – Countries and territories with a rating of 2 have slightly weaker civil liberties than those with a rating of 1 because of such factors as limits on media independence, restrictions on trade union activities, and discrimination against minority groups and women.

3, 4, 5 – Countries and territories with a rating of 3, 4, or 5 either moderately protect almost all civil liberties or strongly protect some civil liberties while neglecting others. The same factors that undermine freedom in countries with a rating of 2 may also weaken civil liberties in those with a rating of 3, 4, or 5, but to a greater extent at each successive rating.

6 – Countries and territories with a rating of 6 have very restricted civil liberties. They strongly limit the rights of expression and association and frequently hold political prisoners. They may allow a few civil liberties, such as some religious and social freedoms, some highly restricted private business activity, and some open and free private discussion.

7 – Countries and territories with a rating of 7 have few or no civil liberties. Their governments or powerful nonstate actors allow virtually no freedom of expression or association, do not protect the rights of detainees and prisoners, and often control most economic activity.

The gap between a country or territory’s political rights and civil liberties ratings is rarely more than two points. Politically oppressive states typically do not allow a well-developed civil society, for example, and it is difficult, if not impossible, to maintain political freedoms in the absence of civil liberties like press freedom and the rule of law.

Because the designations of Free, Partly Free, and Not Free each cover a broad swath of the available scores, countries or territories within any one category, especially those at either end of the range, can have quite different human rights situations. For example, those at the lowest end of the Free category (2 in political rights and 3 in civil liberties, or 3 in political rights and 2 in civil liberties) differ from those at the upper end of the Free group (1 for both political rights and civil liberties). Also, a designation of Free does not mean that a country or territory enjoys perfect freedom or lacks serious problems, only that it enjoys comparatively more freedom than those rated Partly Free or Not Free (and some others rated Free).

FREEDOM IN THE WORLD 2018

Methodology Questions

The bulleted subquestions are intended to provide guidance to the analysts regarding what issues are meant to be considered in scoring each checklist question. The analysts do not need to consider every subquestion during the scoring process, as the relevance of each varies from one place to another.

POLITICAL RIGHTS (0–40 POINTS)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS (0–12 points)

A1. Was the head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? (Note: Heads of government chosen through various electoral frameworks, including direct elections for president, indirect elections for prime minister by parliament, and the electoral college system for electing presidents, are covered under this question. In cases of indirect elections for the head of government, the elections for the legislature or other body that chose the head of government, as well as the selection process for the head of government itself, should be taken into consideration. In systems where executive authority is formally divided between a head of state and a head of government, greater weight should be given to elections for the official with the most executive authority.)

- Did independent, established, and reputable national and/or international election monitoring organizations judge the most recent election for head of government to have met democratic standards?
- Was the most recent election for head of government called in a timely manner, without undue, politically motivated delays or an accelerated schedule that unfairly limited campaign opportunities for some candidates?
- Was the registration of voters and candidates conducted in an accurate, timely, transparent, and nondiscriminatory manner?
- Were women allowed to register and run as candidates?

- Could all candidates make speeches, hold public meetings, and enjoy fair or proportionate media access throughout the campaign, free of intimidation?
- Did voting take place by secret ballot?
- Were voters able to vote for the candidate or party of their choice without undue pressure or intimidation?
- Was the vote count transparent and timely, and were the official results reported honestly to the public?
- Could election monitors from independent groups and representing parties/candidates watch the counting of votes to ensure its honesty?
- Did voters have equal access to polling places and opportunities to cast ballots?
- Has the most recently elected head of government been removed from office through violent, irregular, unconstitutional, or otherwise undemocratic means? (Note: Although a bloodless coup may ultimately lead to a positive outcome—particularly if it removes a head of government who was not freely and fairly elected—the new leader has not been freely and fairly elected and cannot be treated as such.)
- Has the head of government’s electorally mandated term expired or been extended without new elections?
- In cases where elections for regional, provincial, or state governors and/or other subnational executive officials differ significantly in conduct from national elections, does the conduct of the subnational elections reflect an opening toward improved political rights in the country, or, alternatively, a worsening of political rights?

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections?

- Did independent, established, and reputable domestic and/or international election monitoring organizations judge the most recent national legislative elections to have met democratic standards?
 - Were the most recent legislative elections called in a timely manner, without undue, politically motivated delays or an accelerated schedule that unfairly limited campaign opportunities for some parties or candidates?
 - Was the registration of voters and candidates conducted in an accurate, timely, transparent, and nondiscriminatory manner?
 - Were women allowed to register and run as candidates?
 - Could all candidates make speeches, hold public meetings, and enjoy fair or proportionate media access throughout the campaign, free of intimidation?
 - Did voting take place by secret ballot?
 - Were voters able to vote for the candidate or party of their choice without undue pressure or intimidation?
 - Was the vote count transparent and timely, and were the official results reported honestly to the public?
 - Could election monitors from independent groups and representing parties/candidates watch the counting of votes to ensure its honesty?
 - Have members of the most recently elected national legislature been removed from office through violent, irregular, unconstitutional, or otherwise undemocratic means? (Note: Although a bloodless coup may ultimately lead to a positive outcome—particularly if it removes a legislature that was not freely and fairly elected—an appointed postcoup legislative body has not been freely and fairly elected and cannot be treated as such.)
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- Has the legislature's electorally mandated term expired or been extended without new elections?
- In cases where elections for subnational councils/parliaments differ significantly in conduct from national elections, does the conduct of the subnational elections reflect an opening toward improved political rights in the country, or, alternatively, a worsening of political rights?

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies?

- Is there a clear, detailed, and fair legislative framework for conducting elections? (Note: Changes to electoral laws should not be made immediately preceding an election if these changes infringe on the ability of voters, candidates, or parties to fulfill their roles in the election.)
- Does the composition of election commissions ensure their independence?
- Are election commissions or other election authorities free from government or other pressure and interference?
- Do adult citizens enjoy universal and equal suffrage?
- Is the drawing of election districts conducted in a fair and nonpartisan manner, as opposed to malapportionment or gerrymandering for personal or partisan advantage?
- Has the selection of a system for choosing legislative representatives (such as proportional versus majoritarian) been improperly manipulated to advance certain political interests or to influence the electoral results?
- Are procedures for changing the electoral framework at the constitutional level, including referendums, carried out fairly and transparently, with adequate opportunity for public debate and discussion?

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION (0–16 points)

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings?

- Do political parties encounter undue legal or practical obstacles in their efforts to form and operate, including onerous registration requirements, excessively large membership requirements, etc.?
- Do parties face discriminatory or onerous restrictions in holding meetings or rallies, accessing the media, or engaging in other peaceful activities?
- Are laws and regulations governing party financing fair and equitably enforced? Do they impose excessive obstacles to political and campaign activity, or give an effective advantage to certain parties?
- Are party members or leaders intimidated, harassed, arrested, imprisoned, or subjected to violent attacks as a result of their peaceful political activities?
- In systems dominated by political parties, can independent candidates register and operate freely?

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections?

- Are various legal/administrative restrictions selectively applied to opposition parties to prevent them from increasing their support base or successfully competing in elections?
- Are there genuine opposition forces in positions of authority, such as in the national legislature or in subnational governments?

- Does intimidation, harassment, arrest, imprisonment, or violent attack as a result of peaceful political activities affect the ability of opposition party members or leaders to increase their support or gain power through elections?
- Is there a significant opposition vote?
- Did major opposition parties choose to boycott the most recent elections rather than participate in a flawed process?

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable?

- Do such groups offer bribes or other incentives to voters in order to influence their political choices?
- Do such groups offer bribes or other incentives to political figures and/or parties in order to influence their political choices?
- Do such groups intimidate, harass, or attack voters and/or political figures in order to influence their political choices?
- Do major private or public-sector employers directly or indirectly control the political choices of their workers?

B4. Do cultural, ethnic, religious, or other minority groups have full political rights and electoral opportunities?

- Do national political parties of various ideological persuasions address issues of specific concern to minority or other relevant groups?
- When other parties fail to address the interests of certain groups, are political parties that are focused on those groups—provided they espouse peaceful, democratic values—legally permitted and de facto allowed to operate?
- Does the government inhibit the participation of certain groups in national or subnational political life through laws and/or practical obstacles—for example, by limiting access to voter registration or failing to publish public documents in certain languages?

Are the interests of women represented in political parties—for example, through party manifestos that address gender issues, gender equality policies within parties, and mechanisms to ensure women's full and equal participation in internal party elections and decision-making?

Are there unusually excessive or discriminatory barriers to acquiring citizenship that effectively deny political rights to a majority or large portion of the native-born or legal permanent population, or is citizenship revoked to produce a similar result?

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT (0–12 points)

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? (Note: Because the score for question C1 is partly dependent on the presence of a freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives, under most circumstances it will not exceed the average of the scores for questions A1 and A2.)

- Are the candidates who were elected freely and fairly duly installed in office, and were they able to form a functioning government within a reasonable period of time?
 - Do other appointed or non–freely elected state actors interfere with or prevent freely elected representatives from adopting and implementing legislation and making meaningful policy decisions?
-

- Do nonstate actors, including criminal gangs and insurgent groups, interfere with or prevent elected representatives from adopting and implementing legislation and making meaningful policy decisions?
 - Do the armed forces or other security services control or enjoy a preponderant influence over government policy and activities, including in countries that are nominally under civilian control?
 - Do foreign governments control or enjoy a preponderant influence over government policy and activities by means including the presence of foreign military troops and the use of significant economic threats or sanctions? (Note: If a treaty was signed and ratified by a freely elected government, adherence to that treaty is typically not considered an improper external influence on policymaking, even if it limits a government's options in practice.)
 - Is the freely elected government able to implement its decisions across the entire territory without interference from nonstate actors?
 - Does the executive exhibit excessive dominance over the legislature?
 - Has partisan polarization or obstructionism seriously impaired basic executive or legislative functions, such as approving a budget or filling important vacancies?
- C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective?**
- Has the government implemented effective anticorruption laws or programs to prevent, detect, and punish corruption among public officials, including conflicts of interest?
 - Is the government free from excessive bureaucratic regulations, registration requirements, or other controls that increase opportunities for corruption?
 - Are there independent and effective auditing and investigative bodies that function without impediment or political pressure or influence?
 - Are allegations of corruption involving government officials thoroughly investigated and prosecuted without prejudice or political bias?
 - Are allegations of corruption given extensive and substantive airing in the media?
 - Do whistleblowers, anticorruption activists, investigators, and journalists enjoy legal protections that allow them to freely and safely report abuses?
- C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency?**
- Do citizens have the legal right and practical ability to obtain information about state operations and the means to petition government agencies for it?
 - Does the government publish information online, in machine-readable formats, for free, and is this information accessible by default?
 - Are civil society groups, interest groups, journalists, and other citizens given a fair and meaningful opportunity to comment on and influence pending policies or legislation?
 - Are elected representatives accessible to their constituents?
 - Is the budget-making process subject to meaningful legislative review and public scrutiny?
 - Does the state ensure transparency and effective competition in the awarding of government contracts?
 - Are the asset declarations of government officials open to public and media scrutiny and verification?

ADDITIONAL DISCRETIONARY POLITICAL RIGHTS QUESTIONS

Q. Is the government or occupying power deliberately changing the ethnic composition of a country or territory so as to destroy a culture or tip the political balance in favor of another group? (–4 to 0 points)

- Is the government providing economic or other incentives to certain people in order to change the ethnic composition of a region or regions?
- Is the government forcibly moving people in or out of certain areas in order to change the ethnic composition of those regions?
- Is the government arresting, imprisoning, or killing members of certain ethnic groups in order change the ethnic composition of a region or regions?

CIVIL LIBERTIES (0–60 POINTS)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF (0–16 points)

D1. Are there free and independent media? (Note: “Media” refers to all relevant sources of news and commentary—including formal print, broadcast, and online news outlets, as well as social media and communication applications when they are used to gather or disseminate news and commentary for the general public. The question also applies to artistic works in any medium.)

- Are the media directly or indirectly censored?
 - Is self-censorship common among journalists (the term includes professional journalists, bloggers, and citizen journalists), especially when reporting on sensitive issues, including politics, social controversies, corruption, or the activities of powerful individuals?
 - Are journalists subject to pressure or surveillance aimed at identifying their sources?
 - Are libel, blasphemy, security, or other restrictive laws used to punish journalists who scrutinize government officials and policies or other powerful entities through either onerous fines or imprisonment?
 - Is it a crime to insult the honor and dignity of the president and/or other government officials? How broad is the range of such prohibitions, and how vigorously are they enforced?
 - If media outlets are dependent on the government for their financial survival, does the government condition funding on the outlets’ cooperation in promoting official points of view and/or denying access to opposition parties and civic critics? Do powerful private actors engage in similar practices?
 - Do the owners of private media exert improper editorial control over journalists or publishers, skewing news coverage to suit their personal business or political interests?
 - Is media coverage excessively partisan, with the majority of outlets consistently favoring either side of the political spectrum?
 - Does the government attempt to influence media content and access through means including politically motivated awarding or suspension of broadcast frequencies and newspaper registrations, unfair control and influence over printing facilities and distribution networks, blackouts of internet or mobile service, selective distribution of advertising, onerous operating requirements, prohibitive tariffs, and bribery?
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- Are journalists threatened, harassed online, arrested, imprisoned, beaten, or killed by government or nonstate actors for their legitimate journalistic activities, and if such cases occur, are they investigated and prosecuted fairly and expeditiously?
- Do women journalists encounter gender-specific obstacles to carrying out their work, including threats of sexual violence or strict gender segregation?
- Are works of literature, art, music, or other forms of cultural expression censored or banned for political purposes?

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private?

- Are registration requirements employed to impede the free functioning of religious institutions?
- Are members of religious groups, including minority faiths and movements, harassed, fined, arrested, or beaten by the authorities for engaging in their religious practices?
- Is state monitoring of peaceful religious activity so indiscriminate, pervasive, or intrusive that it amounts to harassment or intimidation?
- Are religious practice and expression impeded by violence or harassment by nonstate actors?
- Does the government appoint or otherwise influence the appointment of religious leaders?
- Does the government control or restrict the production and distribution of religious writings or materials?
- Is the construction of religious buildings banned or restricted?
- Does the government place undue restrictions on religious education? Does the government require religious education?
- Are individuals free to eschew religious beliefs and practices in general?

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination?

- Are teachers and professors at both public and private institutions free to pursue academic activities of a political and quasi-political nature without fear of physical violence or intimidation by state or nonstate actors?
- Does the government pressure, strongly influence, or control the content of school curriculums for political purposes?
- Is the allocation of funding for public educational institutions free from political manipulation?
- Are student associations that address issues of a political nature allowed to function freely?
- Does the government, including through school administration or other officials, pressure students and/or teachers to support certain political figures or agendas, including by requiring them to attend political rallies or vote for certain candidates? Conversely, does the government, including through school administration or other officials, discourage or forbid students and/or teachers from supporting certain candidates and parties?

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution?

- Are people able to engage in private discussions, particularly of a political nature, in public, semipublic, or private places—including restaurants, public transportation, and their homes, in person or on the telephone—without fear of harassment or detention by the authorities or nonstate actors?

- Do users of personal online communications—including direct messages, voice or video applications, or social media accounts with a limited audience—face legal penalties, harassment, or violence from the government or powerful nonstate actors in retaliation for critical remarks?
- Does the government employ people or groups to engage in public surveillance and to report alleged antigovernment conversations to the authorities?

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS (0–12 points)

E1. Is there freedom of assembly?

- Are peaceful protests, particularly those of a political nature, banned or severely restricted?
- Are the legal requirements to obtain permission to hold peaceful demonstrations particularly cumbersome or time-consuming?
- Are participants in peaceful demonstrations intimidated, arrested, or assaulted?
- Are peaceful protesters detained by police in order to prevent them from engaging in such actions?
- Are organizers blocked from using online media to plan or carry out a protest, for example through DDoS attacks or wholesale blackouts of internet or mobile services?
- Are similar restrictions and obstacles used to impede other public events, such as conferences, panel discussions, and town hall–style meetings?
- Are public petitions, in which citizens gather signatures to support a particular policy or initiative, banned or severely restricted?

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights– and governance-related work? (Note: This includes civic organizations, interest groups, foundations, think tanks, gender rights groups, etc.)

- Are registration and other legal requirements for nongovernmental organizations particularly onerous or intended to prevent them from functioning freely?
- Are laws related to the financing of nongovernmental organizations unduly complicated and cumbersome, or are there obstacles to citizens raising money for charitable causes or civic activism?
- Are donors and funders of nongovernmental organizations free from government pressure?
- Are members of nongovernmental organizations intimidated, arrested, imprisoned, or assaulted because of their work?

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations?

- Are trade unions allowed to be established and to operate without government interference?
 - Are workers pressured by the government or employers to join or not to join certain trade unions, and do they face harassment, violence, or dismissal from their jobs if they fail to comply?
 - Are workers permitted to engage in strikes, and do participants in peaceful strikes face reprisals? (Note: This question may not apply to workers in narrowly defined essential government services or public safety jobs.)
 - Are unions able to bargain collectively with employers and negotiate agreements that are honored in practice?
-

- For states with primarily agricultural economies that do not necessarily support the formation of trade unions, does the government allow for the establishment of agricultural workers' organizations or their equivalents? Is there legislation expressly forbidding the formation of trade unions?
- Are professional organizations, including business associations, allowed to operate freely and without government interference?

F. RULE OF LAW (0–16 points)

F1. Is there an independent judiciary?

- Is the judiciary subject to interference from the executive branch of government or from other political, economic, or religious influences?
- Are judges appointed and dismissed in a fair and unbiased manner?
- Do judges rule fairly and impartially, or do they commonly render verdicts that favor the government or particular interests, whether in return for bribes or for other reasons?
- Do executive, legislative, and other governmental authorities comply with judicial decisions, and are these decisions effectively enforced?
- Do powerful private entities comply with judicial decisions, and are decisions that run counter to the interests of powerful actors effectively enforced?

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters?

- Are defendants' rights, including the presumption of innocence until proven guilty, protected?
- Do detainees have access to independent, competent legal counsel regardless of their financial means?
- Are defendants given a fair, public, and timely hearing by a competent, independent, and impartial tribunal?
- Is access to the court system in general dependent on an individual's financial means?
- Are prosecutors independent of political control and influence?
- Are prosecutors independent of powerful private interests, whether legal or illegal?
- Do law enforcement and other security officials operate professionally, independently, and accountably?
- Do law enforcement officials make arbitrary arrests and detentions without warrants, or fabricate or plant evidence on suspects?
- Do law enforcement and other security officials fail to uphold due process because of influence by nonstate actors, including organized crime, powerful commercial interests, or other groups?

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies?

- Do law enforcement officials beat detainees during arrest or use excessive force or torture to extract confessions?
- Are conditions in pretrial detention facilities and prisons humane and respectful of the human dignity of inmates?
- Do citizens have the means of effective petition and redress when they suffer physical abuse by state authorities?
- Is violent crime common, either in particular areas or among the general population?
- Is the population subjected to physical harm, forced removal, or other acts of violence or terror due to civil conflict or war?

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population?

- Are members of various distinct groups—including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups—able to effectively exercise their human rights with full equality before the law?
- Is violence against such groups considered a crime, is it widespread, and are perpetrators brought to justice?
- Do members of such groups face legal and/or de facto discrimination in areas including employment, education, and housing because of their identification with a particular group?
- Do noncitizens—including migrant workers and noncitizen immigrants—enjoy basic internationally recognized human rights, including the right not to be subjected to torture or other forms of ill-treatment, the right to due process of law, and the freedoms of association, expression, and religion?
- Do the country’s laws provide for the granting of asylum or refugee status in accordance with the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, its 1967 Protocol, and other regional treaties regarding refugees? Has the government established a system for providing protection to refugees, including against *refoulement* (the return of persons to a country where there is reason to believe they would face persecution)?

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS (0–16 points)

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education?

- Are there restrictions on foreign travel, including an exit visa system, which may be enforced selectively?
- Is permission required from the authorities or nonstate actors to move within the country?
- Do state or nonstate actors control or constrain a person’s ability to change their type and place of employment?
- Are bribes or other inducements needed to obtain the necessary documents to travel, change one’s place of residence or employment, enter institutions of higher education, or advance in school?
- Is freedom of movement impaired by general threats to physical safety, such as armed conflict?
- Do women enjoy the same freedom of movement as men?

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors?

- Are people legally allowed to purchase and sell land and other property, and can they do so in practice without undue interference from the government or nonstate actors?
 - Do women face discrimination in property and inheritance rights?
 - Are individuals protected from arbitrary expropriation, and do they receive adequate and timely compensation when property is seized?
 - Are people legally allowed to establish and operate private businesses with a reasonable minimum of registration, licensing, and other requirements?
 - Are bribes or other inducements needed to obtain the necessary legal documents to operate private businesses?
 - Do private/nonstate actors, including criminal groups, seriously impede private business activities through such measures as extortion?
-

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance?

- Are personalized forms of violence—including domestic violence, female genital mutilation/cutting, sexual abuse, and rape—widespread, and are perpetrators brought to justice?
- Does the government directly or indirectly control choice of marriage partner or other personal relationships through means such as bans on interfaith marriages, failure to enforce laws against child marriage or dowry payments, restrictions on same-sex relationships, or criminalization of extramarital sex?
- Do individuals enjoy equal rights in divorce proceedings and child custody matters?
- Do citizenship or residency rules undermine family integrity through excessively high or discriminatory barriers for foreign spouses or transmission of citizenship to children?
- Does the government determine the number of children that a couple may have, including by denying access to or imposing birth control, or by criminalizing or imposing abortion?
- Does the government restrict individuals' choice of dress, appearance, or gender expression?
- Do private institutions or individuals, including religious groups or family members, unduly infringe on the personal social freedoms of individuals, including choice of marriage partner, family size, dress, gender expression, etc.?

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation?

- Do state or private employers exploit their workers through practices including unfairly withholding wages, permitting or forcing employees to work under unacceptably dangerous conditions, or adult slave labor and child labor?
 - Does tight government control over the economy, including through state ownership or the setting of prices and production quotas, inhibit individuals' economic opportunity?
 - Do the revenues from large state industries, including the energy sector, benefit the general population or only a privileged few?
 - Do private interests exert undue influence on the economy—through monopolistic practices, concentration of ownership, cartels, or illegal blacklists—that impedes economic opportunity for the general population?
 - Do laws, policies, or persistent socioeconomic conditions effectively impose rigid barriers to social mobility, generally preventing individuals from rising to higher income levels over the course of their lives?
 - Is the trafficking of persons for labor, sexual exploitation, forced begging, etc., widespread, and is the government taking adequate steps to address the problem?
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KEY TO SCORES, PR AND CL RATINGS, STATUS			
Table 1		Table 2	
Political Rights (PR)		Civil Liberties (CL)	
Total Scores	PR Rating	Total Scores	CL Rating
36–40	1	53–60	1
30–35	2	44–52	2
24–29	3	35–43	3
18–23	4	26–34	4
12–17	5	17–25	5
6–11	6	8–16	6
0–5*	7	0–7	7

TABLE 3	
Combined Average of the PR and CL Ratings (Freedom Rating)	Freedom Status
1.0 to 2.5	Free
3.0 to 5.0	Partly Free
5.5 to 7.0	Not Free
<p>* It is possible for a country or territory's total political rights score to be less than zero (between -1 and -4) if it receives mostly or all zeros for each of the 10 political rights questions <i>and</i> it receives a sufficiently negative score for the political rights discretionary question. In such a case, it would still receive a final political rights rating of 7.</p>	

Tables and Ratings

Countries

Country	PR	CL	Freedom Status	Trend Arrow
Afghanistan	5 ▲	6	Not Free	
Albania*	3	3	Partly Free	
Algeria	6	5	Not Free	
Andorra*	1	1	Free	
Angola	6	6	Not Free	
Antigua and Barbuda*	2	2	Free	
Argentina*	2	2	Free	
Armenia	5	4	Partly Free	
Australia*	1	1	Free	
Austria*	1	1	Free	
Azerbaijan	7	6	Not Free	
Bahamas*	1	1	Free	
Bahrain	7	6	Not Free	
Bangladesh	4	4	Partly Free	
Barbados*	1	1	Free	
Belarus	6 ▲	6	Not Free	
Belgium*	1	1	Free	
Belize*	1	2	Free	
Benin*	2	2	Free	
Bhutan	3	4	Partly Free	
Bolivia*	3	3	Partly Free	↓
Bosnia and Herzegovina*	4	4	Partly Free	
Botswana*	3	2	Free	
Brazil*	2	2	Free	
Brunei	6	5	Not Free	
Bulgaria*	2	2	Free	
Burkina Faso*	4	3	Partly Free	
Burundi	7	6	Not Free	
Cambodia	6	5	Not Free	↓
Cameroon	6	6	Not Free	

Country	PR	CL	Freedom Status	Trend Arrow
Canada*	1	1	Free	
Cape Verde*	1	1	Free	
Central African Republic	7	7	Not Free	
Chad	7	6	Not Free	
Chile*	1	1	Free	
China	7	6	Not Free	
Colombia*	3	3	Partly Free	
Comoros*	3	4	Partly Free	
Congo (Brazzaville)	7	5	Not Free	
Congo (Kinshasa)	7	6	Not Free	
Costa Rica*	1	1	Free	
Côte d'Ivoire	4	4	Partly Free	
Croatia*	1	2	Free	
Cuba	7	6	Not Free	
Cyprus*	1	1	Free	
Czech Republic*	1	1	Free	
Denmark*	1	1	Free	
Djibouti	6	5	Not Free	
Dominica*	1	1	Free	
Dominican Republic*	3	3	Partly Free	
Ecuador*	3	3 ▲	Partly Free	↑
Egypt	6	6 ▼	Not Free	
El Salvador*	2	3	Free	
Equatorial Guinea	7	7	Not Free	
Eritrea	7	7	Not Free	
Estonia*	1	1	Free	
Ethiopia	7	6	Not Free	
Fiji*	3	3 ▲	Partly Free	
Finland*	1	1	Free	
France*	1	2	Free	
Gabon	7 ▼	5	Not Free	
Georgia*	3	3	Partly Free	
Germany*	1	1	Free	
Ghana*	1	2	Free	
Greece*	2	2	Free	
Grenada*	1	2	Free	
Guatemala*	4	4	Partly Free	

Country	PR	CL	Freedom Status	Trend Arrow
Guinea	5	5	Partly Free	
Guinea-Bissau	5	5	Partly Free	
Guyana*	2	3	Free	
Haiti	5	5	Partly Free	
Honduras	4	4	Partly Free	
Hungary*	3	2	Free	↓
Iceland*	1	1	Free	
India*	2	3	Free	
Indonesia*	2	4	Partly Free	
Iran	6	6	Not Free	
Iraq	5	6	Not Free	
Ireland*	1	1	Free	
Israel*	1	3 ▼	Free	
Italy*	1	1	Free	
Jamaica*	2	3	Free	
Japan*	1	1	Free	
Jordan	5	5	Partly Free	
Kazakhstan	7	5	Not Free	
Kenya	4	4	Partly Free	
Kiribati*	1	1	Free	
Kosovo	3	4	Partly Free	
Kuwait	5	5	Partly Free	
Kyrgyzstan	5	5	Partly Free	
Laos	7	6	Not Free	
Latvia*	2 ▼	2	Free	
Lebanon	6 ▼	4	Partly Free	
Lesotho*	3	3	Partly Free	
Liberia*	3	3 ▲	Partly Free	
Libya	7	6	Not Free	
Liechtenstein*	2	1	Free	
Lithuania*	1	1	Free	
Luxembourg*	1	1	Free	
Macedonia	4	3	Partly Free	
Madagascar*	3	4	Partly Free	
Malawi*	3	3	Partly Free	
Malaysia	4	4	Partly Free	
Maldives	5	5	Partly Free	

Country	PR	CL	Freedom Status	Trend Arrow
Mali	5	4	Partly Free	
Malta*	1	1	Free	
Marshall Islands*	1	1	Free	
Mauritania	6	5	Not Free	
Mauritius*	1	2	Free	
Mexico*	3	3	Partly Free	
Micronesia*	1	1	Free	
Moldova*	3	3	Partly Free	
Monaco*	3	1	Free	
Mongolia*	1	2	Free	
Montenegro*	3	3	Partly Free	
Morocco	5	5 ▼	Partly Free	↓
Mozambique	4	4	Partly Free	
Myanmar	5	5	Partly Free	
Namibia*	2	2	Free	
Nauru*	2	2	Free	
Nepal*	3	4	Partly Free	↑
Netherlands*	1	1	Free	
New Zealand*	1	1	Free	
Nicaragua	5	4	Partly Free	
Niger	4	4	Partly Free	
Nigeria	3	5	Partly Free	
North Korea	7	7	Not Free	
Norway*	1	1	Free	
Oman	6	5	Not Free	
Pakistan	4	5	Partly Free	
Palau*	1	1	Free	
Panama*	2	2	Free	
Papua New Guinea*	3	3	Partly Free	
Paraguay*	3	3	Partly Free	
Peru*	2	3	Free	
Philippines*	3	3	Partly Free	
Poland*	1	2	Free	
Portugal*	1	1	Free	
Qatar	6	5	Not Free	
Romania*	2	2	Free	
Russia	7	6	Not Free	

Country	PR	CL	Freedom Status	Trend Arrow
Rwanda	6	6	Not Free	
Samoa*	2	2	Free	
San Marino*	1	1	Free	
São Tomé and Príncipe*	2	2	Free	
Saudi Arabia	7	7	Not Free	
Senegal*	2	2	Free	
Serbia*	3	2	Free	↓
Seychelles*	3	3	Partly Free	
Sierra Leone*	3	3	Partly Free	
Singapore	4	4	Partly Free	
Slovakia*	1	1	Free	
Slovenia*	1	1	Free	
Solomon Islands*	3	2	Free	
Somalia	7	7	Not Free	
South Africa*	2	2	Free	
South Korea*	2	2	Free	
South Sudan	7	7	Not Free	
Spain*	1	1	Free	
Sri Lanka*	3	4	Partly Free	
St. Kitts and Nevis*	1	1	Free	
St. Lucia*	1	1	Free	
St. Vincent and the Grenadines*	1	1	Free	
Sudan	7	7	Not Free	
Suriname*	2	2 ▲	Free	
Swaziland	7	6 ▼	Not Free	
Sweden*	1	1	Free	
Switzerland*	1	1	Free	
Syria	7	7	Not Free	
Taiwan*	1	1	Free	
Tajikistan	7	6	Not Free	
Tanzania*	4 ▼	4	Partly Free	↓
Thailand	6	5	Not Free	
The Gambia	4 ▲	5 ▲	Partly Free ▲	
Timor-Leste*	2 ▲	3	Free ▲	
Togo	4	4	Partly Free	
Tonga*	2	2	Free	

Country	PR	CL	Freedom Status	Trend Arrow
Trinidad and Tobago*	2	2	Free	
Tunisia*	2 ▼	3	Free	↓
Turkey	5 ▼	6 ▼	Not Free ▼	
Turkmenistan	7	7	Not Free	
Tuvalu*	1	1	Free	
Uganda	6	4 ▲	Partly Free ▲	
Ukraine*	3	3	Partly Free	
United Arab Emirates	7 ▼	6	Not Free	
United Kingdom*	1	1	Free	
United States*	2 ▼	1	Free	
Uruguay*	1	1	Free	
Uzbekistan	7	7	Not Free	
Vanuatu*	2	2	Free	
Venezuela	6	5	Not Free	
Vietnam	7	5	Not Free	
Yemen	7	6	Not Free	
Zambia	4	4	Partly Free	
Zimbabwe	6 ▼	5	Not Free ▼	

PR and CL stand for political rights and civil liberties, respectively; 1 represents the most free and 7 the least free rating.

▲ ▼ up or down indicates an improvement or decline in ratings or status since the last survey.

↑ ↓ up or down indicates a positive or negative trend.

* indicates a country's status as an electoral democracy.

NOTE: The ratings reflect global events from January 1, 2017, through December 31, 2017.

Territories

Country	PR	CL	Freedom Status	Trend Arrow
Abkhazia	4	5	Partly Free	
Crimea	7	6	Not Free	
Gaza Strip	7	6	Not Free	
Hong Kong	5	2	Partly Free	↓
Indian Kashmir	4	4	Partly Free	
Nagorno-Karabakh	5	5	Partly Free	
Northern Cyprus	2	2	Free	
Pakistani Kashmir	6	5	Not Free	
Somaliland	4 ▲	5	Partly Free	
South Ossetia	7	6	Not Free	
Tibet	7	7	Not Free	
Transnistria	6	6	Not Free	
West Bank	7	5	Not Free	
Western Sahara	7	7	Not Free	

PR and CL stand for political rights and civil liberties, respectively; 1 represents the most free and 7 the least free rating.

▲ ▼ up or down indicates an improvement or decline in ratings or status since the last survey.

↑ ↓ up or down indicates a positive or negative trend.

NOTE: The ratings reflect global events from January 1, 2017, through December 31, 2017.

Freedom Ratings—Countries

FREE	Poland	Paraguay	Cambodia
1.0	United States	Philippines	Djibouti
Andorra		Seychelles	Iraq
Australia	2.0	Sierra Leone	Mauritania
Austria	Antigua and Barbuda	Ukraine	Oman
Bahamas	Argentina		Qatar
Barbados	Benin	3.5	Thailand
Belgium	Brazil	Bhutan	Turkey
Canada	Bulgaria	Burkina Faso	Venezuela
Cape Verde	Greece	Comoros	Zimbabwe
Chile	Israel	Kosovo	
Costa Rica	Latvia	Macedonia	6.0
Cyprus	Monaco	Madagascar	Angola
Czech Republic	Namibia	Nepal	Belarus
Denmark	Nauru	Sri Lanka	Cameroon
Dominica	Panama		Congo (Brazzaville)
Estonia	Romania	4.0	Egypt
Finland	Samoa	Bangladesh	Gabon
Germany	São Tomé and Príncipe	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Iran
Iceland	Senegal	Côte d'Ivoire	Kazakhstan
Ireland	South Africa	Guatemala	Rwanda
Italy	South Korea	Honduras	Vietnam
Japan	Suriname	Kenya	
Kiribati	Tonga	Malaysia	6.5
Lithuania	Trinidad and Tobago	Mozambique	Azerbaijan
Luxembourg	Vanuatu	Niger	Bahrain
Malta		Nigeria	Burundi
Marshall Islands	2.5	Singapore	Chad
Micronesia	Botswana	Tanzania	China
Netherlands	El Salvador	Togo	Congo (Kinshasa)
New Zealand	Guyana	Zambia	Cuba
Norway	Hungary		Ethiopia
Palau	India	4.5	Laos
Portugal	Jamaica	Armenia	Libya
San Marino	Peru	Mali	Russia
Slovakia	Serbia	Nicaragua	Swaziland
Slovenia	Solomon Islands	Pakistan	Tajikistan
Spain	Timor-Leste	The Gambia	United Arab Emirates
St. Kitts and Nevis	Tunisia		Yemen
St. Lucia		5.0	
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	PARTLY FREE	Guinea	7.0
Sweden	3.0	Guinea-Bissau	Central African Republic
Switzerland	Albania	Haiti	Equatorial Guinea
Taiwan	Bolivia	Jordan	Eritrea
Tuvalu	Colombia	Kuwait	North Korea
United Kingdom	Dominican Republic	Kyrgyzstan	Saudi Arabia
Uruguay	Ecuador	Lebanon	Somalia
	Fiji	Maldives	South Sudan
1.5	Georgia	Morocco	Sudan
Belize	Indonesia	Myanmar	Syria
Croatia	Lesotho	Uganda	Turkmenistan
France	Liberia		Uzbekistan
Ghana	Malawi	NOT FREE	
Grenada	Mexico	5.5	
Liechtenstein	Moldova	Afghanistan	
Mauritius	Montenegro	Algeria	
Mongolia	Papua New Guinea	Brunei	

Freedom Ratings—Territories

FREE
2.0
Northern Cyprus
PARTLY FREE
3.5
Hong Kong
4.0
Indian Kashmir
4.5
Abkhazia
Somaliland
5.0
Nagorno-Karabakh
NOT FREE
5.5
Pakistani Kashmir
6.0
Transnistria
West Bank
6.5
Crimea
Gaza Strip
South Ossetia
7.0
Tibet
Western Sahara

Electoral Democracies (116)

Albania	Israel
Andorra	Italy
Antigua and Barbuda	Jamaica
Argentina	Japan
Australia	Kiribati
Austria	Latvia
Bahamas	Lesotho
Barbados	Liberia
Belgium	Liechtenstein
Belize	Lithuania
Benin	Luxembourg
Bolivia	Madagascar
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Malawi
Botswana	Malta
Brazil	Marshall Islands
Bulgaria	Mauritius
Burkina Faso	Mexico
Canada	Micronesia
Cape Verde	Moldova
Chile	Monaco
Colombia	Mongolia
Comoros	Montenegro
Costa Rica	Namibia
Croatia	Nauru
Cyprus	Nepal
Czech Republic	Netherlands
Denmark	New Zealand
Dominica	Norway
Dominican Republic	Palau
Ecuador	Panama
El Salvador	Papua New Guinea
Estonia	Paraguay
Fiji	Peru
Finland	Philippines
France	Poland
Georgia	Portugal
Germany	Romania
Ghana	Samoa
Greece	San Marino
Grenada	Sao Tome and Principe
Guatemala	Senegal
Guyana	Serbia
Hungary	Seychelles
Iceland	Sierra Leone
India	Slovakia
Indonesia	Slovenia
Ireland	Solomon Islands

South Africa	Tanzania
South Korea	Timor-Leste
Spain	Tonga
Sri Lanka	Trinidad and Tobago
St. Kitts and Nevis	Tunisia
St. Lucia	Tuvalu
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	Ukraine
Suriname	United Kingdom
Sweden	United States
Switzerland	Uruguay
Taiwan	Vanuatu

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METHODOLOGY REVIEWERS

In 2016–17, Freedom House engaged a team of external experts to assist the staff in a thorough review of the *Freedom in the World* methodology. This represented the first such review since 2002. The following experts with global, regional, and issue-based expertise participated in the exercise.

Dodi Ambardi is the executive director of the Indonesian Survey Institute (LSI).

David Armstrong is the Canada Research Chair in Political Methodology, an associate professor of political science, and an associate professor of statistics (by courtesy) at the University of Western Ontario.

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Andras Bozoki is a professor of political science at Central European University.

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