THE WORLD'S MOST REPRESSIVE REGIMES 2003

A Special Report to the 59th Session of the
United Nations Commission on Human Rights
Geneva, 2003

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Freedom in the World 2003
The Annual Survey of Political Rights & Civil Liberties

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Contents

Introduction

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

The reports that follow are excerpted from the Freedom House survey *Freedom in the World 2003*. The ratings and accompanying essays are based on information received through the end of December 2002. The 16 countries and three territories in this year's study rank at or near the bottom of the list of 192 countries and 18 major related and disputed territories that are surveyed annually by Freedom House.

Included in our list are nine countries that are judged to be the "worst of the worst" in terms of their civil liberties and political rights: Burma, Cuba, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, and Turkmenistan. They are joined by two territories, Chechnya and Tibet, whose inhabitants suffer from intense repression. These states and regions received the Freedom House survey's lowest rating: 7 for political rights and 7 for civil liberties. Within these entities, state control over daily life is pervasive and intrusive, independent organizations and political opposition are banned or suppressed, and fear of retribution is a factor of daily life. In the case of Chechnya, the rating reflects the condition of a vicious conflict that has disrupted normal life and resulted in tens of thousands of victims within the civilian population.

There are, additionally, seven other countries near the bottom of Freedom House's list of the most repressive states: China, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Laos, Somalia, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam. These states differ from the "worst of the worst" because they offer some very limited scope for private discussion, while severely suppressing opposition political activity, impeding independent organizing, and censoring or punishing criticism of the state. The territory of Western Sahara is also included in this group.

The states on this year's "most repressive regimes" list span a wide array of cultures, civilizations, regions, and levels of economic development. They include countries from the Americas, the Middle East, Central Asia, Africa, and East Asia.

Brutal human rights violations continued to take place in nearly every part of the world in 2002. Of the 192 countries in the world, 89 (nearly half) are Free and can be said to respect a broad array of basic human rights and political freedoms. A further 55 are Partly Free, with some abridgments of basic rights and weak enforcement of the rule of law, and 48 countries (a quarter of the world's total) are Not Free and suffer from systematic and pervasive human rights violations.

This report from Freedom House to the United Nations paints a picture of severe repression and unspeakable violations of human dignity. But the grim reality depicted in this report stands in sharp contrast to the gradual expansion of human liberty over the last twenty-five years. Today, there are more Free countries than at any time in history, and the number—which grew by four this year with the addition of Brazil, Lesotho, Senegal, and Serbia-Montenegro (formerly Yugoslavia)—is rapidly approaching a majority. As significantly, there are 121 electoral democracies, representing 63 percent of the world's countries, the highest number and proportion in the 30-year history of the survey and up from 41 percent in 1986. This progress is in no small measure the consequence of the influence of the global pro-democracy and human rights movements that have supported courageous activists on the ground.

Increasingly, it is clear that countries that make the most measured and sustainable progress toward long-term economic development are those that are characterized by good governance and the absence of massive corruption and cronyism, conditions that are only possible in a climate of transparency, civil control, and a vigorously independent media—all requisites of a multiparty democracy. In part, for this reason, the U.S. Administration has announced that it will examine which states "rule justly" and will use Freedom House's ratings for political rights and civil liberties in determining which developing countries are eligible for enhanced foreign assistance under the proposed Millennium Challenge Account.

The dramatic expansion of democratic governance over the last several decades has important implications for the United Nations and other international organizations. Today, states that respect basic freedoms and the rule of law have

greater potential than ever to positively influence the functioning of global and regional institutions. But they can only achieve that potential within international bodies by working cooperatively and cohesively on issues of democracy and human rights.

In 2002, Freedom House and the U.S.-based Council on Foreign Relations sponsored an Independent Task Force on the UN. It recommends the establishment of a democracy group at the UN to promote the values of human rights and democracy and to ensure that countries committed to respect for these fundamental principles occupy leadership positions within the UN system.

We hope that the 2003 Geneva meeting of the UN Commission on Human Rights can be an occasion for cooperation by democratic member states that can lead to the emergence of such a bloc. Democratic cooperation can best ensure that the attention of the UN Commission on Human Rights is properly focused on the countries with the world's worst human rights records, many of which, regrettably, have escaped criticism in recent years.

At the same time, Freedom House hopes that in distributing information about the "most repressive" states, we are bringing the violations of these states to the attention of the UN Commission on Human Rights. In this fashion, we are playing a modest role in aiding activists engaged in struggles for human dignity and freedom and hastening the day when dictatorships will give way to genuine pluralism, democracy, and the rule of law—the bedrock not only of political rights and civil liberties, but also of lasting economic prosperity.

Additional information about Freedom House and its reports on the state of political rights and civil liberties around the world can be obtained at www.freedomhouse.org.

Jennifer Windsor
Executive Director, Freedom House
March 2003

↑ Burma

Political Rights:	7
Civil Liberties:	7
Status:	Not Free
Trend Arrow:	Burma received an upward trend arrow due to the release of Aung San Suu Kyi from house arrest, as well as the increased latitude granted to the National League for Democracy opposition party

Overview:

A quiet dialogue begun in October 2000 between the military junta and pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi bore fruit this year, when the Nobel laureate was released from house arrest in May. Several hundred political prisoners were freed throughout 2002, and Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) was permitted to re-open a number of party offices. However, since Suu Kyi's release, there have been no further discussions regarding a possible return to constitutional government, and the ruling junta continues to wield a tight grip over all aspects of Burmese life.

After being occupied by the Japanese during World War II, Burma achieved independence from Great Britain in 1948. The military has ruled since 1962, when the army overthrew an elected government buffeted by an economic crisis and a raft of ethnic-based insurgencies. During the next 26 years, General Ne Win's military rule helped impoverish what had been one of Southeast Asia's wealthiest countries.

The present junta, currently led by General Than Shwe, has been in power since the summer of 1988, when the army opened fire on peaceful, student-led pro-democracy protesters, killing an estimated 3,000 people. In the aftermath, a younger generation of army commanders who succeeded Ne Win created the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) to rule the country.

The SLORC refused to cede power after holding elections in 1990 that were won in a landslide by the NLD. The junta jailed dozens of members of the NLD, which won 392 of the 485 parliamentary seats in Burma's first free elections in three decades.

Than Shwe and several other generals who head the junta refashioned the SLORC as the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) in 1997. The generals appeared to be trying to improve the junta's international image, attract foreign investment, and encourage an end to U.S.-led sanctions linked to the regime's grim human rights record. Yet the junta took few concrete steps to gain international support. It continued to sentence peaceful pro-democracy activists to lengthy jail terms, force NLD members to quit the party, and periodically detain dozens of NLD activists.

However, in late 2000, encouraged by the efforts of UN special envoy Razali Ismail, the regime began holding talks with Suu Kyi, which led to an easing of restrictions on the NLD by mid-2002. Suu Kyi was released "unconditionally" from house arrest on May 6 and has been allowed to make several political trips outside the capital, while the NLD has been permitted to re-open some 45 offices in greater Rangoon. Nevertheless, analysts note that further talks have not taken place, and remain doubtful whether these signs of progress noted will evolve into a more meaningful dialogue over the future restoration of democracy.

The junta continued to face low-grade insurgencies in border areas waged by the Karen National Union (KNU) and at least five smaller ethnic-based rebel armies, although a number of other rebel groups have reached ceasefire deals with the junta since 1989. A serious dispute with neighboring Thailand erupted in late May, when the junta accused the Thai government of aiding rebel ethnic-minority forces along the border. For its part, Thailand criticized the Burmese government for its support to the United Wa State Army, which is involved in the production and trafficking of millions of methamphetamine tablets to Thailand each year. A series of military clashes led to the deaths of dozens of fighters, the closure of the border, and an escalation of nationalist rhetoric on both sides.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Burma continues to be ruled by one of the world's most repressive regimes. The junta rules by decree, controls the judiciary, suppresses nearly all basic

rights, and commits human rights abuses with impunity. Military officers hold most cabinet positions, and active or retired officers hold most top posts in all ministries. Official corruption is reportedly rampant.

Since rejecting the results of the 1990 elections, the junta all but paralyzed the victorious National League for Democracy (NLD). Authorities jailed many NLD leaders, pressured thousands of party members and officials to resign, closed party offices, and periodically detained hundreds of NLD members at a time to block planned party meetings. Although the NLD has been allowed somewhat greater freedom following the resumption of talks between the junta and party leader Aung San Suu Kyi, it continues to face restrictions on its activities. Besides the NLD, there are more than 20 ethnic political parties that remain suppressed by the junta.

Although several hundred political prisoners were released at intervals throughout 2002, more than 1,400 remain incarcerated, according to an Amnesty International report released in July. Most political prisoners are held under broadly drawn laws that criminalize a range of peaceful activities. These include distributing pro-democracy pamphlets and distributing, viewing, or smuggling out of Burma videotapes of Suu Kyi's public addresses. The frequently used Decree 5/96 of 1996 authorizes jail terms of 5 to 25 years for aiding activities "which adversely affect the national interest." The few nongovernmental groups in Burma generally work in health care and other nominally nonpolitical fields.

The junta sharply restricts press freedom, jailing dissident journalists and owning or tightly controlling all daily newspapers and radio and television stations. It also subjects most private periodicals to prepublication censorship. In October, dozens of dissidents were arrested and detained for possession of banned newspapers, and a number of journalists remained in jail throughout 2002.

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

Since the 1988 student pro-democracy demonstrations, the junta has sporadically closed universities, limiting higher education opportunities for a generation of young Burmese. Moreover, since reopening universities in 2000

after a four-year hiatus, authorities have lowered standards and shortened the academic term at many schools, made students pledge loyalty to the regime, barred political activity on campuses, and relocated some schools to relatively remote areas. In August, 15 university students were arrested and two were sentenced to prison terms for distributing pro-democracy pamphlets.

Ordinary Burmese generally can worship freely. The junta, however, has tried to control the Buddhist clergy by placing monastic orders under a state-run committee, monitoring monasteries, and subjecting clergy to special restrictions on speech and association. A number of monks remain imprisoned for their pro-democracy and human rights work. Burma was once again designated a "country of particular concern" by the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, which noted systematic official discrimination against members of minority religious groups. A Human Rights Watch report published in June alleged that the government had failed to protect Muslims from a significant increase in anti-Muslim violence throughout 2001 and that it had imposed restrictions on Muslim religious activities and travel.

Independent trade unions, collective bargaining, and strikes are illegal. Several labor activists continued to serve long prison terms for their political and labor activities. Child labor has become increasingly prevalent, according to the U.S. State Department report.

The regime continued to use forced labor despite formally banning the practice in October 2000, just days prior to an unprecedented call by the International Labor Organization (ILO) for its members and UN agencies to "review" their relations with Burma. Many interpreted the resolution as a call to tighten sanctions against the regime. The ILO, the U.S. State Department, and other sources say that soldiers routinely force civilians to work without pay under harsh conditions. Soldiers make civilians construct roads, clear minefields, porter for the army, or work on military-backed commercial ventures. Forced labor appears to be most widespread in states dominated by ethnic minorities. A report published in October by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) alleged that the use of forced labor was on the rise and pointed to the complicity of multinational corporations in condoning the practice. However, the ILO was permitted to set up a liaison office in Rangoon in June.

Burmese courts respect some basic due process rights in ordinary criminal cases but not in political cases, according to the U.S. State Department report. Corruption, the misuse of overly broad laws, and the manipulation of the courts for political ends continue to deprive citizens of their legal rights. Prisons and

labor camps are overcrowded, and inmates lack adequate food and health care. Amnesty International's 2001 report noted that at least 64 political prisoners have died in custody since 1988. However, conditions in some facilities have reportedly improved somewhat since the junta began allowing the International Committee of the Red Cross access to prisons in 1999.

The UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva condemns the regime each year for committing grave human rights abuses; this year's resolution, passed in April, accused Rangoon of "a continuing pattern of gross and systematic violations of human rights," including extrajudicial, summary, or arbitrary executions; enforced disappearances; rape, torture, inhuman treatment, and forced labor, including the use of children; forced relocation and the denial of freedom of assembly, association, expression, religion, and movement; the lack of an independent judiciary; and delaying the process of national reconciliation and democratization.

Some of the worst human rights abuses take place in Burma's seven ethnic minority-dominated states. In these border states, the *tatmadaw*, or Burmese armed forces, often kill, beat, rape, and arbitrarily detain civilians with impunity, according to the United Nations, the U.S. State Department, and other sources. A report issued in May by the Shan Human Rights Foundation and the Shan Women's Action Network accused the tatmadaw of systematically raping more than 600 women in Shan state between 1996 and 2001. Soldiers also routinely seize livestock, cash, property, food, and other goods from villagers, as well as destroying property.

Tens of thousands of ethnic minorities in Shan, Karenni, Karen, and Mon states and Tenasserim Division remain in squalid and ill-equipped relocation centers set up by the army. The army forcibly moved the villagers to the sites in the 1990s as part of its counterinsurgency operations. Press reports suggested that the army continued to forcibly uproot villagers in Karen, Shan, and other states, and that an estimated two million people have been internally displaced by such tactics. Thailand continues to host some 120,000 Karen and Karenni refugees in camps near the Burmese border and some 100,000 Shan refugees who are not permitted by Thai authorities to enter the camps.

The junta denies citizenship to, and has committed serious abuses against, the Muslim Rohingya minority in northern Arakan state. Lacking citizenship, the Rohingyas face restrictions on their movement and right to own land and are barred from secondary education and most civil service jobs. The government denies citizenship to most Rohingyas on the grounds that their ancestors

allegedly did not reside in Burma in 1824, as required under the 1982 citizenship law. More than 100,000 Rohingya refugees remain in Bangladesh, where they fled in the 1990s to escape extrajudicial executions, rape, forced labor, and other abuses, according to reports by Human Rights Watch and other sources. The refugees include some of the 250,000 Rohingyas who fled to Bangladesh in the early 1990s but then largely returned to Burma, as well as newer arrivals.

While army abuses are the most widespread, some rebel groups forcibly conscript civilians, commit extrajudicial killings and rape, and use women and children as porters, according to the U.S. State Department. A report issued in October by Human Rights Watch documented the widespread use of child soldiers by insurgent groups as well as by the Burmese army.

Criminal gangs have in recent years trafficked thousands of Burmese women and girls, many from ethnic minority groups, to Thailand and other destinations for prostitution, according to reports by Human Rights Watch and other groups. Although Burmese women have traditionally enjoyed high social and economic status, they are underrepresented in the government and civil service.

China

Political Rights:	7
Civil Liberties:	6
Status:	Not Free

Overview:

The ruling party's carefully-scripted leadership changes, aimed at giving the impression of a smooth transition to a younger generation of leaders, ended up creating some uncertainty over who actually wields decisive power in the world's most populous country. Hu Jintao, the sixty-year-old state vice president and an engineer by training, formally took the reigns of the all-powerful Chinese Communist Party (CCP) from veteran party boss Jiang Zemin, 76, at a November party congress. Jiang, however, held on to a key military post, leading to speculation that he intends to be a power broker behind the scenes. Regardless of who really is on top, the party is expected to continue its overarching policy of gradually freeing up the economy while crushing political dissent as it faces rising unemployment, widespread labor protests, and growing income inequalities.

The CCP took power in 1949 under Mao Zedong after defeating the Koumintang, or Nationalists, in a civil war that began in the 1920s. Aiming to tighten the party's grip on power, Mao led several brutal, mass mobilization campaigns that resulted in millions of deaths and politicized nearly every aspect of public life. Following Mao's death in 1976, Deng Xiaoping emerged as China's paramount leader. While maintaining the CCP's absolute rule, Deng scaled back the party's role in everyday life and launched China's gradual transition from central planning to a market economy.

The party showed its intent to hold on to power at all costs with the June 1989 massacre of hundreds, if not thousands, of student protesters in and around

Beijing's Tiananmen Square. The Beijing demonstrations, along with similar student rallies in cities across China, protested official corruption and demanded democratic reforms. Following the crackdown, the CCP tapped Jiang, then the Shanghai mayor and party boss, to replace the relatively moderate Zhao Ziyang as party secretary-general. Jiang became state president in 1993 and was widely recognized as China's new paramount leader following Deng's death in 1997.

Against opposition from die-hard Marxists within the party, Jiang continued Deng's policies of selling off state firms, encouraging private enterprise, and rolling back China's "iron rice bowl" welfare system. He also oversaw China's emergence from its pariah status following the Tiananmen Square massacre to become a more engaged player in world affairs, even as the government continuously faced foreign criticism over its appalling human rights record.

CCP leaders appear now to have reached a consensus that continued economic reforms are needed in order to boost living standards and stave off broad calls for political reform. They fear, however, that freeing up the economy too fast—thereby giving people ever more freedom in their day-to-day lives—will create social unrest.

While the student activism of the late 1980s has largely died down, factory workers and farmers have in recent years held thousands of street protests over hardships associated with economic restructuring. Tens of thousands of workers demonstrated over mass layoffs, poor severance pay, low or unpaid wages or pensions, and other labor grievances in spring 2002 in the northeastern cities of Liaoyang and Daqing and in the eastern mining town of Fushun. These hardships are expected to increase as the government slashes tariffs and takes other measures to open up China's economy to trade and foreign investment in line with its commitments as a World Trade Organization (WTO) member.

Already, the privatization of thousands of small- and medium-sized state-owned enterprises has thrown tens of millions out of work in a country that lacks a viable system of unemployment benefits, health insurance, and pensions. The government also faces the difficult choice of either cleaning up China's ailing state banks, which would involve yet more painful job cuts at state firms, or allowing the billions of dollars in bad loans held by these banks to continue choking off lending to private firms while risking a financial crisis. Analysts suggest that, at least in the near term, China's leadership will continue stoking the economy with massive public spending rather than take tough measures to clean up state banks or reform money-losing large state firms.

Meanwhile, in the countryside, home to 70 percent of the population—or roughly 900 million Chinese—thousands of riots and demonstrations by farmers in recent years have protested against high and often arbitrary local government fees and taxes. Rural China also has too many workers chasing too few farm and factory jobs. This has contributed to a "floating population" of some 80 million to 130 million people, by official count, who have left their rural homes in search of work in cities, where the migrants increasingly compete with locals for jobs. China's WTO membership could make matters worse for many peasants if cheaper agricultural imports chip away at their incomes. Already, China has wide income gaps between the dynamic, export-oriented coastal and southern areas and the ailing rural and rust-belt interior.

Corruption, meanwhile, has flourished in a country that has a rapidly expanding economy but lacks independent courts, regulators, and investigative agencies and a free press. Corruption consumes 13 to 17 percent of economic output annually, according to official figures. Chinese authorities recently have responded by executing hundreds, possibly thousands, of people for corruption.

Against this backdrop, the CCP's sixteenth party congress in November—an event held only once every five years—was carefully stage-managed to project an image of an orderly transfer of power. Hu was named secretary-general of the CCP, reportedly having been tapped by Deng a decade ago as Jiang's successor. Jiang is expected to also give up the state presidency to Hu when his term expires in March. Jiang continues, however, to head the Central Military Commission, a post that effectively keeps him in charge of China's 2.5 million-man armed forces. By virtue of this position, Jiang, not Hu, is officially listed as the head of the new party leadership.

Analysts say, moreover, that five or six of the cadres on the powerful, nine-member Politburo Standing Committee, which Hu heads, are Jiang proteges. The Jiang allies include Zeng Qinghong, 63, described by some observers as a potential political rival to Hu. In addition to formally endorsing the new leadership lineup, the congress also approved Jiang's controversial decision to allow private entrepreneurs to join the CCP.

Chinese authorities, meanwhile, continue to stifle any organized calls for political reform. Since 1998, courts have sentenced more than 30 leaders of a would-be opposition party, the China Democracy Party, to prison terms of up to 13 years on subversion or other charges. The government has also jailed

thousands of followers of the Falun Gong spiritual movement, which in 1999 organized the biggest protest in the capital since 1989 to demand official recognition.

Wary of separatism, the government has also tried to crush pro-independence movements among the seven million ethnic Uighurs and other, smaller Turkic-speaking Muslim groups in China's northwestern Xinjiang province. Since the early 1990s, officials have detained "tens of thousands" of Uighurs and other Muslims in Xinjiang, executing several for alleged separatist activities, the human rights group Amnesty International said in a March report. Most Uighur independence activities appear to be peaceful. Beijing, however, has used allegations that Uighur militants carried out several bombings and assassinations in the 1990s—and, more recently, the post-September 11 campaign against pan-Islamic terrorism—to brand all Uighur dissidents as terrorists.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

China is one of the most authoritarian states in the world. Opposition parties are illegal, the CCP controls the judiciary, and ordinary Chinese enjoy few basic rights.

The CCP Politburo's Standing Committee makes nearly all key political decisions and sets governmental policy. Party cadres hold nearly all top national and local governmental, police, and military posts. China's legislature, the National People's Congress, is constitutionally the most powerful state body. Its handpicked delegates now routinely register protest votes over the government's handling of crime and other issues. For the most part, though, the congress merely rubber-stamps the Politburo's decisions.

China's only real experiment with democracy has been at the local level, mainly with elections for so-called village committees. These bodies, however, cannot levy taxes, and they hold few executive powers. Moreover, "In general the CCP dominates the local electoral process, and roughly 60 percent of the members elected to the village committees are CCP members," according to the U.S. State Department's global human rights report for 2001, released in March 2002. More recently, however, tens of thousands of villages have held elections for the more powerful position of local party secretary, a party researcher told the Hong Kong-based *Far Eastern Economic Review*.

The government controls the judiciary, with the CCP directing verdicts and sentences in sensitive cases, according to the U.S. State Department report. Recent reforms aimed at making ordinary trials fairer "have not brought the country's criminal procedures into compliance with international standards," the report said. Officials often subject prisoners to "severe psychological pressure" to confess and use legal loopholes to prevent suspects from obtaining counsel, according to the report. Trials generally are little more than sentencing hearings. Moreover, corruption and inefficiency in the judicial system are "endemic," the report added.

Officials bypass the courts entirely in jailing without trial hundreds of thousands of Chinese each year under two types of administrative detention. "Re-education through labor" camps held some 310,000 Chinese as of early 2001, and the number has very likely grown since then, Amnesty International said in an October report. Meanwhile, a system called "custody and repatriation" is used to detain one million Chinese each year, many of them homeless people and other "undesirable" city dwellers, the report said.

By most accounts, Chinese prisons, re-education camps, and detention centers hold thousands of political prisoners, although the exact number is not known. Even after they are released, many former political prisoners face unrelenting police harassment that prevents them from holding jobs or otherwise leading normal lives.

China executes thousands of people each year, and more than all other countries combined, according to Amnesty International. Many are executed immediately after summary trials, and often for non-violent crimes. As part of Beijing's national "Strike Hard" campaign against crime that began in 2001, many Chinese have been executed for non-violent offenses such as corruption, pimping, hooliganism, and theft of farm animals or rice.

Law enforcement officials routinely torture suspects to extract confessions, Amnesty International said in a September report. Courts recently have sentenced some officials convicted of torture to heavy prison sentences, although most perpetrators go unpunished. Deaths of criminal suspects in custody continue to be a concern, according to the U.S. State Department report, which did not provide figures on the number of such deaths each year.

Conditions in Chinese prisons and labor camps for both political prisoners and ordinary criminals are "harsh and frequently degrading," the U.S. State Department report said. Prisoners are kept in overcrowded jails with poor

sanitation and often receive inadequate food and medical care. Forced labor in prisons is "common," the report added.

The regime sharply restricts press freedom. It bars the media from promoting political reform, covering internal party politics or the inner workings of government, criticizing Beijing's domestic and international policies, or reporting financial data that the government has not released. At the same time, officials often allow the media to report on certain problems that the CCP itself seeks to alleviate. These include corruption, arbitrary decisions, and other abuses by local officials. Newspapers, however, cannot report on corruption without government and party approval.

Chinese jails held 36 journalists as of December 2002, 14 of whom were serving time for publishing or distributing information online, according to the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists. Other journalists have been harassed, detained, threatened, or dismissed from their jobs over their reporting. Officials also recently have suspended or shut down some liberal magazines, newspapers, and publishing houses. While China's press is both public and private, the government owns and operates all radio and television stations.

The government promotes use of the Internet, which it believes to be critical to economic development, but regulates access, monitors use, and restricts and regulates content. Amnesty International, in a December report on state control of the Internet in China, said that it knows of 33 Chinese who have been detained or jailed for offenses related to their use of the Internet. Some 45 million Chinese regularly log on to the Internet, a government-funded industry group reported in mid-2002, and the number is growing rapidly.

China has hundreds of thousands of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). They all work in areas that, at least on the surface, do not challenge the government's authority, such as the environment and the provision of social services. Officials use a complex vetting process to deny licenses to human rights or other politically oriented groups. Once registered, NGOs must report regularly to specific government departments.

Workers, farmers, and others have held thousands of public protests in recent years over labor and economic issues and corruption by local officials. Security forces, however, have forcibly broken up many demonstrations, particularly those with overt political and social messages or where protesters became unruly. Police, for example, broke up a May protest in the town of Yaowan over a lack of adequate compensation for the more than one million

villagers who will be displaced by the controversial Three Gorges Dam, the London-based *The Economist* magazine reported.

Beijing sharply restricts religious freedom by placing religious groups under the tight control of state-sponsored bodies and cracking down on religious leaders and ordinary worshippers who reject this authority. For each of the five religions recognized by the government, the respective "patriotic association" appoints clergy; monitors religious membership, funding, and activities; and controls publication and distribution of religious books and other materials. Beijing does not allow the Roman Catholic patriotic association and its member churches to be openly loyal to the Vatican. The five recognized religions are Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Protestantism, and Catholicism. Buddhism claims the most adherents.

The extent to which congregations actually must submit to these regulations varies by region. In many areas, unregistered Protestant and Catholic congregations worship freely. Elsewhere, however, zealous local officials sometimes break up underground services. They also harass and at times fine, detain, beat, and torture church leaders or ordinary worshippers, and raid, close, or demolish underground churches, mosques, temples, and seminaries, according to the U.S. State Department report and other sources.

In Xinjiang, officials sharply restrict the building of new mosques, limit Islamic publishing and education, ban religious practice by those under 18, and control the leadership of mosques and religious schools. Officials recently have also shut down many mosques in Xinjiang, Amnesty International says.

Tens of thousands of Falun Gong practitioners continue to be detained in China, with the vast majority apparently held without trial in "reeducation through labor" camps, Amnesty International said in a September report. At least 200 Falun Gong adherents reportedly have died in detention since 1999, according to the U.S. State Department report. Chinese authorities generally show leniency toward ordinary practitioners who recant while severely punishing those who refuse as well as core leaders. "Anti-cult" laws developed to crush the Falun Gong, which combines *qiqong* (a traditional martial art) with meditation, have also been used to sentence members of at least 16 other religious groups to long prison terms, the New York–based Human Rights Watch reported in February.

China's one-child family planning policy is applied fairly strictly in the cities and less so in the countryside. While urban couples seldom receive permission to

have a second child, rural couples generally may have a second child if their first is a girl. Couples failing to comply face demotion or loss of jobs, fines of up to three times their annual salary, or loss of benefits or access to social services. Local officials have at times demolished or confiscated homes and personal property to punish couples for unpaid fines. Some officials have also forced women to undergo abortions or be sterilized in order to meet government birth targets, the U.S. State Department report said. The government, however, appears to be relaxing the family planning policy somewhat in the cities, the report added.

Chinese women face considerable unofficial discrimination in employment and other areas and are far likelier than men to be laid off when state firms are slimmed down or privatized, according to the U.S. State Department report. Violence occurs in about 30 percent of Chinese families, with 80 percent of cases involving husbands abusing their wives, according to a 2000 survey by the official All-China Women's Federation. Trafficking in women and children, and the kidnapping and sale of women and girls for prostitution or marriage, are serious problems, although the number of victims each year is not known, the State Department report said.

Muslims and other minorities face unofficial discrimination in access to jobs and other areas, and minorities credibly claim that the majority Han Chinese have reaped an outsize share of benefits from government programs and economic growth, according to the U.S. State Department report. China's 55 ethnic minorities make up just under 9 percent of the population, according to 1995 government figures.

In the absence of vigorous unions or strong enforcement of labor laws, private factories often pay workers below-minimum wages, force them to work overtime, sometimes without extra pay, and arbitrarily dismiss employees. Although the law does not guarantee the right to strike, officials frequently allow workers to strike or demonstrate against layoffs, dangerous conditions, or unpaid wages, benefits, or unemployment stipends. The government prohibits independent trade unions, requires all unions to belong to the state-run All China Federation of Trade Unions, and has detained or jailed several independent labor activists.

The economic reforms launched in the late 1970s have freed millions of Chinese from party control of their day-to-day lives. Many now work for private firms, which account for around 30 percent of China's economic output. In urban areas, however, many state workers still must belong to

company-based, government-linked work units, which control many aspects of everyday life including housing, health care, permission to have children, and approval to apply for passports. All government offices, public schools, and state firms still have party committees that handle budgets, political education, and personnel decisions. The economic reforms have also lifted hundreds of millions of Chinese out of absolute poverty, although some 200 million still live on less than $1 per day, according to the World Bank.

↑ Cuba

Political Rights:	7
Civil Liberties:	7
Status:	Not Free
Trend Arrow:	Cuba received an upward trend arrow due to the emergence of significant peaceful protest activity by civil society against the Castro dictatorship.

Overview:

Despite its almost total lack of access to the media, Cuba's beleaguered dissident movement received several important boosts both internally and abroad. The Varela Project, a referendum initiative seeking broad changes in the four-decades-old socialist system, achieved significant support domestically while its leader, Oswaldo Paya, was showered with international recognition. A June visit by former U.S. president Jimmy Carter also added status and visibility to the protest movement. In October, more than 300 dissident organizations joined together as the Assembly to Promote Civil Society in preparation for a post-Fidel Castro Cuba. Meanwhile the world's longest-lived dictator faced serious popular discontent, particularly because of the failing of the sugar industry. A former Cuban ambassador to the United Nations who defected in July said that intractable economic problems in his country might produce a "social explosion" against the regime.

Cuba achieved independence from Spain in 1898 as a result of the Spanish-American War. The Republic of Cuba was established in 1902, but was under U.S. tutelage under the Platt Amendment until 1934. In 1959, Castro's July 26th Movement—named after an earlier, failed insurrection—overthrew the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista, who had ruled for 18 of the previous 25 years.

Since then, Fidel Castro has dominated the political system, transforming the country into a one-party state, with the Cuban Communist Party (PCC) controlling all governmental entities from the national to the local level. Communist structures were institutionalized by the 1976 constitution installed at the first congress of the PCC. The constitution provides for the national assembly, which designates the Council of State. It is that body which in turn appoints the Council of Ministers in consultation with its president, who serves as head of state and chief of government. However, Castro is responsible for every appointment and controls every lever of power in Cuba in his various roles as president of the Council of Ministers, chairman of the Council of State, commander-in-chief of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR), and first secretary of the PCC.

Since the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union, and the end of some $5 billion in annual Soviet subsidies, Castro has sought Western foreign investment. Most investment has come from Europe and Latin America. However, a EU study published in 2002 showed that direct foreign investment during the past five years peaked at $488 million in 2000 before falling to $38.9 million in 2001, while the country's foreign debt has risen to $11 billion. The legalization of the U.S. dollar since 1993 has heightened social tensions, as the minority with access to dollars from abroad or through the tourist industry has emerged as a new moneyed class and the desperation of the majority without has increased.

Under Castro, the cycles of repression have ebbed and flowed depending on the regime's need to keep at bay the social forces set into motion by his severe post-Cold War economic reforms. By mid-June 1998, in the aftermath of the visit of Pope John Paul II five months earlier, the number of dissidents confirmed to be imprisoned dropped nearly 400 percent. In February 1999, the government introduced tough legislation against sedition, with a maximum prison sentence of 20 years. It stipulated penalties for unauthorized contacts with the United States and the import or supply of "subversive" materials, including texts on democracy, by news agencies and journalists.

U.S.-Cuban relations took some unexpected turns in 2000, against a backdrop of unprecedented media coverage of the story of the child shipwreck survivor Elian Gonzalez, who was ordered to be returned to his father in Cuba after a seven-month legal battle involving émigré relatives in Florida. In response to pressure from U.S. farmers and businessmen who pushed for a relaxation of economic sanctions against the island, in October the United States eased the 38-year-old embargo on food and medicine to Cuba.

In June 2001, Castro, who was then 74, collapsed at a long outdoor rally near Havana. The incident centered attention on what might happen once the world's longest-ruling dictator passes from the scene. In November 2001, Hurricane Michelle, the most powerful tropical storm to hit Cuba in a half-century, left a low death toll but a trail of physical destruction, devastating Cuban crops. In the wake of the storm, the first direct food trade was permitted between Cuba and the United States since the latter imposed the embargo in 1962. The renewal of food sales in the wake of Michelle sparked further debate between farmers and others in the United States who want the embargo lifted, and Cuban exile groups and some democracy activists who demand even tougher sanctions.

In May 2002, organizers of the Varela Project submitted more than 11,000 signatures to the National Assembly demanding a referendum be held in which Cubans could vote for fundamental reforms, such as freedom of expression, the right to own private businesses, and electoral reform. After Jimmy Carter mentioned the project on Cuban television the same month, the regime held its own "referendum" in which 8.2 million people supposedly declared the socialist system to be "untouchable."

In October, the EU—long loath to criticize Castro—awarded Paya its prestigious Sakharov human rights prize. While the regime ignored the Varela Project petition, in violation of its own constitution, the new civil society movement was launched. Composed of 321 dissident organizations ranging from human rights groups and independent libraries to labor unions and the independent press, the civil society assembly said it would prepare for a post-Castro transition rather than seek reforms from the regime.

In a move emblematic of the country's worsening economic crisis, in June 2002, the government closed 71 of Cuba's 156 sugar mills, a blow to thousands who were left without work and to a nation whose popular motto used to be: "Without sugar there is no country."

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Cubans cannot change their government through democratic means. In October 2002, some eight million Cubans voted in tightly controlled municipal elections. Half of those chosen for municipal seats will later be candidates for the one-party National Assembly, with parliamentary elections scheduled for early 2003.

All political and civic organizating outside the PCC is illegal. Political dissent, spoken or written, is a punishable offense, and those so punished frequently receive years of imprisonment for seemingly minor infractions. There has been a slight relaxation of strictures on cultural life; nevertheless, the educational system, the judicial system, labor unions, professional organizations, and all media remain state-controlled.

In Cuba the executive branch controls the judiciary. The 1976 constitution concentrates power in the hands of one individual—Castro, president of the Council of State. In practice, the council serves as a de facto judiciary and controls both the courts and the judicial process as a whole. In 1999, the Cuban government showed some willingness to enhance antinarcotics cooperation with the United States

There are some 320 prisoners of conscience in Cuba, most held in cells with common criminals and many convicted on vague charges such as "disseminating enemy propaganda" or "dangerousness." Members of groups that exist apart from the state are labeled "counterrevolutionary criminals" and are subject to systematic repression, including arrests, beatings while in custody, confiscations, and intimidation by uniformed or plainclothes state security agents. Since 1991, the United Nations has voted annually to assign a special investigator on human rights to Cuba, but the Cuban government has refused to cooperate. Cuba also does not allow the International Red Cross and other humanitarian organizations access to its prison. There are 88 U.S. fugitives from justice in Cuba, including alleged airplane hijackers and murderers of police officers.

The press in Cuba is the object of a targeted campaign of intimidation by the government. Independent journalists, particularly those associated with five small news agencies they established outside state control, have been subjected to continued repression, including jail terms at hard labor and assaults while in prison by state security agents. Foreign news agencies must hire local reporters only through government offices, which limits employment opportunities for independent journalists.

Freedom of movement and the right to choose one's residence, education, and job are severely restricted. Attempting to leave the island without permission is a punishable offense.

In 1991, Roman Catholics and other believers were granted permission to join the Communist Party, and the constitutional reference to official atheism was

dropped the following year. However, in October 2002, the U.S. State Department issued a report saying that Cuba was one of six countries that engaged in widespread repression of religion. The report said that security agents frequently spy on worshippers, the government continues to block construction of new churches, the number of new foreign priests is limited, and most new denominations are refused recognition. In a positive development, the regime now tolerates the Baha'i faith.

In the post-Soviet era, the rights of Cubans to own private property and to participate in joint ventures with foreigners have been recognized. Non-Cuban businesses have also been allowed. In practice, there are few rights for those who do not belong to the PCC. Party membership is still required for good jobs, serviceable housing, and real access to social services, including medical care and educational opportunities.

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

Equatorial Guinea

Political Rights:	7 ▼
Civil Liberties:	6
Status:	Not Free
Ratings change:	Equatorial Guinea's political rights rating declined from 6 to 7 after authorities conducted an unfair trial of many of the government's political opponents, jailed them, and then moved up by two months presidential elections that were neither free nor fair.

Overview:

After initially appearing to be making steps toward improving its records on political and human rights, the government of Equatorial Guinea took several steps back in 2002. Authorities in March began rounding up members of the political opposition, claiming that a coup plot was underway. By May, 144 people had been detained. International human rights groups condemned the trial that followed in which 68 people were sentenced to prison terms ranging from 6 to 20 years. Among those convicted was Placido Miko, the prominent leader of the opposition Convergence for Social Democracy party, who was sentenced to 14 years. Defendants alleged that their statements were exacted under torture during incommunicado detention.

The mass arrests appeared to be an effort by the government of President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo to clear the playing field ahead of presidential elections that were originally scheduled for February 2003. Obiang further consolidated the position of the ruling party by moving the elections up to December 2002. He won the election with nearly 100 percent of the vote. Four opposition candidates withdrew from the election at the last minute, citing irregularities and saying there was no chance of fairness.

Equatorial Guinea achieved independence in 1968 following 190 years of Spanish rule. It has since been one of the world's most tightly closed and repressive societies. President Obiang seized power in 1979 by deposing and murdering his uncle, Francisco Macias Nguema. Pressure from donor countries demanding democratic reforms prompted Obiang to proclaim a new "era of pluralism" in January 1992. Political parties were legalized and multiparty elections announced, but in practice Obiang and his clique wield all power.

The UN Human Rights Commission terminated the mandate of the special investigator for Equatorial Guinea in April 2002, saying it aimed instead to encourage the government to implement a national human rights action plan.

Equatorial Guinea is the continent's third-largest oil producer and boasts one of the highest figures for per capita gross domestic product in Africa. The oil sector has led to more jobs but the lives of most people have yet to change. U.S. oil companies have invested at least $5 billion in Equatorial Guinea since the mid-1990s. The World Bank resumed cooperation with the country in 2002 after a ten-year break.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Equatorial Guinea's citizens are unable to change their government through peaceful, democratic means. The December 2002 election was not credible. The four opposition challengers withdrew from the poll, citing irregularities. The candidates said soldiers, police, and electoral officials were present at polling stations and were opening ballot envelopes after votes were cast. President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo was declared the winner of his third 7-year term with 99.5 percent of the vote. The 1996 presidential election was neither free nor fair, and was marred by official intimidation, a near-total boycott by the political opposition, and very low voter turnout.

The 1999 parliamentary elections were also marred by intimidation and fraud and were neither free nor fair. Many opposition candidates were arrested or confined to their villages prior to the polls. The ruling Democratic Party of Equatorial Guinea (PDGE) won 75 of 80 seats. Led jointly by the Convergence for Social Democracy and the Popular Union, seven opposition parties claimed massive fraud, demanding an annulment. Those opposition candidates that had won parliamentary seats refused to take them up. Amnesty International said at least 90 opposition party activists were detained for short periods in 1999.

President Obiang wields broad decree-making powers and effectively bars public participation in the policy-making process. Most opposition parties are linked with the ruling party, and several remain officially banned. By moving the presidential election up two months and jailing political opponents, Obiang could be hoping to avoid controversy such as fraud claims that followed previous elections.

The judiciary is not independent, and laws on search and seizure, as well as detention, are routinely ignored by security forces, who act with impunity. Civil cases rarely go to trial. A military tribunal handles cases tied to national security. Unlawful arrests remain commonplace. Prison conditions are extremely harsh. Abuse combined with poor medical care has led to several deaths. There are no effective domestic human rights organizations in the country, and the few international nongovernmental organizations operating in Equatorial Guinea are prohibited from promoting or defending human rights.

The trial of 144 people in 2002 on suspicion of coup plotting received international condemnation as being unfair. London-based Amnesty International said no evidence was presented against any defendant and called on authorities to conduct a new trial within a reasonable time for the 68 people who were sentenced or release them. It also demanded an investigation into allegations by the defendants that they were tortured, adding that it had evidence that the torture continued during the trial. Amnesty said the sentences were unfair, heavy, and passed on the sole basis of statements extracted under torture during incommunicado detention. None of the detainees was allowed access to medical treatment, and some were denied food brought by their families.

An opposition political activist, Juan Ondo Nguema, died in detention in July 2002 after he was sentenced to more than six years in jail. International human rights groups blamed his death on injuries resulting from torture during police investigations. Equatorial Guinea accused local political groups and international organizations of "disrespectful judgments" and "acts of open hostility" against the government.

Press freedom is constitutionally guaranteed, but the government restricts those rights in practice. Nearly all print and broadcast media are state-run and tightly controlled. The 1992 press law authorizes government censorship of all publications. Mild criticism of infrastructure and public institutions is allowed, but nothing disparaging about the president or security forces is tolerated.

Foreign publications have become more widely available in recent years. The shortwave programs of Radio France Internationale and Radio Exterior (the international shortwave service from Spain) can be heard. A few small independent newspapers publish occasionally but exercise self-censorship, and all journalists must be registered.

Reporters Sans Frontieres said independent journalists covering the trial of opposition figures in May were verbally threatened by presidential guards and police daily. At one point, presidential security guards threatened to bar journalist Rodrigo Angue Nguema and Pedro Nolasco Ndong, president of the Equatorial Guinea Press Association, from entering the court if they continued to "have contact" with the accused. Police also confiscated the equipment of a photographer from the independent newspaper *La Opinion*.

Authorities in May barred the press association from organizing activities it had scheduled to mark World Press Freedom Day. Several journalists, political leaders, and association heads complained in 2002 of increasing difficulties in accessing the Internet. They said illegal wiretapping had increased and the country's sole Internet service provider allegedly monitored e-mail traffic closely.

About 80 percent of the population is Roman Catholic. Freedom of individual religious practice is generally respected, although President Obiang has warned the clergy against interfering in political affairs. Monopoly political power by the president's Mongomo clan of the majority Fang ethnic group persists. Differences between the Fang and the Bubi are a major source of political tension that often has erupted into violence. Fang vigilante groups have been allowed to abuse Bubi citizens with impunity.

Constitutional and legal protections of equality for women are largely ignored. Traditional practices discriminate against women, and few have educational opportunities or participate in the formal (business) economy or government. Violence against women is reportedly widespread. There is no child rights policy.

Freedom of association and assembly is restricted. Authorization must be obtained for any gathering of ten or more people for purposes the government deems political.

Steps have been made to reform the labor sector. The country's first labor union, the Small Farmers Syndicate, received legal recognition in 2000, and it is independent. The government has ratified all International Labor Organization conventions. There are many legal steps required prior to collective bargaining.

Eritrea

Political Rights:	7
Civil Liberties:	6
Status:	Not Free

Overview:

In 2002, the government of President Isaias Afwerki continued its repressive policy of allowing no opposition or independent organizations in the political or civil sphere. In April the International Court in The Hague issued a final boundary demarcation of the Ethiopian-Eritrean boundary. Disputes over the border had led to warfare between the two countries. Both sides adopted the common border with reluctance, but also continued to lay claim to the town of Badme.

In 1950, after years of Italian occupation, Eritrea was incorporated into Ethiopia. Eritrea's independence struggle began in 1962 as a nationalist and Marxist guerrilla war against the Ethiopian government of Emperor Haile Selassie. The seizure of power by a Marxist junta in Ethiopia in 1974 removed the ideological basis of the conflict, and by the time Eritrea finally defeated Ethiopia's northern armies in 1991, the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) had discarded Marxism. Internationally recognized independence was achieved in May 1993 after a referendum supervised by the United Nations produced a landslide vote for statehood.

War with Ethiopia broke out in 1998. In May 2000, an Ethiopian military offensive succeeded in making significant territorial gains. Eritrea signed a truce with Ethiopia in June 2000 and a peace treaty in December 2000. The agreement provided for a UN-led buffer force to be installed along the Eritrean side of the contested border and further negotiations to determine the final boundary line. The war had dominated the country's political and

economic agenda and reflected deeper issues of nationalism and political mobilization by a government that has long used the presence of real or perceived enemies to generate popular support and unity.

In May 2001, a dissident group of 15 senior ruling-party members publicly criticized President Isaias and called for "the rule of law and for justice, through peaceful and legal ways and means." Eleven members of this group were arrested in September 2001, allegedly for treason (three members who were out of the country at the time escaped arrest and one withdrew his support for the group). They remained in jail throughout 2002. The small independent media sector was shut down, and as of September 2002, 18 journalists were imprisoned. Student leaders escaping persecution fled to Ethiopia.

In addition to the war with Ethiopia, since 1993, Eritrea has engaged in hostilities with Sudan and Yemen and has also had strained relations with Djibouti. Eritrea's proclivity to settle disputes by the force of arms and the continued tight government control over the country's political life have dashed hopes raised by President Isaias' membership in a group of "new African leaders" who promised more open governance and a break with Africa's recent tradition of autocratic rule.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Created in February 1994 as a successor to the EPLF, the Popular Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ) maintains a dominance over the country's political and economic life that is unlikely to change in the near or medium term future. Instead of moving towards creating a framework for a democratic political system, since the end of the war with Ethiopia, the PFDJ has taken significant steps backward. The 2001 crackdown against those calling for greater political pluralism has chilled the already tightly controlled political atmosphere. National elections scheduled for December 2001 have been postponed indefinitely.

In 1994, a 50-member constitutional commission was established. In 1997, a new constitution authorizing "conditional" political pluralism with provisions for a multiparty system was adopted. The constitution provides for the election of the president from among the members of the national assembly by a vote of the majority of its members.

In 2000, the National Assembly determined that the first elections would be held in December 2001 and appointed a committee that issued draft regulations governing political parties. These draft regulations remain under consideration, and independent political parties authorized by the constitution do not exist. In theory, polls were supposed to have been held in 1998, but they were postponed indefinitely following the outbreak of hostilities with Ethiopia.

Eritrea's political culture places priority on group interests over those of the individual. This view has been forged in part by years of struggle against outside occupiers and austere attachment to Marxist principles. Eritrea's aggressive foreign policy has contributed significantly to regional instability and to a sense of victimization among Eritreans, which in turn affords a rationale for continued strong central government control.

The new constitution's guarantees of civil and political liberties are unrealized, as pluralistic media and rights to political organization continue to be absent. A judiciary was formed by decree in 1993 and has yet to adopt positions that are significantly at variance with government perspectives. A low level of training and resources limits the courts' efficiency. Constitutional guarantees are often ignored in cases relating to state security. Arbitrary arrest and detention are problems. The provision of speedy trials is limited by a lack of trained personnel, inadequate funding, and poor infrastructure, and the use of a special court system limits due process.

The government has maintained a hostile attitude towards civil society and has refused international assistance designed to support the development of pluralism in society. The government controls most elements of civil life, either directly or through affiliated organizations.

Government control over all broadcasting and pressures against the independent print media have constrained public debate. The 1996 press law allows only qualified freedom of expression, subject to the official interpretation of "the objective reality of Eritrea." In its September 2001 crackdown, the government banned all privately owned newspapers while claiming that a parliamentary committee would examine conditions under which they would be permitted to re-open. According to Amnesty International, the newspapers were accused of contravening the 1996 Press Law, but their alleged offences were not specified.

In the days following the clampdown, 10 leading journalists were arrested by the police in Asmara. They had protested in writing to the Minister of Information concerning the arrest of members of the Group of 15 and the closure of the newspapers. Other journalists were arrested in 2002. Some of these began a hunger strike in April 2002 and were then transferred from prison to unknown places of detention. This action and the absence of nongovernmental human rights organizations have had a dissuasive effect on the development of other civil society groups.

Official government policy is supportive of free enterprise, and citizens generally have the freedom to choose their employment, establish private businesses, and function relatively free of government harassment. Until recently, at least, government officials have enjoyed a reputation for relative probity.

Women played important roles in the guerilla movement, and the government has worked in favor of improving the status of women. In an effort to encourage broader participation by women in politics, the PFDJ named 3 women to the party's executive council and 12 women to the central committee in 1997. Women participated in the constitutional commission (filling almost half of the positions on the 50-person committee) and hold senior government positions, including the positions of minister of justice and minister of labor.

Equal educational opportunity, equal pay for equal work, and penalties for domestic violence have been codified; yet traditional societal discrimination persists against women in the largely rural and agricultural country. In general, religious freedom is observed, although Jehovah's Witnesses face some societal discrimination.

Iraq

Political Rights:	7
Civil Liberties:	7
Status:	Not Free

Overview:

As the United States mobilized military resources and diplomatic support for a possible invasion to oust the government of Iraq, Saddam Hussein took some steps to improve human rights conditions in what many observers regard as the most oppressive state in the world. Public reaction suggested that long-dormant public disaffection with the regime may be as decisive in determining Iraq's future as the military forces poised on the outside.

Iraq was established as a League of Nations mandate in 1921 and gained formal independence in 1932. The British-installed Hashemite monarchy was overthrown by a 1958 military coup and followed by a succession of weak leftist governments for the next decade. In 1968, the pan-Arab Baath (Renaissance) party seized power and has ruled Iraq ever since. In June 1979, the regime's de facto strongman, Vice President Saddam Hussein, formally assumed the presidency.

The ascension of a dictator anxious to establish Iraq as undisputed leader of the Arab world coincided with postrevolutionary chaos in neighboring Iran. Seeing an opportunity to humble a once-powerful enemy, Hussein ordered an invasion of Iran in 1980, setting off a bloody eight-year war. In 1988, Iraq emerged from the war with minor territorial gains, major foreign debt, and catastrophic human and material losses. Unwilling to demobilize what had become the world's third-largest standing army and introduce hundreds of thousands of soldiers into the ranks of the unemployed, President Hussein initiated another war two years later with the invasion of Kuwait.

Following Iraq's defeat by a 22-nation coalition in 1991, the UN Security Council imposed a strict economic sanctions regime pending the destruction of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction (WMD). While it was originally anticipated that the sanctions would be lifted within a few years, Iraq refused to voluntarily disclose its WMD capabilities for more than a decade and the sanctions remained in place.

Anxious to avert a humanitarian disaster in postwar Iraq, the United Nations offered within months of the ceasefire to permit Baghdad to sell limited amounts of oil, provided that the proceeds be used for food and humanitarian supplies. For more than four years, Hussein refused to accept such proposals, apparently hoping that the suffering of the Iraqi people would move the world to accept the complete and unconditional lifting of the sanctions. After an "oil for food" program was finally implemented in 1996, Hussein exploited the initiative, imposing a clandestine surcharge on oil sales and re-exporting considerable amounts of humanitarian goods in order to earn illicit revenue to finance rearmament.

As a result of the Iraqi regime's obstruction of humanitarian assistance to the Iraqi people, a sharp decline in health care services and the use of contaminated water increased the spread and mortality rate of curable diseases in postwar Iraq. According to UNICEF, more than 500,000 Iraqi children under age five died between 1991 and 1998. In 1990, the UN Human Development Index, which ranks countries based on quality of life as measured by indicators such as education, life expectancy, and adjusted real income, ranked Iraq 55th in the world. By 2000, Iraq's ranking had fallen to 126th of 174 countries.

Iraq exploited this humanitarian disaster to rally international opposition to the sanctions and inflame anti-Western sentiment in the Arab world. By 2001, Iraq's neighbors were turning a blind eye to sanctions-violating trade, and according to a September 2002 report by the British government, Iraq's illicit revenue had reached $3 billion per year. These funds were used not only to finance rearmament, but also to secure the loyalty of Sunni tribal elites and the military-security apparatus surrounding President Hussein. Flush with illicit revenue, the Iraqi regime became stronger than ever.

In the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States, U.S. President George W. Bush designated Iraq's WMD a salient threat to American national security and openly committed his administration to engineering Saddam Hussein's ouster. In November 2002, after months of intense American

diplomacy, the UN Security Council passed a resolution giving Iraq a "final opportunity" to disarm and declaring that false statements, omissions, or noncooperation by Iraq would constitute a "material breach" of the Gulf War ceasefire. The Bush administration made clear its view that the resolution was a sufficient mandate for American military intervention in the event that Iraq fails to cooperate fully with UN weapons inspectors, who returned to the country in late November.

In the face of mounting threats of American military action, the Iraqi regime took some steps in 2002 to improve human rights conditions, as a means of diminishing both domestic and international support for U.S. intervention. In February, Iraq allowed the UN Commission on Human Rights special rapporteur, Andreas Mavrommatis, to enter the country for the first time in 10 years. Exit fees for Iraqis wishing to leave the country were reportedly waived. Following his "reelection" in an October presidential referendum, Saddam Hussein issued a sweeping amnesty and released tens of thousands of prisoners.

More surprising than the amnesty was the public reaction that followed: hundreds of women whose husband or sons had not been released protested outside the Information Ministry. Few observers believe that the Iraqi people will rally around Saddam Hussein in the event of an American invasion. In August, former Egyptian chief-of-staff Salah Halaby predicted that the Iraqi army will "pounce on Saddam . . . without any hesitation" once a U.S. assault begins. Reports of dissent within the armed forces, mostly unconfirmed, occurred throughout the year. On October 8, the Kuwaiti daily *Al-Qabas* reported that an Iraqi MiG-23 pilot tried to veer off course during a training exercise and bomb a presidential palace, but was shot down. During a visit to Baghdad, Qatari foreign minister Hamad bin Jasem bin Jaber al-Thani offered Hussein and his family political asylum if he would step down (the envoy was quickly expelled from the country). There were also reports that Libya had agreed to accept the Iraqi dictator.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Iraqis cannot change their government democratically. Saddam Hussein holds supreme power as president and chairman of the nine-member Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), a body with virtually unlimited and unchecked authority. Although the 250-seat National Assembly formally shares legislative responsibilities with the RCC, in practice it ritually endorses RCC decisions

with little or no deliberation. Opposition parties are illegal, and all legislative candidates are carefully vetted to ensure their support for the regime. High turnout is typical in elections, as failure to vote may be seen as opposition to the government.

Iraqi citizens live under the constant threat of arbitrary arrest, torture, rape, and summary execution. Tens of thousands of Iraqi citizens have disappeared over the last two decades and thousands are believed to be held in incommunicado detention. The number of political prisoners was estimated to be in the tens of thousands prior to the October 2002 amnesty, and international human rights groups expressed concerns that few political detainees were among those freed. The security forces routinely torture detainees suspected of opposition activity. According to defectors from Iraq's national soccer team, players have been brutally tortured after losing games. There have been credible reports of Iraqi defectors receiving videotapes of their female relatives being raped.

Executions are an integral component of the regime's control over Iraqi society. Military and government officials suspected of disloyalty are routinely executed, as are the relatives of Iraqi defectors. Some mass executions have been carried out to thin the prison population. The Washington-based International Alliance for Justice, an umbrella group of 260 nongovernmental organizations from 120 countries, reported in early 2002 that the Iraqi government had executed 4,000 people since 1998. There were numerous additional reports of executions in 2002. In July, the government itself announced the execution of two people allegedly spying for Iran. According to Iraqi human rights organizations abroad, the regime executed 6 military officers who served at a presidential retreat at Tharthar and 17 Iraqis from the southern provinces of Muhanna and Najaf in March. In June, 10 people were reportedly executed at Abu Ghareb prison. In October, 6 political prisoners with alleged links to the opposition were put to death.

The judiciary is not independent. Although some safeguards exist in civil cases, those accused of political and economic crimes are usually tried in closed, special security courts, chaired by military officers and Baath party officials, where no due process protections are recognized. A variety of crimes, including theft, corruption, desertion from the army, and currency speculation, are punishable by amputation, branding, or execution. Doctors have been killed for refusing to carry out punishments or for attempting reconstructive surgery.

Freedom of expression is almost entirely absent in Iraq. All media outlets are either controlled directly by the state or owned by Saddam Hussein's loyalists.

The Iraqi president's eldest son, Uday Hussein, is head of the Journalists' Union, owner of 11 newspapers, including the daily *Babel*, and director of television and radio stations. Freedom of speech is explicitly restricted by numerous laws, such as RCC Decree Number 840, which prohibits insulting the president or other senior government officials on punishment of death.

Freedom of assembly is restricted to pro-government gatherings, while freedom of association is limited to government-backed political parties and civic groups. Independent trade unions are nonexistent, and the state-backed General Federation of Trade Unions is the only legal labor federation. The law does not recognize the right to collective bargaining and places restrictions on the right to strike.

Islam is the official state religion. While freedom of religion is protected in principle, it is severely restricted in practice. The government appoints all clergy in Iraq and monitors all places of worship. Sunni Muslim Arabs, who constitute 13-16 percent of the population, dominate political and economic life, although token members of minority communities have been appointed to high-level positions in the government and ruling party. Shiite Muslims, who are predominantly Arab and constitute around 60 per cent of the population, face severe persecution. Shiites may not engage in communal Friday prayers, funeral processions, or other religious observances without explicit government approval. Security forces have reportedly arrested thousands of Shiites, executed an undetermined number of these detainees, and assassinated dozens of Shiite clerics and religious students in recent years. Government forces in the south have desecrated Shiite mosques and holy sites, razed homes, and drained the Amara and Hammar marshes in order to flush out Shiite guerrillas.

The Iraqi regime has long pursued a policy of "Arabization" against ethnic Kurds, Turkomans, and other non-Arab minorities. Thousands of families have been expelled by the central government into northern Iraq, where a Kurdish safe haven has existed under UN protection since 1991.

Iraqi laws grant women equality with men in most respects, but it is difficult to determine the extent to which these rights are respected in practice.

Laos

Political Rights:	7
Civil Liberties:	6
Status:	Not Free

Overview:

By staging a tightly controlled election in February 2002, the ruling Communist party in Laos signaled that it has few plans to loosen its iron-fisted grip over this impoverished Southeast Asian land after more than a quarter-century in power.

This landlocked, mountainous nation won independence in 1953 following six decades as a French protectorate and occupation by the Japanese during World War II. Backed by Vietnam's Viet Minh rebels, Communist Pathet Lao (Land of Lao) guerrillas quickly tried to topple the royalist government in Vientiane. Following several years of political turmoil, Communist, royalist, and so-called neutralist forces in 1960 began waging a three-way civil war.

Amid continued fighting, Laos was drawn into the Vietnam War in 1964, when the United States began bombing North Vietnamese forces operating inside Laos. The Pathet Lao seized power in 1975 shortly after the Communist victory in neighboring Vietnam. The guerrillas set up a one-party Communist state under Prime Minister Kaysone Phomvihane's Lao People's Revolutionary Party (LPRP).

By the mid-1980s, the Laotian economy was a shambles, reeling under the double blow of the LPRP's central planning and the legacy of civil war. In response, the LPRP in 1986 began freeing prices, encouraging foreign investment, and privatizing farms and some state-owned firms. Partially unshackled, the economy grew by 7 percent a year on average from 1988 to 1996.

At the same time, the LPRP continued to reject calls for political reforms, jailing two officials in 1990 who called for multiparty elections. Meanwhile, Kaysone's death in 1992 ushered in a new strongman to lead the country. Veteran revolutionary Khamtay Siphandone, now 78, took the reigns of the all-powerful LPRP and later became state president.

At its seventh party congress in 2001, the LPRP added only a few young faces to its Politburo and Central Committee and did not announce any initiatives to boost the nascent private sector. Many diplomats and other observers had expected the party to launch deeper reforms in an effort to sharpen the economy's competitiveness. The LPRP's lack of zest for deeper change, including privatizing the large, creaking state firms that dominate the economy, reflects the aging leadership's concern that reducing the party's control over the economy could undermine its tight grip on power.

Against this backdrop, the February 2002 parliamentary elections provided little suspense. All but one of the 166 candidates for the National Assembly's 109 seats were LPRP members.

In the rugged highlands, several armed Hmong groups have been waging low-grade insurgencies against the government since the Communist takeover. The Hmong are one of the largest of several upland hill tribes. Together with smaller numbers of other ethnic minorities, the hill tribes make up roughly half the population. The politically dominant ethnic Lao make up the remainder.

The economy depends on subsistence agriculture, which accounts for around half of output and provides livelihoods for 80 percent of Laotians. Trade and sales of hydroelectric power to neighboring Thailand are key sources of foreign revenue. The economy, however, has yet to recover from the regional financial crisis that began in 1997. Foreign investors, the majority of whom were Thai, pulled out of Laos in droves and have not returned. In a sign of the economy's fragility, donor aid makes up more than 15 percent of gross domestic product. That's up from 6.25 percent in the mid-1980s, just before Laos began its tentative market reforms.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Laotians cannot change their government through elections, and the ruling LPRP sharply restricts most basic rights. The 1991 constitution makes the LPRP the sole legal political party and gives it a leading role at all levels of

government. The National Assembly merely rubber-stamps the party's proposals. The LPRP vets all candidates for assembly elections, which are held once every five years.

Both Laotian forces and Hmong rebels reportedly have committed some politically motivated killings and other human rights abuses relating to the Hmong insurgency. The poorly equipped Hmong rebels have little chance of overthrowing the government, and their goals are not clear. The Hmong and other ethnic minorities face some discrimination in mainstream society and have little input into government decisions on how land is used and natural resources are allocated, according to the U.S. State Department's global human rights report for 2001, released in March 2002.

Laos's party-controlled courts provide citizens with little means of addressing government human rights abuses and other grievances. The judiciary "is subject to executive influence, is corrupt, and does not ensure citizens' due process," the U.S. State Department report said. The report noted, however, that party and government officials appear to exert less influence over the courts than in the past.

Security forces often illegally detain suspects, and some Laotians have spent more than a decade in jail without trial, according to a June report by the human rights group Amnesty International. The report also said that prisoners sometimes must bribe jail officials to obtain their freedom even after a court has ordered their release. Prisoners reportedly are routinely tortured, have limited access to health care, and are provided with meager food rations, the report added.

Laotian jails hold several political prisoners. These include two officials in the pre-1975 government and two who served in the present regime before being jailed in 1990 for advocating multiparty politics, according to the U.S. State Department report. In addition, five students who disappeared after they tried to hold an unprecedented pro-democracy protest in 1999 are serving prison terms, Laotian officials conceded to visiting European members of parliament in June. The officials did not reveal the charges or the lengths of the sentences. As of the end of 2001, the government also was holding an estimated 100 to 200 national security suspects, most of them without trials, the U.S. State Department report said.

The government owns all newspapers and broadcast media, and news coverage parrots the party line. The law subjects journalists who do not file "constructive

reports" or who attempt to "obstruct" the LPRP's work to jail terms of from 5 to 15 years. Freedom of the press, as well as free speech more generally, is also restricted by broadly-drawn criminal laws that forbid inciting disorder, slandering the state, distorting LPRP or state policies, or disseminating information or opinions that weaken the state.

Laotian authorities monitor e-mail, control all domestic Internet service providers, and block access to some political Web sites, the U.S. State Department report said. The number of Laotian Internet users is not known.

Religious freedom is tightly restricted. Several Laotians are serving jail terms for proselytizing or other peaceful religious activities, according to the U.S. State Department report. Besides those formally tried and jailed, dozens of Christians have recently been detained, some for months, the report said, while others reportedly have been barred from worshipping openly or forced to renounce their beliefs.

Officials also prohibit Laotians from printing non-Buddhist religious texts or distributing them outside their congregations and restrict the import of foreign religious texts and materials, the U.S. State Department report said. Some minority religious groups reportedly are also unable to register new congregations or obtain permission to build new places of worship, the report added.

In a society where more than half the population is Buddhist, the LPRP controls the Buddhist clergy. It requires monks to study Marxism-Leninism, attend certain party meetings, and weave party and state policies into their Buddhist teachings. Officials have, however, permitted some Buddhist temples to receive support from abroad, expand the training of monks, and emphasize traditional teachings.

Many Laotian women hold important civil service and private sector jobs, though women hold relatively few positions in government and politics, the U.S. State Department report said. The report also said that Laos is "a source and transit country for trafficking in persons," with rough estimates suggesting that 15,000 to 20,000 Laotian women and girls are trafficked abroad each year for prostitution.

The government recently has scaled back its monitoring of ordinary civilians. The security service, however, still uses a "vast" surveillance network to monitor the personal communications and track the movements of some Laotians,

according to the U.S. State Department report. The regime also maintains an informal militia and a sporadically active system of neighborhood and workplace committees that inform on the population, the report added.

Trade unions are state-controlled and have little influence. All unions must belong to the official Federation of Lao Trade Unions, and workers lack the right to bargain collectively. Strikes are not expressly prohibited, but they occur rarely. In any case, with subsistence farmers making up around four-fifths of the workforce, few Laotian workers are unionized. Consistent with its policy of neutralizing trade unions, the regime prohibits nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) from having political agendas. However, it permits some professional and social-oriented NGOs, all of which it controls, to function.

Libya

Political Rights:	7
Civil Liberties:	7
Status:	Not Free

Overview:

Libyan leader Colonel Mu'ammar al-Qadhafi continued his campaign for regional and international respectability in 2002. His attempts to position himself as a pan-African leader built upon recent efforts to break Libya out of international isolation, further burnishing his image as a continental gadfly. Libya seemed to cooperate with the United States on the war against terrorism. Nevertheless, the United States classified it as a proliferator of weapons of mass destruction. Libya offered a compensation package to the families of the victims of the Pan Am Flight 103 bombing in 1988, but conditioned this offer on the complete removal of international sanctions against the country. At year's end, Libya was slated to chair the UN Commission on Human Rights.

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

Qadhafi's open hostility toward the West and his sponsorship of terrorism have earned Libya the status of international pariah. Clashes with regional neighbors, including Chad over the Aozou strip and Egypt over their common border, have led to costly military failures. Suspected Libyan involvement in the 1988 bombing of Pan Am flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland prompted the United Nations in 1992 to impose sanctions, including embargoes on air traffic and the

import of arms and oil production equipment. The United States has maintained unilateral sanctions against Libya since 1981 because of the latter's sponsorship of terrorism.

With the economy stagnating and the internal infrastructure in disrepair, Qadhafi began taking steps in 1999 to end Libya's international isolation. He surrendered two Libyan nationals suspected in the Lockerbie bombing. He also agreed to pay compensation to the families of 170 people killed in the 1989 bombing of a French airliner over Niger. In addition, he accepted responsibility for the 1984 killing of British police officer Yvonne Fletcher by shots fired from the Libyan Embassy in London, and expelled from Libya the Palestinian terrorist organization headed by Abu Nidal. The United Nations suspended sanctions in 1999, but stopped short of lifting them permanently because Libya has not explicitly renounced terrorism. The United States eased some restrictions to allow American companies to sell food, medicine, and medical equipment to Libya, but maintained its travel ban. Britain restored diplomatic ties with Libya for the first time since 1986; the Libyan embassy in Britain reopened in March 2001. The EU lifted sanctions but maintained an arms embargo.

The two Lockerbie suspects went on trial in May 2000 under Scottish law in the Netherlands. One, a Libyan intelligence agent named Abdel Basset Ali Mohammed al-Megrahi, was convicted of murder in January 2001 and sentenced to life imprisonment. The other was acquitted for lack of evidence and freed. Following the trial, the Arab League called for a total lifting of UN sanctions; all 22 of its members agreed to disregard them. The United States and Britain reiterated their demand that Libyan authorities renounce terrorism, take responsibility for the attack, and pay compensation to the victims' families. Libya has consistently denied government involvement in the attack.

Once a leading advocate of pan-Arab unity, Qadhafi received little Arab support in the wake of Lockerbie and turned instead to promoting a united Africa. In 2001 he worked with Egypt on a peace plan for Sudan and mediated disputes between Sudan and Uganda, and Eritrea and Djibouti. He also sent troops to the Central African Republic (CAR) to support President Ange Felix Patasse in the wake of a failed coup.

While working to improve his image abroad, Qadhafi has become increasingly isolated at home. Ethnic rivalries among senior junta officials have been reported, while corruption, mismanagement, and unemployment have eroded

support for the regime. Disaffected Libyans see little of some $10 billion per year in oil revenue and have yet to reap the benefits of suspended UN sanctions as potential investors from Europe, Asia, and the Middle East stream in seeking oil contracts. Economists stress the need for deregulation and privatization, and Qadhafi has gradually lifted some state controls on the economy. He has also tried to encourage foreign investment in agriculture and tourism as well as oil. In 2001, as part of an ongoing investigation apparently aimed at cleaning up Libya's image, 47 government and bank officials, including the finance minister, were sent to prison for corruption

Early in 2002, Libyan officials held talks with American counterparts in London over removing Libya from the U.S. State Department's list of countries that sponsor terrorism. While a State Department report published in the spring did indicate that Libya was taking steps "to get out of the terrorism business," Libya was not removed from the official list. Whatever progress Libya has made in this area—including its relative cooperation with the United States in the war against terrorism—was offset later in the year when the United States accused Libya of proliferating weapons of mass destruction.

Expanding its image-rehabilitation drive, the government in May offered a $2.7 billion compensation package to the families of the 270 victims of the Pan Am Flight 103 bombing. However, Libya tied dispensation of the money to a removal of all outstanding sanctions against it and its removal from the U.S. State Department's terrorism-sponsors list.

In October Qadhafi sent troops to protect President Patasse's palace while Libyan jets bombed rebel-held areas of Bangui, the CAR's capital. Analysts speculated Qadhafi's military support was either part of his recent efforts at positioning himself as an African power broker or an attempt to leverage his access to the CAR's mineral resources.

Qadhafi's vision of a unified African state came into clearer focus in July with the formation of the African Union (AU), and Libya's inclusion on the steering committee of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Libya's inclusion in an economic recovery plan predicated on transparent governance and respect for human rights generated much controversy abroad; most Libyans suffer rampant corruption, mismanagement, and severe restrictions on their political and civic freedom. The union is largely the product of Qadhafi's enthusiasm, and his promises of generous financial aid to many regional leaders have undoubtedly secured their support.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Libyans cannot change their government democratically. Colonel Mu'ammar al-Qadhafi rules by decree, with almost no accountability or transparency. Libya has no formal constitution; a mixture of Islamic belief, nationalism, and socialist theory in Qadhafi's *Green Book* provides principles and structures of governance, but the document lacks legal status. Libya is officially known as a *jamahiriyah*, or state of the masses, conceived as a system of direct government through popular organs at all levels of society. In reality, an elaborate structure of revolutionary committees and people's committees serves as a tool of repression. Real power rests with Qadhafi and a small group of close associates that appoints civil and military officials at every level. In 2000, Qadhafi dissolved 14 ministries, or General People's Committees, and transferred their power to municipal councils, leaving 5 intact. While some praised this apparent decentralization of power, others speculated that the move was a power grab in response to rifts between Qadhafi and several ministers.

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

The death penalty applies to a number of political offenses and "economic" crimes, including currency speculation and drug- or alcohol-related crimes. Libya actively abducts and kills political dissidents in exile. The public practice of law is illegal.

In August, the government released from jail several prisoners of conscience affiliated with the banned Islamic Liberation Party. In August 2001, officials released 107 political prisoners, including one who had served 31 years in connection with an attempted coup in 1970. Hundreds of other political prisoners reportedly remain in prison. Some have been in jail for more than ten years without charge or trial. The government does not allow prison visits by human rights monitors.

Earlier in the year, Libya was nominated by the Africa group at the United Nations to chair the UN Commission on Human Rights. The nomination

elicited outcry by rights groups, which appealed to the African Union to select a more suitable candidate. After its nomination as chair for the UN Commission on Human Rights, Libya indicated it would invite UN and other human rights monitors to visit Libya. It also declared its intention to review the role of the people's courts.

In February, a Libyan court ruled there was no evidence to indicate that seven foreign medical workers were deliberately infecting children with AIDS. Qadhafi had previously accused one Palestinian and six Bulgarian health workers of carrying out a conspiracy to undermine Libya's national security. The matter was referred to a criminal court.

Free media do not exist in Libya. Publication of opinions contrary to government policy is forbidden. The state owns and controls all media and thus controls reporting of domestic and international issues. Satellite television is widely available; access to Western news channels such as CNN is available, but foreign programming is sometimes censored. International publications are censored and sometimes prohibited. Internet access is available via one service provider, which is owned by Col. Qadhafi's son.

Academic freedom is severely restricted. Elementary, middle, and high schools are subject to intensive political indoctrination. In December, the revolutionary committee of the department of politics and economics at Garyounis University in Benghazi reportedly "purified" the department of so-called subversive elements.

Limited public debate occurs within government bodies, but free expression and the right to privacy are not respected. An extensive and pervasive security apparatus exists, including local "Revolutionary Committees" and "Purification Committees" that monitor individual activities and communications.

Independent political parties and civic associations are illegal; only associations affiliated with the regime are tolerated. Political activity considered treasonous is punishable by death. Public assembly must support and be approved by the government. Instances of public unrest are rare.

About 98 percent of Libyans are Sunni Muslim. Islamic groups whose beliefs and practices differ from the state-approved teaching of Islam are banned. The government controls most mosques and Islamic institutions. According to the U.S. State Department, small communities of Christians worship openly. The largely Berber and Tuareg minorities face discrimination, and Qadhafi

reportedly manipulates, bribes, and incites fighting among tribes in order to maintain power.

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

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

Arbitrary investment laws, restrictions on foreign ownership of property, state domination of the economy, and continuing corruption are likely to hinder growth for years to come.

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

North Korea

Political Rights:	7
Civil Liberties:	7
Status:	Not Free

Overview:

North Korea faced further international economic isolation after it confessed to having a nuclear bomb program and took steps in December 2002 to reactivate a mothballed nuclear facility capable of producing weapons-grade plutonium. The moves touched off fresh fears of a nuclear arms race in East Asia and of conflict on the Korean Peninsula.

Pyongyang's brinkmanship was widely viewed as the Stalinist regime's latest attempt to use its long-range missile and nuclear weapons programs as bargaining chips to gain diplomatic recognition and increased aid from the United States. Washington, though, demanded that Pyongyang unilaterally promise to end its uranium-enrichment program before talks could be held on aid and other issues.

Regardless of North Korean leader Kim Jong-il's motives, the crisis will likely make it harder for his impoverished country to gain the international support that it needs to revive its moribund economy. North Korea began lifting some price controls in 2002, but these and other limited free market reforms will have to be buttressed by foreign aid, advice, and investment in order to have any deep-rooted impact.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea was established in the northern part of the Korean Peninsula in 1948, three years after the United States occupied the south of the peninsula—and Soviet forces, the north—following Japan's defeat in World War II. At independence, North Korea's uncontested ruler was

Kim Il-sung, a former Soviet army officer who claimed to be a guerrilla hero in the struggle against Japanese colonial rule over Korea, which began in 1910. North Korea invaded South Korea in 1950 in an attempt to reunify the peninsula under Communist rule. Drawing in the United States and China, the ensuing three-year conflict killed up to two million people and ended with a ceasefire rather than a peace treaty. Since then, the two Koreas have been on a continuous war footing.

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

With the regime's survival already in doubt, Kim's death in 1994 ushered in even more uncertainty. Under his son and appointed successor, the reclusive Kim Jong-il, Pyongyang has carried out limited economic reforms and made sporadic efforts to improve relations with the United States, Japan, and South Korea in the hopes of gaining increased aid. The moves are widely seen as last-ditch attempts to save the country from economic implosion. Famine killed "an estimated several hundreds of thousands to two million persons" in the 1990s, according to the U.S. State Department's global human rights report for 2001, released in March 2002.

On top of continued food shortages, North Korea is facing an acute health care crisis. Foreign press reports suggest that the state-run health system has all but collapsed, hospitals lack adequate medicine and equipment, and clean water is in short supply because of electricity and chlorine shortages. Some 63 percent of North Korean children are stunted because of chronic undernourishment, according to a 1998 UNICEF survey.

The modest reforms introduced in 2002 could help boost economic output. The government during the year began paying farmers more for their goods and easing price controls on food, housing, and other necessities. It also raised salaries to offset the higher prices. The regime recently has also allowed farmers to set up small markets in the cities, something it has quietly tolerated for decades in the countryside. Prospects appear dim, though, for more far-reaching market reforms, given that the regime fears that loosening its control over the economy will undermine its tight grip on power.

However, the outside help that North Korea needs for the reforms to work seemed further away than ever after Pyongyang touched off the latest crisis over its nuclear bomb program. The crisis began after Washington said in October that Pyongyang had confessed to having a program to produce enriched uranium, a component in nuclear bombs. This violated a 1994 deal under which North Korea pledged to abandon its plutonium nuclear program, including shuttering the plutonium facility at Yongbyon, north of Pyongyang, that it now vows to reopen. In return, the U.S., South Korea, and Japan agreed under the 1994 deal to provide North Korea with two light-water nuclear reactors, which, unlike the Yongbyon facility, cannot be used to produce weapons-grade plutonium. They also agreed to provide fuel oil until the new reactors are built.

After North Korea's October admission, the U.S. and its allies decided to suspend the fuel oil shipments. In December, North Korea upped the ante by throwing out international inspectors monitoring the Yongbyon reactor and began delivering fuel rods to the plant.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

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

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

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

Defectors and refugees have in recent years reported that the regime regularly executes political prisoners, repatriated defectors, military officers accused of spying or other antigovernment offenses, and other suspected dissidents, according to the U.S. State Department report. Ordinary North Koreans reportedly have been executed merely for criticizing the regime, the report added.

North Korean authorities have also executed some North Koreans who were sent back by Chinese officials after they fled across the border, according to the U.S. State Department report. An estimated 300,000 North Koreans have fled to China in recent years to escape food shortages and other hardships.

North Korea runs a network of jails and prison camps that are notorious for their brutal treatment of inmates. The UN Human Rights Committee in 2001 called on Pyongyang to allow international human rights groups into the country to verify the "many allegations of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and conditions and of inadequate medical care in reform institutions, prisons, and prison camps." South Korean media have reported that North Korean officials subject camp inmates to forced labor, beatings, torture, and public executions.

Defectors say that the regime holds some 150,000 to 200,000 political prisoners in maximum security camps, while the South Korean government puts the number of political prisoners at 200,000. The number of ordinary prisoners is not known.

The regime has also forcibly relocated "many tens of thousands" of North Koreans to the countryside from Pyongyang, particularly people considered politically unreliable, according to the U.S. State Department report. Officials also continue to restrict travel into Pyongyang, normally granting permission only for government business. At the same time, the regime has recently made it easier for North Koreans to travel outside of their home villages.

The state spies extensively on the population, using a network of informers and surprise security checks on homes and even entire communities. Pyongyang also assigns to each North Korean a security rating that partly determines access to education, employment, and health services as well as place of residence. By some foreign estimates, nearly half the population is considered either "wavering" or "hostile," with the rest rated "core."

Religious freedom is virtually nonexistent. The government requires all prayer and religious study to be supervised by the state and severely punishes

North Koreans for worshipping independently in underground churches. Officials have killed, beaten, arrested, and detained in prison camps many members of underground churches, foreign religious and human rights groups say.

The regime controls all trade unions and uses them to monitor workers, mobilize them to meet production targets, and provide them with health care, schooling, and welfare services. Strikes, collective bargaining, and other basic organized-labor activities are illegal. Many work sites are dangerous, and the rate of industrial accidents reportedly is high.

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

The regime uses a vague guiding philosophy of *juche*, or "I myself," to justify its dictatorship and rabid efforts to root out dissent. Credited to former president Kim Il-sung, juche emphasizes national self-reliance and stresses that the collective will of the people is embodied in a supreme leader. Opposing the leader, therefore, means opposing the national interest. Taking this to the extreme, officials have punished people for offenses as trivial as accidentally defacing photographs of Kim Il-sung or Kim Jong-il, according to the U.S. State Department report.

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

North Korea's economy remains centrally planned even after the recent market reforms. The government prohibits private property, assigns all jobs, and directs and controls nearly all economic activity, with the exception of crops grown in small private gardens. Even the small farmers' markets now allowed in the cities are tightly run. Prior to the economic collapse that began in the early 1990s, the government provided all North Koreans with free food, housing, clothing, and medical care. Today, it barely provides these essentials.

The economy is hobbled not only by rigid state control but also by creaking infrastructure and an inability to borrow on world markets and from the World Bank and other multilateral agencies because of sanctions and a past foreign debt default. Spending on the country's million-man army and other military programs very likely consumes at least one-quarter of economic output, according to the U.S. State Department report.

Saudi Arabia

Political Rights:	7
Civil Liberties:	7
Status:	Not Free

Overview:

Faced with severe economic difficulties and under greater outside scrutiny following the September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States, the Saudi government in 2002 introduced some changes to its oppressive criminal code, introduced minor labor reforms, and ended the clerical establishment's control of female education. However, there does not appear to be a consensus within the royal family in favor of farther-reaching reforms.

The origins of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia date back to a 1744 pact between the ruler of the small central Arabian town of Diriyah, Muhammad ibn Saud, and a puritanical Islamic revolutionary, Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab. Ibn Saud pledged to purge the land of impurities in return for the latter's endorsement, and together they conquered Riyadh and the central Arabian region of Najd. The Saud family's control of the Najd was later broken by the Ottoman Empire and the rival Rashid family, but it was reestablished after Abdelaziz al-Saud recaptured Riyadh in 1902. Over the next three decades, Abdelaziz expanded his domain to encompass most of the Arabian Peninsula, including the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, through a combination of conquest, diplomacy, and strategic polygamous marriages. In 1932, he officially declared the establishment of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Since the death of Abdelaziz in 1953, Saudi kings have been chosen from among his 44 sons on the basis of seniority and consensus within the royal family. King Fahd has held the throne since 1982, though he ceded political authority to Crown Prince Abdullah in 1996 after suffering a stroke.

Throughout the 60-year history of Saudi Arabia, the royal family has ruled without any institutional checks on its authority. Oil revenue facilitated an informal social contract; in return for material prosperity and the provision of free health care, education, and other social services, the population accepted the denial of basic political and civil liberties. The infusion of petrodollars into the country also helped perpetuate enforcement of the fundamentalist Wahhabi interpretation of Islamic law. The government could afford to maintain an educational system centered around religious indoctrination because the country's material prosperity did not require cultivating an indigenous skilled labor force. Women could be denied the right to drive because most families could afford to import chauffeurs.

Over the last two decades, however, declining oil prices, rampant corruption within the royal family, and gross economic mismanagement have caused a steep decline in the living standards of most Saudis. Per capita income, more than $28,000 in the early 1980s, has today dropped to below $8,000. Unemployment is now estimated at up to 35 percent and is expected to rise in coming years. Growing opposition to the monarchy by religious and liberal dissidents was brutally crushed in the 1990s.

Crown Prince Abdullah has reportedly lobbied within the royal family for relatively sweeping economic and social reforms in recent years (such as permitting employed women over 40 to drive), but few senior princes have been willing to sanction major changes. While other oil-rich states making the transition to market-oriented economies have typically introduced limited political reforms in order to avoid sparking unrest, powerful members of the royal family remain firmly opposed to establishing even powerless representative institutions. Reform of the legal system and banking sector—the two most important steps needed to attract international investment and gain membership in the World Trade Organization—has been stalled because greater transparency would undermine royal patronage networks. Most other economic reforms have been insufficient in meeting investors' concerns. Changes in the educational system needed to prepare Saudi students for the job market have been blocked by princes aligned with the religious establishment.

The biggest obstacle to attracting international investment in the years ahead is likely to be uncertainty about political transition in Saudi Arabia. Abdullah and Sultan, who is second in line for the throne, are both in their seventies, while

even the youngest remaining sons of Abdelaziz are in their sixties. As a result, Saudi Arabia is set to experience a rapid series of royal successions in the coming years unless a mechanism for passing power to the next generation of princes can be agreed upon. Speculation that Abdullah will break with tradition after Fahd's death and designate one of his own sons as heir has fueled fears that Sultan may try to seize the throne by force.

Unable to attack decisively the underlying causes of the country's economic malaise, Abdullah has sought to remedy its most politically dangerous symptom—unemployment. In 2002, the government enacted a set of "Saudization" laws that require companies with 20 or more employees to ensure that Saudi citizens constitute at least 30 percent of their workforce (a quota that will gradually increase in future years). In addition to reducing unemployment, the measures should alleviate the government's perennial budget deficits by reducing the estimated $16 billion sent abroad each year by foreign workers in the kingdom. In conjunction with the Saudization initiatives, some reforms were made in the area of workers' rights.

In March 2002, eleven Saudi girls died when a fire broke out at their school and the *mutawwa'in*—baton-wielding religious police—blocked the escape of those who had discarded their veils amid the commotion. The tragedy sparked widespread media criticism of the cleric-controlled General Presidency for Girls Education (GPGE), prompting the government to end the religious establishment's direct control over the education of girls.

Under pressure from the United States to crack down on al-Qaeda activities in the kingdom, the government detained scores of suspects during the year. As of November, around 100 people remained in custody for what the Interior Ministry called "holy war activities." Although a new criminal procedure code went into effect in May, there was little evidence that it has been observed in practice.

Attacks against Westerners residing in the kingdom continued in 2002. In June, a British bank employee was killed by a bomb placed under his car and an American couple found a similar device beneath their car. In September, a German national was killed by a car bomb. As with most previous cases of attacks on Westerners in recent years, the government blamed the killings on turf wars between Western expatriates engaged in the illegal alcohol trade.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Saudis cannot change their government democratically. The king rules by decree in accordance with the strict Wahhabi interpretation of Sharia (Islamic law) and with the consensus of senior princes and religious officials. There are no elections at any level and political parties are illegal.

Saudi citizens enjoy little effective protection from arbitrary arrest, prolonged pretrial detention, and torture at the hands of security forces. Although the new criminal code prohibits torture, protects the right of suspects to obtain legal council, and limits administrative detention to five days, there is little evidence that these statutes have been observed in practice. In July 2002, the son of jailed dissident Said bin Zubeir was taken into custody as he tried to board a plane to Qatar for an interview on Al-Jazeera satellite television and remains incarcerated, apparently without charge. The younger brother of Virginia-based activist Ali al-Ahmed has been held since September 2001. A Saudi prisoner released in 2002 told Human Rights Watch that he was forced to sign a statement promising not to speak about his experience in police custody.

The judiciary is subject to the influence of the royal family and its associates. The king has broad powers to appoint or dismiss judges, who are generally selected on the basis of their strict adherence to religious principles. Trials are routinely held in secret, and convictions are commonly founded upon little more than signed or videotaped confessions extracted under torture. The legal system, based on Sharia, allows for corporal punishment and death by beheading, both of which are widely practiced. In recent years, around 100 people have been executed annually. In mid-2002, seven foreigners accused of carrying out a series of car bombings were tried and convicted by a secret court on the basis of allegedly coerced confessions.

Freedom of expression is severely restricted by prohibitions on criticism of the government, Islam, and the ruling family. The government owns all domestic broadcast media, closely monitors privately owned (but publicly subsidized) print media, has the authority to remove all editors in chief, routinely censors domestic and foreign publications, and restricts the entry of foreign journalists into the kingdom. Private ownership of satellite dishes is illegal, but is widespread. Internet access is filtered to block Web sites deemed offensive to Islam or a threat to state security.

In March 2002, the Interior Ministry dismissed the editor of the daily *Al-Medina* after the newspaper published a poem about corrupt judges.

The author of the poem, Abdel Mohsen Mosallam, was detained without charge for 18 days, banned from publishing in Saudi newspapers, and prohibited from leaving the country.

Public demonstrations pertaining to political issues are completely prohibited. Government permission is required to form professional groups and associations, which must be nonpolitical. In April 2002, the authorities dispersed an anti-Israeli demonstration in Skaka and arrested dozens of demonstrators.

Trade unions, collective bargaining, and strikes are prohibited. Foreign workers, who constitute about 60 percent of the kingdom's workforce, are not protected under labor law, and courts generally do not enforce the few legal protections provided to them. Foreign nationals working as domestic servants are frequently abused and often denied legitimate wages, benefits, or compensation. Some steps were taken in 2002 to advance workers' rights. In April, the government issued a new law permitting Saudi workers to establish "labor committees" in companies with 100 or more employees, though the committees are empowered only to issue recommendations. The first such committee was established by Saudi employees of British Aerospace in July. In August, the government announced a multi-stage plan that would require Saudi employers to provide foreign nationals with health insurance by September 2004.

Freedom of religion in Saudi Arabia is virtually nonexistent for those who do not adhere to the Wahhabi interpretation of Sunni Islam. Public expression of non-Islamic religious beliefs is illegal, though private worship is permitted. Shiite Muslims, who constitute 7 to 10 percent of the population, face numerous restrictions on the public practice of their religion and encounter discrimination in all areas of public sector employment. The testimony of Shiite citizens is frequently discounted in the courts. Shiite religious seminaries are not permitted and numerous Shiite clerics have been arrested and sentenced to long prison terms. In January 2002, an Ismaili Shiite tribal leader was arrested six days after he was quoted by the *Wall Street Journal* as saying that "the government is making a mistake against us" and subsequently sentenced to seven years in prison. Two other Ismaili tribal leaders were detained in February.

Women in Saudi Arabia are second-class citizens. In most legal respects, an unmarried adult woman is the ward of her father, a married woman is the ward of her husband, and a widowed woman is the ward of her sons. Women cannot

get an identity card, obtain an exit visa, or be admitted to a hospital without the permission of this guardian. Women are segregated from men in public—barred from most workplaces, taught in separate schools, restricted to "family sections" of restaurants and female-only stores, prohibited from driving, unable to travel without a male relative, and required outside the home to wear the *abaya*, a black garment covering the body and most of the face. The religious police (*mutawwa'in*) harass women who violate these social codes. The penalty for female adultery is death by stoning. The testimony of a woman is treated as inferior to that of a man in Saudi courts. Laws governing marriage, divorce, and inheritance discriminate against females. Although women make up half the student population, they may not study engineering, law, or journalism. They account for only about 5 percent of the workforce.

Somalia

Political Rights:	6
Civil Liberties:	7
Status:	Not Free

Overview:

Somalia's Transitional National Government (TNG) and more than 20 rival groups signed a ceasefire in October 2002 in Kenya as a first step toward establishing a federal system of government. However, more than a dozen similar peace agreements have failed and the latest received no support from either a faction in central Somalia, or from the self-declared republic of Somaliland in the north. Somalia in 2002 remained wracked by violence and lack of security. Somalia's relations with neighboring Ethiopia were strained further in 2002 following persistent reports that Ethiopia was backing Somali factions and making military incursions into Somali territory. Ethiopia denied the claims and countered that Somalia was used as a rear base for terrorist attacks in the Kenyan port city of Mombassa in November 2002.

Somalia, a Horn of Africa nation, gained independence in July 1960 with the union of British Somaliland and territories to the south that had been an Italian colony. Other ethnic Somali-inhabited lands are now part of Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Kenya. General Siad Barre seized power in 1969 and increasingly employed divisive clan politics to maintain power. Civil war, starvation, banditry, brutality, and natural disasters ranging from drought to flood to famine have wracked Somalia since the struggle to topple Barre began in the late 1980s. When Barre was deposed in January 1991, power was claimed and contested by heavily armed guerrilla movements and militias based on traditional ethnic and clan loyalties.

Extensive television coverage of famine and civil strife that took approximately 300,000 lives in 1991 and 1992 prompted a U.S.-led international intervention. The armed humanitarian mission in late 1992 quelled clan combat long enough to stop the famine, but ended in urban guerrilla warfare against Somali militias. The last international forces withdrew in March 1995 after the casualty count reached the thousands. Approximately 100 peacekeepers, including 18 U.S. soldiers, were killed. The $4 billion UN intervention effort had little lasting impact.

The Conference for National Peace and Reconciliation in Somalia adopted a charter in 2000 for a three-year transition and selected a 245-member transitional assembly, which functions as an interim parliament. Minority groups are included, and 25 of the members are women. The breakaway regions of Somaliland and Puntland do not recognize the TNG, nor do several faction leaders. A government security force in Mogadishu has been cobbled together from members of the former administration's military, the police, and militias. U.S. military reconnaissance flights and other surveillance activities were stepped up in Somalia in 2001 as the United States sought to prevent the country from becoming a new base for al-Qaeda. The highest-ranking U.S. delegation in several years visited Somalia in 2002 to discuss the war on terrorism with the TNG and faction leaders. U.S. officials said they believed al-Qaeda had links in Somalia.

Somalia is a poor country where most people survive as pastoralists or subsistence farmers. The country's main exports are livestock and charcoal. The TNG and several faction leaders in November 2002 called on the international community to unfreeze the assets of Somalia's Al-Barakaat telecommunications and money-transfer company to help the country's battered economy. Al-Barakaat was Somalia's largest employer, and hundreds of thousands of Somalis depended on it to receive money transfers from abroad. U.S. authorities froze the assets of Al-Barakaat in 2001 on suspicion that its owners were aiding and abetting terrorism, a charge the owners deny.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

The elections in 2000 marked the first time Somalis have had an opportunity to choose their government on a somewhat national basis since 1969. Some 3,000 representatives of civic and religious organizations, women's groups, and clans came together as the Inter-Governmental Authority for Development,

following Djibouti-hosted peace talks, to elect a parliament in August 2000. The 245 members of the Transitional National Assembly elected the president. More than 20 candidates contested the first round of voting for the presidency. The Inter-Governmental Authority chose the lawyers who drafted the country's new charter.

Somalia's new charter provides for an independent judiciary, although a formal judicial system has ceased to exist. Islamic courts operating in Mogadishu have been effective in bringing a semblance of law and order to the city. Efforts at judicial reform are proceeding slowly. The Islamic courts in Mogadishu are gradually coming under the control of the transitional government. Most of the courts are aligned with various subclans. Prison conditions are harsh in some areas, but improvements are underway.

Human rights abuses, including extrajudicial killings, torture, beatings, and arbitrary detention by Somalia's various armed factions, remain a problem. Many violations are linked to banditry. Several international aid organizations, women's groups, and local human rights groups operate in the country. Kidnapping, however, is a problem. Two UN workers were kidnapped in 2002 and later released. A Swiss aid worker was killed.

Somalia's charter provides for press freedom. Independent radio and television stations have proliferated. Most of the independent newspapers or newsletters that circulate in Mogadishu are linked to one faction or another. Although journalists face harassment, most receive the protection of the clan behind their publication. The transitional government launched its first radio station, Radio Mogadishu, in 2001. There are three private radio stations and two run by factions.

Somaliland has exercised de facto independence from Somalia since May 1991. A clan conference led to a peace accord among its clan factions in 1997, establishing a presidency and bicameral parliament with proportional clan representation. Somaliland is far more cohesive than the rest of the country, although reports of some human rights abuses persist. Somaliland has sought international recognition as the Republic of Somaliland since 1991. A referendum on independence and a new constitution were approved in May 2001, opening the way for a multiparty system. Fear of potential instability grew in 2002 after leader Mohamed Ibrahim Egal died following surgery. Somaliland's vice president was sworn in as president, but there were concerns that a power struggle would emerge.

Puntland established a regional government in 1998, with a presidency and a single-chamber quasi legislature known as the Council of Elders. Political parties are banned. The traditional elders chose Abdullahi Yusuf as the region's first president for a three-year term. After Jama Ali Jama was elected to replace him in 2001, Abdullahi Yusuf refused to relinquish power, claiming he was fighting terrorism. He seized power in 2002, reportedly with the help of Ethiopian forces.

Although more than 80 percent of Somalis share a common ethnic heritage, religion, and nomadic-influenced culture, discrimination is widespread. Clans exclude one another from participation in social and political life. Minority clans are harassed, intimidated, and abused by armed gunmen.

Somalia is an Islamic state, and religious freedom is not guaranteed. The Sunni majority often view non-Sunni Muslims with suspicion. Members of the small Christian community face societal harassment if they proclaim their religion.

Women's groups were instrumental in galvanizing support for Somalia's peace process. As a result of their participation, women occupy at least 30 seats in parliament. The country's new charter prohibits sexual discrimination, but women experience such discrimination intensely under customary practices and variants of Sharia (Islamic law). Infibulation, the most severe form of female genital mutilation, is routine. UN agencies and nongovernmental organizations are working to raise awareness about the health dangers of the practice. Various armed factions have recruited children into their militias.

The charter provides workers with the right to form unions, but civil war and factional fighting led to the dissolution of the single labor confederation, the government-controlled General Federation of Somali Trade Unions. Wages are established largely by ad hoc bartering and the influence of clan affiliation.

Sudan

Political Rights:	7
Civil Liberties:	7
Status:	Not Free

Overview:

While there was some progress—including breakthrough agreements—on ending Sudan's long-running civil war, fighting continued in 2002 between the government and rebel groups in the country's south. An international commission confirmed the practice of slavery and religious persecution in Sudan. The United States passed the Sudan Peace Act, officially recognizing Sudan as guilty of genocide. The Sudanese government banned relief and aid organizations access to some war-affected areas of the country. While the government cooperated in the global war against terrorism, it also established camps to train militants for attacks against Israel.

The Sudanese civil war moved into its 20th year, but substantive peace talks and a limited ceasefire agreement provided some hope for a final resolution of the conflict. Peace initiatives have taken on greater urgency since the 1999 inauguration of a Sudanese oil pipeline, which now finances Khartoum's war efforts. The government has intensified fighting around oil-rich civilian areas in an apparent effort to drive out or exterminate their inhabitants.

Africa's largest country has been embroiled in civil wars for 36 of its 46 years as an independent state. It achieved independence in 1956 after nearly 80 years of British rule. The Anyanya movement, representing mainly Christian and animist black Africans in southern Sudan, battled Arab Muslim government forces from 1956 to 1972. The south gained extensive autonomy under a 1972 accord, and for the next decade, an uneasy peace prevailed. In 1983, General Jafar Numeiri, who had toppled an elected government in 1969,

restricted southern autonomy and imposed Sharia (Islamic law). Opposition led again to civil war, and Numeiri was overthrown in 1985. Civilian rule was restored in 1986 with an election that resulted in a government led by Sadiq al-Mahdi of the moderate Islamic Ummah Party, but war continued. Lieutenant General Omar al-Bashir ousted al-Mahdi in a 1989 coup, and the latter spent seven years in prison or under house arrest before fleeing to Eritrea. Until 1999, al-Bashir ruled through a military-civilian regime backed by senior Muslim clerics including Hassan al-Turabi, who wielded considerable power as the ruling National Congress (NC) party leader and speaker of the 400-member National Assembly.

Tensions between al-Bashir and al-Turabi climaxed in December 1999; on the eve of a parliamentary vote on a plan by al-Turabi to curb presidential powers, al-Bashir dissolved parliament and declared a state of emergency. He introduced a law allowing the formation of political parties, fired al-Turabi as NC head, replaced the cabinet with his own supporters, and held deeply flawed presidential and parliamentary elections in December 2000, which the NC won overwhelmingly. Al-Turabi formed his own party, the Popular National Congress (PNC), in June 2000, but was prohibited from participating in politics. In January 2001, the Ummah Party refused to join al-Bashir's new government despite the president's invitation, declaring that it refused to support totalitarianism.

Al-Turabi and some 20 of his supporters were arrested in February 2001 after he called for a national uprising against the government and signed a memorandum of understanding in Geneva with the southern-based, rebel Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA). Al-Turabi and four aides were charged with conspiracy to overthrow the government, and al-Turabi was placed under house arrest in May. In September 2002, he was moved to a high-security prison.

The ongoing civil war broadly pits government forces and government-backed, northern Arab Muslims against southern-based, black African animists and Christians. The government also sponsors the Popular Defense Force, a volunteer militant Islamic militia that fights against southern rebels. Some pro-democracy northerners, however, have allied themselves with the SPLA-led southern rebels to form the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), while northern rebels of the Sudan Allied Forces have staged attacks in northeastern Sudan. Some southern groups have signed peace pacts with the government, and there is fighting among rival southern militias. A convoluted

mix of historical, religious, ethnic, and cultural tensions makes peace elusive, while competition for economic resources fuels the conflict. Past ceasefire attempts have failed, with Khartoum insisting on an unconditional ceasefire, and the SPLA demanding the establishment of a secular constitution first.

The government regularly bombs civilian as well as military targets. International humanitarian relief efforts are hampered by ceasefire violations and are sometimes deliberately targeted by parties to the conflict. The government has denied access by humanitarian relief workers to rebel-held areas or where large concentrations of internal refugees have gathered.

A peace plan proposed in December 2001 by former U.S. senator John Danforth called for "one country, two systems" in Sudan, with an Islamic government in the north and a secular system in the south.

The international community stepped up its mediation efforts in the civil war in 2002, in part to prevent Sudan from becoming a breeding ground for terror, much as Afghanistan had become prior to September 11, 2001. Peace talks under the auspices of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) focused on southern self-determination, borders, and the application of Sharia in the south.

In January, U.S.-mediated peace talks between the government and rebels took place in Switzerland, leading to a breakthrough agreement affecting the Nuba mountain region, a 30,000-square-mile area in the heart of Sudan. The black Africans native to the Nuba region numbered more than one million in 1985, and have been reduced to some 300,000 today. The government frequently bombed the region and enforced blockades preventing food, fuel, clothing, and medicine from entering. The agreement allowed for humanitarian relief access, which was nonetheless blocked later in the year.

Fighting continued elsewhere throughout the year. While the government agreed to extend the Nuba agreement, and participated in further talks in Machakos, Kenya, rebels reported government-sponsored attacks in several towns and villages. In June, four civilians were reportedly killed during a bombing raid in the town of Malual-Kan as they left a Medecins Sans Frontieres compound to walk to church. The same month, the International Crisis Group (ICG) issued a major report that claimed Khartoum was intensifying its drive southward. The government's capture of oil fields has helped its war effort, enabling it to buy several Russian MiG fighter jets used to suppress rebels and bomb civilian areas.

Amid reports of further assaults on villages and fleeing refugees, the government and the SPLA agreed in July on a framework for future talks. The agreement allowed for a referendum in six years for southern self-determination and the preservation of Islamic law in the north. However, a general ceasefire was not reached.

Following the capture by the SPLA of several southern towns, the government suspended the Kenya talks, prompting a further SPLA offensive and a renewed demand from Khartoum for an immediate ceasefire as a precondition for renewed talks. The government continued to bomb southern villages with MiG fighters and helicopter gunships.

In October, the United States passed the landmark Sudan Peace Act, which recognized Sudan as guilty of genocide. The act authorized direct aid to the south to prepare the population for peace and democratic governance. It also specified sanctions against Khartoum if Sudan is deemed to be ham pering humanitarian efforts or not to be negotiating in good faith. In the same month, the Canadian oil company Talisman quit drilling operations in Sudan after enduring years of pressure from human rights organizations. It also sold off its 25 percent stake in Sudan's Greater Nile Petroleum Operating Company.

In November, government and SPLA representatives in Machakos signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on power sharing. The MOU also extended an earlier understanding on a general ceasefire and unrestricted aid access. Reflecting on the agreement, the ICG said both sides were "closer than they have ever been to ending the twenty-year civil war."

Al-Bashir has begun to lift Sudan out of its international isolation by sidelining al-Turabi, who was seen as the force behind Sudan's efforts to export Islamic extremism. Although new vice president Ali Osman Mohammed Taha, who replaced al-Turabi as Islamic ideologue, maintains a firm commitment to Sudan as an Islamic state and to the government's self-proclaimed jihad against non-Muslims, al-Bashir has managed to repair relations with several states, including Iran, Eritrea, Saudi Arabia, and even the United States. Following the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States, al-Bashir issued a statement rejecting violence and offered to cooperate on combating terrorism. In March, Sudanese security reportedly arrested a top operative of Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda terrorist organization. The Saudi-born bin Laden resided in Sudan for five years in the 1990s before being expelled by the government.

Prior cooperation with the United States in the global war on terrorism may have contributed to the American decision in September 2001 to abstain from a UN Security Council vote that cleared the way for the lifting of UN sanctions imposed on Sudan in 1996 for its alleged role in an assassination attempt against Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak. Despite its seeming cooperation, the Sudanese military announced in April that it had established training camps throughout the country to prepare volunteers for a jihad—holy war—against Israel. The United States maintains its own sanctions, citing human rights abuses and Sudan's apparent support for terrorism.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Sudanese cannot change their government democratically. December 2000 presidential and parliamentary elections cannot credibly be said to have reflected the will of the people. The major opposition parties, which are believed to have the support of most Sudanese, boycotted in protest of what they called an attempt by a totalitarian regime to impart the appearance of fairness. The EU declined an invitation to monitor the polls to avoid bestowing legitimacy on the outcome. Omar al-Bashir, running against former president Jafar Numeiri and three relative unknowns, won 86 percent of the vote. NC candidates stood uncontested for nearly a third of parliamentary seats, and more than 100 seats are reserved for presidential appointees. Voting did not take place in some 17 rebel-held constituencies, and government claims of 66 percent voter turnout in some states were denounced as fictitious.

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

In May, the International Eminent Persons Group, a fact-finding mission composed of humanitarian relief workers, human rights lawyers, academics, and former European and American diplomats, confirmed the existence of slavery in Sudan. After conducting extensive research in the country, the group reported a range of human rights abuses, including what under international law is considered slavery. The report also addressed abductions and forced servitude under the SPLA's authority.

While the government has acknowledged forced servitude—especially of black animists and Christians—as a "problem," it continued to use murahallen (tribal militias), to pillage Dinka villages and abduct women and children.

Although there has been no organized effort to compile casualty statistics in southern Sudan since 1994, the total number of people killed by war, famine, and disease is believed to exceed two million. More than four million people are internally displaced, and that number is growing as the government fights to clear black Africans from oil fields or potential oil drilling sites.

Distribution of food and medical relief is hampered by fighting and by the government's deliberate blockage of aid shipments. In June, the UN World Food Program complained that a government ban on relief access to the oil-rich region of western Upper Nile in southern Sudan was threatening 350,000 civilians, many of whom had been displaced by fighting. The ban took place during the dry season, exacerbating civilian vulnerability.

Despite the ceasefire reached in the Nuba Mountains region, and a government pledge to allow unfettered humanitarian access to the area, aid agencies still encountered difficulty delivering food, particularly to SPLA-controlled areas. Prior to the ceasefire, the Sudanese military carried out a policy of "depopulating" the Nuba Mountains. In September, the government suspended all relief flights to areas of active fighting in the south.

The judiciary is not independent. The chief justice of the Supreme Court, who presides over the entire judiciary, is government-appointed. Regular courts provide some due process safeguards, but special security and military courts, used to punish political opponents of the government, do not. Criminal law is based on Sharia and provides for flogging, amputation, crucifixion, and execution. Ten southern, predominantly non-Muslim states are officially exempt from Sharia, although criminal law allows for its application in the future if the state assemblies choose to implement it. Arbitrary arrest, detention, and torture are widespread, and security forces act with impunity. Prison conditions do not meet international standards.

In May, the World Organization Against Torture reported that 12 prisoners charged with robbery were hanged in Darfour in western Sudan after being sentenced by a Special Court. While the court deals with criminal matters, it is composed of two military judges and one civilian judge. Lawyers were forbidden from appearing before the court. Other prisoners were reportedly awaiting execution.

Press freedom has improved since the government eased restrictions in 1997, but journalists practice self-censorship to avoid harassment, arrest, and closure of their publications. There are reportedly nine daily newspapers and a wide variety of Arabic- and English-language publications. All of these are subject to censorship. Penalties apply to journalists who allegedly harm the nation or economy or violate national security. A 1999 law imposes penalties for "professional errors."

In February, the editor of the English-language daily *Khartoum Monitor* was fined for publishing an article implicating the government in slavery. In July, security officials seized issues of the Arabic daily *Al-Horreya* (Freedom), preventing their publication. No explanation was given for the seizure. In September, authorities seized the issues of three papers and arrested one journalist for criticizing the government's withdrawal from peace talks in Kenya. The same month, a Sudanese Sharia court found U.S.-based, Sudanese author Kola Boof guilty of blasphemy. Boof was sentenced to death by beheading should she return to Sudan. Boof wrote a book critical of Sudan's treatment of black women.

Emergency law severely restricts freedom of assembly and association. In February, the College of Technological Science in Khartoum reportedly suspended several students for engaging in human rights activities, including organizing symposiums on women's rights and attending a conference on democracy. In November, the government closed the University of Khartoum indefinitely after students protested attacks on dormitories by pro-government student militias. Several students were injured and arrested. The clashes erupted following student celebrations of the 38th anniversary of protests against Sudan's first military government and against the banning of the University Students Union four years ago, when opposition groups were poised to win campus elections.

Islam is the state religion, and the constitution claims Sharia as the source of its legislation. At least 75 percent of Sudanese are Muslim, though most southern Sudanese adhere to traditional indigenous beliefs or Christianity. The overwhelming majority of those displaced or killed by war and famine in Sudan have been non-Muslims, and many starve because of a policy under which food is withheld pending conversion to Islam. Officials have described their campaign against non-Muslims as a holy war. Under the 1994 Societies Registration Act, religious groups must register in order to gather legally. Registration is reportedly difficult to obtain. The government denies permission

to build churches and destroys Christian schools, centers, and churches. Roman Catholic priests face random detention and interrogation by police.

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

There are no independent trade unions. The Sudan Workers Trade Unions Federation is the main labor organization, with about 800,000 members. Local union elections are rigged to ensure the election of government-approved candidates. A lack of labor legislation limits the freedom of workers to organize or bargain collectively.

Syria

Political Rights:	7
Civil Liberties:	7
Status:	Not Free

Overview:

Political and civil liberties in Syria continued to deteriorate in 2002, under the weight of arrests and trials of leading reform advocates. Whether this reversal signifies President Bashar Assad's loss of authority vis-à-vis the regime's "old guard" or the consolidation of his power is the subject of intense debate by outside observers, but it is clear that sweeping reform of the repressive and corrupt political system built by his father is not on the horizon.

Located at the heart of the Fertile Crescent, the Syrian capital of Damascus is the oldest continuously inhabited city in the world and once controlled a vast empire extending from Europe to India. The modern state of Syria is a comparatively recent entity, established by the French after World War I and formally granted independence in 1946. The pan-Arab Baath Party, which seized control of Syria 40 years ago, has long sought to extend its writ beyond Syrian borders.

For all its pan-Arab pretensions, however, the Syrian government has been dominated by Alawites, adherents of an offshoot sect of Islam who constitute just 12 percent of the population, since a 1970 coup brought Gen. Hafez Assad to power. For the next 30 years, the Assad regime managed to maintain control of the majority Sunni Muslim population only by brutally suppressing all dissent. In 1982, government forces stormed the northern town of Hama to crush a rebellion by the Muslim Brotherhood and killed up to 20,000 insurgents and civilians in a matter of days.

In 2000, Assad's son and successor, Bashar, inherited control of a country with one of the most stagnant economies and highest rates of population growth in the region, with skyrocketing unemployment estimated at more than 20 percent. In his inaugural speech, the young Syrian leader pledged to eliminate government corruption, revitalize the economy, and establish a "democracy specific to Syria, which takes its roots from its history, and respects its society." After his ascension, Assad permitted a loose network of public figures from all sectors of civil society to organize private gatherings to discuss the country's social, economic, and political problems. Under the guise of conducting an anticorruption campaign, the new president sidelined potential rivals within the regime.

In September, 99 liberal Syrian intellectuals released a statement calling on the government to end the state of emergency imposed by the Baath Party in 1963 and to respect public freedoms. Assad initially responded by releasing more than 600 political prisoners, closing the notorious Mazzeh prison, allowing scores of exiled dissidents to return home, reinstating dissidents who had been fired from state-run media outlets and universities, and instructing the state-run media to give voice to reformers. To the astonishment of outside observers, the government-run daily *Al-Thawra* even published an op-ed piece by a prominent economist, Aref Dalilah, stating that one-party rule is "no longer effective." By the end of 2000, a parliamentary opposition bloc had begun to emerge under the leadership of Riad Seif, a maverick member of parliament who repeatedly called for an end to "political and economic monopolies" and restrictions on civil liberties from the floor of Syria's rubber-stamp People's Assembly.

The "Damascus Spring" reached its zenith in January 2001 with the release of a declaration, signed by more than 1,000 intellectuals, calling for comprehensive political reforms, the formation of two independent political parties (without official approval), and the establishment of the country's first privately owned newspaper. The following month, however, the regime abruptly ended its toleration of independent discussion forums and launched an escalating campaign of threats, intimidation, and harassment against the reform movement. By the end of the year, 10 leading reformists who had refused to abide by newly imposed restrictions on public freedoms were behind bars. In 2002, all of the so-called Damascus Ten were sentenced to prison terms, while the security agencies arrested more than a dozen prominent journalists, human rights activists, and political dissidents during the year.

The regime's assault on political and civil liberties elicited little criticism from Western governments. In part, this was in return for Assad's cooperation in the war against al-Qaeda, his support for a key UN Security Council Resolution against Iraq in November, and the reduction in cross-border attacks into Israel by Syrian-backed guerrillas in south Lebanon during the latter half of 2002. It also reflected an assumption by Western observers that the crackdown stemmed from a weakening of Assad's position vis-à-vis the Old Guard and that outside pressure would benefit hard-liners. However, the crackdown has coincided with major administrative changes in the government and security forces that consolidate Assad's authority. Some dissidents suggest that the president exploited the Damascus Spring to outmaneuver his rivals and then ended it once he had gained full control of the regime.

Economic reform has also fallen by the wayside; dozens of economic reform laws remain unimplemented or have been put into effect half-heartedly, and hopes for a massive influx of foreign investment have faded. The bursting of the Zaytun dam north of Hama in June, which flooded some 1,200 hectares of arable land and killed 20 people, highlighted both the decay of the once-impressive infrastructure and the scope of bureaucratic mismanagement in Syria. The prospect of peace with Israel, which would free up funds for public sector investment and an expansion of social services, remains as distant as ever.

While regional tensions have bought the regime some forbearance domestically, there have been signs of disaffection boiling beneath the surface. In December, 150 Kurdish activists assembled outside the Syrian parliament and staged the country's largest antigovernment protest since the early 1980s. The organizers of the rally were promptly arrested.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

The regime of Bashar Assad wields absolute authority in Syria. Under the 1973 constitution, the president is nominated by the ruling Baath Party and approved by a popular referendum. In practice, these referendums are orchestrated by the regime (neither the late Hafez Assad nor his son Bashar ever won by less than a 99 percent margin), as are elections to the 250-member People's Assembly, which holds little independent legislative power. Independent political parties are illegal.

The Emergency Law overrides provisions of the Penal Code that prohibit arbitrary arrest and detention, giving the security agencies virtually unlimited

authority to arrest suspects and hold them incommunicado for prolonged periods without charge. Many of the several hundred remaining political prisoners in Syria have never been tried for any offense. The security agencies, which operate independently of the judiciary, routinely extract confessions by torturing suspects and detaining members of their families. Government surveillance of dissidents is widespread.

At least four dissidents who returned from exile in 2002 were arrested shortly after their arrival. Although two were later released, one is still held incommunicado and another, Mohammed Hasan Nassar, died in custody.

While regular criminal and civil courts operate with some independence and generally safeguard defendants' rights, most politically sensitive cases are tried under two exceptional courts established under emergency law: the Supreme State Security Court (SSSC) and the Economic Security Court (ESC). Both courts deny or limit the defendant's right to appeal, limit access to legal counsel, try most cases behind closed doors, and admit as evidence confessions obtained through torture. According to the U.S. State Department, the SSSC has never ordered a medical examination of a defendant who claimed to have been tortured.

In 2002, two members of parliament, Riad Seif and Maamoun al-Homsi, were sentenced by a criminal court to 5 years in prison, and eight other leading dissidents were sentenced by the SSSC to prison terms ranging from 2 to 10 years (one was later pardoned). Several former government officials, including a former transport minister, were convicted on corruption charges and sentenced by the ESC to prison terms.

Freedom of expression is heavily restricted. The government is allowed considerable discretion in punishing those who express dissent, by vaguely worded articles of the Penal Code and Emergency Law, such as those prohibiting the publication of information that opposes "the goals of the revolution," incites sectarianism, or "prevents authorities from executing their responsibilities." The broadcast media are entirely state-owned. While there are some privately owned newspapers and magazines, a new press law enacted in September 2001 permits the government to arbitrarily deny or revoke publishing licenses for reasons "related to the public interest," and compels privately owned print media outlets to submit all material to government censors on the day of publication. Syrians are permitted to access the Internet only through state-run servers, which block access to a wide range of Web sites. Satellite dishes are illegal, but generally tolerated.

The journalist Aziza Sbayni and her sister, Shirine, were arrested in May 2002 and continue to be held incommunicado awaiting trial before the SSSC on espionage charges. In October, the authorities arrested two journalists who had written articles critical of the government in Lebanese newspapers, Yahia al-Aous and Hayssam Kutaish, along with the latter's brother, Muhammad, and charged them with spying for Israel. In December, police arrested the Damascus bureau chief of the London-based Arabic daily *Al-Hayat*, Ibrahim Humaydi, on charges of "publishing false information." In November, Assad fired the top two officials in charge of state-run broadcast media after they had neglected to edit out portions of a program in which U.S. Ambassador Theodore Kattouf said that Syrian support for terrorist groups hindered its relations with the United States. At least three foreign-media correspondents were expelled during the year.

Freedom of assembly is largely nonexistent. While citizens can ostensibly hold demonstrations with prior permission from the Interior Ministry, in practice only the government, the Baath Party, or groups linked to them organize demonstrations. Freedom of association is restricted. All nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) must register with the government, which generally denies registration to reformist groups. In September 2002, the regime indicted four members of the Syrian Human Rights Association (Association des droits de l'homme en Syrie, or ADHS) for illegally establishing a human rights organization, for distributing an illegal publication (the ADHS magazine, *Tayyara*), and on other charges.

All unions must belong to the General Federation of Trade Unions (GFTU). Although ostensibly independent, the GFTU is headed by a member of the ruling Baath Party and is used by the government to control all aspects of union activity in Syria. Although strikes are legal (except in the agricultural sector), they rarely occur.

There is no state religion in Syria, though the constitution requires that the president be a Muslim, and freedom of worship is generally respected. The Alawite minority dominates the officer corps of the military and security forces. Since the eruption of an Islamist rebellion in the late 1970s, the government has tightly monitored mosques and controlled the appointment of Muslim clergy.

The Kurdish minority in Syria faces cultural and linguistic restrictions, and suspected Kurdish activists are routinely dismissed from schools and jobs. Some 200,000 Syrian Kurds are stateless and unable to obtain passports,

identity cards, or birth certificates, which in turn prevents them from owning land, obtaining government employment, and voting. The September 2001 press law requires that owners and chief editors of publications be Arabs. Suspected members of the banned Syrian Kurdish Democratic Unity Party (SKDUP) continued to be arrested and jailed in 2002. In March, a suspected member of the party, Hussein Daoud, was sentenced by the SSSC to two years in prison for "involvement in an attempt to sever part of the Syrian territory." At least two Kurds arrested during police raids in April and May remain in detention. In December, SKDUP leaders Hassan Saleh and Marwan Uthman were arrested after organizing a demonstration in front of parliament.

The government has promoted gender equality by appointing women to senior positions in all branches of government and providing equal access to education, but many discriminatory laws remain in force. A husband may request that the Interior Ministry block his wife from traveling abroad, and women are generally barred from leaving the country with their children unless they can prove that the father has granted permission. Syrian law stipulates that an accused rapist can be acquitted if he marries his victim, and it provides for reduced sentences in cases of "honor" crimes committed by men against female relatives for alleged sexual misconduct. Personal status law for Muslim women is governed by Sharia (Islamic law) and is discriminatory in marriage, divorce, and inheritance matters. Violence against women is widespread, particularly in rural areas.

Turkmenistan

Political Rights:	7
Civil Liberties:	7
Status:	Not Free

Overview:

Cracks in President Saparmurat Niyazov's tightly controlled regime became visible with an apparent attempt on the president's life in November 2002. The secretive nature of the country's authoritarian leadership fueled widespread speculation about who, including Niyazov himself, may have orchestrated the shooting. Several high-level government defections, along with a purge by Niyazov of Turkmenistan's intelligence service, further highlighted growing political tensions and challenges to the government.

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

Niyazov, the former head of the Turkmenistan Communist Party, ran unopposed in elections to the newly created post of president in October 1990. After the adoption of a new constitution in 1992, Niyazov was reelected as the sole candidate for a five-year term with a reported 99.5 percent of the vote. The main opposition group, Agzybirlik, which was formed in 1989 by leading intellectuals, was banned. Niyazov's tenure as president was extended for an additional five years, until 2002, by a 1994 referendum, which exempted him from having to run again in 1997 as originally scheduled. In the December 1994 parliamentary elections, only Niyazov's Democratic Party of Turkmenistan (DPT), the former Communist Party, was permitted to field candidates.

In the December 1999 elections to the National Assembly (Mejlis), every candidate was selected by the government and virtually all were members of the DPT. According to government claims, voter turnout was 98.9 percent. The OSCE, citing the lack of provision for nongovernmental parties to participate and the executive branch's control of the nomination of candidates, refused to send even a limited assessment mission. In a further consolidation of Niyazov's extensive powers, parliament unanimously voted in late December to make him president for life. With this decision, Turkmenistan became the first Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) country to formally abandon presidential elections. However, in February 2001, Niyazov announced that a presidential poll would be held in 2010, although he claimed that he would not run.

After the September 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, Niyazov announced that the United States could not use his country for military strikes against the Taliban in Afghanistan, although Turkmenistan would serve as a base for humanitarian aid. Ashgabat cited the country's official political neutrality as a reason for not participating in the U.S.-led campaign. However, Turkmenistan had maintained good relations with the Taliban in recent years in an attempt to secure safe energy export routes through Afghanistan to destinations including India and China.

Although Niyazov continued to exercise widespread power throughout the country in 2002, cracks in his regime became increasingly visible during the year. In February, former deputy prime minister and head of the central bank Khudaiberdy Orazov accused the government of falsifying data to disguise economic troubles and fled to exile in Russia. In April, another prominent former government official, former prime minister Aleksander Dodonov, announced from his exile in Moscow that he was joining the opposition. Apparently fearing the influence and growing independence of the country's powerful security apparatus, Niyazov orchestrated a significant purge of the Committee for National Security (KNB), the successor to the Soviet-era KGB. According to Niyazov, 80 percent of the KNB's senior leadership had been removed for supposed abuse of power and other violations; several were subsequently sentenced to lengthy prison terms. Despite these preemptive efforts, the KNB appears to represent a serious potential challenge to the current regime, with the dismissals further provoking opposition to Niyazov's rule within the current and former ranks of the KNB.

On November 25, Niyazov was the apparent victim of an assassination attempt in which gunmen fired at the president's motorcade in Ashgabat; Niyazov was

unhurt in the attack. More than a hundred people—including two alleged chief suspects, Guvanch Dzhumaev, a prominent Turkmen businessman, and Dzhumaev's business partner, Leonid Komarovsky, a naturalized U.S. citizen—were reportedly detained on suspicion of their involvement in the shootings. According to the government, former foreign minister and opposition leader Boris Shikhmuradov was a key organizer of the attack. Shikhmuradov, who had returned to Turkmenistan from exile in Russia, was arrested on December 25; he made a televised confession on December 29 that critics maintain had been coerced. He was sentenced on December 30 to life in prison after a one-day trial that human rights groups criticized as a Soviet-era-style show trial.

Alternative theories quickly emerged as to who was responsible for the attack in this highly secretive society. Some speculated that Niyazov himself, out of a high level of concern over the influence of his critics, had planned the shooting as an excuse to increase repression of the opposition. Others argued that the attack was carried out by disgruntled members of the KNB. Regardless of who orchestrated it, the shooting highlighted the growing political tensions in Turkmenistan and the internal and external challenges to Niyazov's leadership.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Turkmenistan cannot change their government democratically. President Saparmurat Niyazov enjoys virtually absolute power over all branches and levels of the government. He has established an extensive cult of personality, including the erection of monuments to his leadership throughout the country. In 1994, he renamed himself Turkmenbashi, or leader of the Turkmen. In 2002, Niyazov continued to enact often bizarre decrees enhancing his already extensive cult of personality. In August, he ordered the renaming of the days of the week and months of the year, including January (as Turkmenbashi), April (after his mother), and September (as *Rukhnama*, after a spiritual guidebook allegedly authored by Niyazov).

The government has undergone a rapid turnover of personnel as Niyazov has dismissed many officials whom he suspects may challenge his authority. Niyazov relies heavily on the Presidential Guard, an elite and powerful group that monitors political developments in the country and carries out operations on Niyazov's personal orders.

The country has two national legislative bodies: the unicameral National Assembly (Mejlis), composed of 50 members elected in single-mandate

constituencies for five-year terms, which is the main legislature; and the People's Council (Khalk Maslakhaty), consisting of members of the assembly, 50 directly elected representatives, and various regional and other executive and judicial officials, which meets infrequently to address certain major issues. Neither parliamentary body enjoys genuine independence from the executive. The 1994 and 1999 parliamentary elections were neither free nor fair. Following the November 2002 assassination attempt on Niyazov, the president announced early parliamentary elections for April 2003.

Freedom of speech and the press is severely restricted by the government, which controls all radio and television broadcasts and print media. Reports of dissenting political views are banned, as are even mild forms of criticism of the president. Subscriptions to foreign newspapers are severely restricted. Foreign journalists have few opportunities to visit Turkmenistan and are often limited to certain locations. The state-owned Turkmentelekom is the only authorized Internet provider in the country. In 2002, the government took further steps to limit information coming into the country by ordering the removal of rooftop satellite dishes.

The government restricts freedom of religion through means including strict registration requirements. Only Sunni Muslims and Russian Orthodox Christians have been able to meet the criterion of having at least 500 members to register. Members of religious groups that are not legally registered by the government, including Baptists, Pentecostals, and Baha'is, are frequently harassed or attacked by security forces.

While the constitution guarantees peaceful assembly and association, these rights are restricted in practice. Only one political party, the Niyazov-led Democratic Party of Turkmenistan, has been officially registered. Opposition parties have been banned, and their leading members face harassment and detention or have fled abroad. Two of the leading figures of the opposition-in-exile are Avdy Kuliev, who founded the United Turkmen Opposition in 1992, and former foreign minister Boris Shikhmuradov, who established the National Democratic Movement of Turkmenistan (NDMT) in 2001. In late 2002, Shikhmuradov was imprisoned for his alleged connection with the November assassination attempt against Niyazov. In June, exiled dissidents met in Vienna to discuss the human rights situation in Turkmenistan and to form a coordinating-consultative body of opposition members. However, the opposition continues to be plagued by rivalries and disagreements between different factions. Several small demonstrations were reported in 2002, including one in August at

which some 200 women gathered in Ashgabat to protest against the government; they were quickly arrested by police and security personnel.

The government-controlled Colleagues Union is the only central trade union permitted, and there are no legal guarantees for workers to form or join unions or to bargain collectively.

The judicial system is subservient to the president, who appoints and removes judges for five-year terms without legislative review. The authorities frequently deny rights of due process, including public trials and access to defense attorneys. There are no independent lawyers, with the exception of a few retired legal officials, to represent defendants in trials. Police abuse of suspects and prisoners, often to obtain confessions, is reportedly widespread, and prisons are overcrowded and unsanitary. The security services regularly monitor the activities of those critical of the government.

Freedom of movement is severely restricted, with citizens required to carry internal passports that note the bearer's place of residence and movements into and out of the country. Obtaining passports and exit visas for foreign travel is difficult for most nonofficial travelers and allegedly often requires payment of bribes to government officials. Although the government officially ended exit visa requirements for Turkmen citizens in January 2002, unofficial controls remain at Ashgabat airport.

Corruption in the country's educational system is widespread, with personal connections and bribes playing a central role in admittance to higher-level institutions. The *Rukhnama*, a quasi-spiritual guide allegedly authored by Niyazov, is required reading throughout the school system and has largely replaced many other traditional school subjects. Primary and secondary school attendance has been reduced from 11 to 9 years, and higher education from 5 to 2 years of study, with 2 years of work.

A continuing Soviet-style command economy and widespread corruption diminish equality of opportunity. Profits from the country's extensive energy exports rarely reach the general population, which lives in extreme poverty.

Traditional social-religious norms mostly limit professional opportunities for women to the roles of homemaker and mother, and anecdotal reports suggest that domestic violence is common.

Uzbekistan

Political Rights:	7
Civil Liberties:	6
Status:	Not Free

Overview:

Uzbekistan's continued cooperation with the U.S.-led antiterrorism campaign in 2002 led to American commitments of increased financial assistance in exchange for promises from President Islam Karimov of political reforms. Although Uzbekistan appeared to have made certain human rights-related concessions—including the abolition of official censorship, the registration of a prominent human rights organization, and the unprecedented conviction of seven law enforcement officials for the deaths of two detainees—there was little evidence at year's end of substantive changes to the Uzbek government's repressive policies. In a move that critics charged would further strengthen Karimov's already sweeping powers, voters officially approved constitutional amendments extending the president's term in office from five to seven years.

Located along the ancient trade route of the famous Silk Road, Uzbekistan was incorporated into Russia by the late 1800s. The Uzbekistan Soviet Socialist Republic was established in 1924, and its eastern region was detached and made a separate Tajik Soviet republic five years later.

On December 29, 1991, the country's independence was endorsed in a popular referendum by more than 98 percent of the electorate. In a parallel vote, Islam Karimov, former Communist Party leader and chairman of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), the successor to the Communist Party, was elected president with a reported 88 percent of the vote over the only independent candidate to challenge him, Erk (Freedom) Party leader Mohammed Solih, who charged election fraud. The largest opposition group, Birlik (Unity), was barred

from contesting the election and later refused legal registration as a political party, while the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) and other religious-based groups were banned entirely. Only pro-government parties were allowed to compete in elections to the first post-Soviet legislature in December 1994 and January 1995. A February 1995 national referendum to extend Karimov's first five-year term in office until the year 2000 was allegedly approved by 99 percent of the country's voters.

Throughout the 1990s, the government increased its repression of opposition movements, including moderate political and religious groups, often under the pretext of fighting violent Islamist organizations. The growing crackdowns, coupled with widespread poverty, in turn fueled Islamist extremist activities and contributed to the radicalization of some former advocates of peaceful change. The Uzbek government blamed a series of deadly car bombings in Tashkent in February 1999 on the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), which seeks the violent overthrow of Uzbekistan's secular government and its replacement with an Islamic state. The authorities used the attacks, which they described as an assassination attempt on Karimov's life, to justify further arrests and trials of both the religious and secular opposition. As a result, many Uzbeks, including both peaceful Muslims and members of the IMU, fled to neighboring countries. In August, IMU militants attempted to enter Uzbekistan by crossing from Tajikistan into the neighboring Kyrgyz Republic, where they held several villages hostage until early October.

Of the five parties that competed in December's parliamentary election, which was strongly criticized by international election observers, all supported the president and differed little in their political platforms. The January 2000 presidential poll resulted in an expected victory for Karimov, who defeated his only opponent, Marxist history professor Abdulhasiz Dzhalalov, with 92 percent of the vote. Karimov's former party, the PDP, from which he resigned in 1996, had nominated Dzhalalov, its first secretary, with Karimov's consent. Karimov ran as a candidate of the recently established Fidokorlar Party. Uzbekistan's government refused to register genuinely independent opposition parties or permit their members to stand as candidates.

In August 2000, the IMU engaged in armed clashes with government troops in southeastern Uzbekistan. While Tashkent alleged that the guerillas had entered Uzbek territory from bases in neighboring Tajikistan, that country denied the charge. Uzbekistan also accused Afghanistan's then-ruling Taliban of harboring many members of the IMU, which the U.S. government had placed on its list

of international terrorist organizations in September for its ties to Osama bin Laden's terrorist network, al-Qaeda, and the Taliban.

After the September 11, 2001, attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center, Uzbekistan became a key strategic ally of the United States in its military operations in Afghanistan. By the end of the year, an estimated 1,500 U.S. troops were reported to be stationed at the Khanabad air base in the south of the country, and President Karimov announced that no deadline had been set for their withdrawal. Tashkent's decision to permit the deployment of U.S. troops on its territory was widely seen as an effort to obtain various concessions from the West, including economic assistance, security guarantees, and reduced criticism of its poor human rights record.

In a sign of the two countries' strengthening ties, the United States and Uzbekistan signed the Declaration on Strategic Partnership and Cooperation Framework on March 12, 2002, in which both countries agreed to cooperate on economic, legal, humanitarian, and nuclear proliferation matters. While Uzbekistan affirmed a commitment to implementing democratic reforms—including establishing a multiparty system, ensuring independence of the media, and improving the judicial system—the United States pledged to provide financial aid to encourage the development of civil society. The United States agreed to triple bilateral aid to $160 million and to guarantee $55 million in credit through the U.S. Export-Import Bank. In July, the U.S. Congress allocated $45 million in aid contingent upon Uzbekistan's efforts to institute political and legal reforms. Under the law, the U.S. State Department must certify that Tashkent is making progress in meeting the commitments agreed upon under the Declaration. According to a Human Rights Watch statement issued in August, Uzbekistan by mid-year had failed to make significant improvements in any of the areas outlined in the Declaration.

In a January nationwide referendum that critics charged indicated Karimov's intention to consolidate further his already considerable political power, voters allegedly approved amending the country's constitution to extend the presidential term from five to seven years. Karimov's current term in office would therefore end in 2007, rather than in 2005. In a parallel vote, voters officially supported replacing the country's 250-member single chamber legislature with a bicameral parliament. According to the Central Election Commission, 91 percent had voted for the term extension and 93 percent for the creation of the bicameral legislature, with voter turnout at 92 percent. Independent observers raised serious doubts about the validity of the

referendum, citing the presence of police in polling stations, the confusing design of ballot papers, and the fact that some people had been able to vote on behalf of several individuals.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Uzbekistan cannot change their government democratically. President Islam Karimov and the executive branch dominate the legislature and judiciary, and the government severely represses all political opposition. The primary purpose of the national legislature is to confirm decisions made by the executive branch. The 1994–1995 and 1999 parliamentary elections and the 2000 presidential poll, in which only pro-government candidates could participate, were neither free nor fair.

The state imposes strict limits on freedom of speech and the press, particularly with regard to reports on the government and President Karimov. The country's private broadcast and print media outlets generally avoid political issues, are largely regional in scope, and suffer from administrative and financial constraints. Printing presses are owned by the state, which can grant or deny licenses to media outlets. Self-censorship is widespread, while the few journalists who dare to produce probing or critical reports of the authorities face harassment, physical violence, and closure of their media outlets. In April, the government ordered the surveillance of and collection of personal information on opposition party activists and Uzbek journalists employed by Radio Liberty and the BBC.

In a positive development, state radio reporter Shadi Mardiev was released from prison in January 2002 under a presidential amnesty. Mardiev had been sentenced in 1998 to 11 years in prison for slandering a local government official in a program satirizing the official's alleged corrupt activities. In October, the government no longer required that all Internet service providers (ISPs) route their connections through the government-run ISP, UzPak. Although official prior censorship was formally abolished in May, the responsibility for censoring material was transferred to newspaper editors, who were warned by the State Press Committee that they would be held personally accountable for what they publish.

The government permits the existence of mainstream religions, including approved Muslim and Jewish communities, as well as the Russian Orthodox Church and some other Christian denominations. However, the activities of

other congregations are restricted through legislation that requires all religious groups to register with the state through burdensome registration criteria. In addition, the 1998 Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations prohibits proselytizing, the teaching of religious subjects without official permission, and the wearing of religious garments in public by anyone other than clerics. Revisions to the criminal code in May 1998 and May 1999 increased penalties for violating the law and other statutes on religious activities. In November 2002, a Jehovah's Witness, Marat Mudarisov, was given a three-year suspended sentence for disseminating publications that incite national and racial hatred and for undermining the constitution. Mudarisov maintains that the publications were planted on him by security service members, and that he was beaten and threatened with torture.

The government continued to be suspicious and intolerant of followers of Muslim organizations not sanctioned by the state. During the last several years, many of them have been arrested or imprisoned on charges of anti-constitutional activities, often under the pretext of the government's fight against militant Islamists. Authorities have targeted members of the banned Hizb-ut-Tahrir (Islamic Party of Liberation), an international movement calling for the creation of an Islamic caliphate throughout the Muslim world. Suspected members have been forced to give confessions under torture and their family members have been subjected to interrogation, arrest, and extortion. In August, the bodies of two prisoners who had been convicted of involvement with Hizb-ut-Tahrir were returned to their families for burial. According to Human Rights Watch, they had died under suspicious circumstances and their bodies showed apparent signs of torture. Both men had been held at Jaslyk prison, which is notorious for its harsh conditions and ill-treatment of religious prisoners.

Permits for public demonstrations, which must be approved by the government, are not routinely granted, and fear of police persecution makes such rallies uncommon occurrences. In 2002, police detained a number of women who protested against the imprisonment of their male relatives for belonging to illegal Islamic groups.

No genuine political opposition groups function legally or participate in the government. A 1997 law prohibits parties based on ethnic or religious lines and those advocating subversion of the constitutional order. Members of unregistered opposition groups, including Birlik and Erk, are subject to discrimination or have gone into voluntary exile abroad. The Council of the

Federation of Trade Unions is dependent on the state, and no genuinely alternative union structures exist.

After years of its having been denied legal status, the authorities in March finally registered the Independent Human Rights Organization of Uzbekistan (NOPCHU), one of the country's principal human rights groups. The decision, which was the first time that the government had formally registered a local human rights organization, came just days before a visit by Karimov to the United States. Two months earlier, police had returned archived records of human rights abuses, along with the passport of NOPCHU director Mikhail Ardzinov, after having held them for more than two years.

Although the registration of NOPCHU was hailed by many observers as a tentative positive step, other human rights groups, including the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan (HRSU), continued to be denied registration and to face ongoing harassment by the authorities. Following a protest against human rights abuses that was held outside the Ministry of Justice on August 27, two participants, including HRSU member Elena Urlaeva, were arrested, forcibly detained in a psychiatric hospital, and reportedly given psychiatric drugs. In September, another HRSU member, Yuldash Rasulov, was sentenced in a politically motivated trial to seven years in prison on charges of attempting to overthrow the constitutional order and distributing "extremist" literature.

The judiciary is subservient to the president, who appoints all judges and can remove them from office at any time. Police routinely physically abuse suspects to extract confessions, while arbitrary arrest and detention are common. Law enforcement authorities reportedly often plant narcotics, weapons, and banned religious literature on suspected members of Islamic groups or political opponents to justify their arrest. In the country's first conviction of law enforcement officials on charges of lethal brutality, four policemen were found guilty in January in the beating death of one detainee and the torture of another and were sentenced to 20 years in prison. The verdict followed a visit to Tashkent the previous day of a senior U.S. State Department official, who had expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of democratic reform in Uzbekistan. In a separate case in June, three National Security Service officers received prison sentences of between 5 and 15 years in the death of a suspect alleged to belong to a banned religious group.

Prisons suffer from severe overcrowding and shortages of food and medicine. Following a two-week fact-finding mission, the UN special rapporteur on torture, Theo van Boven, concluded that torture is "systematic" in Uzbekistan's prisons and detention centers. In December, Karimov announced an amnesty for various categories of prisoners in honor of the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the country's constitution. However, the presidential pardon did not apply to those convicted of involvement in extremist organizations or anti-constitutional activities, crimes under which many of the country's estimated 7,000 political prisoners have been sentenced.

Widespread corruption, bureaucratic regulations, and the government's tight control over the economy limit most citizens' equality of opportunity. Duties of up to 90 percent on imported goods that were imposed in mid-2002 led to greater financial hardships for the country's many merchants and shuttle traders and sparked protests in a number of towns and villages. Uzbekistan continues to use Soviet-style residence permits and maintains widespread restrictions on foreign travel. Most people must pay often costly bribes in order to obtain exit visas.

Women's educational and professional prospects are restricted by traditional cultural and religious norms and by ongoing economic difficulties throughout the country. Victims of domestic violence are discouraged from pressing charges against their perpetrators, who rarely face criminal prosecution. According to a Human Rights Watch report, the government is extending its campaign against non-mainstream Muslims to include women. In May, four women charged with membership in the banned group, Hizb-ut-Tahrir, were given suspended sentences of between two and three years.

Vietnam

Political Rights:	7
Civil Liberties:	6
Status:	Not Free

Overview:

Vietnam held parliamentary elections in 2002 that were as tightly controlled as ever, while authorities cracked down on critics ranging from hill tribesmen to cyber-dissidents. The ruling Communist party's efforts to solidify its tight grip on power came as it faces protests over corruption and land rights, as well as a less-docile workforce empowered by its limited but potent market reforms.

Vietnam won independence from France in 1954 after a century of colonial rule followed by occupation by the Japanese during World War II. At independence, the country was divided into the French-backed Republic of South Vietnam and the Communist-ruled Democratic Republic of Vietnam in the north. Following a decade-long war that killed tens of thousands of soldiers and civilians, North Vietnam defeated the U.S.-backed South in 1975 and reunited the country in 1976.

Victorious on the battlefield, the Communist government proved unable to feed its people. The centralized economy grew at anemic rates, and Vietnam had to import rice. The government responded with reforms in 1986 that dismantled collectivized agriculture and encouraged small-scale private enterprise.

Spurred by the reforms, Vietnam's economy grew by 7.6 percent per year on average, and output doubled, between 1991 and 2000, according to World Bank figures. The Southeast Asian country is now the world's second-biggest rice exporter.

Vietnam's leadership, however, continues to be divided over the pace and depth of privatization and other market reforms. Moderates see deep-rooted reforms as the ticket to modernizing the impoverished country and producing enough jobs to stave off social unrest. Hard-liners, though, fear that loosening the state's control over the economy will undermine the ruling Communist Party of Vietnam's (CPV) tight grip on power. They realize that farmers, who now work for themselves, and other private sector workers cannot be monitored as easily as those who depend on the state for their livelihoods. Moreover, while the government has sold off thousands of small firms, privatization of large companies would very likely throw millions out of work, possibly leading to a backlash against the regime.

The CPV in 2001 signaled its intent to continue carrying out reforms, but in a gradual way, when it tapped as its new party leader a veteran politician who has a reputation for stressing pragmatism over ideology. Nong Duc Manh, now 61, is widely viewed as being capable of forging consensus between the party's conservative old guard and younger, reform-minded cadres. His elevation to the top post came that April at the CPV's ninth party congress, which nominally set out government policy for the next five years. In choosing Manh, a northerner, and then in 2002 reelecting Prime Minister Phan Van Khai and state President Tran Duc Luong, the party also preserved the leadership troika's traditional balance between northern, central, and southern Vietnam.

The May 19, 2002, parliamentary elections, meanwhile, offered little suspense, as all candidates for the 498-seat body had been vetted in advance by the CPV. The number of nonparty legislators elected shrank to 51 from 68.

The elections came as the government faced international criticism over its treatment of ethnic minorities in the mountainous central highlands. The watchdog groups Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International said in January that they had documented beatings and jailings over the past year of dozens of returning hill tribe refugees who had been deported from Cambodia.

The refugees had fled Vietnam in early 2001 to escape a crackdown on members of hill tribes that came after several thousand mainly Christian hill tribesmen held protests in the highlands demanding more religious freedom, greater land rights, and political autonomy for the region. Vietnamese officials have "systematically arrested and repressed those they believe responsible" for the 2001 protests, Amnesty said in a December report. Hill tribesmen, known as Montagnards, routinely complain that their lands are increasingly being

converted by lowland Vietnamese into plantations for coffee and other cash crops.

During the year, the regime also intensified its crackdown on pro-democracy activists. Several government critics were arrested, sentenced to long jail terms, placed under house arrest, or otherwise harassed by Vietnamese authorities.

The government, meanwhile, moved slowly in complying with a three-year, $368 million loan package extended by the International Monetary Fund in 2001 to help Vietnam restructure 1,800 state-owned firms, reform its debt-ridden state banks, and free up trade and capital flows. Only 79 of the firms slated for privatization were sold off by the first half of 2002.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Ruled by the CPV as a single-party state, Vietnam is one of the most tightly controlled societies in the world. The regime jails or harasses most dissidents, controls all media, sharply restricts religious freedom, and prevents Vietnamese from setting up independent political, labor, or religious groups. At the same time, authorities recently have tolerated some grassroots protests over nominally nonpolitical issues and loosened their control over the day-to-day lives of ordinary Vietnamese.

Vietnam's 498-member National Assembly generally does not table legislation or pass laws the party opposes. Delegates, however, question state ministers, air grassroots grievances, and debate legal, economic, and social matters. They also criticize officials' performance and government corruption and inefficiency. The party-controlled Fatherland Front, however, vets all assembly candidates and allows only CPV members and some independents to run.

In addition to using the National Assembly as an outlet for grassroots complaints, the regime has also tried to address bread-and-butter concerns with a 1998 decree that directs local officials to consult more with ordinary Vietnamese. In many provinces, however, complaints get bogged down in bureaucratic shuffling, the *Far Eastern Economic Review* of Hong Kong reported in 2001.

The leadership increasingly has also allowed farmers and others to hold small protests over local grievances, which most often concern land seizures. Thousands of Vietnamese also try to gain redress each year by writing letters to

or personally addressing officials. In addition to land matters, citizens complain about official corruption, economic policy, government inefficiency, and opaque bureaucratic procedures. Underscoring these concerns, the Berlin-based Transparency International watchdog group ranked Vietnam in a three-way tie as the 16th most corrupt out of 102 countries covered in its annual survey of corruption for 2002.

Vietnam's judiciary is "subservient to the CPV," with the party closely controlling the courts at all levels and reportedly telling judges how to rule in political cases, according to the U.S. State Department's global human rights report for 2001, released in March 2002. Even in ordinary criminal cases, defendants often lack time to meet with their lawyers and prepare and present an adequate defense, while defense lawyers are sometimes permitted only to appeal for clemency for their clients, according to Amnesty International. Moreover, many criminal suspects are unable to obtain counsel at all because of Vietnam's shortage of lawyers.

Jails are overcrowded, and inmates lack sufficient food, although prison conditions generally are not life threatening, the U.S. State Department report said. The report noted, however, that guards sometimes badly mistreat prisoners and frequently beat them. Similarly, Amnesty International said in November that it had documented dozens of cases of Vietnamese prisoners who were denied adequate medical care, shackled as a form of punishment, or held in solitary confinement for long periods.

Vietnamese jails hold some political prisoners, including religious dissidents, although there are no accurate figures on the number of prisoners of conscience. Their ranks include Le Chi Quang, a 32-year-old lawyer who received a four-year jail sentence in November after he posted on the Internet articles critical of the government. Another political prisoner, Nguyen Khac Toan, received a 12-year sentence in December, after a trial that lasted less than a day, for allegedly passing information to overseas Vietnamese activist groups and helping farmers draft petitions to the government, according to Amnesty International. The government denies holding any prisoners on political grounds.

In addition to jailing dissidents, officials place restrictions on where some dissidents can work or live, confining some to house arrest, the U.S. State Department report said. They do this under a broad 1997 decree authorizing "administrative probation" for up to two years without trial for Vietnamese whose offenses are deemed to be punishable without quite warranting "criminal responsibility."

To monitor the population, the regime relies on a household registration system and on block wardens, who use informers to track individual activity. Officials, however, have largely scaled back their surveillance of ordinary Vietnamese, focusing instead mainly on political and religious dissidents, according to the U.S. State Department report.

All media are tightly controlled by the party and government. Officials have punished journalists who overstepped the bounds of permissible reporting by jailing or placing them under house arrest, taking away their press cards, and closing down their newspapers, the *Far Eastern Economic Review* of Hong Kong reported in 2001. The media are also kept in check by a 1999 law that requires journalists to pay damages to groups or individuals that are found to be harmed by press articles, even if the reports are true. At least one suit has been filed under this law, although it was withdrawn. In this stifling environment, journalists practice self-censorship on sensitive political and economic matters.

The media, nevertheless, are sometimes permitted to report on high-level government corruption and mismanagement. The regime, however, strictly prohibits the media, or ordinary Vietnamese, from promoting democracy, questioning the CPV's leading role, or criticizing individual government leaders or the regime's human rights record. These restrictions are backed up by tough national security and anti-defamation provisions in the constitution and criminal code.

The government allows Vietnamese to surf the Internet, but blocks some politically sensitive sites and requires service providers and Internet café owners to monitor their customers' access to the Internet. In 2002, the government also ordered all domestic Web sites to obtain licenses. Vietnam has some 150,000 Internet users, according to official figures.

The regime sharply restricts religious freedom by tightly regulating religious organizations and clergy and cracking down on independent religious groups and their leaders. All religious groups must register with the government. They also must get permission to build or remodel places of worship; run religious schools or do charitable work; hold conventions, training seminars, and special celebrations; and train, ordain, promote, or transfer clergy, according to the U.S. State Department report.

As a result of these regulations, religious groups generally have trouble expanding schools, obtaining teaching materials, publishing religious texts, and increasing the number of students training for the clergy. Among the hardest hit

by the regulations are the Cao Daiists, who are prohibited from ordaining new priests, and Protestants, who are barred from running seminaries and ordaining new clergy. The regulations are enforced most strictly in the northwestern provinces and central highlands.

Officials also enforce closure orders, in effect since 1975, on Hoa Hao places of worship. Amnesty International said in October that members of the Hoa Hao faith have been jailed over the past year on charges that the London-based rights group believes are linked solely to their religious practices. Hoa Hao followers fought the Communist forces during the Vietnam War.

Both religious groups and most individual clergy must join a party-controlled supervisory body, one of which exists for each religion the state recognizes. These are: Buddhism; Roman Catholicism; Protestantism; Islam; Cao Daism, a synthesis of several religions; and the Hoa Hao faith, a reformist Buddhist church.

Officials frequently jail, arrest, or otherwise harass worshippers who belong to independent religious groups that refuse to join one of the supervisory bodies, according to Amnesty International. For years, the government has tried to undermine the independent Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV). Officials released several prominent UBCV monks in 1998 but continue to harass group members. Buddhists make up three-quarters of Vietnam's population.

Authorities reportedly also subject underground Protestant worshippers in the central highlands and northwestern provinces to "severe abuses," according to the U.S. State Department report, including jailing some congregants and shutting down some churches. Meanwhile, ethnic Hmong converts to Christianity, particularly in the northern provinces of Lao Cai and Lai Chau, have complained since the late 1980s that they are often jailed, harassed, and pressured to abandon their religious faith by provincial officials, according to Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

Vietnamese women are increasingly active in business, but they continue to face unofficial employment and wage discrimination. They also hold relatively few senior positions in government and politics.

Domestic violence against women reportedly is relatively common, and officials do not vigorously enforce relevant laws, the U.S. State Department report said. Despite some government initiatives to protect women, moreover, trafficking of

women and girls, both within Vietnam and to China and Cambodia, continues to be a serious and growing problem, the report added. Women are trafficked for both labor and sexual exploitation. Meanwhile, roughly 40,000 Vietnamese children between the ages of 8 and 14 are working illegally full or part-time, according to official figures.

Vietnam's ethnic minorities face unofficial discrimination in mainstream society, and local officials reportedly sometimes restrict minority access to schooling and jobs. Minorities also generally have little input into development projects that affect them, the *Far Eastern Economic Review* reported in 2001.

In the workplace, the government prohibits independent trade unions and only weakly enforces child labor and other labor laws. Despite the ban on free trade unions, hundreds of independent "labor associations" have been permitted to represent many workers at individual firms and in some service occupations. In any case, the vast majority of Vietnamese workers are small-scale farmers in rural areas who are not unionized in any way.

Workers have staged dozens of strikes in recent years, generally against foreign and private companies. The government has tolerated the strikes even though in most cases the workers have not followed a legally mandated conciliation and arbitration process with management. The regime's ban on independent trade unions extends to all private groups, such as human rights organizations, whose agenda touches on politics.

China (Tibet)

Political Rights:	7
Civil Liberties:	7
Status:	Not Free

Overview:

During 2002, China made some goodwill gestures towards Tibet, including releasing several Tibetan political prisoners. However, it was not clear whether these actions, which were regarded by some analysts as attempts to influence international opinion, were merely cosmetic.

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

In what is perhaps the defining event of Beijing's occupation, Chinese troops suppressed a local uprising in 1959 by killing an estimated 87,000 Tibetans in the Lhasa region alone. The massacre forced the Tibetan spiritual and political leader, the fourteenth Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, to flee to Dharamsala, India, with 80,000 supporters.

The Geneva-based International Commission of Jurists in 1960 called the Chinese occupation genocidal and ruled that between 1911 and 1949, the year China invaded, Tibet had possessed all the attributes of statehood as

defined under international law. Mao's Cultural Revolution devastated Tibet, as China jailed thousands of monks and nuns, burned many sacred texts, and destroyed nearly all of Tibet's 6,200 monasteries.

As resistance to Beijing's rule continued, Chinese soldiers forcibly broke up peaceful protests throughout Tibet between 1987 and 1990. Beijing imposed martial law on Lhasa and surrounding areas in March 1989 following three days of anti-government protests and riots during which police killed at least 50 Tibetans. Officials lifted martial law in May 1990.

Since the 1989 demonstrations, Tibetans have mounted few large-scale protests against Chinese rule in the face of a blanket repression of dissent. In addition to jailing dissidents, officials have stepped up their efforts to control religious affairs and undermine the exiled Dalai Lama's religious and political authority. Foreign observers have reported a slight easing of repression since late 2000, when Beijing tapped the relatively moderate Guo Jinlong to be the region's Communist Party boss. Guo, who served on several party committees in Sichuan Province and the TAR, replaced Chen Kuiyan, the architect of recent crackdowns.

One reason for the change in Tibet's top governmental post may have been Beijing's anger over the escape to India in late 1999 of the teenager recognized by the Dalai Lama, and accepted by Beijing, as the seventeenth Karmapa. The Karmapa is the highest-ranking figure in the Karma Kargyu school of Tibetan Buddhism.

Beijing had interfered in the Karmapa's selection and education as part of an apparent effort to create a generation of more pliant Tibetan leaders. In an even more flagrant case of interference with Tibet's Buddhist hierarchy, China in 1995 detained six-year-old Gedhun Choekyi Nyima and rejected the Dalai Lama's selection of him as the eleventh reincarnation of the Panchen Lama. The Panchen Lama is Tibetan Buddhism's second-highest religious figure. Officials then stage-managed the selection of another six-year-old boy as the Panchen Lama. Since the Panchen Lama identifies the reincarnated Dalai Lama, Beijing potentially can control the identification of the fifteenth Dalai Lama.

China made several goodwill gestures in 2002 that some analysts interpreted as an effort to influence international opinion concerning the situation in Tibet. China hosted visits to Beijing and Lhasa by two of the Dalai Lama's envoys, the first formal contact between Beijing and the Dalai Lama since 1993. Beijing also brought several press and diplomatic delegations to Tibet and released at least six Tibetan political prisoners before the end of their sentences.

One of those released, Jigme Sangpo, 76, was Tibet's longest-serving political prisoner. He was jailed in 1983 for putting up a wall poster calling for Tibetan independence and had his sentence extended for nonviolent protests while behind bars. At year's end it was not clear whether China's moves were solely cosmetic or perhaps also reflected a willingness to open a dialogue with the Dalai Lama on autonomy for Tibet and other issues.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Under China's occupation of Tibet, Tibetans enjoy few basic rights, lack the right to determine their political future, and cannot change their government through elections. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) rules the TAR and neighboring areas that historically were part of Tibet through officials whose ranks include some Tibetans in largely ceremonial posts. While ethnic Tibetans have served as TAR governor, none has ever held the peak post of TAR party secretary. Most of China's policies affecting Tibetans apply both to those living in the TAR and to Tibetans living in parts of pre-invasion Tibet that Beijing has incorporated into China's Gansu, Qinghai, Sichuan, and Yunnan Provinces.

Political dissidents face some of the worst human rights abuses of any Tibetans. Security forces routinely arrest, jail, and torture dissidents to punish nonviolent protest against Chinese rule, according to the U.S. State Department, the London-based Tibet Information Network (TIN) watchdog group, and other sources. Dissidents have been severely punished for distributing leaflets, putting up posters, holding peaceful protests, putting together lists of prisoners, possessing photographs of the Dalai Lama, and displaying Tibetan flags or other symbols of cultural identity.

The government controls all print and broadcast media in Tibet, except for around 20 clandestine publications that appear sporadically, the Paris-based Reporters Without Borders press freedom group said in 2000.

The CCP-controlled judiciary routinely hands down lengthy jail terms to Tibetans convicted of these and other political offenses. Tibet's jails held 188 known political prisoners as of February 2002, according to TIN. The number of political prisoners has declined in recent years, although the reason for this is not clear. At least 37 Tibetan political prisoners, or about 1 in 50, have died since 1987 as a result of prison abuse, TIN said in 2001.

Throughout Tibet, security forces routinely beat, torture, or otherwise abuse detainees and inmates. "Poor conditions of detention coupled with widespread torture and abuse make life extremely harsh for all those jailed in Tibet," the human rights group Amnesty International said in April. In one of the most notorious cases of abuse in recent years, officials responded to protests at Lhasa's Drapchi Prison in May 1998 by torturing and beating to death nine prisoners, including five nuns and three monks.

Prison officials reportedly at times also sexually abuse female inmates, according to the U.S. State Department's global human rights report covering 2001, released in March 2002. At some jails and detention centers, they also reportedly require inmates to work, often for some pay and the possibility of sentence reductions, the report added.

A senior lama and another Tibetan from the Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan Province were sentenced to death in December following a closed trial in connection with a series of bombings in Sichuan Province that resulted in one fatality. In keeping with Chinese practice, the lama's suspended sentence will likely be commuted. The sentences handed down to the outspoken lama, Tenzin Deleg Rinpoche, 52, and one of his supporters, Lobsang Dondrub, were the first reported instances in many years of Tibetans being sentenced to death on grounds that may be politically motivated.

Chinese officials permit Tibetans to observe some religious practices, but since 1996 they have strengthened their control over monasteries under an intense propaganda campaign that is aimed largely at undermining the Dalai Lama's influence as a spiritual and political leader. Under China's "patriotic education campaign," government-run "work teams" visit monasteries to conduct mandatory sessions on Beijing's version of Tibetan history and other political topics. Officials also require monks to sign a declaration agreeing to denounce the Dalai Lama, reject independence for Tibet, not listen to Voice of America radio broadcasts, and reject the boy the Dalai Lama identified as the eleventh Panchen Lama.

The intensity of the patriotic education campaign recently has died down somewhat. In past years, though, officials expelled from monasteries hundreds of monks and nuns who refused to comply with these rules.

In addition to trying to force monks and nuns to renounce their beliefs, the government oversees day-to-day affairs in major monasteries and nunneries through state-organized "democratic management committees" that run each

establishment. The government also limits the numbers of monks and nuns permitted in major monasteries, although these restrictions are not always enforced. Officials have also restricted the building of new monasteries and nunneries, closed many religious institutions, and demolished several others.

Hundreds of religious figures hold nominal positions in local "people's congresses," although Tibetan members of the CCP and Tibetan government workers are banned from most religious practice. Since 1994, government workers have also been banned from displaying photographs of the Dalai Lama in state offices.

The government, however, appears to be easing tough restrictions on certain lay religious practices imposed in 2000 that targeted not only party cadres and government workers but also students and pensioners. The TAR government that year threatened civil servants with dismissal, schoolchildren with expulsion, and retirees with loss of pensions if they publicly marked the Buddhist Sagadawa festival in Lhasa. Officials also warned Lhasa students that they could be thrown out of their schools if they visited monasteries or temples during the summer holidays.

Beijing's draconian one-child family planning policy is in theory more lenient towards Tibetans and other ethnic minorities. And in keeping with stated policy, officials generally permit urban Tibetans to have two children, while farmers and herders often have three or more children. Officials, however, frequently pressure party cadres and state workers to have only one child, the U.S. State Department report said. Moreover, authorities reportedly are applying a two-child limit to farmers and nomads in several counties, TIN said in 2000.

As one of China's 55 recognized ethnic minority groups, Tibetans also receive some preferential treatment in university admissions and government employment. Tibetans, however, need to learn Mandarin Chinese in order to take advantage of these preferences. Many Tibetans are torn between a desire to learn Chinese in order to compete for school slots and jobs and the realization that increased use of Chinese threatens the survival of the Tibetan language. Chinese has long been the language of instruction in middle schools and reportedly is now being used to teach several subjects in a number of Lhasa primary schools, TIN said 2001.

In the private sector, employers routinely favor Han Chinese for jobs and give them greater pay for the same work, according to the U.S. State Department report. Tibetans also find it more difficult than Han Chinese do to get permits

and loans to open businesses, the report added. As in the rest of China, officials reportedly subject farmers and herders to arbitrary taxes.

Thanks in part to heavy subsidies from Beijing and favorable tax and other economic policies, living standards have improved in recent years for many Tibetans. Han Chinese, however, have been the main beneficiaries of the growing private sector and many other fruits of development. This is seen most starkly in certain areas of Lhasa where Han Chinese run almost all small businesses.

Moreover, the influx of Han Chinese has altered the region's demographic composition, displaced Tibetan businesses, reduced job opportunities for Tibetans, and further marginalized Tibetan cultural identity. Possibly because of these rapid social and economic changes and dislocations, prostitution is a "growing problem" in Tibet, particularly in Lhasa, the U.S. State Department report said. Some 3,000 Tibetans flee to Nepal as refugees each year, according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

Morocco (Western Sahara)

Political Rights:	7
Civil Liberties:	6
Status:	Not Free

Overview:

Prospects for a settlement of the dispute in Western Sahara dimmed in 2002, as international consensus on the issue fractured and the Moroccan government declared for the first time that it will not accept a long-awaited UN-sponsored referendum to determine the future of the mineral-rich desert territory. Abuses by Moroccan security forces in the territory declined somewhat during the year.

Western Sahara was a Spanish colony from 1884 until 1975, when Spain withdrew from the territory after two years of bloody conflict with the Polisario Front (Frente Popular para la Liberation del Sagiat al-Hamra Rio de Oro). The following year, Morocco and Mauritania partitioned the territory under a tripartite agreement with Spain, but Polisario declared the establishment of an independent Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) and fought to expel foreign forces. Mauritania signed a peace agreement with Polisario in 1979, prompting Morocco to seize Mauritania's section of the territory.

In 1991, the United Nations brokered an agreement between Morocco and Polisario that provided for a ceasefire and the holding of a referendum on independence in January 1992, to be supervised by the newly formed Mission for a Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). However, the referendum was repeatedly postponed after Morocco insisted that the list of eligible voters include an additional 48,000 people who, according to Polisario and most international observers, are Moroccan nationals.

The process remained deadlocked for more than a decade as the Moroccans sought in various ways to undercut domestic and international support for the independence of Western Sahara. The late King Hassan II had offered free housing and salaries to Saharawis who relocated from the territory to Morocco. Since the ascension of King Mohammed VI in 1999, Morocco has released hundreds of Saharawi political prisoners and allowed limited activity by Saharawi human rights groups. The king regularly tours the territory, and his government has financed projects to ease unemployment in the region.

Morocco's bid to win international recognition for its claim to Western Sahara has been boosted by its role in the war on terror. In October 2001, the kingdom signed deals with French and U.S. oil companies allowing for exploration off the coast of Western Sahara. In December, French president Jacques Chirac publicly referred to Western Sahara as the "southern provinces of Morocco." Since the attacks of September 11, 2001, on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the United States has exerted considerable pressure on Algeria to withhold support for Polisario and has been urging members of the UN Security Council to drop their support for a referendum and back an autonomy plan introduced in June 2001 by the UN special envoy to the region, former U.S. secretary of state James Baker. The Baker plan would give the territory autonomy under Moroccan rule for a period of five years and put off final status negotiations. However, intense U.S. lobbying and threats to cut funding to MINURSO during the first half of 2002 won support for the autonomy plan from only five other members of the Security Council (Britain, France, Cameroon, Guinea, and Norway), and the mandate of MINURSO was extended for another six months in July.

A vigorous campaign by Morocco to undercut support for Polisario in Africa, where two dozen governments have officially recognized the SADR, also met with failure in 2002. The king waived $120 million in debt owed to Morocco by African countries and even hinted that he would allow Algeria access to the Atlantic coast to transport oil if it renounced support for the rebel group. However, at the inaugural meeting of the newly formed African Union (AU) in July, African heads of state not only admitted the SADR as a member, but elected SADR president Mohammed Abdelaziz as one of five AU vice presidents.

In a November 2002 speech, King Mohammed for the first time publicly rejected the idea of holding a referendum to allow the Saharawi people to vote on the question of independence, calling the plan "out of date" because of the

"growing support of the international community" for Moroccan sovereignty over the region.

Polisario is equally defiant in its rejection of any settlement short of a fair referendum. The group is emboldened not only by the support of African and other developing countries for Saharawi self-determination, but also by recent developments in a small island on the other side of the globe. In May 2002, the people of East Timor formally gained independence after decades of struggle, with no foreign allies and little international interest in their plight. Saharawi nationalists invariably draw the same conclusion from the experience of East Timor—no wait is too long.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Saharawis have never been allowed to elect their own government. The four provinces of Western Sahara have held local elections organized and controlled by the Moroccan government, and pro-Moroccan Saharawis fill the seats reserved for Western Sahara in the Moroccan legislature.

Saharawis are subject to Moroccan law, though many legal protections, such as the maximum limit of 72 hours for incommunicado detention, are not observed in practice. Around 450 Saharawis who disappeared at the hands of Moroccan security prior to the early 1990s remain unaccounted for. Around 170,000 Saharawis have fled the territory and now live in makeshift refugee camps in southwest Algeria.

Although human rights groups report greater freedom from repression in recent years, arbitrary killing, arrest, detention, and torture by Moroccan security forces continued in 2002. In March, security forces reportedly opened fire on civilian cars in the area of Guelta Zemmour, killing one Saharawi civilian and wounding several others. Two leading members of the Western Sahara branch of the Forum for Truth and Justice (FVJSS), Abdessalam Dimaoui and Ahmed Nasiri, were arrested during the summer and reportedly beaten by police in an attempt to force them to sign statements admitting they had instigated violence at an antigovernment protest the previous year. Dimaoui was later acquitted after nearly 2 months in detention, while Nasiri was sentenced to 18 months in prison. In June, Mohammed Haboub Mouilid (alias Tirsal) was arrested at a checkpoint outside the Saharawi town of Smara and detained for 48 hours after returning from a meeting of the FVJSS in Rabat. Ali Salem Tamek, a member of the FVJSS, was arrested in August and subsequently sentenced to two years in

prison for "undermining the internal security of the State." In November, a 35-year-old Saharawi prisoner, Boucetta Mohamed Barka (alias Chaybani) died in prison in Laayoune. According to his family, Chaybani's body carried traces of torture. Several hunger strikes were carried out by Saharawi prisoners during the year.

Torture and other abuses by Polisario forces, including arbitrary killing, have been reported in the past, but most cases have not been verified. Polisario holds 1,362 Moroccan prisoners of war in six centers in Tindouf, Algeria, and in Polisario-controlled areas of Western Sahara. In January 2002, Polisario released 115 Moroccan POWs.

Freedoms of expression, assembly, and association are severely restricted in Western Sahara. Political parties, nongovernmental organizations, and private media are virtually nonexistent, and suspected pro-independence activists and opponents of the government, including former political prisoners, are subject to surveillance and harassment. In May 2002, Moroccan forces forcibly dispersed a crowd of mourners attending a prayer service in memory of the late Polisario representative to the United Kingdom and Ireland, Fadel Ismail, who had died one year earlier. According to Polisario, dozens of Saharawis were arrested, interrogated, and tortured. In September, five members of the Sahara Unemployed Association, which fights discrimination against native Saharawis in the local job market, were sentenced to prison terms of up to one year on charges of disrupting public order.

The overwhelming majority of Sahrawis are Sunni Muslim and freedom of worship is generally respected by the Moroccan authorities. Restrictions on religious freedom in the Western Sahara are similar to those found in Morocco. There is little verifiable information on the status of women in Western Sahara, though it is known that they are active in Polisario.

Russia (Chechnya)

Political Rights:	7
Civil Liberties:	7
Status:	Not Free

Overview:

Despite some indications of rising support for a political solution to the ongoing war in Chechnya, the brutal conflict continued throughout 2002 with no clear end in sight. Russian forces continued to face daily ambushes and sniper attacks by rebel forces, underscoring the Russian military's tenuous hold over much of the breakaway republic's territory. The fighting struck closer to home for many Russians when Chechen separatists captured 800 people in a Moscow theater in October, a crisis that ended with the deaths of most of the rebels and some 120 of the hostages.

A small Northern Caucasus republic covered by flat plains in the north-central portion and by high mountains in the south, Chechnya has been at war with Russia almost continuously since the late 1700s. In February 1944, the Chechens were deported en masse to Kazakhstan under the pretext of their having collaborated with Germany during World War II. Although rehabilitated by Nikita Khrushchev in 1957 and allowed to return to their homeland, they continued to be politically suspect and were excluded from the region's administration.

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

In 1994, Russia began assisting Chechen figures opposed to Dudayev, whose rule was marked by corruption and the rise of powerful clans and criminal gangs. Russian president Boris Yeltsin sent 40,000 troops into Chechnya by mid-December 1994 and attacked the capital city, Grozny, on New Year's Eve. Federal forces intensified the shelling of Grozny and other population centers throughout 1995, with civilians becoming frequent targets. Chechen forces regrouped, making significant gains against ill-trained, undisciplined, and demoralized Russian troops. Russian public opposition to the war increased, fueled by criticism from much of the country's media. In April 1996, Dudayev was killed, reportedly by a Russian missile.

With mounting Russian casualties and no imminent victory for Moscow, a peace deal was signed in August 1996. While calling for the withdrawal of most Russian forces from the breakaway territory, the document postponed a final settlement on the republic's status until 2001. In May 1997, Yeltsin and Chechen president Aslan Maskhadov signed an accord in which Moscow recognized Maskhadov as Chechnya's legitimate leader. Maskhadov sought to maintain Chechen sovereignty while pressing Moscow to help rebuild the republic, whose formal economy and infrastructure were virtually destroyed. Throughout 1998, a number of former rival field commanders came together as an unruly opposition of often-competing warlords, removing large areas of Chechen territory from Maskhadov's control.

In September 1999, then Russian prime minister Vladimir Putin launched a second military offensive in Chechnya after incursions into the neighboring republic of Dagestan by a group of Chechen rebels and a string of deadly apartment bombings in Russia that the Kremlin blamed on Chechen militants. Although Russian troops advanced rapidly over the largely flat terrain in the northern third of the republic, their progress slowed considerably as they neared the heavily defended city of Grozny. In a notable policy shift, Putin in early October effectively withdrew Moscow's recognition of Maskhadov as the republic's main legitimate authority.

Russia's increasingly deliberate and indiscriminate bomb attacks on civilian targets caused some 200,000 people to flee Chechnya, most to the tiny neighboring Russian republic of Ingushetia. After federal troops finally captured the largely destroyed city of Grozny in February 2000, the Russian military turned its offensive against the remaining rebel strongholds in the southern mountainous region. While Russian troops conducted air and artillery raids against towns suspected of harboring large numbers of Chechen fighters,

frequently followed by security sweeps in which civilians were regularly beaten, raped, or killed, they were subject to almost daily guerilla bomb and sniper attacks by rebel forces. Although the international community issued periodic condemnations of Moscow's operation in Chechnya, the campaign enjoyed broad popular support in Russia that was fueled by the media's now one-sided reporting favoring the official government position.

Following the September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States, Moscow defended its actions in Chechnya as part of the broader war on global terrorism, drawing a connection between Chechen separatists and international terrorist groups associated with Osama Bin Laden's al-Qaeda. Meanwhile, the West softened some of its criticisms of Moscow's conduct in Chechnya in apparent exchange for Russia's support of the U.S.-led operation against the Taliban in Afghanistan.

As the bloody conflict entered its third year, prominent Russian and Chechen figures met in Liechtenstein in August 2002 to discuss a compromise peace plan in an apparent sign of gradual growing support for a political settlement to the protracted conflict. Among the participants were Maskhadov's representative, Akhmed Zakayev; the Russian parliamentary deputy from Chechnya, Aslambek Aslakhanov; the former speaker of Russia's parliament, Ruslan Khasbulatov; and the former Russian security council chief, Ivan Rybkin. The draft plan envisaged giving Chechnya special status within the borders of the Russian Republic.

However, genuine progress toward peace remained elusive, as Chechen rebels continued to engage in guerilla warfare against Russian troops with regular mine, sniper, and bomb attacks, highlighting Moscow's inability to assert full control over the breakaway republic. In August, rebels reportedly shot down a Russian military helicopter near Grozny, killing more than 100 people on board. In the neighboring republic of Ingushetia, heavy clashes between federal troops and Chechen separatists erupted in September, the first time that such large-scale fighting had occurred in the area since 1994. Moscow stepped up its pressure on neighboring Georgia to crack down on Chechen rebels allegedly hiding in Georgia's lawless Pankisi Gorge region. Russian military airplanes reportedly bombed Georgian territory several times in a stated attempt to flush out Chechen fighters, leading Georgian president Eduard Shevardnadze to order a police operation to cleanse the area of armed rebels and criminals.

In a dramatic development broadcast live on Russian television, a group of some 50 Chechen rebels stormed a Moscow theater on October 23, taking 750 people hostage. More than 120 hostages were killed, most from the effects of a sedative gas that Russian troops used to incapacitate the rebels ahead of a pre-dawn rescue operation on October 26. Russian authorities reported that 41 of the rebels had been killed.

Following the hostage crisis, Russian officials announced a suspension of a long-planned reduction in the number of federal troops stationed in Chechnya, estimated at 80,000. On October 30, Akhmed Zakayev, who had been attending a world congress of Chechens in Copenhagen, was arrested by Danish police at Moscow's request. Zakayev was accused by Russian authorities of participating in terrorist activities, including the Moscow theater hostage crisis. On December 3, Denmark released him from custody, citing insufficient evidence. Just days later, Zakayev was detained again in London, but was released the next day after British actress Vanessa Redgrave posted his $78,000 bail. He was ordered to return to court in early January 2003. Moscow also asked Qatar to extradite Chechen rebel leader Zelimkhan Yanderbiev.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

With the resumption of war in Chechnya in 1999, residents of the republic currently do not have the means to change their government democratically. The 1997 presidential elections were characterized by international observers to have been reasonably free and fair. President Aslan Maskhadov fled the capital city in December 1999, and the parliament elected in 1997 ceased to function. Russia placed Moscow loyalists or Chechens opposed to Maskhadov's central government in various administrative posts throughout the republic. In June 2000, Putin enacted a decree establishing direct presidential rule over Chechnya, appointing Akhmed Kadyrov, a Muslim cleric and Chechnya's spiritual leader, to head the republic's administration. Kadyrov was denounced by Maskhadov and separatist Chechens as a traitor, while pro-Moscow Chechens objected to his support during the first Chechen war for the republic's independence. On December 12, 2002, Russian president Vladimir Putin signed a decree calling for a public referendum on a constitution in Chechnya and subsequent elections for the republic's president and parliament. Critics of the planned referendum, scheduled to take place in March 2003, insist that it should not be held while fighting continues and that the results are likely to be falsified.

The disruptive effects of the war severely hinder news production and the flow of information to the general public. Russian state-run television and radio resumed broadcasts in Chechnya in March 2001 via a transmitter north of Grozny, although much of the population remains without electricity. The Chechen rebel government operates a Web site with reports about the conflict and other news from its perspective.

The Russian military continued to impose severe restrictions on journalists' access to the Chechen war zone, issuing accreditation primarily to those of proven loyalty to the Russian government. Few foreign reporters are allowed into the breakaway republic. In July 2001, the Russian military announced that journalists covering the war must be accompanied at all times by military officials. In August 2002, Russian soldiers briefly confiscated equipment from ORT television and TV Center crews who were filming fighting between federal troops and rebels near the town of Shalazhi. The journalists were accused by the army of having traveled to the town without a military escort.

Amendments to Russia's media law, which would have placed stricter controls on reporting on antiterrorist operations, were vetoed by Putin on November 25. Press freedom advocates had criticized the amendments, which parliament adopted quickly after the Moscow theater crisis, as an attempt to further censor coverage of the war in Chechnya. In April 2002, the U.S.-funded Radio Liberty began airing daily broadcasts from Prague in Chechen and two other North Caucasus languages. Originally scheduled to start broadcasting in February, Radio Liberty's governing body decided to postpone the broadcasts after protests by the Russian government, including threats to revoke Radio Liberty's license in Russia.

Most religious Chechens practice Sufism, a mystical form of Islam characterized by the veneration of local saints and by groups practicing their own rituals. The Wahhabi sect, with roots in Saudi Arabia and characterized by a strict observance of Islam, has been banned. Since the start of the last war in 1994, during which time many of the republic's schools have been damaged or destroyed, education in Chechnya has been sporadic. Most schools have not been renovated and continue to lack such basic amenities as textbooks, electricity, and running water.

Since the resumption of war, the rule of law has become virtually nonexistent. Civilians have been subject to harassment and violence, including torture, rape, and extrajudicial executions, at the hands of Russian soldiers, while senior

military authorities have shown general disregard for these abuses. Chechen fighters have targeted Chechens who have cooperated with Russian government officials and work for the pro-Moscow local administration. In November 2002, Putin ordered the creation of a Chechen interior ministry to be in charge of the local police force, a move designed to strengthen the pro-Moscow Chechen administration of Akhmed Kadyrov. Previously, the federal Interior Ministry had been responsible for overseeing Chechen law enforcement activities.

The trial of the first high-ranking Russian officer to be charged with a serious crime against a civilian in Chechnya ended on December 31, 2002, when a military court acquitted Colonel Yuri Budanov on charges of abducting and murdering a young Chechen woman in March 2000. The court ruled that Budanov had been temporarily insane at the time of the killing and ordered him sent to a psychiatric hospital for treatment. The verdict came after nearly two years of procedural delays and repeated psychiatric examinations, including two conducted by the Serbsky Institute, known for its role during the Soviet era of using psychiatry to condemn political dissidents. The New York-based Human Rights Watch condemned the verdict as "a travesty of justice" and an indication of Russia's resolve to shield its military from accountability for atrocities committed in Chechnya. Human rights groups emphasized that the Budanov case represents only one of many similar crimes committed by Russian soldiers against local civilians.

Prominent Chechen rebel leader Salman Raduyev, who was serving a life sentence in prison for leading a 1996 hostage-taking raid on a hospital in neighboring Dagestan that lead to the deaths of 78 people, died on December 14, 2002. While the Russian Ministry of Justice maintained that he died of natural causes, others, including representatives of the separatist Chechen leadership, insist that he was murdered. The Saudi-born Khattab, an elusive Chechen rebel commander accused of having links to Osama Bin Laden, was reportedly killed in March 2002 by a poisoned letter.

Russian troops continued to engage in so-called mopping-up operations, in which they seal off entire towns and conduct house-to-house searches for suspected rebels. During these security sweeps, soldiers have been accused of beating and torturing civilians, looting, and extorting money. Moreover, thousands of Chechens have gone missing or been found dead after such operations. In a high-level acknowledgment of the extent of these abuses, the commander of federal troops in Chechnya issued new rules in March 2002 for

troops conducting sweeps, including being courteous, identifying themselves, and providing a full list of those detained. However, human rights activists have accused federal troops of ignoring these rules, called Order 80. Similarly, under Decree No. 46, which was adopted after notoriously harsh sweeps in mid-2001, officials are supposed to compile comprehensive information on all detainees. However, Human Rights Watch maintains that the decree, meant to prevent forced disappearances or mistreatment of detainees, is not being fully implemented.

More than 100,000 Chechen refugees continue to seek shelter in the neighboring republic of Ingushetia, often living in appalling conditions in tent camps, in abandoned buildings, or in cramped quarters with friends or relatives. Despite assurances from the Russian government that refugees will not be forcibly returned, Human Rights Watch reported that migration officials were placing enormous pressure on displaced persons to leave in late 2002. In early December, Russian authorities closed a tent camp in neighboring Ingushetia housing some 1,700 Chechen refugees, and announced plans to close the five remaining tent camps sheltering an estimated 20,000 people. Critics charge that Moscow is using the resettlement plans to bolster its argument that it has restored order and stability to Chechnya. However, most refugees fear returning because of ongoing concerns for personal security, as well as a lack of employment and housing opportunities.

In mid-December, the Russian news agency Interfax reported that 4,704 Russian soldiers, officers, and policemen had been killed in Chechnya since 1999. However, the Soldiers' Mothers of Russia group estimates that casualty figures, which are impossible to verify, are more than double the official number provided. Both sides in the conflict routinely inflate enemy losses while downplaying their own casualty figures.

Travel both within and to and from the republic is severely restricted. After the resumption of war, the Russian military failed to provide safe exit routes for many civilians out of the conflict zones. Bribes are usually required to pass the numerous military checkpoints.

Widespread corruption and the economic devastation caused by the war severely limit equality of opportunity. Ransoms obtained from kidnapping and the lucrative illegal oil trade provide money for Chechens and members of the Russian military. Much of the republic's infrastructure and housing remains damaged or destroyed after years of war, with reconstruction efforts plagued by

chronic funding delays, money shortages, and corruption. The first installments of federal funding earmarked for 2002 were finally released in May. Much of the population ekes out a living selling produce or other goods at local markets. Residents who have found work are employed largely by the local police, the Chechen administration, the oil and construction sectors, or at small enterprises, such as cafés.

While women continue to face discrimination in a traditional male-dominated culture, the war has resulted in many women becoming the primary breadwinners for their families. Russian soldiers reportedly rape Chechen women in areas controlled by federal forces.

Appendix A: Table of Independent Countries 2003

	Country	PR	CL	Freedom Rating
	Afghanistan	6▲	6▲	Not Free
	Albania	3	3▲	Partly Free
	Algeria	6	5	Not Free
	Andorra	1	1	Free
	Angola	6	5▲	Not Free
	Antigua and Barbuda	4	2	Partly Free
↓	Argentina	3	3	Partly Free
	Armenia	4	4	Partly Free
	Australia	1	1	Free
	Austria	1	1	Free
	Azerbaijan	6	5	Partly Free
	Bahamas	1	1	Free
	Bahrain	5▲	5	Partly Free
	Bangladesh	4▼	4	Partly Free
	Barbados	1	1	Free
	Belarus	6	6	Not Free
	Belgium	1	1▲	Free
	Belize	1	2	Free
	Benin	3	2	Free
	Bhutan	6▲	5▲	Not Free
	Bolivia	2▼	3	Free
	Bosnia-Herzegovina	4▲	4	Partly Free
	Botswana	2	2	Free
	Brazil	2▲	3	Free
	Brunei	6▲	5	Not Free
	Bulgaria	1	2▲	Free
↑	Burkina Faso	4	4	Partly Free
↑	Burma	7	7	Not Free
	Burundi	6	5▲	Not Free
	Cambodia	6	5	Not Free
↑	Cameroon	6	6	Not Free
	Canada	1	1	Free
	Cape Verde	1	2	Free
	Central African Republic	5	5	Partly Free
	Chad	6	5	Not Free
	Chile	2	1▲	Free
	China	7	6	Not Free
	Colombia	4	4	Partly Free
	Comoros	5▲	4	Partly Free
	Congo (Brazzaville)	6▼	4	Partly Free
↑	Congo (Kinshasa)	6	6	Not Free
	Costa Rica	1	2	Free
	Cote d'Ivoire	6▼	6▼	Not Free
↓	Croatia	2	2	Free
↑	Cuba	7	7	Not Free
	Cyprus (G)	1	1	Free
	Czech Republic	1	2	Free
	Denmark	1	1	Free
	Djibouti	4	5	Partly Free
	Dominica	1	1	Free
	Dominican Republic	2	2	Free
	East Timor	3▲	3	Partly Free
	Ecuador	3	3	Partly Free
	Egypt	6	6	Not Free
	El Salvador	2	3	Free
	Equatorial Guinea	7▼	6	Not Free
	Eritrea	7	6	Not Free
	Estonia	1	2	Free
	Ethiopia	5	5	Partly Free
	Fiji	4	3	Partly Free
	Finland	1	1	Free
	France	1	1▲	Free
	Gabon	5	4	Partly Free
	The Gambia	4▲	4▲	Partly Free
	Georgia	4	4	Partly Free
	Germany	1	1▲	Free

Appendix A: Table of Independent Countries

	Country	PR	CL	Freedom Rating
	Ghana	2	3	Free
	Greece	1	2▲	Free
	Grenada	1	2	Free
	Guatemala	4▼	4	Partly Free
🡅	Guinea	6	5	Not Free
	Guinea-Bissau	4	5	Partly Free
	Guyana	2	2	Free
🡇	Haiti	6	6	Not Free
	Honduras	3	3	Partly Free
	Hungary	1	2	Free
	Iceland	1	1	Free
🡇	India	2	3	Free
	Indonesia	3	4	Partly Free
	Iran	6	6	Not Free
	Iraq	7	7	Not Free
	Ireland	1	1	Free
	Israel	1	3	Free
	Italy	1	1▲	Free
	Jamaica	2	3	Free
	Japan	1	2	Free
	Jordan	6▼	5	Partly Free
🡇	Kazakhstan	6	5	Not Free
	Kenya	4▲	4▲	Partly Free
	Kiribati	1	1	Free
	Korea, North	7	7	Not Free
	Korea, South	2	2	Free
	Kuwait	4	5	Partly Free
	Kyrgyzstan	6	5	Not Free
	Laos	7	6	Not Free
	Latvia	1	2	Free
🡇	Lebanon	6	5	Not Free
	Lesotho	2▲	3▲	Free
	Liberia	6	6	Not Free
	Libya	7	7	Not Free
	Liechtenstein	1	1	Free
	Lithuania	1	2	Free
	Luxembourg	1	1	Free
	Macedonia	3▲	3▲	Partly Free
	Madagascar	3▼	4	Partly Free
	Malawi	4	4▼	Partly Free
	Malaysia	5	5	Partly Free
	Maldives	6	5	Not Free
	Mali	2	3	Free
	Malta	1	1	Free
	Marshall Islands	1	1	Free
	Mauritania	5	5	Partly Free
	Mauritius	1	2	Free
	Mexico	2	2▲	Free
	Micronesia	1	2	Free
	Moldova	3▼	4	Partly Free
	Monaco	2	1	Free
	Mongolia	2	2▲	Free
	Morocco	5	5	Partly Free
	Mozambique	3	4	Partly Free
	Namibia	2	3	Free
	Nauru	1	2▲	Free
	Nepal	4▼	4	Partly Free
	Netherlands	1	1	Free
	New Zealand	1	1	Free
	Nicaragua	3	3	Partly Free
🡇	Niger	4	4	Partly Free
	Nigeria	4	5	Partly Free
	Norway	1	1	Free
	Oman	6	5	Not Free
🡅	Pakistan	6	5	Not Free
	Palau	1	2	Free
	Panama	1	2	Free
	Papua New Guinea	2	3	Free
🡇	Paraguay	4	3	Partly Free
	Peru	2▼	3	Free
	Philippines	2	3	Free
	Poland	1	2	Free
	Portugal	1	1	Free
	Qatar	6	6	Not Free
	Romania	2	2	Free
	Russia	5	5	Partly Free
	Rwanda	7	5▲	Not Free
	Saint Kitts and Nevis	1	2	Free
	Saint Lucia	1	2	Free
	Saint Vincent and Grenadines	2	1	Free
	Samoa	2	2	Free
	San Marino	1	1	Free
	Sao Tome and Principe	1	2	Free
	Saudi Arabia	7	7	Not Free
	Senegal	2▲	3▲	Free
	Seychelles	3	3	Partly Free
	Sierra Leone	4	4▲	Partly Free
	Singapore	5	4▲	Partly Free
	Slovakia	1	2	Free
	Slovenia	1	1▲	Free
	Solomon Islands	3▲	3▲	Partly Free
	Somalia	6	7	Not Free
	South Africa	1	2	Free
	Spain	1	1▲	Free
🡅	Sri Lanka	3	4	Partly Free
	Sudan	7	7	Not Free
	Suriname	1	2	Free
	Swaziland	6	5	Not Free
	Sweden	1	1	Free
	Switzerland	1	1	Free
	Syria	7	7	Not Free
	Taiwan	2▼	2	Free
	Tajikistan	6	5▲	Not Free
	Tanzania	4	3▲	Partly Free
🡇	Thailand	2	3	Free

	Country	PR	CL	Freedom Rating
	Togo	6▼	5	Not Free
	Tonga	5	3	Partly Free
	Trinidad and Tobago	3	3	Partly Free
	Tunisia	6	5	Not Free
	Turkey	3▲	4▲	Partly Free
	Turkmenistan	7	7	Not Free
	Tuvalu	1	1	Free
	Uganda	6	4▲	Partly Free
	Ukraine	4	4	Partly Free
	United Arab Emirates	6	5	Not Free
	United Kingdom *	1	1▲	Free
	United States	1	1	Free
↓	Uruguay	1	1	Free
	Uzbekistan	7	6	Not Free
	Vanuatu	1	2▲	Free
	Venezuela	3	4▲	Partly Free
	Vietnam	7	6	Not Free
	Yemen	6	5▲	Not Free
	Yugoslavia (Serbia/Montenegro)	3	2▲	Free
	Zambia	4▲	4	Partly Free
↓	Zimbabwe	6	6	Not Free

PR and CL stand for Political Rights and Civil Liberties

1 represents the most free and 7 the least free category

↑↓ up or down indicates a general trend in freedom

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

The freedom ratings reflect an overall judgment based on the results of *Freedom in the World 2003*

* Excluding Northern Ireland

Appendix B: Methodology

The survey team, composed of regional experts, posed a series of questions concerning the level of political rights and civil liberties in each country in the world and a select group of related or disputed territories. Using these criteria, Freedom House assigned each country and territory a numerical rating between 1 and 7 for both political rights and civil liberties, with 1 representing the most free and 7 the least free. Based on these ratings, each country and territory was then assigned to one of three broad categories: Free, Partly Free, and Not Free. A change in a country's political rights or civil liberties rating from the previous year is indicated by an arrow before the rating in question, along with a brief ratings change explanation. Freedom House also assigned upward or downward "trend arrows" to certain countries and territories which saw general positive or negative trends during the year that were not significant enough to warrant a ratings change. Trend arrows are indicated with arrows placed before the name of the country or territory in question, along with a brief trend arrow explanation.

In previous years, Freedom House labeled those countries and territories which received the lowest score of 7 for both political rights and civil liberties as "most repressive regimes." This year, the list has been expanded to include those countries and territories which received scores of 6 for political rights and 7 for civil liberties, or 7 for political rights and 6 for civil liberties. Freedom House recognizes that within these groups are gradations of repression that make some more repressive than others.

For a more detailed analysis of last year's survey methodology, please consult the methodology chapter from Freedom in the World 2001-2002. The methodology for the forthcoming survey edition, that will cover developments of 2002, will be published in Freedom in the World 2003.

Appendix C: About Freedom House

Freedom House is a clear voice for democracy and freedom around the world. Founded in 1941 by Eleanor Roosevelt, Wendell Willkie, and other Americans concerned with the mounting threats to peace and democracy, Freedom House has been a vigorous proponent of democratic values and a steadfast opponent of dictatorships of the far left and the far right.

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

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

Freedom House has opposed dictatorships in Central America and Chile, apartheid in South Africa, the suppression of the Prague Spring, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, genocide in Bosnia and Rwanda, and the brutal violation of human rights in countries including Cuba, Burma, China, and Iraq. It has championed the rights of democratic activists, religious believers, trade unionists, journalists, and proponents of free markets.

Today, Freedom House is a leading advocate of the world's young democracies, which are coping with the legacies of statism, dictatorship, and political repression. It conducts an array of U.S. and overseas research, advocacy,

education, and training initiatives that promote human rights, democracy, free market economics, the rule of law, independent media, and U.S. engagement in international affairs.