Spain

Population: 42,500,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GNI/capita: $14,580 **Civil Liberties:** 1
Life Expectancy: 79 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (94 percent), other (6 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Mediterranean and Nordic
Capital: Madrid

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

1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

After eight years of conservative rule, the Socialist Party won general elections in March 2004. The elections took place only a few days after the bombing of commuter trains in Madrid by al-Qaeda, the Islamic terrorist group, took the lives of nearly 200 people. The government's quick response in blaming Basque terrorists was largely seen as the reason for the conservatives' defeat at the polls. Keeping an election promise, the newly elected prime minister, Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, pulled 1,300 Spanish soldiers out of Iraq, citing the lack of a UN mandate for the 2003 U.S.-led invasion. On the domestic front, the government began drafting a law to legalize same-sex marriage.

The unification of present-day Spain dates from 1512. After a period of colonial influence and wealth, the country declined as a European power and was occupied by France in the early nineteenth century. By the end of the century, after a number of wars and revolts, Spain lost its American colonies. The Spanish Civil War, from 1936 to 1939, led to the deaths of more than 350,000 Spaniards and the victory of Franco's Nationalists, who executed, jailed, and exiled the opposition Republicans. During Franco's long rule, many countries cut off diplomatic ties, and his regime was ostracized by the United Nations from 1946 to 1955. Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA, or Basque Fatherland and Freedom) was formed in 1959 with the aim of creating an independent Basque homeland. After a transitional period on Franco's death in 1975, Spain emerged as a parliamentary democracy, joining the European Economic Community, the precursor to the European Union (EU), in 1986.

During the March 2004 parliamentary elections, the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) won more than 43 percent of the vote, capturing 164 seats in the Congress of Deputies (lower house). The PSOE toppled the conservative People's Party (PP), which had been in power for 11 years, and which took 148 seats. Other parties winning seats included the left Convergence and Union (CiU), Catalonia's Republican Left (ERC), the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV), the United Left (IU), and the Canarian Coalition (CC). Lacking an outright majority, the PSOE relied on the support of various regionalist parties to support its legislation. In the Senate, the PP led by winning 102 directly elected seats, while the PSOE took 81 directly elected seats.

The election came only three days after multiple terrorist bombings of commuter trains in Madrid that killed nearly 200 people. Shortly after the bombing, the conser-

vative government blamed ETA, a factor that angered voters when it was discovered that the perpetrators were linked to al-Qaeda. The attacks allegedly came in response to the conservative government's staunch support of the U.S.-led war in Iraq. Shortly after his accession to the post of prime minister, Rodriguez Zapatero pulled the 1,300 Spanish troops out of Iraq. However, he also promised to double the Spanish peacekeeping force in Afghanistan. A 16-year old Spaniard accused of trafficking a significant amount of explosives used in the bombing admitted to his role in the attacks during a very quick trial in November 2004 and received a six year sentence.

Regionalist pressures continued during the year as the Basque regional government continued to make plans for an illegal referendum in early 2005 that would propose *de facto* political independence from Spain. In the Catalan region, a coalition of socialists and radical nationalists joined forces after elections in November 2003 to demand more autonomy for the region.

In October 2004, the government, in collaboration with the French police, arrested ETA's political leader, Mikel Albizu, as well as his girlfriend and 16 other members of the group, in southwest France. The arrests, which also netted a significant amount of firearms and explosives, dealt a serious blow to the separatist group, which has been waging a 30-war against the Spanish state for Basque independence. By the end of the year, over 70 ETA members and collaborators had been arrested by the police.

The new government introduced a number of socially liberal pieces of legislation, including a same-sex marriage bill. If approved by parliament, Spain will be the third EU country to allow same-sex marriage. The prime minister, who made women's rights and gender equality a centerpiece of his electoral campaign, also introduced a "gender violence" law that would confront the widespread problem of domestic violence in the country.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of Spain can change their government democratically. The Chamber of Deputies has 350 members that are elected from closed party lists in individual constituencies. There is also a Senate, which has 259 members, 208 of which are directly elected and 51 of which are appointed as regional representatives. The country is divided into 17 autonomous regions with varying degrees of power. People generally have the right to organize in different political parties and other competitive groups of their choice. However, the Basque-separatist Batasuna Party remains permanently banned since 2003 for its alleged ties to the armed group ETA.

Political corruption remains an issue in Spain. Spain was ranked 22 out of 146 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2004 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Spain has a free and lively press with more than 100 newspapers that cover a wide range of perspectives and are active in investigating high-level corruption. Daily newspaper ownership, however, is concentrated within large media groups like Prisa and Zeta. A Syrian-born television reporter for the Qatar-based satellite network Al-Jazeera, Spanish citizen Tayseer Alouni, was arrested and placed in police custody again in November. Alouni was among 35 people arrested and charged with terror-related offenses in September 2003. Alouni, who has interviewed Osama bin Laden

for Al-Jazeera, was charged with having links to al-Qaeda and using reporting trips to Kabul, Afghanistan, as a cover for fund-raising activities.

The Basque separatist group, ETA, continued its campaign of fear targeted against journalists that oppose its views on the political situation in the disputed region. Journalists and newspapers reported receiving threats by ETA in October 2004.

Freedom of religion is guaranteed in Spain through constitutional and legal protections. Roman Catholicism, however, is the dominant religion and enjoys privileges that other religions do not, such as financing through the tax system. Jews, Muslims, and Protestants have official status through bilateral agreements with the state, while other religions (for example, Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormons) have no special agreements with the state.

The government does not restrict academic freedom. However, ETA and other Basque nationalists, through a campaign of street violence and vandalism in the region, continue to intimidate unsympathetic academics, journalists, and politicians. The constitution provides for freedom of assembly and the government respected this right. People are free to demonstrate and speak publicly. Domestic and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operated within the country freely without government restrictions. With the exception of members of the military, workers are free to organize and join unions of their choice. Workers also have the right to strike, although there are limitations imposed on foreigners. The Basic Act on Rights and Freedoms of Foreigners in Spain, which went into force in 2001, limits the rights of foreign workers to organize and strike. The law, which forces foreigners to "obtain authorization for their stay or residence in Spain" before they can organize, strike, or freely assemble, is intended to distinguish between "legal" and "irregular" foreigners. The issue is currently before the Constitutional Court.

The constitution provides for an independent judiciary. However, there have been concerns about the functioning of the judicial system, including the impact of media pressure on sensitive issues like immigration and Basque terrorism. The Spanish government endorsed a judicial reform plan in 2003 that will enhance the transparency of judges and magistrates. The judiciary has also been affected by Basque terrorism as judicial officials and law enforcement officers have been targets of ETA. Prison conditions generally met international standards. There were, however, reports of police abuse of prisoners, especially immigrants. Police can also hold suspects of certain terror-related crimes for up to five days with access only to a public lawyer.

The constitution provides for an ombudsman (the People's Defender) whose duties include investigating alleged human rights abuses by government officials.

The country has tightened its immigration legislation in recent years to stem the influx of immigrants into the country. In May, two foreign nationals who were loosely tied to the March 11 bomb attacks in Madrid were expelled from the country because they were deemed a threat to national security. The country's Aliens Law allows for the expulsion of legal immigrants if they are involved in activities that are considered threatening to the country's national security.

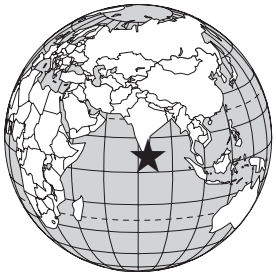
A Spanish national, Hamed Abderrahman Ahmed, who was held in U.S. military custody in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, was turned over to Spanish authorities in February.

Women enjoy legal protections against rape, domestic abuse, and sexual harassment in the workplace. Despite this, violence against women—particularly within

the home—remains a serious problem in the country. The new prime minister has made the protection of women's rights and gender equality a centerpiece of his administration. A "gender violence" law was drafted only a week after the government was installed in April.

There are no quotas for women in national elective office. However, 35 percent of the seats in parliament during the elections in March were won by women, a 7 percent increase from the previous elections in 2000. Trafficking in women for the purpose of sexual exploitation remains a problem. The government targets traffickers as part of its larger plan to control immigration.

Sri Lanka



Population: 19,600,000 **Political Rights:** 3
GNI/capita: $850 **Civil Liberties:** 3
Life Expectancy: 72 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Buddhist (70 percent), Hindu (15 percent), Christian (8 percent), Muslim (7 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Sinhalese (74 percent), Tamil (18 percent), Moor (7 percent), other (1 percent)
Capital: Colombo

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

1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
4,5PF	3,5PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,3PF	3,3PF

Overview:

The uneasy cohabitation between Sri Lanka's two main political parties came to an end in 2004, as President Chandrika Kumaratunga dissolved parliament in February and called for fresh elections to be held in April. Strengthened by a strategic electoral alliance with a leftist Sinhalese party, Kumaratunga's coalition was able to form a minority government, failing as it did to win a majority of seats in parliament. Meanwhile, wrangling between the southern political factions continues to impede any meaningful progress on peace talks with the Tamil Tiger separatist rebels. The February 2002 ceasefire is still in place and has contributed to somewhat greater freedom of movement and a reduction in human rights violations by security forces in the north and east of the country. However, the Tigers continue to commit numerous abuses, including the forcible conscription of child soldiers, politically motivated killings, and restrictions on freedom of expression and of association.

Since independence from Britain in 1948, political power in this island nation has alternated between the conservative United National Party (UNP) and the leftist Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP). While the country has made impressive gains in literacy, basic health care, and other social needs, its economic development has been stunted and its social fabric tested by a long-standing civil war that has killed an

estimated 65,000 people. The conflict initially pitted several Tamil guerrilla groups against the government, which is dominated by the Sinhalese majority. The war, although triggered by anti-Tamil riots in 1983 that claimed hundreds of lives, came in the context of long-standing Tamil claims of discrimination in education and employment opportunities. By 1986, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE, or Tamil Tigers), which called for an independent Tamil homeland in the Northeastern Province, had eliminated most rival Tamil guerrilla groups and was in control of much of the northern Jaffna Peninsula. At the same time, the government was also fighting an insurgency in the south by the leftist People's Liberation Front (JVP). The JVP insurgency, and the brutal methods used by the army to quell it in 1989, killed 60,000 people.

In 1994, Kumaratunga ended nearly two decades of UNP rule by leading the SLFP-dominated People's Alliance (PA) coalition to victory in parliamentary elections and then winning the presidential election. Early in her term, she tried to negotiate a peace agreement with the LTTE, but following a renewal of hostilities by the LTTE, she reverted to focusing on a military solution to the conflict. Kumaratunga won early presidential elections in 1999, but the UNP and its allies gained a majority in parliamentary elections held in December 2001, and UNP leader Ranil Wickremasinghe became prime minister.

In response to an LTTE ceasefire offer, the new government declared a truce with the rebels, lifted an economic embargo on rebel-held territory, and restarted Norwegian-brokered peace talks. A permanent ceasefire accord with provisions for international monitoring was signed in February 2002. Shortly before the first round of talks took place, the government lifted its ban on the LTTE, and by December 2002, the government and the Tigers had agreed to share political power in a federal system. Although the LTTE suspended its participation in peace talks in April 2003, it stated that it remained committed to a political solution. In June, bilateral and multilateral donors pledged a total of $4.5 billion over a four-year period to support Sri Lanka's reconstruction, although much of the aid was conditionally tied to further progress in reaching a settlement with the Tigers.

However, such progress has remained constrained by conflict between the two main political parties. In November 2003, President Kumaratunga declared a state of emergency, sacked three cabinet ministers and assumed their portfolios, and temporarily suspended parliament. In order to justify these steps, she expressed concern that LTTE proposals for the establishment of a Tiger-dominated Interim Self Governing Authority (IGSA) in the Northeastern Province were a threat to national security. However, analysts noted that an equally compelling impetus for her actions was the UNP's motion to initiate impeachment proceedings against the chief justice of the supreme court, whom the president views as a key ally.

Although the state of emergency was pulled back and parliament resumed functioning, Wickremasinghe claimed that his ability to govern had been severely curtailed by the fact that President Kumaratunga continued to hold the important defense portfolio. The impasse was broken when the president dissolved parliament in February 2004 and called for fresh elections to be held in April. Bolstered by the direct support of the Marxist JVP, Kumaratunga's new PA-led United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) coalition won 105 out of 225 seats and managed to form a minority government. Apart from the JVP, other extremist and ethnic-based parties

also made inroads, including a new party formed by Buddhist clergy, the Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU, or National Heritage Party), which won nine seats. The new government's tenuous grip on power became immediately apparent when it failed to secure the election of its candidate to the post of Speaker of parliament; instead, the UNP was able to win the position with the help of votes from members of the smaller ethnic parties.

Meanwhile, the ceasefire with the LTTE continued to hold, despite an increasing incidence of violations during the year. Of particular concern was a spate of assassinations by the LTTE of political opponents, suspected informants, and intelligence operatives in the northeast, and more unusually, in Colombo. Uncertainty was also created when the leader of the LTTE forces in the eastern part of the Northeastern Province, Colonel Karuna, who controlled an estimated 6,000 out of a total of 15,000 LTTE troops, formed a breakaway faction in March, alleging discrimination in the treatment of eastern Tamils by the LTTE leadership. However, his rebellion proved to be short lived; after fierce internecine fighting in April, Karuna disbanded his forces and went into hiding, although clashes and killings between the two groups continued throughout the year as both attempted to reassert their control over the east.

Though President Kumaratunga had repeatedly criticized the UNP government for making excessive concessions to the LTTE, she has indicated that she also remains committed to finding a political solution to the ethnic conflict. Nevertheless, progress in resuming meaningful peace talks has been complicated by the addition to the ruling coalition of the JVP, which adamantly opposes granting more powers to the provinces or to the LTTE, and by the presence of pro-Sinhalese forces such as the JHU in parliament. While the LTTE insists that any future talks include discussions on the formation of an IGSA, which would give them effective rule over the Northeastern Province, it is clear that the stability of the present coalition government would be at risk if Kumaratunga were to proceed with talks on this basis.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Sri Lankans can change their government through elections based on universal adult suffrage. The 1978 constitution vested strong executive powers in a president who is directly elected for a six-year term and can dissolve parliament. The 225-member unicameral parliament is directly elected for a five-year term through a mix of single-seat, simple-plurality districts and proportional representation. Elections are open to multiple parties, and fair electoral laws and equal campaigning opportunities ensure a competitive political process. While elections are generally free and fair, they continue to be marred by some irregularities, violence, and intimidation. However, the interim report issued by the independent Center for Monitoring Election Violence noted that with 368 incidents on election day, the 2004 elections were considerably less beleaguered by violence and malpractice than previous polls had been. The LTTE refuses to allow free elections in the areas under its control and continues to intimidate—and sometimes kill—members of rival non-militarized Tamil political parties.

In recent years, the fact that the executive and legislative branches of government have been controlled by competing parties headed by long-standing political rivals has led to a general unwillingness to effectively resolve issues and construct coherent state policies. Although President Chandrika Kumaratunga's coalition was

able to unseat the UNP's Ranil Wickremasinghe in the April 2004 elections and form a minority government headed by her choice of prime minister, it lacks the mandate and parliamentary strength to accomplish meaningful change. Differences of opinion between the main political factions over the correct way to approach the peace process have led to an inability to formulate a united strategy toward the LTTE and its specific demands during the ongoing but currently stalled negotiations.

Official corruption is a growing concern, and the legal and administrative framework currently in force is inadequate in terms of either promoting integrity or punishing the corrupt behavior of public officials. No current or former politician has thus far been sentenced for bribery or corruption, although a number of cases are under investigation or prosecution. Sri Lanka was ranked 67 out of 146 countries surveyed in the 2004 Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of expression is provided for in the constitution, and independent media outlets can generally express their views openly. However, the LTTE does not permit free expression in the areas under its control and continues to terrorize a number of Tamil journalists and other critics. During the November 2003 state of emergency, President Kumaratunga briefly deployed troops outside government-run media outlets and sacked the chairman of the government-owned Lake House media group. In 2004, the Colombo-based Free Media Movement repeatedly condemned the manipulation of the state media by the president's party for political ends, including pressure on editors and biased election coverage. Reporters, particularly those who cover human rights issues or official misconduct, continued to face harassment and threats from the police and security forces, government officials, political activists, and the LTTE. A number of journalists and media outlets were attacked during the year, and three journalists were killed. The government controls the largest newspaper chain, two major television stations, and a radio station, while business interests wield some control over content in the form of selective advertising and bribery.

Religious freedom is respected and members of all faiths are generally allowed to worship freely, although the constitution gives special status to Buddhism and there is some discrimination and occasional violence against religious minorities. The LTTE discriminates against Muslims in the areas under its control and has attacked Buddhist sites in the past. The U.S. State Department's 2004 Report on International Religious Freedom notes that Christian missionaries are occasionally harassed by Buddhist clergy and others opposed to their work. Tensions between the island's Buddhist majority and the Christian minority—and in particular, evangelical Christian groups—appear to be worsening, according to a report released in August by the U.S.-based Jubilee Campaign, with a sharp increase in attacks against churches and individuals noted at the end of 2003 and the introduction of draft anti-conversion legislation in May and June 2004.

The government generally respects academic freedom. However, the LTTE has a record of repressing the voices of those intellectuals who criticize its actions, sometimes through murder or other forms of violent intimidation. Groups such as the University Teachers for Human Rights-Jaffna (UTHR-J) have faced particularly severe harassment at the hands of the LTTE.

Freedom of assembly is generally respected, although both main political parties occasionally disrupt each other's rallies and political events. Except in conflict-affected areas, human rights and social welfare nongovernmental organizations gen-

erally operate freely. However, the LTTE does not allow for freedom of association in the regions under its control and reportedly uses coercion to force civilians to attend pro-LTTE rallies.

Trade unions are independent and engage in collective bargaining. Except for civil servants, most workers can hold strikes. However, under the 1989 Essential Services Act, the president can declare a strike in any industry illegal. Kumaratunga has used the act to end several strikes. Employers on tea plantations routinely violate the rights of the mainly Tamil workforce.

Successive governments have respected the constitutional provision for an independent judiciary, and judges can generally make decisions in an atmosphere free of overt intimidation from the legislative or executive branches. However, there is growing concern about the perceived politicization of the judiciary, in particular regarding the conduct of the chief justice of the Supreme Court. According to the Colombo-based Free Media Movement, he has narrowed the scope of human rights litigation, dismissed a number of judges without holding an inquiry or disciplinary hearing, and consistently defended the president and her party in legal actions relating to political disputes. At the lower levels of the judiciary, corruption is fairly common among both judges and court staff, and those willing to pay bribes have more efficient access to the legal system.

Despite an overall reduction in the number of human rights abuses committed by police and security forces, the rule of law remains somewhat weak, and torture and prolonged detention without trial continue to be issues of concern. Such practices are facilitated by legislation such as the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), under which security personnel can arrest and detain suspects indefinitely without court approval. Although over 1,000 detainees held under PTA legislation have been released since the February 2002 ceasefire, several dozen remained in custody at the end of 2003, according to Amnesty International. There has been little progress in reducing acts of torture by the security forces and police, particularly of detainees during routine interrogations. Cases of custodial death and custodial rape continue to be reported. A lack of aggressive prosecution of the majority of past abuses contributes to a climate of impunity for those who have overstepped the bounds of the law.

The LTTE has effective control on the ground in large sections of the north and east of the country and operates a parallel administration that includes schools, hospitals, courts, and police and other law enforcement personnel. The Tigers raise money through extortion, kidnapping, theft, and the seizure of Muslim property, and have used threats and attacks to close schools, courts, and government agencies in their self-styled Tamil homeland. Despite their involvement in the peace process, the rebels continue to be responsible for summary executions of civilians, disappearances, arbitrary abductions and detentions, torture, and the forcible conscription of children to be used as soldiers. Press reports as well as an exhaustive report issued by Human Rights Watch in November indicated that the Tigers continued to recruit thousands of teenage girls and boys in 2004 despite their signing of the "Action Plan for Children Affected by War" in June 2003, in which they pledged to release all children within their ranks. Recruitment efforts are at times so intense that parents keep their children home from school so they will not be forcibly abducted.

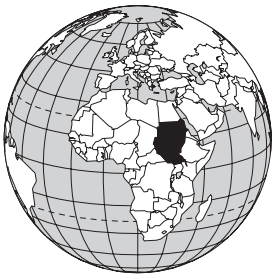
The LTTE has also targeted Tamil political parties that challenge its claim to represent the Tamil people, particularly the Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP),

with over 100 political killings being attributed to the LTTE since the ceasefire was signed, according to Human Rights Watch. A statement issued by the Colombo-based Peace Support Group noted that during a four-month period from April to July 2004, at least 40 people were killed as a consequence of their political affiliation, including EPDP members, followers of the breakaway Karuna faction of the LTTE, military intelligence officers, elected officials, and members of civil society.

Tamils maintain that they face systematic discrimination in several matters controlled by the state, including government employment, university education, and access to justice. Thousands of Tamils whose ancestors were brought from India to work as indentured laborers in the nineteenth century did not qualify for Sri Lankan citizenship and faced discrimination and exploitation by the native Sinhalese. However, in October 2003, the parliament approved legislation granting citizenship to about 170,000 previously stateless "Indian" Tamils. Tensions between the three major ethnic groups (Sinhalese, Tamil, and Muslim), which lead to occasional violent clashes, remain a concern. Overall, almost half of an estimated 730,000 internally displaced refugees have returned to their homes following the February 2002 ceasefire, but an equal number remain unwilling or unable to return to the northeast and continue to live in government-run camps throughout the country, according to Refugees International.

Women are under represented in politics and the civil service. Female employees in the private sector face some sexual harassment as well as discrimination in salary and promotion opportunities. Rape and domestic violence against women remain serious problems, and authorities weakly enforce existing laws. Although women have equal rights under civil and criminal law, matters related to the family, including marriage, divorce, child custody, and inheritance, are adjudicated under the customary law of each ethnic or religious group, and the application of these laws sometimes results in discrimination against women.

Sudan



Population: 39,100,000 **Political Rights:** 7
GNI/capita: $370 **Civil Liberties:** 7
Life Expectancy: 57 **Status:** Not Free
Religious Groups: Sunni Muslim (70 percent), indigenous beliefs (25 percent), Christian (5 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Black (52 percent), Arab (39 percent), Beja (6 percent), other (3 percent)
Capital: Khartoum

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

1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF

Overview:

A long-simmering conflict in Sudan's western Darfur region exploded into widespread acts of ethnic cleansing, massacre, rape, and forced displacement in 2004. The United

States classified the situation as genocide. Sudanese government forces and state-backed Arab militias killed at least 70,000 black Africans and created a massive refugee crisis affecting at least 1.5 million people. Despite a ceasefire between rebel groups and the government and the passage of UN Security Council resolutions against Khartoum, attacks against civilians continued throughout the year. The conflict in Darfur threatened to jeopardize progress toward a final resolution of the 22-year-long war in the country's South. The government carried out a broad security clampdown in response to an alleged coup attempt, re-arresting Hassan al-Turabi, a leading Sudanese Muslim cleric and former leader of the ruling political party.

Africa's largest country, which achieved independence in 1956 after nearly 80 years of British rule, has been embroiled in civil wars for 38 of its 48 years as an independent state. The Anyanya movement, representing mainly Christian and animist black Africans in southern Sudan, battled Arab Muslim government forces from 1956 to 1972. In 1969, General Jafar Numeiri toppled an elected government and ushered in a military dictatorship. The South gained extensive autonomy under a 1972 accord, and for the next decade, an uneasy peace prevailed. Then, in 1983, Numeiri restricted southern autonomy and imposed Sharia (Islamic law). Civil war resumed, and Numeiri was overthrown in 1985. Civilian rule was restored in 1986 with the election of a government led by Sadiq al-Mahdi of the moderate Islamic Ummah Party. War, however, continued. Lieutenant General Omar al-Bashir ousted al-Mahdi in a 1989 coup, and al-Mahdi spent seven years in prison or under house arrest before fleeing to Eritrea. Until 1999, al-Bashir ruled through a military-civilian regime backed by senior Muslim clerics including Hassan al-Turabi, who wielded considerable power as the ruling National Congress (NC) party leader and speaker of the 360-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 fired al-Turabi as NC head, replaced the cabinet with his own supporters, and held deeply flawed presidential and parliamentary elections in December 2000, which the NC won overwhelmingly. In June 2000, al-Turabi formed his own party, the Popular National Congress (PNC), but he was prohibited from participating in politics. In January 2001, the Ummah Party refused to join al-Bashir's new government despite the president's invitation, declaring that it refused to support totalitarianism.

Al-Turabi and some 20 of his supporters were arrested in February 2001 after he called for a national uprising against the government and signed a memorandum of understanding in Geneva with the southern-based, rebel Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA). In May 2001, al-Turabi and four aides were charged with conspiracy to overthrow the government, and al-Turabi was placed under house arrest. In September 2002, he was moved to a high-security prison and subsequently released in October 2003.

By sidelining al-Turabi, who was considered a leading force behind Sudan's efforts to export Islamic extremism, al-Bashir began to lift Sudan out of international isolation. Although Vice President Ali Osman Mohammed Taha—who replaced al-Turabi as Islamic ideologue—remains firmly committed to Sudan's status as an Islamic state and to the government's self-proclaimed jihad against non-Muslims, al-

Bashir has managed in recent years to repair relations with several countries, including the United States. After the September 11 terrorist attacks against the United States, al-Bashir offered his country's cooperation in combating terrorism. Sudan had previously provided a safe haven for Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda, the terrorist network.

In March 2004, al-Turabi was again placed under house arrest, this time on suspicion of plotting a coup with sympathizers of rebel groups in Darfur; al-Turabi had been outspokenly critical of the government's tactics in the region. In September, al-Turabi was jailed amid a broad security crackdown after the government said it foiled a coup attempt by his supporters. Thirty members of al-Turabi's PNC were detained, and authorities said they uncovered weapons caches in several locations around Khartoum.

Sudan's international image was substantially tarnished in 2004 as events in Darfur reached horrific proportions. The conflict began in earnest in February 2003 when the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), representing black farmers and villagers in Darfur, attacked Sudanese military garrisons in the region. Darfur residents had long complained of official discrimination, a lack of economic and land rights, and occasional pogrom-style attacks by state-backed Arab militias known as "Janjaweed." By early 2004, government and Janjaweed attacks against villages in Darfur were well under way, creating mass casualties and an enormous refugee crisis. Sudanese jet fighters and helicopter gunships routinely bombed and strafed villages. Horse- and camel-mounted Janjaweed militiamen, in seeming coordination with airborne government forces, would often follow air strikes, massacring survivors, especially men and boys. Hundreds of thousands of people, their villages torched, were forcibly displaced, relegated to makeshift, government-run refugee camps. Tens of thousands escaped westward to neighboring Chad. Attacks seemed to focus on three black tribal groups—the Fur, Massalit, and Zhagawa—which led to charges of racial discrimination, ethnic cleansing, and genocide by international human rights organizations. Many independent refugee accounts described a systematic campaign of rape of women by Janjaweed and government soldiers. By November 2004, approximately 70,000 people were dead and 1.5 million displaced.

Government-run camps for internally displaced people (IDPs) set up throughout Darfur lacked adequate sanitation facilities, water, or feeding centers. The government also routinely blocked humanitarian workers from accessing the camps. To discourage villagers from returning home, Janjaweed militiamen dumped the corpses of executed civilians into village wells to poison the water. Male refugees generally avoided venturing outside refugee camps for fear of being murdered; women generally went out in search of firewood and water, often exposing themselves to rape. By the fall of 2004, the World Health Organization announced that at least 10,000 people were dying monthly in the substandard and fetid camps. The UN World Food Program announced that nearly 22 percent of children under age five in Darfur were malnourished.

An April 2004 ceasefire between Darfur's rebel groups and government and Janjaweed forces broke down amid renewed Janjaweed attacks and failure by the government to disarm the militias. In July, the United States declared that the situation in Darfur amounted to genocide, and the African Union dispatched 300 moni-

tors to the region. The UN Security Council adopted a resolution imposing a 30-day deadline on Khartoum to restore stability by disarming the Janjaweed and allowing the safe return of refugees. The resolution did not outline penalties for failure to adhere to its terms, and the deadline passed without Sudanese government compliance. In August, the government and rebel groups began what would become on-and-off peace talks in Nigeria. Meanwhile, the United Nations reported that traumatized refugees were being forcibly returned to unsafe villages vulnerable to attack by the Janjaweed, in violation of the government's prior agreement with the UN. In September, reports of continued fighting and renewed refugee movements emerged. The UN Security Council authorized another resolution, but again declined to threaten specified sanctions.

In late October, in the face of mounting international pressure, the Sudanese government approved the dispatch of 3,500 additional African Union troops. Their mobilization was delayed, however, because of lack of funds; the United States provided air transport for some. Khartoum approved the dispatch of the additional troops on condition that they not assume a civilian protection role. Rebel groups reported fresh government air attacks after Khartoum signed a peace pact in November and agreed to ban military flights over Darfur.

The Darfur crisis threatened to derail progress made in finally resolving the 22-year-long civil war in the country's South. While hostilities in the South declined markedly in 2004, a final settlement to the conflict was not achieved by the end of the year. The war pitted government forces and government-backed, northern Arab Muslims against African animists and Christians in the country's oil-rich South. A convoluted mix of historical, religious, ethnic, and cultural tensions has made peace elusive, while competition for economic resources—most notably, oil—has fueled 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.

Throughout the war, the government regularly bombed civilian targets, including villages, churches, and humanitarian relief facilities. The government also denied humanitarian relief workers access to rebel-held areas or areas containing large concentrations of internal refugees. The SPLA also engaged in attacks on civilians and child soldier recruitment. Human Rights Watch has documented how the Sudanese government used roads, bridges, and airfields built by international oil companies to wage war in the South, especially in the oil rich Western Upper Nile region. Some of the companies were criticized for ignoring government attacks against civilian targets.

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, as Afghanistan had prior to September 11, 2001. In 2003, substantive peace talks under the auspices of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) finally resulted in a relaxation of hostilities and a high degree of optimism that a final resolution of the conflict was within reach. In December 2003, an agreement was reached on the sharing of oil wealth.

Talks continued in 2004, culminating in the June signing of the Nairobi Declara-

tion. The agreement paved the way toward a comprehensive ceasefire and a six-year transition period leading to a referendum on southern secession, during which time the government would withdraw 80 percent of its troops from the South. However, continued negotiations in the summer broke down amid the worsening crisis in Darfur, effectively stalling the IGAD process. Several international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) expressed concern that the West was neglecting the IGAD process while focusing almost exclusively on Darfur.

By October, the protocols signed in 2003 were still not in place. However, optimism was high that a peace accord would be signed early in the New Year.

While the United Nations has lifted sanctions against Sudan, the United States still maintains its own based on the country's human rights abuses and its alleged continuing support for terrorism.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Sudanese citizens cannot change their government democratically. December 2000 presidential and parliamentary elections cannot credibly be said to have reflected the will of the people. The major opposition parties, which are believed to have the support of most Sudanese, boycotted in protest of what they said were attempts by a totalitarian regime to impart the appearance of fairness. The European Union declined an invitation to monitor the polls to avoid bestowing legitimacy on the outcome. Omar al-Bashir, running against former president Jafar Numeiri and three relative unknowns, won 86 percent of the vote. NC candidates stood uncontested for nearly two-thirds of parliamentary seats. Voting did not take place in some 17 rebel-held constituencies, and government claims of 66 percent voter turnout in some states were denounced as fictitious. The president can appoint and dismiss state governors at his discretion.

Sudan was ranked 122 out of 146 countries surveyed in the 2004 Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index.

There is little press freedom in Sudan. Journalists practice self-censorship to avoid harassment, arrest, and closure of their publications. However, there are several daily newspapers and a wide variety of Arabic- and English-language publications, and while all of these are subject to censorship, some do criticize the government. Radio and television stations are owned by the government and are required to reflect government policy in broadcasts. Penalties apply to journalists who allegedly harm the nation or economy or violate national security. A 1999 law imposes penalties for "professional errors." In recent years, several journalists have been detained without explanation, and newspapers have been arbitrarily shut down by the authorities. There were reports throughout the year that the government was preventing journalists from traveling to Darfur to cover the conflict there.

Islam is the state religion, and the constitution claims Sharia (Islamic law) 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 have starved under a policy of withholding food 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 legally gather. Registration is reportedly difficult to obtain.

The government denies permission to build churches and sometimes destroys Christian schools, centers, and churches. Roman Catholic priests face random detention and interrogation by police.

Emergency law severely restricts freedom of assembly and association. Students are forbidden to participate in political activities, according to the Acts of Student Codes, introduced in 2002 after several university students in Khartoum were suspended for engaging in human rights activities, including organizing symposiums on women's rights and attending a conference on democracy. Other students have been expelled for organizing political activities, and security forces have forcefully broken up demonstrations and periodically closed the University of Khartoum.

According to the *Los Angeles Times*, in April Janjaweed gunmen attacked a school in the Darfur town of Kailek, killing six teachers and 36 children. Many other villages reported similar attacks on schools, stemming from what was claimed to be a government policy of anti-black discrimination.

While many international NGOs operate in Sudan, the government at times restricts their movement and ability to carry out their work, which often includes providing essential humanitarian assistance. In early November, the UN World Food Program reported that Sudanese army and police had surrounded IDP camps in Darfur and were barring outside access to the camps' inhabitants. Humanitarian workers have also been targeted, and in some cases kidnapped and killed, by rebel groups.

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

The judiciary is not independent. The chief justice of the Supreme Court, who presides over the entire judiciary, is government appointed. Regular courts provide some due process safeguards, but special security and military courts, which are used to punish political opponents of the government, provide none. "Special courts" often deal with criminal matters, despite their use of military judges. Criminal law is based on Sharia and provides for flogging, amputation, crucifixion, and execution. Ten southern, predominantly non-Muslim states are officially exempted from Sharia, although criminal law allows for its application in the future if the state assemblies choose to implement it. Arbitrary arrest, detention, and torture are widespread, and security forces act with impunity. Prison conditions do not meet international standards.

Serious human rights abuses by nearly every faction involved in the country's long-standing civil war and in the Darfur conflict have been reported. Secret police reportedly have operated "ghost houses"—detention and torture centers—in several cities. Government forces are said to have routinely raided villages, burning homes, killing residents, and abducting women and children to be used as slaves in the North. Relief agencies have discovered thousands of people held captive in the North and have purchased their freedom so they could return to the South. In 2002, the International Eminent Persons Group—a fact-finding mission composed of humanitarian relief workers, human rights lawyers, academics, and former European and American diplomats—confirmed the existence of slavery in Sudan. The group also reported on abductions and forced servitude under the SPLA's authority. Although there has been no organized effort to compile casualty statistics in southern

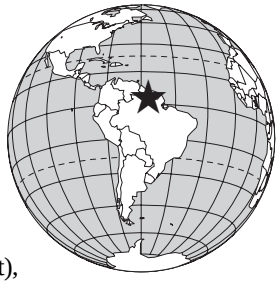
Sudan since 1994, the total number of people killed by war, famine, and disease is believed to exceed two million, with millions more displaced as refugees.

In February, national security agency officials arrested Salih Mahmoud Osman, a lawyer and member of the Sudanese Organization Against Torture (SOAT), after he advocated publicly on behalf of civilians in Darfur. He reportedly began a hunger strike at the end of June while being held incommunicado and without having been formally charged. According to Amnesty International, in August several civilians in Darfur reported being imprisoned for speaking with foreign journalists and visiting dignitaries, including U.S. secretary of state Colin Powell and UN secretary general Kofi Annan. SOAT has reported on the arbitrary arrest and torture of several people, including students suspected of engaging in political activities or harboring SPLA sympathies.

An anonymously written book about ingrained discrimination in Sudan circulated widely during the year. Called the "Black Book," it laid out in succinct detail a broad system of favoritism of northern Arabs over other peoples in Sudan. The book states that Sudan's northern region, constituting roughly 5 percent of the country's population, is overly represented in government. Most of the national budget is devoted to northern development, with other, non-Arab regions notably neglected by Khartoum, the book says. Equality of opportunity and business and property rights are generally restricted to Sudan's Arab Muslim community.

Women face discrimination in family matters such as marriage, divorce, and inheritance, which are governed by Sharia. Women are represented in parliament and hold 35 of the assembly's 360 seats. Public order police frequently harass women and monitor their dress for adherence to government standards of modesty. Female genital mutilation occurs despite legal prohibition, and rape is reportedly widespread in war zones. In March, the BBC reported the mass rape of at least 100 women by militiamen in Darfur. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour speculated during the year that the systematic raping of women in Darfur would constitute crimes against humanity. There was also evidence of official attempts to cover up the problem: police arrested a Darfur man filing a complaint with the African Union ceasefire commission about attacks against women at a camp in El Fasher. He was released only after UN intervention. According to Amnesty International, women have less access to legal representation than men. 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 Darfur conflict, just as they were used in the civil war in the South.

Suriname



Population: 400,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GNI/capita: $1,921 **Civil Liberties:** 2
Life Expectancy: 70 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Hindu (27.4 percent), Muslim (19.6 percent), Roman Catholic (22.8 percent), Protestant (25.2 percent), indigenous beliefs (5 percent)
Ethnic Groups: East Indian (37 percent), Creole (31 percent), Javanese (15 percent), other (17 percent)
Capital: Paramaribo

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

1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F

Overview:

Legislative elections scheduled for May 2005 dominated Suriname's political debate in 2004, with speculation over whether the ruling New Front (NF) would prevail in the face of the surprising popularity of the party of a former dictator of Suriname.

The Republic of Suriname achieved independence from The Netherlands in 1975, which had acquired it as a result of the Treaty of Breda with the British in 1667. Five years after independence, a military coup, which brought Desi Bouterse to power as the head of a regime that brutally suppressed civic and political opposition, initiated a decade of military intervention in politics. In 1987, Bouterse permitted elections that were won handily by the NF, a four-party coalition of mainly East Indian, Creole, and Javanese parties. The National Democratic Party (NDP), organized by the military, won just three seats.

In 1990, the army ousted President Ramsewak Shankar, and Bouterse again took power, this time in a bloodless putsch popularly known as the "telephone coup." International pressure led to new elections in 1991. The center-right NF won a majority, although the NDP increased its share to 12. The National Assembly selected the NF's candidate, Ronald Venetiaan, as president. Bouterse quit the army in 1992 in order to lead the NDP. In the May 25, 2000, legislative elections, the NF won the majority of 51 National Assembly seats—three times as many as its closest rival.

The May 2001 death of a labor leader who was to be the star witness in a trial against Bouterse and others accused of 15 political killings committed on December 8, 1982, initially appeared to rob the prosecution of key testimony. However, the government vowed that testimony given by the witness during a preliminary hearing would be submitted in the trial by the judge who questioned him. The death of the lone survivor of the December 1982 massacre came amid a renewed push by the Dutch to bring Bouterse to account for the murders and for his role in the 1982 coup. He had already been tried and convicted by a Dutch court in absentia on charges of having introduced more than two tons of cocaine into The Netherlands between 1989 and 1997. Suriname did not extradite Bouterse to The Netherlands because of a bilateral agreement not to extradite their own citizens to each other's country.

In October 2002, authorities from neighboring Guyana complained that Suriname is a major supply route for illegal arms used in a crime wave gripping the Guyanese capital of Georgetown. The spillover effects of narcotics trafficking and the drug trade's ties to top political leaders—including Bouterse—continued to make the news.

In October 2003, a judge gave more than 50 convicted cocaine traffickers light sentences in an effort by the government to reduce overcrowding in the country's jails. The UN Drug Control Agency estimates that 20 tons of cocaine are smuggled annually through Suriname to Europe alone. Also in October, Dino Bouterse—the son of Desi Bouterse—was acquitted by a military court of stealing more than 80 guns, including 21 AK-47 assault rifles, from the government's secret service compound. The court ruled that there was insufficient evidence to convict him.

In 2004, legislative elections scheduled for May 2005 dominated Suriname's political debate, with observers saying that the ruling NF coalition headed by President Venetiaan appeared posed to capitalize on the country's new-found price and exchange-rate stability. However, a July public opinion poll by the Institute for Demographic Research showed surprising strength for Bouterse's NDP, which placed less than 1 percent behind the NF. The relatively weak showing by the NF reflected voter discontent, in part, with the side effects of the government's fiscal austerity program, which helped to stabilize both prices and the economy generally.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of Suriname can change their government democratically. The 1987 constitution provides for a 51-seat National Assembly, directly elected by proportional representation, which serves a five-year term and selects the state president. A Council of State (Raad van State), consisting of the president and representatives of the major political groupings, including unions, business, the military, and the legislature, has veto power over legislation deemed to violate the constitution.

Political parties largely reflect the cleavages in Suriname's ethnically complex society, although political-racial discord is much less than in neighboring Guyana. A record number of 23 parties competed in the 2000 elections.

The Heritage Foundation/*Wall Street Journal 2004 Index of Economic Freedom* found that corruption is rampant in Suriname, regulations are applied randomly, and there is a general level of very high regulation. Favoritism, particularly at elite levels, is common in business and government. Suriname was ranked 49 out of 146 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2004 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The government generally respects freedom of expression. Radio is both public and private. A number of small commercial radio stations compete with the government-owned radio and television broadcasting systems, which generally offer pluralistic viewpoints. The government does not restrict access to the Internet. Public access to government information is recognized in law; however, it is very limited in practice.

The government generally respects freedom of religion and does not restrict academic freedom.

Although civic institutions remain weak, human rights organizations function freely. Freedom of assembly and association are provided for in the constitution,

and the government respects these rights in practice. Workers can join independent trade unions, and the labor movement is active in politics. Collective bargaining is legal and conducted fairly widely. Civil servants have no legal right to strike.

The judiciary is weak and susceptible to political influence and suffers from ineffectiveness, a significant shortage of judges, and a large backlog of cases. The courts and the prisons are seriously overburdened by the volume of people detained for narcotics trafficking. The civilian police abuse detainees, particularly during arrests; guards mistreat prisoners; and prisons are dangerously overcrowded. Military personnel generally are not subject to civilian criminal law.

Discrimination against indigenous and tribal peoples is widespread. Tribal peoples, called Maroons, are the descendants of escaped African slaves who formed autonomous communities in the rain forest in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Their rights to their lands and resources, to cultural integrity, and to the autonomous administration of their affairs are not recognized in Surinamese law.

Constitutional guarantees of gender equality are not enforced. Several organizations specifically address violence against women and related issues. Despite their central role in agriculture and food production, 60 percent of rural women, particularly those in tribal communities, live below the poverty level. In the absence of a comprehensive law against trafficking in persons, the practice, including the sexual exploitation of women and children, remained a problem. In 2004, there were no convictions for such trafficking.

Swaziland

Population: 1,200,000 **Political Rights:** 7
GNI/capita: $1,240 **Civil Liberties:** 5
Life Expectancy: 43 **Status:** Not Free
Religious Groups: Zionist [a blend of Christianity and indigenous ancestral worship] (40 percent), Roman Catholic (20 percent), Muslim (10 percent), other (30 percent)
Ethnic Groups: African (97 percent), European (3 percent)
Capital: Mbabane
Trend Arrow: Swaziland received a downward trend arrow due to an increase in the autocratic powers of the king under the country's new constitution.

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

1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,4NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	7,5NF	7,5NF

Overview:

Public debate of Swaziland's controversial and long-delayed draft constitution concluded at a conference in September 2004 that was dominated by supporters of royal rule and largely ignored submissions by labor and human rights groups urging democratic reforms. In November, the parliament, a body with little independent authority, voted overwhelmingly to ratify the new constitution.

Swaziland's King Mswati III is the latest monarch of the Dlamini dynasty, under which the Swazi kingdom expanded and contracted in conflicts with neighboring groups. Britain declared the kingdom a protectorate to prevent Boer expansion in the 1880s and assumed administrative power in 1903. Swaziland regained its independence in 1968, and an elected parliament was added to the traditional kingship and chieftaincies. In 1973, Mswati's predecessor, Sobhuza II (who died in 1983) repealed the 1968 constitution, ended the multiparty system in favor of the *tinkhundla* (local council) system, and declared himself absolute monarch.

Voting in October 1998 legislative elections was marked by very low turnout and was neither open nor fair. It was based on the Swazi tinkhundla system of closely controlled nominations and voting that seeks to legitimatize the rule of King Mswati III and his Dlamini clan. Security forces arrested and briefly detained labor and other pro-democracy leaders before the elections and after a series of bomb blasts. The 55 elected members of the National Assembly were approved by the government and were joined by 10 royal appointees.

Parliamentary elections in October 2003 were preceded by calls by critics of royal rule to boycott the polls, which were not deemed credible by international observers. However, the number of women legislators increased to an impressive 30 percent, or a total of 16 of 55 seats.

The country's new constitution, a product of five years of work by the Constitutional Review Commission, was unveiled in May 2003. Drafted by two of King Mswati's brothers, the document maintains a ban on political opposition to royal rule and reaffirms the palace's absolute control over the cabinet, parliament, and the courts. Although it provides for limited freedom of speech, assembly, and association, as well as limited equality for women, King Mswati may waive these rights at his discretion. In September 2004, public debate of the constitution concluded at a conference dominated by supporters of royal rule; submissions by labor and human rights groups that pushed for democratic reforms were largely ignored. The king has set a November deadline for ratification of the new charter by the parliament, a body with little independent authority. A group called the National Constitutional Assembly—a coalition of trade unions, banned political parties, and other civil society groups—is seeking an order from the country's Supreme Court to block King Mswati from decreeing the new constitution into law. The document already has the approval of parliament.

Most Swazis remain engaged in subsistence agriculture. In addition, many families depend on income from men working in South African mines. The country has the world's highest rate of HIV infection, at 38.6 percent of all adults.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of Swaziland cannot change their government democratically. King Mswati III is an absolute monarch, and royal decrees carry the full force of law. Of the 65 members of the National Assembly, 55 are elected by popular vote and 10 are appointed by the king. The king also appoints 20 members of the Senate, with the remaining 10 selected by the National Assembly. Members of both houses serve five-year terms. Political parties are banned by the constitution, although there are political associations, the two largest being the People's United Democratic Movement (PUDEMO) and the Ngwane National Liberatory Congress (NNLC).

Swaziland was not surveyed in the 2004 Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index. A private firm hired by the Finance Ministry estimates that the government is losing more than $6.5 million per month to corrupt practices. An Anti-Corruption Unit was established in 1998 but has failed to produce a single indictment.

Freedom of expression is severely restricted, especially regarding political issues or matters concerning the royal family. Legislation bans publication of any criticism of the monarchy, and self-censorship is widespread. However, broadcast and print media from South Africa are received in the country. There is one independent radio station, which broadcasts religious programming. In 2003, the new information minister, Abednego Ntshangase, announced that the state media would not be permitted to cover anything that has a "negative bearing" on the government. The ban affects the country's only television station and news-carrying radio channels. The government does not restrict access to the Internet.

Freedom of religion is respected, although there are no formal constitutional provisions protecting the practice. Academic freedom is limited by self-censorship. The government restricts freedom of assembly and association. Political parties are banned, and pro-democracy protests are sometimes violently broken up by police using tear gas and rubber bullets. The trade union movement remains a target of police and government repression. The Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions (SFTU), the country's largest labor organization, has been a leader in demands for democratization, but not successfully, given the absolute rule of the monarch. Jan Sithole, the SFTU general secretary, has been jailed several times in recent years, and he and his family have received death threats. In 2001, Sithole and five other union leaders were charged with contempt of court and brought to trial for organizing a strike that had been banned by the authorities; the case was eventually dismissed. Workers in all elements of the economy, including the public sector, can join unions, and 80 percent of the private workforce is unionized. Wage agreements are often reached by collective bargaining.

The judiciary, which is based on Western and traditional law, is generally independent in most civil cases, although the royal family and the government often refuse to respect rulings with which they disagree. Swaziland's judicial system became mired in crisis in November 2002, when six South African judges on the court of appeals resigned after the prime minister said that the government would ignore court judgments that curbed the king's power. The appeals court was reconstituted in November 2004, following assurances that the government would adhere to its decisions.

There are regular reports of police brutality, including torture, beatings, and suspicious deaths of suspects in custody. Security forces generally operate with impunity and have used heavy-handed tactics to break up pro-democracy rallies. Prisoners complain of beatings and overcrowding, and of neglect of inmates suffering from HIV and AIDS.

The legal code provides some protection against sexual harassment, but Swazi women encounter discrimination in both formal and customary law. Employment regulations requiring equal pay for equal work are obeyed unevenly. Married women are considered minors, requiring spousal permission to enter into almost any form of economic activity, and they are allowed only limited inheritance rights. Only men can pass on Swazi citizenship to their children. Violence against women is common despite traditional strictures against it, and rape frequently goes unpunished.

Sweden

Population: 9,000,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GNI/capita: $25,970 **Civil Liberties:** 1
Life Expectancy: 80 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Lutheran (87 percent), other [including Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Baptist, Muslim, Jewish and Buddhist] (13 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Swedish (majority), Finnish, Sami
Capital: Stockholm

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

1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

In 2004, Swedes closely followed the trial and sentencing of the man responsible for the 2003 murder of Foreign Minister Anna Lindh. Elections to the European Parliament that were held in June resulted in a setback for the ruling Social Democrats and an increase in support for euro-skeptic parties.

After a series of monarchical alliances with Finland, Denmark, and Norway in the eleventh through nineteenth centuries, Sweden emerged as a modern democracy. Its tradition of neutrality, beginning with World War I, was altered somewhat by its admission to the European Union (EU) in 1995, and further eroded by a more pragmatic approach to security first presented in 2002. However, Sweden has retained its commitment to stay outside of military alliances, including NATO.

The Social Democrats, led by Prime Minister Goran Persson, have dominated politics since the 1920s. With their partners, the Left (formerly Communist) Party and the Greens, the Social Democrats won 191 out of 349 seats in the 2002 parliamentary elections, promising not to cut back the generous welfare system. An impressive 79 percent of eligible Swedes voted in the poll.

The population overwhelmingly rejected the adoption of the euro in a referendum in September 2003, despite strong support from government and business. The "no" vote was generally attributed to popular fears of deterioration in Sweden's generous welfare state benefits and damage to the Swedish economy. The "no" vote may also have been a reflection of skepticism about the EU as a whole.

On September 10, 2003, just days before the referendum, Foreign Minister Lindh was mortally wounded in a knife attack in a Stockholm department store. The killing sparked considerable debate about security in Sweden, where violence is very rare and politicians regularly travel without bodyguards in order to maintain direct contact with citizens.

In January 2004, Mijailo Mijailovic confessed to the murder, claiming it was a random attack motivated by "voices inside his head." In March, a Stockholm district court sentenced Mijailovic to life in prison, finding him mentally sound and guilty of murder. However, an appeals court overturned this verdict in June and ordered Mijailovic to a closed psychiatric ward after declaring him insane, a decision that

rules out prison under Swedish law. The appeals court ruling was met with general dismay by the Swedish population and elicited widespread criticism of the Swedish psychiatric care system. The case was sent to the Supreme Court and was pending as of November 30.

Elections to the European Parliament in June saw only 37 percent of Swedes cast their ballots. Those that did vote gave a surprising 3 seats (of 19) to the euro-skeptic June List, a coalition that formed in the wake of the defeat of the referendum on the euro. The Social Democrats led all parties with 5 seats but garnered a lower percentage of votes than expected, a fate shared by their allies the Green Party (1 seat) and the Left Party (2 seats). The right-of-center opposition parties, who recent opinion polls show are gaining in popularity, earned the rest of the seats: the Moderates won 4 seats, the People's Party captured 2 seats, the Center Party took 1 seat, and the Christian Democrats secured 1 seat. In October, Prime Minister Persson reshuffled his cabinet in hopes of heading off the center-right ahead of the 2006 parliamentary elections.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Swedes can change their government democratically. The unicameral parliament, the Riksdag, has 349 members, 310 of whom are elected every four years in a proportional system. The remaining 39 seats are awarded on a national basis to further secure a proportional representation. A party must receive at least 4 percent of the votes in the entire country or 12 percent in a single electoral district to qualify for any seats. The prime minister is appointed by the Speaker of the Riksdag and confirmed by the Riksdag. King Carl XVI Gustaf, crowned in 1973, is head of state, but royal power is limited to official and ceremonial functions.

The principal religious, ethnic, and immigrant groups are represented in parliament. Since 1993, the Sami community elects its own parliament, which has significant powers over education and culture and serves as an advisory body to the government.

Corruption is very low. Transparency International ranked Sweden the sixth least corrupt country in the world in its 2004 Corruption Perceptions Index. However, recent instances of corporate graft have stained Sweden's image. In 2003, some 80 employees of the state-owned alcohol retail monopoly Systembolaget were brought to court on bribery charges. In December 2003, executives from the insurance group Skandia were investigated and found culpable of fraudulent accounting and reaping millions of kroner in excessive bonuses.

Sweden's media are independent. Most newspapers and periodicals are privately owned, and the government subsidizes daily newspapers regardless of their political affiliation. The Swedish Broadcasting Corporation and the Swedish Television Company broadcast weekly radio and television programs in several immigrant languages. The ethnic press is entitled to the same subsidies as the Swedish-language press. Reporters Sans Frontieres has reported that journalists who investigate extreme right-wing groups are regularly threatened and even physically attacked by neo-Nazi militants.

Religious freedom is constitutionally guaranteed. Although the country is 87 percent Lutheran, all churches, as well as synagogues and mosques, receive some state financial support. Academic freedom is ensured for all.

Freedom of assembly and association is guaranteed, as are the rights to strike and participate in unions. Trade union federations are strong and well organized and represent approximately 80 percent of the workforce.

Sweden's judiciary, which includes the Supreme Court, district courts, and a court of appeals, is independent. The government maintains effective control of the security and armed forces. No instances of human rights abuses by police were reported during the year. A series of highly publicized jail breaks in 2004 called into question the traditional leniency of the Swedish penal system.

The Swedish intelligence service reports that neo-Nazi activity is increasing in Sweden, which is one of the world's largest producers of racist and xenophobic Web sites. However, the movement's main political party, Sweden Democrats, won only 1.4 percent of the vote in the 2002 general election, not enough to win seats in the Riksdag. In December 2003, anti-Nazi demonstrators attempting to break up a neo-Nazi march clashed with police, resulting in 12 injuries. Anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim attacks are on the rise.

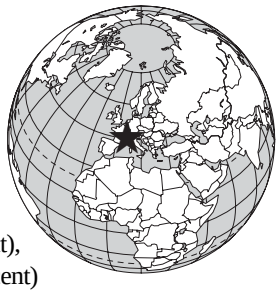
The first half of 2004 saw only 10 percent of refugees granted asylum in Sweden, a large drop-off from previous years and the result of stricter government policy toward refugees from Iraq and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Sweden is generally very welcoming of refugees, but its immigration policy has become more restrictive in recent years. In April, Swedish officials revealed that hundreds of asylum seekers were mutilating their fingerprints in order to avoid identification by EU officials, who use a Union-wide database to store asylum seekers' fingerprints. If identified as having already attempted to secure asylum status in another EU country, asylum seekers may be expelled from Sweden.

Despite the support of the ruling Social Democrats, in April the Riksdag rejected a proposal to temporarily maintain work permit requirements for nationals from the 10 new EU countries. The proposal aimed to head off an influx of workers from the new EU countries, and was opposed by a diverse coalition of the Left Party, the Green Party, the Center Party, and the Christian Democrats.

Sweden is a leader in gender equality. At 45 percent, the proportion of females in the Riksdag is the highest of any parliament in the world, and half of all government ministers are women. Although 79 percent of women work outside the home, women still make only 70 percent of men's wages in the public sector and 76 percent in the private sector. Prime Minister Goran Persson has announced that the government will tighten already strict laws on gender equality if the gap remains in two years. Women are under represented on company boards as well, and the government has threatened to introduce quotas if this does not change. Trafficking in women and children to and through Sweden from other countries is a problem, which the government is taking significant steps to deal with.

In April, the Riksdag established a commission to consider replacing the current law permitting same-sex civil unions with one allowing gay marriage. Sweden gave formal recognition to adoption by gay couples for the first time in February 2003; however, no foreign adoption agencies have agreed to send children to gay households.

Switzerland



Population: 7,400,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GNI/capita: $36,170 **Civil Liberties:** 1
Life Expectancy: 80 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (46 percent), Protestant (40 percent), other (14 percent)
Ethnic Groups: German (63.7 percent), French (19.2 percent), Italian (7.6 percent), Romansch (0.6 percent), other (8.9 percent)
Capital: Bern

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

1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

In 2004 there were tensions within the government over the inclusion for the first time, in late 2003, of the leader of a right-wing nationalist party. This leader, Christoph Blocher, pushed to tighten Switzerland's asylum laws. His role in government also complicated Switzerland's ongoing negotiation of a series of bilateral accords with the European Union (EU), a key goal of Swiss foreign policy.

Switzerland, which has been a loose confederation of cantons since 1291, emerged in its current borders after the Napoleonic wars, in 1815, where its tradition of neutrality was also sealed. The country's four official ethnic communities are based on language: German, French, Italian, and Romansh (the smallest community). Switzerland has stayed out of international wars and only joined the United Nations after a referendum in 2002.

For this reason, membership in international institutions has long been a controversial issue in Switzerland. The country is surrounded by members of the EU, but the Swiss, who fiercely value not only their military neutrality but their political independence, have resisted EU membership. The country has even resisted membership in the European Economic Area, a halfway-house to EU membership that has a trade agreement with the EU.

Hostility not only to EU membership, but also to immigration, has been a hallmark of the right-wing Swiss People's Party (SVP). The other main political parties are the center-left Social Democratic Party (SP) the right-wing Free Democratic Party (FDP), and the center-right Christian Democratic People's Party (CVP). Traditionally, these last three parties held two seats each in the seven-member Bundesrat (Federal Council), with the SVP holding just one. However, the SVP's vote share increased gradually over the 1990s—in correspondence with a rightward move by the party—as it poached voters initially from small far-right parties, and then increasingly from the FDP.

During the October 2003 legislative election, the SVP made blatantly xenophobic appeals, including running a newspaper advertisement blaming "black Africans" for crime. The SVP insisted that it had nothing against legal immigrants, who make

up a fifth of Switzerland's population, and that it was merely opposed to illegal immigration and abuse of the asylum policy. The SVP won the biggest share of the vote, while the SP finished just behind the SVP. The CVP received just under 15 percent of the vote, barely half the total of the SVP.

With this success, the SVP's leader, Christoph Blocher, called for a second Bundesrat seat for his party. Blocher demanded that he and another minister be appointed to the council, with a seat being taken from the CVP. After extensive negotiations, the other parties agreed. In late 2003, Blocher joined the cabinet as head of the Federal Department of Justice and Police, and the CVP lost a cabinet seat. The inclusion of the SVP has brought new tensions into the Swiss cabinet, for example over a tightening of asylum laws pushed by Blocher and over justice and home-affairs cooperation with the EU, and could slow down the legislative process.

The success of the SVP, the Swiss party most hostile to Swiss entry into the EU, strained relations with the EU. This has slowed a package of bilateral accords between the two that would deepen cooperation on tax evasion, justice, and home affairs. The package was submitted to the legislature in November 2004, and most of the agreements are expected to be ratified in 2005.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

The Swiss can change their government democratically. The constitution of 1848, significantly revised in 1874 and 2000, provides for two directly elected legislative chambers—the Council of States (in which each canton has two members and each half-canton, one) and the National Council. The Federal Council is a seven-person executive; the presidency is ceremonial and rotates annually among the Federal Council's members. Collegiality and consensus are hallmarks of Swiss political culture.

The Swiss institutional system is characterized by decentralization and direct democracy. The cantons and half-cantons have control over much of economic and social policy, with the federal government's powers largely limited to foreign affairs and some economic policy. The rights of cultural, religious, and linguistic minorities are strongly protected. Referendums are also a common feature; any measure that modifies the constitution must be put to a referendum. Any new or revised law must be put to a referendum if 50,000 signatures in favor of doing so can be gathered, and voters may even initiate legislation themselves with 100,000 signatures.

The government is free from pervasive corruption. However, the country has traditionally drawn criticism for its banking-secrecy laws, which financial watchdogs claim enable money laundering and other crimes. In the IMF's 2004 report on its annual consultation with Switzerland, the IMF praised Switzerland for a toughening of laws on money laundering and terrorist financing in 2003. Switzerland was ranked 7 out of 146 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2004 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Switzerland has a free media environment. The Swiss Broadcasting Corporation dominates the broadcast market. The penal code prohibits racist or anti-Semitic speech. Consolidation of newspapers in large media conglomerates has forced the closure of some small and local newspapers. Internet access is unrestricted.

Freedom of religion is guaranteed by the constitution. Most cantons support one or several churches. The country is split about evenly between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, although as there are now officially more than 300,000

Muslims (and perhaps many more undocumented), Muslims are the largest non-Christian minority. Religion is taught in public schools, depending on the predominant creed in the canton. Students are free to choose their creed of instruction or opt out of religious instruction. In 2001, a cantonal court ruled that the Church of Scientology could not be a "real church" because it does not advocate belief in God. Scientologists face other legal obstacles, such as difficulty establishing private schools. Academic freedom is respected.

There is freedom of assembly and association. The right to collective bargaining is respected, and approximately a third of the workforce is unionized.

The judiciary is independent, and the rule of law prevails in civil and criminal matters. Most judicial decisions are made at the cantonal level, except for the federal Supreme Court, which reviews cantonal court decisions when they pertain to federal law. Refusal to perform military service is a criminal offense for males. Prison conditions are generally acceptable.

Women were only granted universal suffrage at the federal level in 1971, and the half-canton Appenzell-Innerrhoden denied women the vote until 1990. Abortion laws were liberalized to decriminalize abortion in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy following a referendum in 2002, which 72 percent of voters supported. The law gives women 10 weeks of maternity leave but no salary guarantee.

Syria

Population: 18,000,000 **Political Rights:** 7
GNI/capita: $1,130 **Civil Liberties:** 7
Life Expectancy: 70 **Status:** Not Free
Religious Groups: Sunni Muslim (74 percent), other Muslim [including Alawite and Druze] (16 percent), Christian [various sects] (10 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Arab (90 percent), other [including Kurd and Armenians] (10 percent)
Capital: Damascus

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

1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF

Overview:

Political and civil liberties in Syria continued to deteriorate palpably in 2004 for the fourth year in a row. Although President Bashar Assad freed several hundred aging political prisoners jailed during his father's 30-year reign, he showed no such clemency to those opposed to his own autocratic rule. Some 2,000 Kurds were jailed for weeks or months without charge following antigovernment riots in March, while dozens of intellectuals were detained during the year for peacefully expressing their opinions.

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 country's precarious democratic institutions survived nominally in the face of persistent military coups until 1963, when the pan-Arab Baath Party seized power and amended the constitution to guarantee itself "the leading role in society and in the state."

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 General Hafez Assad to power. For the next 30 years, the Assad regime managed to maintain control of Syria's majority Sunni Muslim population, brutally suppressing all dissent. In 1982, government forces stormed the northern town of Hama to crush a rebellion by the Muslim Brotherhood and killed as many as 20,000 insurgents and civilians in a matter of days.

In 2000, Assad's son and successor, Bashar, inherited control of a country with the region's most stagnant economy and highest rate of population growth, with unemployment estimated at well over 20 percent. In his inaugural speech, the young leader pledged to eliminate government corruption, revitalize the economy, and establish a "democracy specific to Syria." The first six months of Assad's tenure, known as the "Damascus Spring" witnessed dramatic changes. Informal networks of public figures from all sectors of civil society were allowed to openly discuss the country's social, economic, and political problems. Assad released more than 600 political prisoners, closed the notorious Mazzeh prison, allowed scores of exiled dissidents to return home, reinstated dissidents who had been fired from state-run media outlets and universities, and allowed the establishment of the country's first privately owned newspaper.

In February 2001, however, the regime abruptly reinstated restrictions on public freedoms and launched an escalating campaign of threats, intimidation, and harassment against the reform movement. Ten of the country's leading reformists were arrested during the year and eventually sentenced to heavy prison terms. Economic reform also fell by the wayside as dozens of reform laws remained unimplemented, were put into effect half-heartedly, or lacked supporting regulatory changes needed to attract international investment.

The regime's renewed assault on political and civil liberties initially elicited little criticism from Western governments, in part because of Assad's cooperation in the war against the al-Qaeda terrorist network. However, Assad's covert efforts to assist Saddam Hussein's rearmament prior to the March 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq and his unwillingness to disrupt the flow of foreign terrorist infiltration into the country after the war led to rapid deterioration in his relations with the administration of U.S. president George W. Bush, culminating in the May 2004 imposition of American economic sanctions on Syria. Meanwhile, Assad's refusal to relax Syrian control over Lebanon severely alienated France, which co-sponsored a September 2004 UN Security Council resolution calling on Damascus to immediately end its lucrative occupation altogether and opened the way for tough diplomacy by the European Union (EU).

Scenes of Iraqis celebrating the downfall of a government so strikingly similar to the Assad regime inspired Syria's pro-democracy movement to reassert itself. After the fall of Baghdad, nearly 300 intellectuals signed a petition demanding the release

of all political prisoners, the cancellation of the state of emergency, and other political reforms. However, while the regime was willing to adjust the manner in which its control over society is legitimized and reproduced—most notably by reducing the two-million-member Baath Party's oversight of policy decisions—it remained unwilling to substantially loosen its grip on power.

Notwithstanding its claim to be threatened by radical Islamists, the Assad regime's behavior indicated that it feels most threatened not by religious fundamentalists, but by secular opposition forces seen as prospective allies of the West. In March 2004, security forces fired on a crowd of Kurdish soccer fans who had hoisted posters of Bush, touching off eight days of riots throughout Kurdish-inhabited areas of the country. At least 30 people, mostly Kurds, were killed as security forces suppressed the riots and arrested some 2,000 people.

While hundreds of Islamists and radical leftist political prisoners were released during the year, secular liberal activists were subjected to a steadily intensifying crackdown. The president of the Committeesfor the Defense of Democratic Liberties and Human Rights (CDDLHR), Aktham Naisse, was arrested in April after he organized a petition and rally calling for the lifting of emergency law. In September, the security forces detained the outspoken leader of a newly established liberal movement, Nabil Fayyad, and held him for 33 days. Fayyad, who had condemned the country's political leaders as "intellectual terrorists" for their intolerance of free speech just months earlier, emerged from prison broken and subdued, praising Assad for "defending public liberties."

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

The Syrian people cannot change their government or exert influence over policy making through democratic means. Under the 1973 constitution, the president is nominated by the ruling Baath Party and approved by a popular referendum. In practice, these referendums are orchestrated by the regime, as are elections to the 250-member People's Assembly, which holds little independent legislative power. The only legal political parties are the Baath Party and its six small coalition partners in the ruling National Progressive Front (NPF). All 167 of the NPF's candidates won seats in the March 2003 parliamentary elections, with heavily vetted independent candidates taking the remaining 83 seats.

Syria was ranked 71 out of 146 countries surveyed in the 2004 Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index. Key regime officials and their offspring monopolize many lucrative import markets and benefit from a range of other illicit economic activities.

Freedom of expression is heavily restricted. Vaguely worded articles of the Penal Code and Emergency Law give the government considerable discretion in punishing those who express views or publish information that "opposes the goals of the revolution" or tarnishes the image of the state. Apart from a handful of non-news radio stations licensed in 2003, the broadcast media are state owned. While there are a few privately owned newspapers and magazines, a 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. The country's leading independent newspaper, *Al-Doumari*, closed in 2003

in the face of recurrent bureaucratic harassment. Satellite dishes are illegal, but generally tolerated.

Muhammad Ghanem, a Syrian journalist for two newspapers based in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), was detained for 13 days in March 2004 after he wrote an article arguing that all Syrian Kurds should be granted citizenship. Even local journalists who publish material in foreign publications under pseudonyms have been unable to escape prosecution because of the government's extensive surveillance of telephone and Internet communication. In July, three journalists who wrote articles using pseudonyms for a UAE-based online newspaper—Muhammad Quteish, Haytham Quteish, and Yahia al-Aws—were sentenced to prison terms ranging from two to four years. In June, Abdel Rahman Shaguri was sentenced to two and a half years in prison on charges of "harming the image and national security of Syria" for sending e-mail copies of a dissident newsletter to friends and relatives. In October, Masoud Hamid was sentenced to five years in prison for sending e-mail photos of a June 2003 Kurdish demonstration in Damascus to a number of dissident-run Web sites.

Syrians are permitted to access the Internet only through state-run servers, which block access to a wide range of Web sites. Shortly after the outbreak of the March 2004 Kurdish riots, the authorities blocked access to two Kurdish-language Web sites that carried news, photos, and video clips of the violence. E-mail correspondence is extensively monitored by the intelligence agencies.

Although the constitution requires that the president be a Muslim, there is no state religion in Syria, and freedom of worship is generally respected. The Alawite minority dominates the officer corps of the military and security forces. Since the eruption of an Islamist rebellion in the late 1970s, the government has tightly monitored mosques and controlled the appointment of Muslim clergy. Academic freedom is heavily restricted. University professors have been routinely dismissed from state universities in recent years because of their involvement in the pro-democracy movement, and some have been imprisoned.

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 are allowed to organize demonstrations. Security forces forcibly dispersed a small crowd of activists who staged a demonstration against the state of emergency on March 8, arresting six people and briefly detaining two foreign journalists and an American diplomat who attended the rally.

Freedom of association is restricted. All nongovernmental organizations must register with the government, which generally denies registration to reformist groups. Although a few unregistered human rights groups have been allowed to operate in Syria, individual leaders of these groups have been jailed for human rights related activities. In addition to Aktham Naisse, two other leaders of the CDDLHR were detained in 2004 for more than a month.

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. Strikes in nonagricultural sectors are legal, but they rarely occur.

While regular criminal and civil courts operate with some independence and generally safeguard defendants' rights, most politically sensitive cases have been tried

by 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 right to appeal, limit access to legal counsel, try most cases behind closed doors, and admit as evidence confessions obtained through torture. The ESC was formally abolished in 2004; henceforth, economic crimes will be tried by criminal courts.

The state of emergency in force since 1963 gives the security agencies virtually unlimited authority to arrest suspects and hold them incommunicado for prolonged periods without charge. Many of the estimated 3,000 remaining political prisoners in Syria have never been tried for any offense. The security agencies, which operate independently of the judiciary, routinely extract confessions by torturing suspects and detaining members of their families. There were scores of reports of torture by the security services during the year, and according to local human rights groups, at least four people (all of them Kurds) died from suspected torture by the security services. At least four people who returned from exile in 2004 were arrested and detained on their arrival. The government carried out two major releases of political prisoners during the year—around 120 in January and more than 250 in late July and early August.

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 deprived of citizenship and unable to obtain passports, identity cards, or birth certificates, which in turn prevents them from owning land, obtaining government employment, or voting. The September 2001 press law requires that owners and editors in chief of publications be Arabs. Scores of Kurds arrested during and after the March 2004 riots remained in detention as of November 30. Following the riots, the authorities explicitly banned all major independent Kurdish political groups.

Although most Syrians do not face travel restrictions, prominent activists living in Syria, as well as relatives of exiled dissidents, are routinely prevented from traveling abroad. Many Kurds lack the requisite documents to leave the country. Equality of opportunity has been compromised by rampant corruption and conscious government efforts to weaken the predominantly Sunni urban bourgeoisie.

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.

Taiwan

Population: 22,600,000 **Political Rights:** 2
GNI/capita: $13,392 **Civil Liberties:** 1*
Life Expectancy: 76 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Mixture of Buddhist, Confucian, Taoist (93 percent), Christian (4.5 percent) other (2.5 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Taiwanese [including Hakka] (84 percent), mainland Chinese (14 percent), Aboriginal (2 percent)
Capital: Taipei
Ratings Change: Taiwan's civil liberties rating improved from 2 to 1 due to improvements in the rule of law, including the consolidation of judicial independence.

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

1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
3,3F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	1,2F	1,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,1F

Overview:

Taiwan's presidential election in March 2004 thrust the country into political turmoil. The Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) incumbent Chen Shui-bian was reelected, but by a very slim margin and only after irregularities: Chen and his vice president were shot just hours before the polling began. A legislative commission was established in August to investigate the shooting. At the same time, recent judicial reforms have reduced corruption and political influence over the courts.

Located some 100 miles off the southeast coast of China, Taiwan became the home of the Koumintang (KMT), or Nationalist, government-in-exile in 1949, when Communist forces overthrew the Nationalists following two decades of civil war on the mainland. While Taiwan is independent in all but name, Beijing considers it to be a renegade province of China and has long threatened to invade if the island formally declares independence.

Taiwan's democratic transition began in 1987, when the KMT government lifted a state of martial law imposed 38 years earlier. The KMT's Lee Teng-hui became the first native Taiwanese president in 1988. His election broke a stranglehold on politics by mainland refugees, who, along with their descendants, make up 14 percent of Taiwan's population.

In his 12 years in office, Lee oversaw far-reaching political reforms including the holding of Taiwan's first multiparty legislative elections in 1991 and the first direct presidential elections in 1996. Lee also played down the KMT's historic commitment to eventual reunification with China, promoting instead a Taiwanese national identity that undermined Beijing's claim that there is only "one China."

With Lee barred by term limits from seeking reelection, Chen's victory in the 2000 presidential race, in which he ran as the standard-bearer of the pro-independence DPP, broke the KMT's grip on politics and signaled that Taiwan would continue promoting an independent identity. After his election, Chen continued to assert that Taiwan should eventually be independent—the DPP's core position.

Chen won reelection in the March 2004 presidential polls by a margin of only 0.2 percent. Hours before the vote, Chen and his vice presidential running mate, Annette Lu, were shot. The candidate of the opposition KMT, who was expected to win the election by a comfortable margin, alleged that the shooting was staged to gain sympathy votes. The parliament (Legislative Yuan), which is controlled by the KMT, passed a law in August to establish a commission to investigate the shooting. The DPP and its ally, the Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU), boycotted the commission on the grounds that it was unconstitutional; under its current statute, for example, the commission may have the right to detain citizens without a warrant. The DPP-TSU union also feared that it would be ignored in the commission; commission seats have been allocated according to representation in the Legislative Yuan, and so the KMT dominates the commission. The Constitutional Court held hearings on the constitutionality of the law and the commission. Elections to the Legislative Yuan were scheduled for December 2004.

Since the DPP victory in March, the government has appeared to take a firmer pro-independence stance. In September, for example, the premier (the head of the Executive Yuan), Yu Shyi-kun, publicly advocated for the first time that Taiwan develop offensive missile capability. Less than a week later, Chen asserted that the country should hold a plebiscite to assert its preference for independence, following the example set in 1945 by Mongolia. It is more than likely, however, that these moves were just ploys to shore up support among DPP and other pro-independence voters ahead of the legislative elections in December 2004. Even if Chen's intention were to assert formal independence, he is far from having the means to actually achieve this, as his party lacks a parliamentary majority. In addition, the United States, which supplies most of Taiwan's arms, cannot provide the island with offensive weapons (the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act, which governs U.S. policy toward the island, stipulates that the U.S. can provide Taiwan only with arms "of a defensive character").

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Taiwanese citizens can change their government democratically. The 1946 constitution, adopted while the KMT was in power on the mainland, created a hybrid presidential-parliamentary system. The president, who is directly elected for a four-year term, wields executive power, appoints the premier, and can dissolve the Legislative Yuan. The prime minister is responsible to the unicameral 225-seat legislature, which is directly elected for a three-year term.

The administration of President Chen Shui-bian has been fairly successful in its attempts to crack down on vote buying and on the links between politicians and organized crime that were widely believed to have flourished under KMT rule. Nevertheless, electoral irregularities remain; the most notable recent example was the shooting—possibly staged—of Chen and his vice presidential running mate just hours before the presidential election in March 2004. Police also investigated some 2,000 cases of alleged vote buying during the election, though they did specify that they did not believe either of the candidates to be personally responsible for the bribery. Taiwan was ranked 35 out of 146 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2004 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The Taiwanese press is "vigorous and active," according to the 2003 human rights report issued by the U.S. State Department in February 2004. Print media are

completely independent, but electronic media and broadcast television stations are still subject to government influence. Given that the government and political parties are barred by law from owning or running media organizations, and that most Taiwanese can access approximately 100 cable television stations, the state's influence on the media is, on balance, minimal.

Taiwanese of all faiths can worship freely. Religious organizations can choose to register with the government; those that do may operate tax-free. Taiwanese professors and other educators can write and lecture freely. Laws barring Taiwanese from advocating Communism or independence from China remain on the books, but they are no longer enforced.

Freedom of assembly and association is well respected. Permits are required for public meetings outdoors, but these are routinely granted. All civic organizations must register with the government, but registration is routinely granted. Taiwanese human rights, social welfare, and environmental nongovernmental groups are active and operate without harassment.

Trade unions are independent, though "a number of laws and regulations limit the right of association," according to the U.S. State Department report. Collective bargaining, though not widespread, is legal in most industries. Teachers, civil servants, and defense industry workers are barred from joining unions or bargaining collectively. Labor unions must submit their constitutions to authorities for review. Moreover, the law restricts the right to strike by, for example, allowing authorities to order mediation of labor disputes and ban work stoppages while mediation is in progress.

Taiwan's judiciary is largely independent, and trials are public and generally fair. There is no trial by jury; judges decide all cases. Recent judicial reforms have reduced corruption and political influence over the courts. In August, the Ministry of Justice established a task force to investigate corruption in the judiciary and brought several officials under investigation. In September, the government reasserted its intention to crack down on organized crime, corruption, and bribery, especially ahead of the legislative elections scheduled for December. Another significant reform took place in August: the Legislative Yuan approved constitutional changes outlining a full-scale overhaul of the legislature. The changes, effective from 2008, include halving the number of seats in the Legislative Yuan and extending all legislators' terms from three to four years. Arbitrary arrest and detention are not permitted, and security forces generally respected this ban. Police occasionally committed acts of physical abuse against detainees, and a "historical and cultural tradition of corruption hindered police effectiveness," according to the U.S. State Department report. Still, police remain under civilian control, and human rights abuses are not considered a problem. Suspects are allowed attorneys during interrogations specifically to prevent abuse during detention. Prison conditions are generally adequate and conform to international norms; overcrowding is the biggest problem.

Taiwan's constitution provides for the equality of all citizens. The rights of the Aboriginal descendants of Malayo-Polynesians are protected, and the government has instituted social and educational programs to help the population assimilate into mainstream ethnic Chinese society. A quota system concerning employment of Aborigines and people with disabilities applies to firms wishing to compete for government contracts. Despite these efforts, the Aborigines still feel discriminated

against: in November, for example, about 1,000 Aborigines held a demonstration to protest the Executive Yuan's alleged failure to allocate enough money for reconstruction in flood-ravaged areas of the country. Societal discrimination against Aborigines has lessened somewhat in recent years.

Laws protecting privacy are generally adhered to. Searches without warrants are allowed only in particular circumstances, and a 1999 law imposed strict punishments for illicit wiretapping. Travel is generally not restricted.

Taiwanese women have made impressive gains in recent years in business, but reportedly continue to face job discrimination in the private sector. Rape and domestic violence remain serious problems despite government programs to protect women. Although the law allows authorities to investigate complaints of domestic violence and to prosecute rape suspects without the victims' formally pressing charges, cultural norms inhibit many women from reporting these crimes.

Tajikistan

Population: 6,600,000
GNI/capita: $180
Life Expectancy: 68
Religious Groups: Sunni Muslim (85 percent), Shia Muslim (5 percent), other (10 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Tajik (65 percent), Uzbek (25 percent), Russian (4 percent), other (6 percent)
Capital: Dushanbe

Political Rights: 6
Civil Liberties: 5
Status: Not Free

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

1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
7,7NF	7,7NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF

Overview:

The government of President Imomali Rakhmonov continued throughout 2004 to consolidate its power by clamping down on the media and working to sideline perceived and actual political opponents in advance of the 2005 parliamentary and 2006 presidential elections. Although several opposition parties joined forces in a tactical coalition early in the year, their prospects for success in the forthcoming polls appear limited by the dominance of pro-government parties and the weakness and limited popularity of much of the opposition. Meanwhile, Russia strengthened its foothold in the region following a bilateral agreement with Dushanbe on a number of strategic and economic matters, including the establishment of a permanent Russian military base in Tajikistan.

Conquered by Russia in the late 1800s, Tajikistan was made an autonomous region within Uzbekistan in 1924 and a separate socialist republic of the U.S.S.R. in 1929. Tajikistan declared independence from the Soviet Union in September 1991, and two months later, former Communist Party leader Rakhman Nabiyev was elected president.

Long-simmering clan-based tensions, combined with various anti-Communist and Islamist movements, soon plunged the country into a five-year civil war for central government control. In September 1992, Communist hard-liners forced Nabiyev's resignation; he was replaced later that year by Rakhmonov, a leading Communist Party member. The following month, Rakhmonov launched attacks against antigovernment forces that caused tens of thousands to flee into neighboring Afghanistan.

As the fighting continued, Rakhmonov was elected president in November 1994 after most opposition candidates either boycotted or were prevented from competing in the poll. The March 1995 parliamentary elections, in which the majority of seats were won by pro-government candidates, were boycotted by the United Tajik Opposition (UTO), a coalition of various secular and Islamic opposition groups that emerged during the war as the main opposition force fighting against Rakhmonov's government.

Following a December 1996 ceasefire, Rakhmonov and UTO leader Said Abdullo Nuri signed a formal peace agreement in Moscow on June 27, 1997, officially ending the civil war, which had claimed tens of thousands of lives and left several hundred thousand as refugees. The accord called for the merging of opposition forces into the regular army; granted an amnesty for UTO members; provided for the UTO to be allotted 30 percent of senior government posts; and established a 26-member National Reconciliation Commission, with seats evenly divided between the government and the UTO. The commission was charged with implementing the peace agreements, including preparing amendments for a referendum on constitutional changes that would lead to fair parliamentary elections.

During the next two years, the government and the UTO took steps toward implementing the peace accord. In a September 1999 referendum, voters approved a series of constitutional amendments permitting the formation of religion-based political parties. This move paved the way for the legal operation of the Islamic opposition, including the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP), which constituted the backbone of the UTO. The referendum also included an amendment extending the president's single term in office from five to seven years. In November, Rakhmonov was reelected with a reported 97 percent of the vote in a poll criticized by international election observers for widespread irregularities.

As the final stage in the implementation of the 1997 peace accord, Tajikistan held elections in February 2000 for the 63-seat lower house of parliament. Rakhmonov's People's Democratic Party (PDP) received nearly 65 percent of the vote, followed by the Communist Party with 20 percent, and the IRP with 7 percent. Although the participation of six parties and a number of independent candidates in the poll provided some political pluralism, international election observers, including a joint mission by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the United Nations, cited serious problems, including the exclusion of certain opposition parties, biased state media coverage, and a lack of transparency in the tabulation of votes. In the March elections to the 33-seat upper house of parliament, in which local assemblies elected 25 members and Rakhmonov appointed the remaining 8, the PDP obtained the overwhelming majority of seats.

After the elections, the National Reconciliation Commission was formally disbanded, and a UN observer mission withdrew in May 2000 after nearly six years in

Tajikistan. However, important provisions of the peace accord remained unimplemented, with demobilization of opposition factions incomplete and the government failing to meet the 30 percent quota of senior government posts to be awarded to the UTO.

Rakhmonov's already substantial powers as president were further consolidated in a June 22, 2003, constitutional referendum. Voters approved by a reported 93 percent a package of 56 constitutional amendments, the most controversial of which permits the president to serve two additional seven-year terms beyond the next presidential election in 2006. (The constitution previously limited the president to a single seven-year term.) Rakhmonov, who argued that this change would better reflect post–civil war circumstances and bring the country continued stability, could theoretically remain in office until 2020. Critics charged that most voters were not fully aware of the proposed changes, which were not printed on the ballot papers and had not been given much media coverage. The opposition Democratic Party urged its supporters to boycott the vote, while the opposition Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the IRP adopted less openly confrontational positions.

With parliamentary elections due in February 2005 and presidential elections a year later, the government increased its pressure in 2004 on opposition figures and other perceived potential challengers to the president's authority. Early in the year, Shamsiddin Shamsiddinov, a deputy chairman of the IRP, was sentenced to 16 years in prison on charges that included setting up an armed group, illegally crossing the state border, and polygamy; while in pretrial detention, he was allegedly abused and denied access to legal counsel. The IRP insists that the conviction was politically motivated. The authorities have also targeted exiled opponents, including Yakub Salimov, a former interior minister and Rakhmonov ally, who fled the country in 1997. He was charged by the Tajik government with treason for involvement in a 1998 invasion and brief occupation of northern Tajikistan and was arrested in Moscow in 2003. In February 2004, Salimov was extradited from Moscow at the request of the Tajik government, a decision some observers speculate may have been linked to bilateral negotiations over security issues. Salimov's trial opened in late November.

In August 2004, Drug Control Agency head Ghaffor Mirzoyev was arrested on charges including abuse of power, tax evasion, and murder. Some observers believe that his arrest was politically motivated because of his close ties with the mayor of Dushanbe, a potential rival for the presidency. Also in August, a Taraqqiyot (Progress) party official was arrested on suspicion of various offenses, including insulting the honor and dignity of the president. The arrest occurred after authorities raided the party's offices and seized a letter to the International Court of Justice protesting the government's repeated refusal to officially register Taraqqiyot.

Although three opposition parties—the Socialist Party, SDP, and IRP—formed a tactical coalition in April of this year the opposition is likely to have few chances of gaining seats in the upcoming elections in the face of the government's overwhelming political dominance. While the stated goal of the coalition is to ensure the proper conduct of the election, the three parties announced that they would field separate candidates, weakening their chances of capturing enough votes to enter parliament. In addition, the IRP faced internal struggles during the year regarding the party's political agenda. A new electoral law signed by Rakhmonov in July was

criticized by opposition groups and international observers for failing to ensure truly independent electoral commissions and imposing excessively high registration fees on candidates. After the approval of the electoral law, the Democratic Party reversed its earlier decision not to join the opposition coalition, saying that the new law did not reflect sufficient input from the opposition and international bodies.

On the international front, Russia and Tajikistan finally reached agreement in October on a number of issues that will solidify Russia's military presence in Tajikistan and increase bilateral economic relations. Under the terms of the agreement, Russia's 201st Motorized Rifle Division in Tajikistan will be upgraded to a full military base, even as responsibility for guarding the Tajik-Afghan border will be transferred from Russian to Tajik jurisdiction over the next two years (most of the border guard officers are Russian, while the troops are Tajik conscripts). Russia will gain control of the Okno space-monitoring system at Nurek in Tajikistan, and Moscow will forgive Dushanbe's massive debts and invest in infrastructure projects in Tajikistan, including a hydropower plant. While the conclusion of the agreement ended a period of prolonged, and often tense, bilateral negotiations, the living and working conditions of the several hundred thousand Tajik migrant workers in Russia, who often face official harassment and discrimination, remained a source of friction between the two countries.

Relations with Uzbekistan, its more powerful Central Asian neighbor, remained uneasy, with Tajik civilians continuing to be killed accidentally by land mines laid by Uzbekistan along the Uzbek-Tajik border. The mines had been designed to prevent renewed invasions by Islamic radical groups that had entered into Uzbekistan via Tajikistan several years earlier. Tajikistan continued to benefit from technical and financial assistance from the United States, which was in the process of constructing a permanent embassy in Dushanbe during the year.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Tajikistan cannot change their government democratically. The 1994 constitution provides for a strong, directly elected executive who enjoys broad authority to appoint and dismiss officials. Amendments to the constitution adopted in a 1999 referendum further increased the powers of the president by extending his term in office from five to seven years and creating a full-time, bicameral parliament: the Assembly of Representatives (lower chamber), whose 63 members are elected by popular vote to serve five-year terms; and the National Assembly (upper chamber), whose 33 members are indirectly elected, 25 by local assemblies and 8 by the president, all for five-year terms. Constitutional amendments adopted in a 2003 referendum allow the president to run for two additional seven-year terms in office. Neither the presidential polls in 1994 and 1999 nor the parliamentary elections of 1995 and 2000 were free and fair.

Patronage networks and regional affiliations are central to political life, with officials from the Kulyob region—the home of President Imomali Rakhmonov—dominant in government. The pro-Rakhmonov PDP is the dominant political party. Secular opposition parties, including the Democratic Party and SDP, are weak and enjoy minimal popular support. A 1998 ban on religious-based parties was lifted, leading to the registration of the IRP, currently the only legal religious-based party in Central Asia. While the IRP has limited political influence within gov-

ernment structures, it also faces opposition criticism of having been co-opted by the authorities.

Corruption is reportedly pervasive throughout society, with payments often required to obtain lucrative government positions. One of the conditions for Tajikistan's receipt of development assistance from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development is the country's efforts to fight corruption. Tajikistan was ranked 133 out of 146 countries in Transparency International's 2004 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Despite constitutional guarantees of freedom of speech and the press, independent journalists continue to face harassment and intimidation, selective tax audits, and denial of access to state printing facilities. The penal code criminalizes publicly defaming or insulting a person's honor or reputation. Consequently, journalists often avoid reporting on sensitive political issues, including corruption, and directly criticizing the president and other senior officials. Most newspapers in this impoverished country are weeklies and suffer from low advertising revenues and poor circulation. Most television stations are state owned or only nominally independent, and the process of obtaining broadcast licenses is cumbersome and expensive. Although the government does not block access to the Internet, the high cost of Internet service puts it out of reach of most citizens.

Dozens of journalists were murdered during the country's five-year civil war in the 1990s, and most of the cases have not been solved. In January 2004, the prosecutor-general's office announced that it had established a special group to investigate the killings.

Independent and opposition journalists and media outlets faced growing government pressure in 2004 in advance of the February 2005 parliamentary elections. Dodojon Atovulloev, the editor of the opposition newspaper *Charogi Ruz*, which is banned in Tajikistan for it antigovernment stance, returned briefly to Tajikistan from exile in Russia in June after having fled the country more than a decade earlier. However, Atovulloev left Tajikistan just four days later out of concern that the authorities could not guarantee his safety after he received death threats. Rajabi Mirzo, the editor of the opposition weekly *Ruzi Nav*, was assaulted in July near his home for what may have been political reasons; the paper frequently printed articles critical of the Tajik authorities. As of November 30, no arrests had been made in connection with the case. In August, the authorities closed down Jiyonkhon, an independent printing house, for the alleged tax violations of one of the opposition newspapers it printed; the charges were believed to be politically motivated. Jiyonkhon had published several opposition newspapers, including *Ruzi Nav* and *Nerui Sukhan*, which the state printing house in Dushanbe refused to print, forcing the newspapers to cease publication or find alternative printing facilities abroad. After *Ruzi Nav* contracted with an independent printing house in neighboring Kyrgyzstan, tax authorities impounded copies of *Ruzi Nav* on their arrival at the Dushanbe airport in November. In October, the Russian-language newspaper *Vechernii Dushanbe* lost a libel case brought by Dushanbe's city court deputy chairman, who claimed that an article in the paper had defamed him.

The government generally respects religious freedom in this predominantly Muslim country, although it monitors the activities of religious institutions to prevent them from becoming overtly political. Religious communities must register with

the State Committee on Religious Affairs (SCRA), a process that some local authorities have used to prevent the activities of certain groups, including Jehovah's Witnesses. In contrast to previous years, there were reportedly no mosques closed and no imams removed by the SCRA. Members of the banned Hizb ut-Tahrir, which calls for the establishment of an Islamic caliphate throughout the Muslim world, have been given lengthy prison sentences on charges including subversion, distribution of extremist literature, and inciting religious hatred.

According to the 2004 U.S. State Department's human rights report, the Tajik government does not restrict academic freedom. However, the country's educational system suffers from inadequate funding and resources, declining enrollments of pupils owing to poverty, and corruption in the grading system. Students are frequently conscripted to work on cotton plantations and have been forced to pay a fine or have been expelled from school if they do not comply.

Although a number of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operate in the country without restrictions, the state strictly controls freedom of association for organizations of a political nature. Registration requirements are often lengthy and cumbersome. Registered groups must obtain permits to hold public demonstrations, and organizers of protests have at times faced government reprisals. Citizens have the legal right to form and join trade unions and to bargain collectively, which they do in practice. Although the law does not restrict the right to strike, it is necessary to apply to local authorities to receive permission to organize a strike; no strikes occurred during the year.

The judiciary is directly influenced by the executive branch, on which most judges depend for their positions, as well as by some criminal groups. Many judges are poorly trained and inexperienced, and bribery is reportedly widespread. The government took some steps to address the problem during the year by arresting some corrupt judges and prosecutors. Police often conduct arbitrary arrests and beat detainees to extract confessions. Detainees are frequently refused access to legal counsel and face lengthy pretrial detention. Prisons are severely overcrowded and suffer from unsanitary conditions and rampant disease. In 2004, Rakhmonov signed a moratorium on the death penalty, replacing capital punishment with a 25-year prison term.

Since the collapse of the Taliban regime in neighboring Afghanistan, narcotics trafficking across the porous, mountainous border with Tajikistan is reportedly on the rise. Organized crime groups involved in the drug trade allegedly have connections with members of the country's security and police forces. A 2004 agreement to gradually transfer border guard service along the Tajik-Afghan border from Russian to Tajik control raised concerns about potential increases in cross-border drug trafficking, since Tajikistan's limited resources are likely to render it even less successful than Russia in stemming the flow of narcotics.

Most of the population live in poverty and survive on subsistence agriculture, remittances from relatives working abroad, mainly in Russia, and foreign humanitarian aid. Widespread corruption, patronage networks, regional affiliations, limited privatization of land and industry, and the growing narcotics trade restrict equality of opportunity and limit economic growth. According to the Tajik Center of Strategic Research, about 15 percent of the incomes of small and medium businesses go to bribery and payoff of officials. Child labor, particularly on cotton farms, is reportedly commonplace.

Although women are employed throughout the government and the business world, they continue to face traditional societal discrimination. Violence against women, including spousal abuse, is reportedly common, but cases reported to the authorities are rarely investigated. Tajikistan is a source and transit country for persons trafficked for prostitution. In 2004, Rakhmonov signed a new law against human trafficking that addresses prevention, protection of victims, and the prosecution of traffickers, and a Tajik court applied the law for the first time in a trafficking case in November. In August, the Council of Ulems, the highest religious body of Muslims in Tajikistan, issued an edict banning women from mosques that do not have the necessary facilities to allow men and women to pray separately; Rakhmonov stated in November that he would not interfere with the decision.

Tanzania

Population: 36,100,000 **Political Rights:** 4
GNI/capita: $290 **Civil Liberties:** 3
Life Expectancy: 45 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Christian (30 percent), Muslim (35 percent), indigenous beliefs (35 percent); Zanzibar: Muslim (more than 99 percent)
Ethnic Groups: African (99 percent), other [including Asian, European, and Arab] (1 percent)
Capital: Dar-es-Salaam

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

1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,3PF	4,3PF	4,3PF

Overview:

Local elections took place in November, won by the ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) party; opposition parties claimed that the legitimacy of the polls had been affected by violence from pro-government supporters and biased election administration. Meanwhile, there were delays in the implementation of reforms regarding the autonomous islands of Zanzibar and Pemba, which had been agreed on in 2001 between the opposition Civic United Front (CUF) and the CCM. The islands have been flashpoints of conflict between the government and the opposition.

After Tanzania gained independence from Britain in 1961, the Chama Cha Mapinduzi party (CCM), under President Julius Nyerere, dominated the country's political life. The Zanzibar and Pemba Islands were merged with Tanganyika to become the United Republic of Tanzania after Arab sultans who had long ruled the islands were deposed in a violent revolution in 1964.

For much of his presidency, Nyerere espoused a collectivist economic philosophy known in Swahili as *ujaama*. While it may have been useful in promoting a sense of community and nationality, this policy resulted in significant economic dislocation and decline. During Nyerere's tenure, Tanzania also played an important role as

a "Front Line State" in the international response to white-controlled regimes in southern Africa. Nyerere retained strong influence after he officially retired in 1985, until his death in 1999. His successor, Ali Hassan Mwinyi, held the presidency from 1985 to 1995 and presided over a carefully controlled political liberalization process. The CCM's landslide legislative victory in the 1995 parliamentary elections was seriously tainted by poor organization of the electoral process, fraud, and administrative irregularities. In addition, extensive use of state broadcasting and other government resources during the campaign favored the ruling party. The CCM won 80 percent of the 232 directly elected seats in the National Assembly. The voting in Zanzibar was plainly fraudulent, with the island's high court summarily rejecting opposition demands for fresh polls.

Tanzania held legislative and presidential elections in October 2000, the second since the reintroduction of multiparty politics. Incumbent president Benjamin Mkapa was reelected with about 70 percent of the vote, and the CCM won an overwhelming victory in the parliamentary election. Although the conduct of these elections represented a modest improvement over that of the 1995 vote, the elections were nonetheless marred by fraudulent polls biased in favor of the ruling party in the federated semiautonomous islands of Zanzibar and Pemba; the status of these islands in relation to the mainland has long provoked tension. The opposition CUF and independent observers convincingly demonstrated that the ruling CCM had engaged in fraud to retain power. Subsequent rioting in Zanzibar in early 2001 resulted in the deaths of more than 40 people. In October 2001, the CCM and the CUF announced a reconciliation agreement designed to resolve the political crisis and allow for more transparent government.

Significant progress occurred in 2003 regarding Zanzibar, with elections that resulted in a parliamentary victory by the CUF. These elections raised hopes that 2005 parliamentary and presidential elections (at which President Benjamin Mkapa is not expected to stand) may represent a positive step forward.

Local elections took place in November, won by the ruling CCM party. The elections were marred by some violence and by claims from opposition parties that the government supported CCM candidates and that the election authorities at times acted in a biased fashion. By late 2004, however, there were delays in the implementation of reforms agreed on in 2001 between the CUF and the CCM. These reforms were to have been implemented in such fields as government jurisdiction of the electoral process, police oversight, publicly owned media institutions, and the Zanzibar Electoral Commission. Delays have included the postponement of voter registration on Zanzibar. The CUF has also complained that mainland Tanzanians are being fraudulently included in the Zanzibari voting rolls.

Tanzania is one of the poorest countries in the world. According to World Bank statistics, per capita income in 2004 is estimated to be at about $290. Life expectancy at birth dropped from 50 years in 1990 to only 43 years in 2002. Infant mortality remains relatively high with 99 per 1,000 in 2003, as compared with 102 per 1,000 in 1990.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Tanzanians cannot choose their government democratically. Although opposition parties were legalized in 1992, the ruling CCM continues to dominate the country's political life.

Executive power rests with the president, who is elected by direct popular vote for a five-year term. The president can serve a maximum of two terms. The constitution provides for legislative power to be held by a unicameral National Assembly with members serving a term of five years, and for universal adult suffrage. The legislative body, the Bunge, has 274 members, with 232 elected for a five-year term in single-seat constituencies. The remaining seats are reserved for women elected by their political parties on the basis of proportional representation among the political parties represented in the National Assembly.

Thirteen opposition parties have formal status. Some of them are active, but they tend to be divided and ineffectual. The opposition CUF has sought to establish significant support on the Tanzanian mainland. Another major opposition party, the National Convention for Constitution and Reform (NCCR-Mageuzi), whose leader, Augustine Mrema, was runner-up to Benjamin Mkapa in the 1995 presidential election, has split. Parties with parliamentary representation receive government subsidies, but they criticize the low level of funding and the formula by which it is allocated. In 2003, most opposition parties came together in an electoral alliance, but the CUF did not join.

Corruption remains a serious problem, although the government has made some attempts to address it, including developing a national anticorruption action plan. The Prevention of Corruption Bureau recorded an increase in the number of reported incidents of corruption from 432 cases in 1998 to 1,461 cases at the end of 2000. However, it is not clear whether this represents an increase in corruption or increased reporting and improved detection of corruption. Tanzania's police chief has publicly stated that corruption is entrenched in some sections of the police force, especially in traffic and investigation departments. Tanzania was ranked 90 out of 146 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2004 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Print and electronic media are active, but media impact is largely limited to major urban areas. The country has more than 50 regular newspapers, including 17 dailies. The growth of the broadcast media has been hindered by the lack of capital investment needed to set up television and radio stations, both public and private. Nevertheless, dozens of private FM radio stations are on the air, most of them in urban areas. Internet access, while limited to urban areas, is growing.

The number of journalists has also increased from only 230 in 1991 to more than 4,000 currently, but journalists in general have serious concerns about press laws that could limit freedom of expression. Progress for independence in the media over the past year was "encouraging," according to a 2004 report of the Tanzania chapter of the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA).

Although the constitution provides for freedom of speech, it does not specifically do so for the freedom of the press. These rights are especially constrained in Zanzibar by the semiautonomous Zanzibar government. Press reforms contained in a 2001 media bill did not apply to the island. There are no private broadcasters or newspapers on Zanzibar, though many islanders can receive mainland broadcasts and read the mainland press. The Zanzibari government has used its powers to selectively limit press freedom. For example, the weekly newspaper *Dira* was banned in November 2003, with no reason being given.

The population is believed to be divided fairly evenly between Muslim and Christian faiths. Freedom of religion is generally respected, and relations between the

various faiths are mainly peaceful. In recent years, however, religious-based tensions have increased. In addition, on Zanzibar, the 2001 Mufti Law allowed the Zanzibari government to appoint a mufti to oversee Muslim organizations. Some Muslims are critical of this law, contending that it permits an excessive government role in the religious sphere.

Many nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are active, and some have been able to influence the public policy process. However, an NGO act passed by parliament in 2002 contains many serious flaws, including compulsory registration backed by criminal sanctions, lack of appeal to the courts, alignment of NGO activities with government plans, prohibition of national networks and coalitions of NGOs, and inconsistencies with other related existing legislation. The International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights and the World Organization Against Torture have criticized the legislation on the grounds that it contravenes the Tanzanian constitution, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Academic freedom is respected. Constitutional protections for the right to freedom of assembly are generally, but not always, respected. Laws allow rallies only by officially registered political parties, which may not be formed on religious, ethnic, or regional bases and cannot oppose the union of Zanzibar and the mainland. Less than 5 percent of the Tanzanian labor force is unionized. Workers' rights are limited. Essential workers are barred from striking; other workers' right to strike is restricted by complex notification and mediation requirements. A labor law was passed early this year, which the government states will help safeguard the rights and welfare of workers. Approximately 85 percent of Tanzania's people survive through subsistence agriculture.

Tanzania's judiciary has displayed signs of autonomy after decades of subservience to the one-party CCM regime, but it remains subject to considerable political influence. Arrest and pretrial detention laws are often ignored. Prison conditions are harsh, and police abuses are said to be common. According to government estimates, there are approximately 45,000 inmates in the country's prisons although the prisons' collective capacity is only 21,000. Such overcrowding has caused widespread concern. Questions have been raised regarding the safety and health of prisoners, including minors and women, who have been subjected to sexual harassment and human rights abuses. The 2002 Prevention of Terrorism Act, which some NGOs have criticized for containing inconsistencies and anomalies, gives the government considerable latitude in that it does not clearly define the term "terrorism." Rather, the act merely lists acts of terrorism, which include, among other things, attacks upon a person's life, kidnapping, and serious damage to property. It gives the police and immigration officials sweeping powers to arrest suspected illegal immigrants or anyone thought to have links with terrorists.

Compared to many of its neighbors, Tanzania has enjoyed relatively tranquil relations between its many ethnic groups. The presence of refugees from conflicts in Burundi, Rwanda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, however, has in the past raised tensions. Women's rights guaranteed by the constitution and other laws are not uniformly protected. Especially in rural areas and in Zanzibar, traditional or Islamic customs discriminatory toward women prevail in family law, and women have fewer educational and economic opportunities. Domestic violence against women

is reportedly common and is rarely prosecuted. Human rights groups have sought laws to bar forced marriages, which are most common among Tanzania's coastal peoples.

Thailand

Population: 63,800,000 **Political Rights:** 2
GNI/capita: $2,000 **Civil Liberties:** 3
Life Expectancy: 71 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Buddhist (95 percent), Muslim (3.8 percent), other (1.2 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Thai (75 percent), Chinese (14 percent), other (11 percent)
Capital: Bangkok
Trend Arrow: Thailand received a downward trend arrow due to the government's excessive use of force toward the insurgency in southern Thailand, the presence of security forces in mosques, and increasing pressure against the press for coverage critical of Prime Minister Thaksin.

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

1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
3,4PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F

Overview:

With an eye to elections that must be called by January 2005, the administration of Thaksin Shinawatra continued to carry out the populist spending programs that had generated strong economic growth and high approval ratings in previous years. Thaksin's image as an effective CEO prime minister, however, has been tarnished by the government's incompetent handling of the outbreak of avian flu and the Muslim insurgency in the South, which had left 440 dead by the end of October. Allegations that Thaksin has used his official position to stifle critics and enrich his allies have for the first time led the administration to reverse policies in response to accusations of conflict of interest.

Known as Siam until 1939, Thailand is the only Southeast Asian nation never colonized by a European country. Beginning with a 1932 coup that transformed the kingdom into a constitutional monarchy, the army ruled periodically for the next six decades. The military last seized power in 1991. Thailand returned to civilian rule the following year when the country's revered monarch, King Bhumibol Alduyadej, convinced the military to appoint a civilian prime minister.

Thailand's export-led economy notched up strong growth in the decade prior to 1997, before being dragged down by the regional financial crisis. Amid noisy street protests by middle-class Thais in Bangkok against corruption and economic mismanagement, parliament voted no confidence in Tammany Hall style politician Chavalit Yongchaiyudh, replaced him with Democrat Party leader Chuan Leekpai, a former prime minister with a clean reputation, and approved a reformist constitution.

The new constitution created independent election and anticorruption bodies and introduced direct election of the Senate.

Criticizing the government for supposedly favoring the urban middle class over ordinary Thais, Thaksin, a former deputy prime minister who built his fortune in telecommunications, unseated Chuan in the January 2001 elections. During the campaign, Thaksin pledged to help poorer Thais hurt by the financial crisis by introducing cheap health care, a debt moratorium for farmers, and investment funds for each village. Thaksin's Thai (Loves) Thai (TRT) party won 248 out of parliament's 500 seats despite a December 2000 ruling by Thailand's new National Counter-Corruption Commission that Thaksin had deliberately falsified wealth-disclosure statements in 1997 as a cabinet minister. In what critics consider a controversial move, the Constitutional Court cleared Thaksin in August 2001.

Thaksin's government has won praise from many Thais for largely sticking to its electoral promises by introducing programs to help the poor and small businesses. Low interest rates and populist spending programs have fueled a consumption-driven economic growth spurt. Wanting to portray Thailand as a well-ordered country safe for foreign investors and tourists, the government has clamped down on negative news, such as the possible presence of terrorists in Thailand. In an attempt to protect the country's poultry industry, the government had long maintained that Thailand was safe from the deadly avian flu sweeping Asia. But in February 2004, the Thaksin administration was forced to confess that six million chickens had been culled and numerous human cases had been confirmed. The cover-up led Japan and the EU to ban Thai chicken imports and the Thai people to question the government's willingness to protect public safety when it conflicted with powerful private interests.

Many of Thaksin's moves run counter to the reformist spirit of the country's new constitution. While the constitution requires the prime minister and cabinet members to divest themselves of all business interests, many officials have simply transferred these holdings to family members. Critics contend that Thaksin and his associates have used government power to enrich themselves. For example, Shin Satellite, a subsidiary of Shin Corporation, a company in which Thaksin's family holds a significant stake, recently won an eight-year tax holiday worth $401 million from Thailand's Board of Investment. This was the first time that this state agency, historically charged with attracting foreign investment, had offered such incentives to a Thai-owned company, according to the *Far Eastern Economic Review*.

Thaksin's October 3, 2004, announcement of a new year-long war on drugs has raised fears of a new wave of extrajudicial killings. In the first three months of Thaksin's 2003 crackdown on narcotics, 2,245 people were killed, according to Amnesty International, and over 42,000 were blacklisted. Thailand has recently been deluged with methamphetamines and other narcotics from neighboring Burma, and many Thais support the government's attempt to eradicate drugs, even if they are uneasy with the means employed to do so.

Thailand's four southernmost provinces, home to most of the country's four million Muslims, erupted into violence in 2004. In January, more than 100 attackers raided a military depot, killing four soldiers and making off with 400 firearms in an operation whose meticulous planning and execution led to suspicions of outside involvement. In a series of coordinated attacks on 11 bases and checkpoints in April,

insurgents killed five members of the Thai security forces, which responded with attacks that left more than 100 people dead. In October, 78 of 1,300 people arrested for demonstrating suffocated in security trucks while they were being transported to a detention center. The government declared martial law in most of Narathiwat, Pattani, and Yala provinces. Many fear that the government's hard-line approach will backfire by creating fertile recruiting ground for the international terrorist groups Jemaah Islamiah and al-Qaeda, both of which have past links to Thailand.

Much of Thailand's traditionally robust press encountered some type of political pressure in 2004. In such an environment, Thailand's revered monarch, King Bhumibol, used his annual December 5 birthday speech to criticize Thaksin for his arrogance, the insurgency in the South and the government cover-up of the bird flu.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Thais can change their government democratically, as evidenced by the August 2004 election of an opposition Democratic candidate as the governor of Bangkok. Thailand's constitution created a parliamentary system with a two-house legislature. The House of Representatives has 400 seats chosen by first-past-the-post balloting and 100 chosen by proportional representation, all directly elected for four-year terms. The Senate has 200 members, who are directly elected for six-year terms.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that official corruption is widespread, involving both bureaucrats demanding bribes in exchange for routine services and law enforcement officials being paid off to ignore trafficking and other illicit activities. Many critics allege that the nexus between politics and big business is strong and growing. Thaksin has responded to conflict-of-interest charges made by an opposition politician by filing criminal charges against him. According to the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, many Democratic Party legislators now spend more time defending themselves in court than scrutinizing policies in parliament. Thailand was ranked 64 out of 146 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2004 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Thaksin's access to state-controlled media combined with the Shin Corporation's 50 percent interest in ITV, a formerly independent television station that have been established specifically to offer an alternative to state-dominated broadcast media, has narrowed the spectrum of opinion aired on television. The outspoken Nation Group lost is contract to produce news for ITV and was further pressured with advertising boycotts and spurious asset investigations, according to the *Nieman Reports*. Thaksin associate and current minister of industry Suriya Jungrungeangkit purchased 30 percent of the Nation Group's shares in 2004, leading many to fear that this economic stake will be used to suppress the voice of Thailand's most outspoken media source.

The print press also came under attack, not through formal censorship but through political intimidation, libel suits, and the threat of lost corporate and government advertising revenues, a potent threat to media companies that still carry large debts from the 1997 economic crisis. In February, the editor of the *Bangkok Post* lost his job when government officials pressured the paper's management about publishing stories deemed too critical of Thaksin. Three editors of the *Thai Post* and nongovernmental organization (NGO) media reformer Surpinya Klangnarong are currently being sued by the Shinawatra family's Shin Corporation for alleging

that it had benefited under his administration. Foreign journalists are not immune to pressure from a government that increasingly uses approval of work permit and visa renewals as leverage. Four *Far Eastern Economic Review* journalists were named in a lese majesty case, *The Economist*'s annual report on Thailand was banned, and a reporter for the *International Herald Tribune* came under vocal attack for articles critical of Thaksin's economic programs.

Thais of all faiths have traditionally worshipped freely in this predominantly Buddhist society, although Muslims in the South have long complained of discrimination in jobs, education, and business opportunities. Recently, a heightened security interest in Islamic institutions has been deterring Muslims from visiting mosques. This discrimination is not limited to southern Thailand. Muslims in Chiang Mai province have complained that Thai security forces have been entering mosques for what locals claim are heavy-handed and religiously insensitive inspections. Professors and other educators can generally lecture and publish freely.

The constitution provides for freedom of assembly and association, and the government generally respected these rights in practice, according to the U.S. State Department human rights report for 2004. Permits are not required for gatherings unless held on public property or organized by foreign nationals, and these are granted routinely. Thailand civil society is dense with NGOs representing farmers, laborers, women, students, and human rights more broadly. Thailand is also home to many environmental groups. Private associations must register with the government, and such registrations are granted routinely. With the imposition of martial law in southern Thailand, the rights of assembly and association there have been severely circumscribed.

Thai trade unions are independent, though fewer than 2 percent of Thai workers are unionized. Private employers often breach the country's poorly enforced labor laws with violations that include using child and sweatshop labor and paying workers less than the minimum wage.

Though the judiciary is generally regarded as independent, it sometimes is subject to corruption, according to anecdotal evidence. Suspects frequently spend long periods in detention before trial because of heavy case backlogs, and trials often take years to complete. Security forces have been accused of using excessive force in dealing with unrest in the South. The suffocation deaths of 78 protestors in police custody occurred because they were piled on top of one another. Coming on the heels of the 2003 war on drugs that left 2,275 dead, this incident continues a trend in which Thailand's poorly trained police often are implicated in wrongful killings of criminal suspects as well as abuse of suspects and prison inmates. According to the U.S. State Department human rights report issued for 2004, conditions in prisons and some provincial immigration detention facilities are poor. Prolonged pretrial detention, including of aliens, is also a problem.

Attacks on civilians and government officials continue to occur almost daily, according to Amnesty International. During 2004, a number of prominent activists, including a Muslim lawyer campaigning against martial law in the South, were killed or disappeared.

Many of the estimated one million members of hill tribes have never been fully integrated into society. Reportedly, half of hill tribe members lack citizenship, rendering them ineligible to vote, own land, attend state schools, or be covered under

labor laws. The government in 2000 made it easier for hill tribe members to gain citizenship, but corruption and inefficiency reportedly have slowed citizenship processing.

Reversing its long-standing policy of harboring refugees from neighboring Southeast Asian nations, in January, Thailand suspended screening of new refugee applicants from Burma by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, according to Human Rights Watch. This followed a July 2003 decision to send all of the estimated 4,000 Burmese refugees and asylum seekers living in urban areas to border camps, despite the fear of cross-border violence and political and ethnic conflict in those camps. The government, which regularly expels as many as 10,000 Burmese migrants a month, also launched a new campaign to round up and deport more of the estimated one million Burmese migrant workers in Thailand. Citing systemic abuses in Burma, rights groups have criticized Thailand's toughened stance toward Burmese fleeing their country who are likely to face reprisals once they return.

Some 200,000 or more Thai women and children work as prostitutes, according to government and private estimates. Many prostitutes work under debt bondage, forced to repay loans by traffickers to their parents. Authorities prosecute relatively few traffickers, and many police, soldiers, local officials, and immigration officers reportedly either are involved in trafficking or take bribes to ignore it.

Togo

Population: 5,600,000 **Political Rights:** 6
GNI/capita: $270 **Civil Liberties:** 5
Life Expectancy: 54 **Status:** Not Free
Religious Groups: Indigenous beliefs (51 percent), Christian (29 percent), Muslim (20 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Native African (99 percent), European and Syrian-Lebanese (1 percent)
Capital: Lome
Trend Arrow: Togo received an upward trend arrow due to the easing of criminal penalties against journalists.

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

1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF

Overview:

In an effort to win back foreign aid, Togo in 2004 eased criminal penalties against journalists and pledged to undertake more than 20 other reforms that officials say will demonstrate that the country is committed to improving its record on democracy and human rights. The European Union agreed to a partial resumption of aid in November 2004.

Togoland, a German colony for more three decades until France seized it at the outset of World War I, gained independence in 1960. The country's founding president, Sylvanus Olympio, was murdered in 1963 as Gnassingbe Eyadema, then a demobilized sergeant who had served in France's colonial wars, led an army coup to

topple the country's democratically elected government. After assuming direct power in 1967, Eyadema suspended the constitution and extended his repressive rule through mock elections and a puppet political party.

In 1991, the organizing of free political parties was legalized, and multiparty elections were promised. The transition faltered, however, as soldiers and secret police harassed, attacked, or killed opposition supporters. Eyadema won fraudulent elections in 1993 and 1998.

Leading opposition parties boycotted the October 2002 legislative vote to protest preparations for the polls, which they said would prevent the holding of a free and fair election. The ruling Rally of the Togolese People party won 72 of 81 parliamentary seats.

Eyadema supporters in the National Assembly began setting the stage in 2002 for his victory in the June 2003 presidential election by changing the constitution to allow him to run for a third term. Lawmakers also altered the composition of the Independent National Electoral Commission, transferred responsibility for organizing the elections from the commission to the Ministry of the Interior, designated the ministry to select polling officers, and stipulated that presidential candidates were to reside in Togo for at least one year prior to elections. To help assure Eyadema's win, the Constitutional Court barred the president's main rival and opposition leader, Gilchrist Olympio, from participating in the polls. Earlier, the electoral commission had denied the candidacy of Olympio, who had been living in exile, on the grounds that he lacked a certificate of residency and could not prove that he had paid his taxes. Olympio appealed, but the commission's decision was upheld by the Constitutional Court.

Eyadema won another five-year term as president with 57 percent of the vote, compared with 34 percent for Emmanuel Bob-Akitani of Olympio's Union of Forces for Change (UFC) party. Four other candidates shared the remainder of the vote. The EU declined to send observers, saying it was unlikely that the vote would be fair. Monitors from the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States, however, claimed that the elections were free and fair. Opposition members maintained that they were intimidated or barred from polling stations, that ballot boxes were stuffed, that fictitious polling centers were created, and that some legitimate voting stations did not receive ballots.

The EU imposed sanctions on Togo a decade ago because of the government's resistance to democratic reform. In November 2004, it agreed to a partial resumption of aid but stated that full aid would not be restored until free and fair elections were held. International donors have partly conditioned a resumption of aid on political dialogue between the government and political opposition. Togolese authorities in 2004 eased travel restrictions against Olympio. The government also pardoned 500 prisoners, including several political prisoners. In April, the government pledged to undertake 22 reforms that would keep the country on what President Eyadema referred to as a "train" headed for democracy. The reforms included launching talks with the political opposition and amending press and communications laws.

Togo's economy is smarting from the EU sanctions, as well as from corruption and mismanagement. Corruption, military spending, and large, inefficient state-owned companies impede economic growth. Eighty percent of Togolese are engaged in subsistence agriculture.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: The Togolese people cannot change their government democratically. Presidential elections in 1993 and 1998 were blatantly fraudulent. The National Assembly, which is dominated by President Eyadema's Rally of the Togolese People, amended the electoral code prior to the 2003 presidential election to favor Eyadema's candidacy. The measures reduced the power of the electoral commission and compromised its impartiality. The October 2002 legislative elections were neither free nor fair.

Togo was not ranked by Transparency International in its 2004 Corruption Perceptions Index. Corruption in Togo has been a serious impediment to development. Reporting about corruption has often landed Togolese journalists in jail.

At least 15 private newspapers publish in Lome. There are more than a dozen independent newspapers that publish sporadically and many private radio stations, most of which operate as pirate stations. Most of the independent broadcast media outlets, however, offer little vibrant local news coverage or commentary. Togo's watchdog groups include the Togolese Media Observatory, a nongovernmental organization made up of state-media and independent journalists, and which aims to protect press freedom and improve professionalism in journalism.

The National Assembly in 2004 amended the press and communications laws to remove prison terms for most offenses. International press freedom groups welcomed the move but said they would watch to see how the amended laws are applied. Prison sentences could still be imposed in cases of journalists found guilty of calling for theft, murder, racial hatred, or subverting security forces from "their duty to the country." Heavy fines of up to $9,000 remained in place for "defaming or insulting" the president, state institutions, courts, the armed forces, and public administration bodies. The previous laws had imposed jail terms of up to five years on reporters and were among the most repressive press laws in Africa.

Fewer journalists were threatened or jailed in 2004 than in previous years. Still, harassment remains a problem. Yves Kpeto, a reporter with Nana FM, and another journalist with the weekly newspaper *Le Combat du People* were roughed up by security forces in May 2004 at the University of Lome during a student demonstration.

Constitutionally protected religious freedom is generally respected. Academic freedom is not respected, and government informers and security forces maintain a presence on campuses. The University of Lome was closed for most of May following student demonstrations demanding better grants and living conditions. Several student leaders were jailed in connection with the protests.

Freedom of assembly is allowed, but is often restricted for the government's political opponents. Demonstrations are often banned or violently halted. Human rights groups are closely monitored and sometimes harassed. Togo's constitution includes the right to form and join unions, except for "essential" workers such as security forces. Nevertheless, only 20 percent of the labor force is unionized. Unions have the right to bargain collectively, but this right is restricted.

The judiciary is heavily influenced by the president. Traditional courts handle many minor matters. Courts are understaffed and inadequately funded, pretrial detentions are lengthy, and prisons are severely overcrowded. Extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, and torture continue. Security forces commit abuses with impunity, and illegal detention is common. Amnesty International in 2004 cited Togo for

malicious prosecution, arbitrary arrest, and excessive force against political demonstrations. Nine militants of the main opposition UFC party were sentenced in 2004 to between two and six years in prison in connection with disturbances during the 2003 presidential elections. They had been detained on what many believe were politically motivated charges following the destruction of a petrol station and the explosion of a handmade bomb in a French restaurant in Lome**.**

Ethnic discrimination is rife among the country's 40 ethnic groups. Political and military power is narrowly held by members of a few ethnic groups from northern Togo, especially Eyadema's Kabye ethnic group. Southerners dominate the country's commerce, and violence occasionally flares between the two groups.

Despite constitutional guarantees of equality, women's opportunities for education and employment are limited. A husband may legally bar his wife from working, or he may legally choose to receive her earnings. Customary law bars women's rights in divorce and denies inheritance rights to widows. Violence against women is common. Female genital mutilation is widely practiced by the country's northern ethnic groups, and a law prohibiting the practice is not enforced. Several organizations promote the rights of women.

Child trafficking for the purpose of slavery is a problem in Togo as it is in much of West Africa. The New York-based Human Rights Watch said in a 2003 report that hundreds of children each year were trafficked from, received in, or trafficked through Togo on false promises of education, professional training, and paid employment. The report said the children were transported at times under life-threatening conditions and were subjected to physical and mental abuse.

Tonga

Population: 100,000 **Political Rights:** 5
GNI/capita: $1,410 **Civil Liberties:** 3
Life Expectancy: 71 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Christian (Free Wesleyan Church claims over 30,000 adherents)
Ethnic Groups: Polynesian, European (about 300)
Capital: Nuku'alofa
Trend Arrow: Tonga received a downward trend arrow due to continuing government efforts to tighten controls over the media.

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

1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
5,3PF	5,3PF	5,3PF	5,3PF	5,3PF	5,3PF	5,3PF	5,3PF	5,3PF	5,3PF

Overview:

The king of Tonga signed into law a controversial amendment to the constitution in December 2003 giving the government greater control over the media. This unpopular action was quickly followed by new media laws to curb foreign ownership and distribution of publications critical of the government. In October, the Supreme Court ruled that the media laws and parts of the amendments were null and void.

Tonga consists of 169 islands that King George Tupou I united under his rule in 1845. The country became a constitutional monarchy in 1875 and a British protectorate in 1900. In 1970, Tonga gained independence; it is a member of the British Commonwealth. The 85-year-old King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV has reigned since 1945.

Politics and the economy are dominated by the monarchy, hereditary nobles, and a few prominent commoners. The first strong show of public support for democratic reform was the election of pro-democracy candidates for seven of the nine directly elected seats reserved for commoners in the March 2002 elections. Soon afterward, the government initiated some public and economic sector reforms, which critics said were far from sufficient. Some voices for change have come from within the monarchy; Prince Tu'ipelehake, a nephew of the king's, had openly called on Australia to pressure Tonga to expand democracy in the kingdom. In October 2004, his proposal for a referendum to allow popular election of all representatives won a narrow approval from parliament after a similar proposal submitted as a people's petition in September 2004 was thrown out by parliament.

In December 2003, the government approved amendments to the constitution that—along with the controversial Newspaper Act and Media Operators Act that were passed by parliament in October 2003—give it licensing power over all publications in the kingdom, including foreign publications that circulate in Tonga. The Newspaper Act requires licenses for publishers, sellers, and importers, with violations carrying a $10,000 fine or imprisonment for a maximum of one year. The Media Operators Act limits foreign ownership of publications published in Tonga to 20 percent. The government said that these new laws were needed to address concerns about foreign entities entering the media market in Tonga and were not intended to curtail freedom of the press. In January 2004, 152 plaintiffs asked the Supreme Court for a judicial review of the media laws. In October, the Supreme Court ruled that the Media Operators Act, Newspaper Act, and parts of the constitutional amendment restricting freedom of speech were void and invalid.

In an attempt to deny its critics another favorable court ruling, the Tongan parliament abolished use of the British Civil Liberty Law by Tongan courts as part of a parcel of bills in December 2003. This law had been used to cover matters, like adoption, not addressed by Tongan law. In April 2004, Chief Justice Frederick Gordon Ward resigned to assume a new position as the chairman of the Court of Appeal in Fiji. There was speculation that Ward's resignation was prompted by the parliament's decision to abolish use of the British Civil Liberty Law.

In July, the parliament temporarily suspended two pro-democracy parliament members from attending sessions: 'Akilisi Pohiva was suspended for a day and a half, and 'Etuate Lvulavu for three days, for allegedly disrupting legislative proceedings with their questions about official corruption and abuses.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Tongan citizens cannot change their government democratically. The king, 33 hereditary nobles, and a few prominent commoners dominate politics and the economy through their majority in parliament and their substantial land holdings. King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV appoints his cabinet without election and for life terms, and the cabinet holds 12 of 30 seats in the unicameral legislature. Another nine parlia-

ment seats are reserved for the nobles, who are chosen by their peers, and cabinet members and nobles usually vote as one bloc. The remaining nine representatives are elected in general elections. The king appoints the prime minister and presides over the Privy Council, which makes major policy decisions. Prince Ulukalala Lavaka Ata, the king's third son, was appointed prime minister in 2000 over Crown Prince Tupoutoa Tupouto'a. Prince Ma'tau, the second son of the king, died in February 2004.

The number of seats held by prominent commoners has been shrinking in recent years, losing to pro-democracy candidates. In September, pro-democracy representatives proposed a referendum on directly electing all 30 representatives, while still allowing the king to appoint the prime minister and his cabinet from those elected. The parliament rejected this proposal, but put forth a similar one in October.

Official corruption and abuses are serious problems in Tonga, causing public dissatisfaction with the government and hindering economic growth. Nobles and others with connections to the political elite own large tracts of land and dominate big and medium-size businesses.

Despite constitutional guarantees for freedom of speech and the press, the government has a long history of suppressing criticism of the monarchy and government. The government owns shares in several private media companies and runs the country's television and radio stations. The government-owned Tonga Communications Corporation and the private Tonofon, with significant shareholding by members of the royal family, are the two Internet service providers. Internet diffusion in Tonga is limited by cost and technical access challenges.

In 2004, two church papers (the Roman Catholic Church's *Taumu'a Lelei* and the Tokaikolo Christian Fellowship's *'Ofa Ki Tonga*), the Tonga Chamber of Commerce's newsletter *Lali Buzz*, the government-owned weekly *Tonga Chronicle*, the Vula News Company, and the privately owned *Tonga Star* were granted new licenses. Vavau Press, publisher of the monthly *Matangi Tonga*, received a license in its third try and after one of its co-owners was granted Tongan citizenship. The *Tonga Times* and the opposition's *Ko e Kele'a* were both denied licenses. The government also arrested a New Zealand citizen of Tongan descent who entered the kingdom in February 2004 with 20 copies of the *Tonga Times*. In the last several years, the government has tried repeatedly to silence the *Tonga Times*, a particularly vocal critic of the government; the paper is independently owned by a New Zealand citizen of Tongan heritage and is published in New Zealand.

Freedom of religion is generally respected in this predominantly Christian society. However, the Tongan Broadcasting Commission requires that any references to religion on radio and television must conform to mainstream Christian beliefs. As such, there are limits on broadcasts about non-Christian religions as well as those, such as Mormonism, not considered mainstream. There were no reports of government restrictions on academic freedom, but self-censorship is practiced to avoid trouble with the government.

Freedom of assembly and association are generally respected for groups not involved in politics and not critical of government policies. In October 2003, nearly one-tenth of the country's population demonstrated against new media restrictions. Many civil society organizations are active in promoting education, public health, and children's and women's welfare. The 1963 Trade Union Act gives workers the

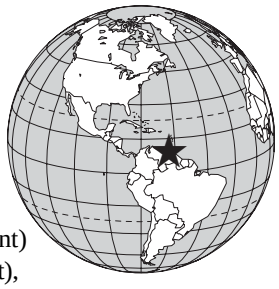
right to form unions and strike, but regulations for union formation were never promulgated. The economy's substantial trade deficit is largely offset by remittances from Tongans working overseas, foreign aid, and tourism.

The judiciary is generally fair, efficient, and independent of the king and the executive branch. In 2004, the Supreme Court ruled that two prisoners suffered abuse in prison before their escape in January. The escapees voluntarily returned to prison after 11 days. It is not clear yet how the parliament's decision to abolish use of the British Civil Liberty Law will affect the judiciary. Traditional village elders also exercise considerable authority and frequently adjudicate local disputes. Prisons are sparse, but there were no reports of prisoner abuse. Suspects may exercise the right to an attorney and a court hearing.

Citizens enjoy freedom of travel, movement, and migration. Immigration laws were tightened after the illegal sale of Tongan passports, particularly to persons from China and Taiwan, became sore points in Tongan relations with major aid donors. Relations between Tongans and Chinese immigrants have worsened in recent years as evidenced by attacks against Chinese-owned shops.

Women face discrimination in almost every sphere of life and are frequent victims of domestic violence. There are few legal protections for women, and the police and courts generally consider domestic abuse better handled by families and village elders.

Trinidad and Tobago



Population: 1,300,000 **Political Rights:** 3
GNI/capita: $6,750 **Civil Liberties:** 3
Life Expectancy: 71 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (29.4 percent), Hindu (23.8 percent), Anglican (10.9 percent), Muslim (5.8 percent), Presbyterian (3.4 percent), other (26.7 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Black (40 percent), East Indian (40 percent), mixed (18 percent), other (2 percent)
Capital: Port-of-Spain

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

1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	2,2F	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF

Overview:

The government of Prime Minister Patrick Manning did not made any significant headway during 2004 in the struggle against dramatic increases in violent crime in Trinidad and Tobago. Meanwhile, the leader of a small radical group who had staged a coup attempt more than a decade earlier was rearrested in July on charges of conspiracy to murder.

Trinidad and Tobago, a member of the Commonwealth, achieved independence from Britain in 1962. In July 1991, Jamaat-al-Muslimeen, a small radical Muslim group,

staged a coup attempt in Port-of-Spain. The prime minister and eight cabinet members were held hostage for four days, and 23 people died in bombings at the police headquarters, the state television station, and the parliamentary building.

After disputed elections in December 2001, Patrick Manning was appointed as prime minister. An ensuing stalemate in parliament, with 18 members of each party in a nine-month deadlock, led to street demonstrations and a legal challenge. Manning eventually called for legislative elections in October 2002. The polling was generally peaceful and saw the participation of six parties representing more than 100 candidates contesting the 36 open seats. Manning's People's National Movement (PNM) won 20 seats, while the United National Congress (UNC) had a heavy showing, reinforcing the domination of these two parties. Manning was sworn in for the third time since 1991, as the seventh prime minister of independent Trinidad and Tobago. His cabinet showed few changes and included his wife, Hazel, who again serves as minister of education; nepotism does not seem to be an issue for the electorate. In previous elections, there were concerns over the impartiality of the Elections and Boundaries Commission, but no major improprieties surfaced during the recent national or local polls. The UNC is, however, opposed to the redrawing of electoral districts as being partisan and favoring the PNM.

In local elections held in July 2003, the PNM won a majority of seats and took control of two districts that had been strongholds of the UNC, which won just 5 of 14 councils. Also during the year, the UNC became increasingly confrontational, forcing Manning's government to compromise when legislation required a two-thirds majority in parliament. Basdeo Panday, leader of the UNC, became increasingly confrontational, refusing to step down from the leadership of his party despite promising to do so when he turned 70 in May 2003.

Yasin Abu Bakr, the leader of Jamaat al-Muslimeen, a small radical Muslim group, was arrested in August 2003 on charges of conspiracy to murder, but was released on bail. He was rearrested in July of 2004 on charges that he was conspiring to murder two former members of his group, including his son-in-law. The group had staged a coup attempt in July 1991 in the capital, Port-of-Spain.

In August, a parliamentary integrity commission was established, an indication of the continuing effort to fight corruption. Meanwhile, growing crime was a critical problem throughout 2004; as of October of, there had been 222 murders, up from 175 in 2003.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Trinidad and Tobago can change their government democratically. The 1976 constitution established the two-island nation as a republic, with a president, elected by a majority of both houses of parliament, replacing the former governor-general. Executive authority remains vested in the prime minister. The bicameral parliament consists of the 36-member House of Representatives, elected for five years, and the 31-member Senate, with 25 senators appointed by the prime minister and 6 by the opposition. Political parties are free to organize, but in practice, the dominance of the PNM and UNC has led to a two-party system.

In July 2001, then prime minister Basdeo Panday of the UNC lashed out at a Transparency International report that rated Trinidad, for the first time, as a country with high levels of official corruption. Panday, who was engaged in a long-running

feud with prominent members of the local press, denied that there was corruption in his administration. Trinidad and Tobago was ranked 51 out of 146 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2004 Corruption Perceptions Index. An Integrity Commission, established under the 2000 Integrity in Public Life Act, has the power to investigate the financial and ethical performance of public functionaries; Panday was the first person to be investigated by the commission.

Press outlets are privately owned and vigorous and offer pluralistic views. There are four daily newspapers and several weeklies. The broadcast media are both private and public. Panday refused, in 1998, to sign the Inter American Press Association's Declaration of Chapultepec on press freedom until it addressed instances of media dissemination of "lies, half-truths and innuendoes." Under Prime Minister Patrick Manning, the government did not interfere with freedom of speech and the press. There is free access to the Internet.

Freedom of religion is guaranteed under the constitution, and the government honors this provision. Foreign missionaries are free to operate, but the government limits representatives of a denomination to 35. Academic freedom is generally respected.

Freedom of association and assembly is respected. Labor unions are well organized, powerful, and politically active, although union membership has declined. Strikes are legal and occur frequently.

The judicial branch is independent, although subject to some political pressure and corruption. As a result of rising crime rates, the court system is severely backlogged, in some cases for up to five years, with an estimated 20,000 criminal cases awaiting trial. However, the government permits human rights monitors to visit prisons, which are severely overcrowded.

Street crime is on the rise, with the consumption and trafficking of illegal drugs considered to be largely responsible for the increase in violent crime. Drug corruption extends to the business community, and a significant amount of money is believed to be laundered through front companies. The Proceeds of Crime Act of 2000 provides severe penalties for money laundering and requires that major financial transactions be strictly monitored. The government works closely with U.S. law enforcement agencies to track drug shipments in and out of the country. In an indication of the seriousness of the country's crime wave, in January 2004, the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce asked the government to strictly enforce laws, including the execution of convicted murderers.

Corruption in the police force, which is often drug related, is endemic, and law enforcement inefficiency results in the dismissal of some criminal cases. The police have won praise, however, for establishing a branch of Crime Stoppers, an international organization that promotes community involvement in preventing and informing on crime through a hotline.

The population is divided into three communities: Afro-Trinidadians, Indo-Trinidadians, and those of mixed race. The Indian community continues to edge towards numerical, and thus political, advantage. The most recent elections are emblematic of the racial tensions that continue to dominate electoral contests. In his speech opening parliament on September 10, 2004, President George Maxwell Richards highlighted the importance of not taking race issues for granted. Efforts to heal the wounds of the 1991 coup continue to characterize Trinidadian politics.

Violence against women is extensive and remains a low priority for police and

prosecutors. While serious crimes such as murder and rape are reported, other instances of abuse go unreported. Women are present in the public and private sector, but men still dominate most leadership positions and pay differentials continue to favor the latter. Discrimination is forbidden under the constitution.

Tunisia

Population: 10,000,000 **Political Rights:** 6
GNI/capita: $1,990 **Civil Liberties:** 5
Life Expectancy: 73 **Status:** Not Free
Religious Groups: Muslim (98 percent), Christian (1 percent), Jewish (1 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Arab (98 percent), other (2 percent)
Capital: Tunis

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

1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF

Overview:

In October 2004, President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, who has ruled Tunisia with an iron fist for 17 years, won a fourth term as president in elections. These polls, as well as legislative elections held the same day, were marred by an opposition boycott and public apathy and were criticized for providing few opportunities for public participation in the political process. Tunisia's press freedoms remained restrictive, and the government continued to crack down on journalists and human rights defenders.

Nationalist pressures for Tunisian independence began in the 1930s under the leadership of Habib Bourguiba, leader of the Neo-Doustour party. Bourguiba became the country's first president when Tunisia gained independence in 1956 after more than 70 years as a French protectorate. Bourguiba's vision for Tunisia led to significant initiatives in the areas of social and economic development, including the promotion of one of the most liberal personal status codes in the Arab world; it ceded significant rights to women and remains unmatched in the Arab world today. He also furthered education and spending on economic development projects. However, political rights and civil liberties were severely restricted under Bourguiba's rule.

In 1987, Ben Ali, formerly the minister of the interior, led a bloodless coup, deposing the aging Bourguiba and promising to open up the political system. After an initial period of minor political reform, Ben Ali cracked down harshly on the Islamist opposition. Over time, the government's repressive practices extended beyond the Islamist opposition; hundreds of dissidents have been jailed over the last 15 years for peacefully exercising their civil liberties.

Tunisia's dismal human rights record has been attacked by international human rights groups, and more discreetly so by the international community. The European Union has quietly linked human rights and assistance in its agreements clauses

with the North African state. The United States has recently been more openly critical, and during a visit to Tunis in December 2003, U.S. secretary of state Colin Powell praised Tunisia's partnership in the war against terrorism, but urged the government to pursue political reforms. However, the government's human rights record has not improved since Amnesty International issued, in 2003, a 40-page report describing how government opponents are subjected to arbitrary arrest, incommunicado detention, torture, and imprisonment.

The presidential election, which Ben Ali won with 94.52 percent of the vote, pointed to a likely continuation of that trend. Ben Ali ran against three other contenders, none of whom garnered more than 4 percent of the vote amid opposition boycotts and claims of manipulation, voter intimidation, and government restrictions. Ben Ali was backed by business groups, trade unions, and two opposition parties. Concurrent legislative elections initially featured 300 candidates from seven political parties competing for 182 seats. However, a major opposition party, the Progressive Democratic Party, pulled out its candidates at the last minute, arguing that the vote would be a sham.

The United States expressed disappointment, saying there had been little opportunity for public political participation. After Ben Ali's reelection, Amnesty International urged him to respect the country's obligations under Tunisian law and international human rights standards and put an end to human rights violations prevalent for the past decade.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Tunisians cannot change their government democratically. The 1959 constitution accords the president significant powers, including the right to select the prime minister and cabinet, to rule by decree when the legislature is not in session, and to appoint the governors of Tunisia's 23 provinces. The legislature, by contrast, serves as a rubber stamp for the president's policies and does not provide a check on executive power. Presidential elections lack any pretense of competition. A constitutional referendum in 2002 removed the three-term limit on the presidency and raised to 75 the maximum age to become president, which means that Ben Ali will be eligible to stand again for office in 2009. Although parliamentary elections are contrived to allow for the appearance of a multiparty legislature, the ruling Constitutional Democratic Rally (Rassemblement Constitutionnel Democratique, or RCD) holds a majority of the seats. After one opposition party, the Democratic Forum for Labor and Freedom was legalized last year—eight years after its formation—the number of authorized political parties in the country increased to seven.

Tunisia was ranked 39 out of 146 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2004 Corruption Perceptions Index. Corruption in the government exists, including petty corruption and bribe taking by security forces. The government announced the creation of a body tasked with reducing corruption, but there were no public reports of its activities.

Tunisia's press freedoms are among the most restricted in the Arab world. The government controls domestic broadcasting and owns or controls six of the eight mainstream dailies. It also uses newsprint subsidies and financial control as means for indirect censorship of the private press. During the presidential and general election campaigns, state-run radio and television provided full coverage to the ruling

RCD but hardly any to the opposition candidates, according to local and international observers. Tunisian journalists critical of the regime continue to be harassed, threatened, imprisoned, physically attacked, and censored. In November 2003, journalist Zouhair Yahyaoui was released after almost a year and a half in prison. However, on the same day, Internet opposition journalist Naziha Rejiba received an eight-month suspended prison sentence on currency-exchange charges. In August 2004, plainclothes security men assaulted journalist Slim Boukhedr after he asked questions implying Ben Ali influenced the judiciary in a particular case. Abdallah Zouari, a journalist with the Islamist opposition newspaper *Al-Fajr*, was released in September 2004, after serving a 13-month sentence. The government restricted access to a number of Internet Web sites, including those belonging to Tunisian opposition and Islamist groups. In July 2004, six Internet users accused of being Islamist extremists and plotting terror attacks were each given a 13-year prison sentence, reportedly after confessions extracted under duress.

While Islam is the state religion, the government allows for the free practice of all religions as long as the public order is not disturbed. The government controls and subsidizes mosques and pays the salaries of prayer leaders. The 1988 law on mosques stipulates that only those appointed by the government may lead activities in the mosques, which are required to remain closed except during prayer times.

Academic freedom is severely restricted. The government closely monitored university staff and students for any Islamist activity, and used uniformed police on campuses to discourage expressions of dissent. Academic publications were submitted to the government prior to publication, and professors avoided teaching classes on sensitive subjects such as civil liberties and political systems.

Freedom of association and assembly is sharply curtailed. Politically oriented nongovernmental organizations remain unauthorized. The government refuses to legalize most independent human rights organizations.

Human rights defenders and democracy activists were subjected to increased government harassment during the year, including physical beatings, heavy police surveillance, and travel bans. In January, an assailant believed to be working with the state security services violently attacked prominent human rights activist and Internet journalist Sihem Bensedrine outside her home. The repression of dissidents increased around the elections period. Jallel Zoughlami, a known critic of Ben Ali and founder of an unauthorized monthly newspaper, and his brother Nejib were detained on September 22, shortly after they were attacked in the center of Tunis by several men. In October, two plainclothes policemen beat opposition activist Hamma Hammami in the street. Another activist, Moncef Marzouki, leader of the unauthorized political party Republican Congress (Congres pour la Republique, or CPR) was stopped and interrogated for three hours at Tunis airport when he was on his way to Paris in October to join a conference of the Tunisian opposition.

There is no independent judiciary; the government has used the courts to convict and imprison critics. Human Rights Watch released a report in July 2004 accusing the government of holding around 40 of the country's more than 500 political prisoners in solitary confinement, some for up to 13 years. They are all Islamist members of the banned Nahdha Party and were sentenced by military courts in 1992 in unfair trials. The government has denied the accusation. Amnesty International has expressed concern that a new antiterrorism law, passed in December 2003, would

further erode human rights through its broad definition of terrorism and provisions for extended pretrial detention. The law came amid a climate of rampant abuse, including torture and ill-treatment of defendants, lack of guarantees for a free trial, harsh prison conditions, arbitrary arrest, and incommunicado detention.

Women enjoy substantial rights, and the government has worked to advance women's rights in the areas of property ownership and support to divorced women. However, inheritance law still discriminates against women. Unlike in many countries in the Arab world, a child's rights to citizenship are conveyed through either the mother or the father.

Turkey

Population: 71,300,000 **Political Rights:** 3
GNI/capita: $2,490 **Civil Liberties:** 3*
Life Expectancy: 69 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Muslim [mostly Sunni] (99.8 percent), other (0.2 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Turkish (80 percent), Kurdish (20 percent)
Capital: Ankara
Ratings Change: Turkey's civil liberties rating improved from 4 to 3 due to the passage of another round of major reforms, including a complete overhaul of the penal code, greater civilian control of the military, the initiation of broadcasts in minority languages, and a decrease in the severest forms of torture.

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

1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
5,5PF	4,5PF	4,5PF	4,5PF	4,5PF	4,5PF	4,5PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,3PF

Overview:

Turkey continued to pass monumental reforms in 2004 in preparation for European Union (EU) membership. May constitutional reforms improved gender equality and civilian oversight of the military, and September saw the first overhaul of the Turkish penal code in its 78-year history. A positive report from the EU Commission in October paved the way for a long-awaited date for the start of negotiations, expected to be set in December 2004.

Turkey emerged as a republic out of the breakup of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I. Its founder and the author of its guiding principles was Kemal Mustafa Ataturk ("Father of the Turks"), who declared that Muslim Turkey would be a secular state. Ataturk sought to modernize the country through measures such as the pursuit of Western learning, use of the Roman alphabet instead of Arabic script for writing Turkish, and abolishment of the Muslim caliphate.

Turkey stayed out of most of World War II, but joined the Allies in February 1945. After the war, the republic joined NATO in 1952 to guarantee its protection from the Soviet Union. However, modern Turkish political history has been unstable,

and the army has overthrown civilian governments in three coups. The army, which sees itself as a bulwark against both Islamism and Kurdish separatism, has traditionally expressed opinions on the functioning of government that are rarely ignored.

The role of political Islam has been one of the defining questions of Turkish politics in the 1990s and early twenty-first century. In 1995, an Islamist party, Welfare, won the general election but failed to obtain a majority. Initially, two other parties formed a majority coalition without it, but the breakup of that coalition in 1996 led the Democratic Party to form a coalition with Welfare. The following year the army, ever protective of Turkey's secular roots, forced the coalition to resign. Welfare prime minister Necmettin Erbakan was replaced by a member of the Motherland Party. The Welfare party was banned in 1998 on the grounds that it was seeking to introduce Islamic rule.

The governments that followed failed to stabilize a shaky economy, which culminated in an economic crisis in 2001. In November 2002, the Justice and Development (AK) Party, whose roots lay in the then-disbanded Welfare, won a sweeping majority in the general election by promising to end government corruption and put the country on a firm path toward EU membership. The AK sought to distance itself from political Islamism, but its leader, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a former mayor of Istanbul, had previously been banned from politics after he was convicted of crimes against secularism for reading a poem seeming to incite religious intolerance. Abdullah Gul served as prime minister until parliament changed the constitution to allow Erdogan to replace him in March 2003.

Erdogan has used his party's large parliamentary majority to push through successive wide-reaching reforms that are crucial to Turkey's application to join the EU. In 2004, the government passed further constitutional reforms and a thorough overhaul of the penal code. In October, Turkey's persistence paid off in a report from the European Commission, which recommended that in December 2004 the EU give Turkey a date to begin negotiations. However, the report cited continued shortcomings, including corruption, inequities in the status of women, and problems with the role of the military, and said that the EU should monitor Turkey to ensure progress. Turkey is not expected to join the EU for at least a decade.

Kurdish separatists fought a 15-year guerrilla war against Turkish forces in the southeast of the country that ended after the capture of their leader, Abdullah Ocalan, in 1999. The legacy of this conflict, in which more than 35,000 people were killed, remains in the form of discrimination and lingering tensions. In June, the Kurdish separatist PKK, now renamed Kongra-Gel, ended its five-year ceasefire with the government because, it claimed, not enough had been done to meet its demands. Clashes with government troops increased over the summer, with deaths on both sides. The EU added Kongra-Gel to its list of terrorist organizations in April 2004.

Turkey has also faced increasing violence from non-Kurdish terrorism. Bombs went off in Ankara and Istanbul ahead of visits by British prime minister Tony Blair in May and U.S. president George W. Bush in June, as well as at a Masonic lodge in March.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Turkish citizens can change their government democratically. The 1982 constitution provides for a 550-member parliament, the Grand National Assembly, which is elected to

five-year terms. The prime minister is the head of government, but the assembly chooses a mostly symbolic president as head of state—currently Ahmet Necdet Sezer. Democratic choice has been undercut by the army in the past, the last time being in a "soft coup" that forced the government of the religious Welfare party out of office in 1997. Recep Tayyip Erdogan of the AK became prime minister in March 2003. The November 2002 elections were widely judged as free and fair.

In January 2003, new legal amendments loosened restrictions on party names and candidates and circumscribed the reasons for closure of a political party. However, a party can still be shut down if its program is not in agreement with the constitution, and the word "agreement" can be widely interpreted. In addition, a party must win at least 10 percent of the votes cast nationwide to have representation in parliament. As a result, although a large number and variety of parties participated in active campaigning in 2002, only two parties, AK and the Republican People's Party (CHP), won seats. Nevertheless, both of these parties had been in the opposition, thus attesting to the ability of the electorate to precipitate change.

Today, AK holds an overwhelming 367 parliamentary seats. The opposition has been in disarray since the 2002 elections, as confirmed by the tremendous victory of AK in March 2004 local elections. The AK Party appears to have abandoned its former Islamist aspirations. Although the party has supported some loosening of restrictions on religious activity, it has not made any attempt to undermine Turkey's secular underpinnings, but instead has steadfastly pursued a start to EU negotiations.

The National Security Council, once dominated by the military, had its policy-setting role downgraded to a purely advisory one in 2003. A civilian was chosen to head the council for the first time in August 2004, and constitutional reforms made military expenditures more accountable to parliament. Significantly, the military did not intervene when Erdogan was chosen prime minister, despite its known reservations. Nevertheless, the opinions of the top generals continue to generate press attention, and the possibility of military intervention in controversial policy making remains.

Turkey struggles with corruption in government and in daily life. The AK Party—"ak" means "pure" in Turkish—came to power amid promises to clean up governmental corruption, and since December 2003, Turkey has signed the Group of States Against Corruption (GRECO), the UN Convention against Corruption, and the European Convention on the Fight against Corruption. However, enforcement is lacking, and a culture of tolerance of corruption pervades among the general population. Transparency has improved through EU reforms, but here too implementation lags. Turkey was ranked 77 out of 146 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2004 Corruption Perceptions Index.

While Turkey's constitution establishes freedom of the media and recent reforms have increased this freedom, some major impediments remain. Fines, arrests, and imprisonment are regularly allotted to media and journalists who, for example, criticize the military or portray the Kurds in too positive of a light. Turkey's Supreme Council of Radio and Television (RTUK) regularly sanctions broadcasters if they are not in compliance with a broadly defined set of principles. Furthermore, media organizations have an incentive to produce news of a certain political bent because they are nearly all owned by giant holding companies with interests in other sectors. Self-censorship therefore occurs. On the other hand, new laws were instituted al-

lowing broadcasts for the first time in minority languages, and the first such broadcasts took place in June 2004. In addition, as of June 2004, a member of the military will no longer be part of the RTUK. The government does not restrict the Internet beyond the same censorship policies that apply to other media.

Turkey is a predominantly Muslim country, and much of its population is very devout. Three non-Muslim groups—Greek and Armenian Orthodox Christians, and Jews—are officially recognized. Other groups lack legal status, and their activities are subject to legal challenges. While the constitution protects freedom of religion, the Turkish republic was set up on the premise of secularism in which state and religious affairs are separated. In practice, this has meant considerable government control of religion. Women wearing headscarves are not allowed in public universities and government offices, and observant men are dismissed from the military. There are periodic protests against the headscarf ban, although the European Court of Human Rights ruled in June 2004 that the ban is legal, and AK dropped its attempt to introduce an easing of the ban in the 2004 penal code reforms. A much more vocal controversy erupted in spring 2004 over an AK proposal to allow graduates of vocational schools—including Islamic imam-*hatip* schools—to enroll in state universities. After the president vetoed the bill, AK allowed the matter to drop. The government does not otherwise restrict academic freedom, although self-censorship on sensitive topics like the role of Islam and the Kurdish problem are common.

The constitution protects freedom of association, but broad language leaves room for restrictions despite some tightening through recent reforms. Some local officials use bureaucracy to prevent registration of demonstrations, and police regularly disperse peaceful public gatherings, often using excessive force. Nevertheless, civil society plays an increasing role in Turkish politics. Regulation of the activities and membership of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) has relaxed with recent reforms, although restrictions remain, particularly for pro-Kurdish groups. Employees have the right to join trade unions and cannot be discriminated against for doing so, but public employees do not have the right to strike.

The Turkish constitution establishes an independent judiciary, but the government can influence judges through its control of appointments, promotions, and financing. Recent reforms give all detainees the right to see a lawyer immediately, free of charge, although the law is not enforced in all instances, particularly in the southeast. The death penalty was fully abolished in 2004, as were State Security Courts, where many human rights abuses occurred. In September, parliament overhauled the penal code, making such fundamental changes as institutionalizing the concept that punishments should be in proportion to the crimes committed; there are accusations that residual ambiguities still allow judges to interpret some laws at will.

Leyla Zana and three other Kurdish former members of parliament, who were convicted of belonging to the PKK in 1994 in what was widely condemned as an unfair trial, were released in June pending an appeal. The four were considered by many to have been political prisoners, and the trial is considered symbolic both of Turkey's flawed judicial system and of the push for Kurdish rights. Their lawyers consider it unlikely that they will return to prison because of the amount of time they have already served.

The Erdogan government has a "zero-tolerance" policy concerning torture, backed up by new laws and training to improve implementation. However, while

torture is widely reported as having decreased, particularly in its harshest forms, most rights groups agree that it still occurs and perpetrators are rarely punished. Prison conditions can be harsh, including measures such as solitary confinement and medical neglect. Most controversial are the F-type prisons, which are criticized for isolation of prisoners. An especially contentious imprisonment is that of Abdullah Ocalan, former leader of the Kurdish guerrilla movement, who is serving a life sentence in solitary confinement on an island off the Turkish coast; Ocalan allegedly has not had adequate access to his lawyer or to visitors.

Turkey claims that all Turkish citizens are treated equally, but its unwillingness to recognize Kurdish differences results in de facto unequal treatment under the law. Because minorities are defined solely by religion, Kurds are denied recognition, and a traditional emphasis on Turkishness over multiculturalism has left the Kurds facing restrictions on their language, culture, and freedom of expression. The situation has improved with the EU harmonization reforms, but official and informal discrimination remain.

Property rights are generally respected in Turkey. The most significant problem is the tens of thousands of Kurds who were driven from their homes by government forces during the conflict in the southeast. The government has initiated a project to compensate these people and return them to their villages. However, local paramilitary "village guards" have allegedly used intimidation and violence to prevent some from returning to their homes.

Constitutional amendments in the spring of 2004 included a provision granting women full equality before the law, building on earlier changes in the civil and penal codes. However, much of Turkey is socially conservative, and women have far lower status than men in practice. UNICEF has determined that in some rural provinces more than half of all girls under age 15 do not attend school. Women are also discriminated against in employment. "Honor crimes," including killings, in which family members punish women who "dishonor" the family by becoming pregnant out of wedlock or being raped, are a problem among traditional Muslim families. In February, the government instructed prayer leaders to state that honor killings are a sin against God, and the 2004 revisions to the penal code included an end to sentence reductions for these crimes. AK leaders attempted to include a law criminalizing adultery in the penal code amendments, which was ultimately excluded. Human trafficking for the purposes of prostitution is a problem in Turkey, although the government has been taking many steps to improve the situation.

Turkmenistan

Population: 5,700,000 **Political Rights:** 7
GNI/capita: $1,200 **Civil Liberties:** 7
Life Expectancy: 67 **Status:** Not Free
Religious Groups: Muslim (89 percent), Eastern Orthodox (9 percent), other (2 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Turkmen (85 percent), Uzbek (5 percent), Russian (4 percent), other (6 percent)
Capital: Ashgabat

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

1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF

Overview:

The government of President Saparmurat Niyazov continued its campaign in 2004 against real and perceived opponents of the regime, including dismissing a number of senior state officials. Despite limited gestures toward improving civil liberties, such as the formal abolition of an exit-visa system and the easing of some restrictions on nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and religious groups, Turkmenistan remained one of the most repressive societies in the world. Meanwhile, the country's strained relations with Russia and Uzbekistan appeared to show small signs of improvement during the year.

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

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

In the December 1999 Mejlis elections, every candidate was selected by the government and virtually all were members of the DPT. The Central Election Commission (CEC) claimed that voter turnout was 98.9 percent. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), citing the lack of provision for nongovernmental parties to participate and the executive branch's control of the nomination of candidates, refused to send even a limited assessment mission. In a further consolidation of his extensive powers, parliament unanimously voted in late December to make Niyazov president for life. With this decision, Turkmenistan became the first

country in the Commonwealth of Independent States to formally abandon presidential elections.

Although Niyazov continued to exercise widespread power throughout the country in 2002, cracks in his regime became more visible during the year. Several high-level government defections, along with a purge by Niyazov of Turkmenistan's intelligence service, highlighted growing political tensions and challenges to the government. On November 25, Niyazov survived an alleged assassination attempt in Ashgabat when gunmen fired at the president's motorcade. The incident sparked a widespread crackdown against the opposition and perceived critics of the regime, drawing condemnation from foreign governments and international organizations, including the OSCE and the United Nations.

While some observers speculated that Niyazov himself had planned the shooting as an excuse to increase repression of his political enemies, others maintained that it was a failed attempt by certain members of the opposition to oust the president from power. According to the government, former foreign minister and prominent opposition leader Boris Shikhmuradov, along with three other former high-ranking officials living in exile, had organized the attack. He was alleged to have returned to Turkmenistan from exile in Russia with the help of the Uzbek authorities, an accusation that soured already strained relations with Uzbekistan. Shikhmuradov was arrested on December 25 and made a televised confession four days later that critics maintain had been coerced. On December 30, he was sentenced to life in prison following what human rights groups condemned as a Soviet-style show trial. Two of the alleged co-conspirators received life sentences in absentia, while many other suspects were given lengthy prison sentences.

The president subsequently announced early elections for the Halk Maslahaty (People's Council) in April 2003. The decision to hold the poll two years ahead of schedule was probably intended to eliminate any remaining opposition to Niyazov's government through a redistribution of legislative posts. There was no election campaign, and the state media did not provide information about the candidates, all of whom were nominated by the presidential administration. The CEC announced voter turnout of 99.8 percent, although the real figure is believed to be much lower.

A series of high-profile government reshuffles in 2004 highlighted ongoing political tensions and concerns about potential challengers to the regime. During the year, the minister of finance, the heads of two television channels, and several bank chairmen were dismissed on charges of corruption and nepotism. Other personnel changes involved the deputy mayor of Ashgabat, the head of the state border service, the country's ambassador to Belgium, and two regional governors. In a rare example of public opposition to the president, leaflets calling for Niyazov's overthrow were distributed in Ashgabat in July. No one claimed responsibility for the leaflets, and their distributors were not caught.

In the run-up to the December 19 Mejlis polls, the list of candidates was reportedly personally approved by Niyazov. The government refused to invite any international observers to monitor the election, which most analysts described as little more than a staged vote, given that all candidates will be approved by the authorities.

Relations with Russia appeared to improve in 2004 after having been strained the previous year. In April 2003, Ashgabat had unilaterally withdrawn from a 1993 dual citizenship agreement with Moscow, a decision that it decided to apply retroac-

tively, thereby forcing dual citizenship holders to choose a nationality. The move provoked strong opposition from members of Russia's parliament and the media, who accused Moscow of having sold out the rights of ethnic Russians in Turkmenistan in exchange for a lucrative, long-term energy deal, which the two countries concluded in the same month. In 2004, Russian-Turkmen relations seemed to have stabilized with the February signing of a cooperation agreement covering economic, scientific, and cultural matters. Meanwhile, both Moscow and Ashgabat downplayed the citizenship issue as their economic relationship dominated the bilateral agenda.

The tense relationship between Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, particularly after Ashgabat accused Tashkent of complicity in the 2002 assassination attempt against Niyazov, showed some signs of easing in late 2004. The presidents of the two countries met for the first time in four years on November 19 in the Uzbekistan city of Bukhara, where they signed a friendship treaty and an agreement simplifying travel for residents of their border areas. Nevertheless, serious problems remained over issues including border demarcation, the joint use of water resources, and the cross-border smuggling of gasoline and weapons.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Turkmenistan cannot change their government democratically. President Saparmurat Niyazov enjoys virtually absolute power over all branches and levels of government. In recent years, the government has undergone a rapid turnover of personnel as Niyazov has dismissed many officials whom he suspects may challenge his authority.

The country has two parliamentary bodies, neither of which enjoys genuine independence from the executive branch: the unicameral Mejlis (National Assembly), composed of 50 members elected by popular vote for five-year terms, and the approximately 2,500-member Halk Maslahaty (People's Council), composed of various elected and appointed members, which was officially made the country's supreme legislative body in August 2003. The 1994, 1999, and 2003 legislative elections were neither free nor fair.

Niyazov has established an extensive cult of personality, including erecting monuments to his leadership throughout the country. In 1994, he renamed himself Turkmenbashi, or leader of the Turkmen. He has enacted bizarre decrees, including ordering the renaming of the days of the week and months of the year after himself and his mother.

Only one political party, the Niyazov-led DPT, has been officially registered. Opposition parties have been banned, and their leading members face harassment and detention or have fled abroad. In September 2003, four prominent opposition groups in exile united to form the Union of Democratic Forces, whose stated goal is the replacement of Niyazov's government with one based on democratic principles. Some analysts have cited the wave of post-assassination attempt reprisals as the impetus for the long-divided opposition groups to put aside enough of their differences to join forces. Nevertheless, the opposition remains weak and unlikely to pose a serious challenge to the Niyazov regime.

Corruption is widespread, and the authorities have used anticorruption campaigns to remove potential rivals. Turkmenistan was ranked 133 out of 146 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2004 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of speech and the press is severely restricted by the government, which controls all radio and television broadcasts and print media. Reports of dissenting political views are banned, as are even mild forms of criticism of the president. Subscriptions to foreign newspapers and magazines are forbidden, and foreign journalists have few opportunities to visit Turkmenistan. In July, the Turkmen government shut down broadcasts of Russia's Radio Mayak, the last foreign media outlet to reach Turkmenistan, ostensibly for technical reasons regarding the station's transmission equipment. A new Turkmen satellite television channel was launched by the government in October with the official purpose of promoting the country's image abroad. The state-owned Turkmen Telekom is the only authorized Internet provider in the country.

Two freelance journalists for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), Rakhim Esenov and Ashyrguly Bayryev, were detained in late February and early March, respectively, by agents from the National Security Ministry. Esenov was accused of smuggling copies of his novel from Russia into Turkmenistan, where it had been banned for ten years, and charged with instigating social, ethnic, and religious hatred. His son-in-law was also arrested as part of the government's policy of collectively punishing family members of the accused. The authorities did not specify the charges against Bayryev. Although both men were released in mid-March, the charges against them were not dismissed, and they were told to stop reporting for RFE/RL. Another RFE/RL correspondent, Mukhamed Berdiyev, was attacked by three men on April 30 and suffered serious head injuries.

The government restricts freedom of religion, and independent religious groups continue to face persecution. Members of religious groups not legally registered by the government, including Armenian Apostolic, Roman Catholic, and Pentecostal communities, have been fined, beaten, and imprisoned by security forces. The government controls access to Islamic education and restricts the number of Muslim mosques throughout the country. According to Forum 18, a religious freedom watchdog group based in Norway, the authorities demolished at least seven mosques in 2004, apparently to prevent unapproved Muslim services. The authorities have pressured houses of worship to display a copy of the *Rukhnama*, a quasi-spiritual guide allegedly authored by Niyazov.

A law on religion that came into effect in November 2003 criminalized the practice of religious groups not officially registered and prescribed up to one year of corrective labor against violators. The law effectively applied to all religions other than Sunni Islam and Russian Orthodoxy, the only two faiths that had successfully achieved registration. The registration fee was set at ten times the average monthly wage, and only clergymen with Turkmen citizenship and a university qualification in theology were authorized to lead a congregation. Under mounting international pressure, the government lifted some of its restrictions against religious organizations in 2004. The authorities eased registration requirements for religious groups in March by lowering from 500 to 5 the number of members required in each locality in which a group wished to register. In May, Niyazov decreed that practicing an unregistered religion would no longer be a criminal offense, although it remains illegal, with violators subject to fines. Although Seventh Day Adventist, Baha'i, Hare Krishna, and Baptist communities achieved formal registration shortly thereafter, other groups have experienced difficulties in attempting to register. Furthermore, members of in-

dependent religious congregations continued to face pressure from the authorities, including threats, detention, and confiscation of religious materials.

The government places significant restrictions on academic freedom, with schools increasingly being used to indoctrinate, rather than educate, students. The *Rukhnama* is required reading throughout the school system and has largely replaced many other traditional school subjects. All new textbooks must meet the government's strict ideological requirements. In February, Niyazov issued an order invalidating most higher education decrees received outside the country since 1993 and dismissing holders of such degrees from state jobs. Analysts view this decree as part of a broader effort to eliminate foreign influences from Turkmen society. Bribes are commonly required for admission to various schools and institutes.

The state security services regularly monitor the activities of citizens and foreign nationals, limiting open and free private discussion. Security officers use such surveillance techniques as wiretapping, the interception of mail, and the recruitment of informers. After the November 2002 assassination attempt, Niyazov reportedly directed law enforcement bodies to carefully monitor people's conversations in public places and called on people to assist the police by informing on their fellow citizens. In February 2004, Niyazov ordered the government to intensify video surveillance, including at all strategic economic facilities, public buildings, and government offices.

While the constitution guarantees peaceful assembly and association, these rights are severely restricted in practice. Public demonstrations against state policies are extremely rare. NGOs have faced increased harassment and threats for their activities as part of the post-November 2002 crackdown. In November 2003, a law on NGOs entered into force that effectively criminalized the activities of unregistered organizations and imposed penalties that include heavy fines, the confiscation of property, and imprisonment. In an apparent reversal, a new law was adopted in November 2004 that abolishes criminal penalties for unregistered NGOs. However, most observers suspect that the law is designed primarily to counter international criticism of the country's poor human rights record, rather than to genuinely improve the environment for Turkmenistan's civil society sector.

The government-controlled Colleagues Union is the only central trade union permitted. There are no legal guarantees for workers to form or join unions or to strike, although the constitution does not specifically prohibit these rights. Strikes in Turkmenistan are extremely rare.

The judicial system is subservient to the president, who appoints and removes judges for five-year terms without legislative review. The authorities frequently deny rights of due process, including public trials and access to defense attorneys. Police abuse and torture of suspects and prisoners, often to obtain confessions, is reportedly widespread. Those arrested and sentenced for complicity in the assassination attempt against Niyazov suffered ill-treatment or torture, had no access to legal counsel of their own choosing, and were convicted in closed trials; many of their friends and relatives were targeted for harassment and intimidation. In early 2003, the government broadened the definition of treason to cover a wide range of activities, including attempting to undermine the public's faith in the president's policies and failing to inform the authorities of a wide range of crimes. Prisons suffer from overcrowding and inadequate nutrition and medical care, and international organizations are not permitted to visit prisons.

Employment and educational opportunities for ethnic minorities are limited by the government's policy of promoting Turkmen national identity and its discrimination against those who are not ethnic Turkmen. Following the 2002 assassination attempt against Niyazov, which Turkmenistan openly accused Uzbekistan of supporting, the Turkmen authorities took a harder line against ethnic Uzbeks in Turkmenistan. The government has reportedly ordered the forced relocation of part of the Uzbek population living along the border with Uzbekistan and their replacement with ethnic Turkmen. Many ethnic Uzbek imams (Muslim religious leaders) have been dismissed and replaced by ethnic Turkmen, as have Uzbeks in other leadership positions in the country. In March 2004, the country's former chief mufti, Nasrullah ibn Ibadullah, an ethnic Uzbek, was sentenced to 22 years in prison on charges of treason; he had been removed from his post in January 2003 and was succeeded by an ethnic Turkmen. In April 2003, Ashgabat unilaterally abrogated its dual citizenship agreement with Russia. After Turkmen authorities set a deadline of June 22 of the same year for the selection of either Russian or Turkmen citizenship, many Russians holding dual citizenship reportedly frantically applied to leave Turkmenistan or risk automatically becoming Turkmen citizens. The authorities have ordered the closure of a variety of Russian-language institutions, including schools, throughout the country.

Freedom of movement and residence is severely restricted. Following the 2002 assassination attempt, travel within the country became more closely monitored, with travelers having to pass through various identity checkpoints. In March 2004, Niyazov formally abolished the country's exit-visa requirement—which had been eliminated in January 2002 but reintroduced the following year—to stave off trade restrictions by the United States. However, this decision is unlikely to ease travel abroad, which is extremely difficult for most Turkmen citizens and often requires the payment of bribes to government officials. In addition, the government is believed to maintain a lengthy blacklist of people—possibly thousands—who are not permitted to travel abroad, including those suspected of opposition to the authorities. In 2003, the State Service for the Registration of Foreign Citizens was established to monitor foreign visitors, whose activities are strictly regulated.

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, most of whom live in poverty. Police forcibly seize grain from farmers—who can only sell grain to a purchasing company that has a government monopoly—without providing compensation. In a move believed to stem from a government budget crisis, some 15,000 medical workers were dismissed in early 2004 and replaced with conscript soldiers, who essentially represent free labor. According to the Vienna-based International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, the Turkmen government has engaged in "widespread violations of property rights" as part of a dramatic urban reconstruction project in Ashgabat that was launched in 2001. Hundreds of residents have reportedly been forced to vacate their homes on extremely short notice and have received little or no financial compensation or equivalent accommodation from the authorities.

The government restricts various personal social freedoms, including the wearing of long hair or beards by men. Traditional social and religious norms limit professional opportunities for women, and anecdotal reports suggest that domestic vio-

lence is common. A payment of $50,000 is required of foreign citizens wishing to marry Turkmen women; the money is ostensibly designed to provide for the couple's children if the marriage ends in divorce. Children are commonly used as forced labor during the annual fall cotton harvest.

Tuvalu

Population: 10,000
GNI/capita: $1,930
Life Expectancy: 66
Religious Groups: Church of Tuvalu [Congregationalist] (97 percent), other (3 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Polynesian (96 percent), Micronesian (4 percent)
Capital: Funafuti
Political Rights: 1
Civil Liberties: 1
Status: Free

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

1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

Tuvalu's frequent changes of government continued in 2004, when Prime Minister Saufatu Sopoanga was ousted in a no-confidence vote in August and replaced by Maatia Toafa.

The Gilbert and Ellice Islands became a British protectorate in 1892 and a British colony in 1916. This island state of nine atolls is situated in the central South Pacific Ocean. During World War II, the United States used the northernmost atoll of the Ellice Islands as a base to fight the Japanese. In 1974, as Britain was preparing the colony for independence, the Polynesian Ellice Islanders voted to separate themselves from the Micronesian Gilbertese, and the country attained independence on October 1, 1978, under the precolonial name of Tuvalu. (The Gilbert Islands, a group of 16 islands, form part of Kiribati.)

In Febraury 2001, Faimalaga Luka became prime minister after the sudden death from a heart attack of Ionatana Ionatana two months earlier. In December 2001, Luka was ousted in a no-confidence vote and replaced by Kolou Telake. In the July 2002 general elections, in which Telake failed to win a seat, Sopoanga was elected prime minister.

Intense political competition brought Tuvalu's parliament largely to a standstill in 2003. Sopoanga lost power after a by-election in May 2003 but refused to concede. In July 2003, the opposition took Sopoanga to court for refusing to convene parliament after the election of the new speaker in mid-June. Parliament eventually reconvened following by-elections in October, which gave Sopoanga a majority in parliament when opposition members agreed to join his cabinet.

Factional politics did not appear to have eased in 2004, with a no-confidence vote ousting Sopoanga in August. In October, an 8-7 vote elected Maatia Toafa as the new prime minister; Sopoanga was chosen for deputy prime minister. Frequent

changes of government as a result of no-confidence votes in parliament have sustained a debate in the last decade over whether citizens should be allowed to choose their prime minister directly rather than through parliament.

The threats of climate change and rising sea levels continue to worry the population of these low-lying islands. Several years ago, the government asked Australia to agree to take its entire population in the event the islands are flooded, but Canberra refused.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Tuvalu can change their government democratically. Tuvalu is a member of the Commonwealth, and the head of state, Queen Elizabeth II, is represented by a governor-general who must be a citizen of Tuvalu. Governor-general Faimalaga Luka was appointed by parliament in September 2003. The prime minister, chosen by parliament, leads the government. The unicameral, 15-member parliament is elected to four-year terms. A six-person council administers each of the country's nine atolls. Council members are chosen by universal suffrage to four-year terms. There are no formal political parties, although there are no laws against their formation.

Tuvalu is one of the few places among Pacific Islands where corruption is not a serious problem**.**

The constitution provides for freedom of speech and the press, and the government generally respects these rights in practice. In 2001, the country's sole radio station, Radio Tuvalu, was privatized. The government voiced objections to some comments made on the station in 2001 but did not interfere with broadcasts. The sole television station, owned and operated by the government, went off the air in 2001 for financial reasons. Broadcast resumed in 2002 for several hours a day. Many residents use satellite dishes to access foreign programs. There is one fortnightly newspaper, *Tuvalu Echoes*. The first Internet connection was made in 1999. The government does not restrict access, but penetration is largely limited to the capital because of cost and connectively issues.

Religious freedom is generally respected in practice. The vast majority of the population, some 97 percent, is Congregational Protestant. Religion is a big part of life, and Sunday service is typically considered the most important weekly event. Academic freedom is also generally respected.

Nongovernmental groups across all levels of society provide a variety of health, education, and other services for women, youths, and the population at large. Public demonstrations are permitted, and workers are free to organize unions and choose their own representatives for collective bargaining. Being a largely subsistence economy with tiny service and manufacturing sectors, Tuvalu has only one registered trade union; the Tuvalu Seaman's Union has about 600 members who work on foreign merchant vessels. Workers have the right to strike, but no strikes have occurred in the island state's history. Public sector employees, who total fewer than 1,000, are members of professional associations that do not have union status.

The judiciary is independent and provides fair trials. Tuvalu has a two-tier judicial system. The higher courts include the Privy Council in London, the court of appeal, and the high court. The lower courts consist of senior and resident magistrates, the island courts, and the land courts. The chief justice, who is also the chief justice of Tonga, sits on the high court about once a year. A civilian-controlled, 70-

member constabulary force maintains internal order. Prisons are sparse but there were no reports of abuses.

Two-thirds of the population is engaged in subsistence farming and fishing. The country has no sub-surface fresh water, and increasing salinization of the soil is a serious concern. Geographical isolation limits options for economic development. Tuvalu generates income using various means, including the sale of coins and stamps, money sent back by islanders working overseas, sale of tuna fishing licenses to foreign fisheries, and lease of the country's Internet domain name, ".tv" to foreign firms. Another 10 percent of its annual budget is derived from the Tuvalu Trust Fund, a well-run overseas investment fund set up by the United Kingdom, Australia, and South Korea in 1987 to provide development assistance.

Although there is general respect for human rights, traditional customs and social norms condone discrimination against women and limit their roles in society. Violence against women is rare. Rape is a crime punishable by law, but spousal rape is not included in this definition. Prostitution is illegal, but no law specifically targets sexual harassment.

Uganda

Population: 26,100,000
GNI/capita: $240
Life Expectancy: 45
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (33 percent), Protestant (33 percent), Muslim (16 percent), indigenous beliefs (18 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Baganda (17 percent), Basogo (8 percent), Ankole (8 percent), Iteso (8 percent), Bakiga (7 percent), Langi (6 percent), Rwanda (6 percent), other (40 percent)
Capital: Kampala
Political Rights: 5
Civil Liberties: 4
Status: Partly Free

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

1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
5,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	5,5PF	6,5PF	6,5PF	6,4PF	5,4PF	5,4PF

Overview:

During 2004, the Constitutional Court voided restrictions on the freedom of political parties to function. The government had also recommended to parliament that multiparty politics, which had been limited since 1986, be restored. The government, however, is also proposing lifting the two-term restriction on the presidency, which would allow incumbent Yoweri Museveni to be a candidate in elections scheduled for 2006. This change would require voters' approval in a 2005 referendum. Intermittent violence in the North continued throughout the year.

In the years following its independence from Britain in 1962, Uganda experienced considerable political instability. An increasingly authoritarian president, Milton

Obote, was overthrown by Idi Amin in 1971. Amin's brutality made world headlines as hundreds of thousands of people were killed. His 1978 invasion of Tanzania finally led to his demise, as Tanzanian forces and Ugandan exiles routed Amin's army. After Obote returned to power in 1980 in fraudulent elections, he and his backers from northern Uganda savagely repressed his critics, who were primarily from southern Ugandan ethnic groups.

Obote was ousted for a second time in a 1985 army coup. Conditions continued to worsen until the Museveni-led National Resistance Army entered the capital of Kampala in January 1986 and assumed power. The new government imposed a ban on most formal political party activities, including the sponsoring of candidates for elections and the staging of political rallies. In June 2000, a referendum was held on whether to lift the ban. Almost 90 percent of those voting supported continuation of the de facto single-party system; however, opposition parties had called for a boycott, and overall voter turnout was just over 50 percent.

Museveni and his National Resistance Movement (NRM) comfortably won presidential and legislative elections in 2001. However, the elections were held under conditions that called their legitimacy into question. Reports by human rights groups and donor countries concerning the March presidential election noted that state media and other official resources were mobilized in support of Museveni's successful candidacy, and that the ban on most formal party activities further hindered the opposition. Most observers believe, however, that Museveni would have won in an open contest and described the actual balloting and vote-tabulation processes as largely transparent. The opposition, which claimed that the elections were rigged, boycotted the subsequent parliamentary elections in June; the NRM's comfortable majority was buttressed by dozens of special-interest representatives nominated by the president.

In 2002, parliament passed the Political Parties and Organizations Act, putting forth the conditions under which political parties could be registered and could fully function. In 2003, the Constitutional Court ruled that parts of the law were unconstitutional, as they effectively prevented political parties from carrying out their activities. Despite the Constitutional Court's ruling, the NRM continues to dominate the nation's political life through direct and indirect means.

Regional tensions diminished somewhat in 2003, as Ugandan military forces withdrew from the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). These units had been sent to suppress rebels who had been perpetrating attacks across the border into Uganda.

International human rights groups, however, have criticized Uganda for continuing to support armed militias in eastern DRC in 2004. Tensions with Rwanda over influence in the region have remained high. In addition, a cult-based guerrilla movement, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), continued a gruesome insurgency in northern Uganda, with human rights violations committed on both sides.

Uganda has 1.5 million people living with HIV or AIDS. The latest records show that the rate of prevalence has gradually fallen from a national average of 30 percent in 1992 to about 6 percent today, the lowest in the sub-Saharan region.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Ugandans do not have the right to elect their government democratically. The only open multiparty elections were held

in 1961 in preparation for the country's independence from Britain. In 1986, arguing that majoritarian democracy exacerbates religious and ethnic tensions in Africa, President Yoweri Museveni substituted a "no-party" system with only one, supposedly nonparty political organization—the NRM—allowed to operate unfettered. Uganda's 1995 constitution extended the ban for five years until the results of a 2000 referendum on the establishment of a multiparty system, in which the electorate approved the status quo. In 2004, the government sent to parliament its official recommendation that multiparty politics, which had been limited since 1986, be restored. At the same time, however, it also proposed lifting the two-term restriction on the presidency, which would allow incumbent president Museveni to be a candidate in elections scheduled for 2006. These proposals are subject to parliamentary approval and a referendum, which would be held in 2005.

Opposition parties have continued to protest about restrictive party registration requirements and the predominant status of the NRM. Other controversial issues include federalism, voter and candidate eligibility, the use of government resources to support NRM candidates, and the use of illegal paramilitary groups such as the Kalangala Action Plan to intimidate voters.

Parliament asserts some independence vis-à-vis the executive branch. High-level government officials have been censured, and several government actions and policies have been influenced or altered as a result of parliamentary oversight.

Some governmental corruption has been reported in the media. The inspector-general of government has accused the government and courts of frustrating the fight against corruption. He said cases took many years in court and culprits were not prosecuted. Under the 1995 constitution, new institutions were set up to investigate corruption and human rights violations and promote the return to democratic governance. These have made some headway in the fight against corruption and abuse of office by public officers, although a number of alleged corrupt acts by government officials have not been fully pursued and prosecuted. Uganda was ranked 102 out of 145 countries surveyed in the 2004 Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index.

There is some freedom of expression. Independent print media outlets, including more than two dozen daily and weekly newspapers, are often highly critical of the government and offer a range of opposition views. Several private radio and television stations report on local political developments. Buttressed by legislation limiting press freedoms, however, the government at times selectively arrests or harasses journalists. A sedition law remains in force and is applied selectively to journalists and others who hold views that are at variance with those of the NRM. The largest newspapers and broadcasting facilities that reach rural areas remain state owned. Journalists have asked parliament to enact a freedom-of-information act.

There is no state religion, and freedom of worship is constitutionally protected and respected. Various Christian sects and the country's Muslim minority practice their creeds freely. The 2003 U.S. Department of State Report on International Religious Freedom commended the extent to which religious freedom is promoted in Uganda. Academic freedom is generally respected.

Freedom of association and assembly is officially recognized. The government has demonstrated increased respect for these rights in the constitution but continues to place some restrictions on them in practice. Nongovernmental organizations

(NGOs) currently make a significant contribution to Uganda's social, economic, cultural, and political life. They encourage the expression of different views and, significantly, have been willing to address politically sensitive issues. Local human rights organizations have shown an increasing interest in monitoring abuses and in conducting advocacy activities in comparison with their past focus on less controversial human rights education activities. The existence and activities of NGOs are, however, subject to stringent legal restrictions. The government continues to control civil society groups through the manipulation of their registration requirements, compelling NGOs to be nonsectarian and nonpolitical through the Non-Government Organizations Act. Security forces have halted numerous political rallies, some through force, and leading opposition activists have been harassed and, sometimes, subjected to arbitrary arrest.

The National Organization of Trade Unions, the country's largest labor federation, is independent of the government and political parties. An array of essential workers are barred from forming unions. Strikes are permitted only after a lengthy reconciliation process.

The judiciary is still influenced by the executive despite increasing autonomy. The Constitutional Court's interpretation that parts of the Political Parties and Organizations Act were unconstitutional showed considerable resolve to uphold independence and liberalism. However, sensitive human rights issues such as police brutality, rape, domestic violence, and vigilante justice remain serious concerns. Prolonged pretrial detention, inadequate resources, the army's occasional refusal to respect civilian courts, and poor judicial administration combine to impede the fair exercise of justice.

Prison conditions are difficult, especially in local jails. More than 500 prisoners die annually as a result of poor diet, sanitation, and medical care. Although there is registered progress toward the improvement of conditions in the prisons, conditions in both local administration and centrally administered prisons are poor. Pretrial detainees comprise more than half of the prison population.

The 2002 Suppression of Terrorism Bill, which defines any act of violence or threat of violence for political, religious, economic, or cultural ends as a terrorist act, imposes harsh penalties on suspected terrorists and has raised fears that it could be used against political opponents. The unlawful possession of arms is also defined as terrorism. Publishing news that is "likely to promote terrorism" can result in up to 10 years' imprisonment.

The Uganda Human Rights Commission 2003 report highlighted serious human rights violations by both rebel groups, including the LRA and the Uganda People's Defense Forces (UPDF). Torture by the security forces has continued despite the government's assurance that there is no institutionalized sanction of its use. The report also commended some elements of the security forces for protecting the rights to life and property amid challenges posed by armed robbers and the LRA. The northern part of the country has been racked by an LRA insurgency for more than 18 years. Nearly 1.6 million people have been displaced, 20,000 children have been abducted by the LRA, and thousands more have been caught up in the fighting between the UPDF and the LRA, which is thought to be composed of 80 percent children. Both the UPDF and the LRA have been accused of systematic human rights abuses.

Manipulation and exploitation of ethnic divisions pose a serious, continuing threat to peace in Uganda. Baganda people in the country's South continue to demand more recognition of their traditional kingdom. Proposed legislation, however, may make traditional chiefs subject to removal from office by the government. Northern ethnic groups complain of official neglect; that region especially is subject to continuing guerrilla activities.

Although the constitution enshrines the principle of equality between women and men, discrimination against women remains pronounced, especially in rural areas. Incidences of domestic violence and sexual abuse, including rape, are often not registered by police and are rarely investigated. There are no laws protecting women from domestic violence; draft laws such as the Domestic Relations Bill and the Sexual Offenses Act have been introduced in parliament but have not been approved. Cultural practices like female genital mutilation continue to exist. Up to 12,000 children in the conflict-affected districts of northern Uganda are estimated to have been abducted by the LRA since June 2002 alone. The Uganda Human Rights Commission and other NGOs indicate that sexual abuse of minors is increasing.

Uganda has legislated quotas for women officials in all elected bodies from village councils to the national parliament. Almost 20 percent of Uganda's parliament is female. One-third of local council seats must, by law, go to women.

Ukraine

Population: 47,400,000 **Political Rights:** 4
GNI/capita: $780 **Civil Liberties:** 3*
Life Expectancy: 68 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Ukrainian Orthodox [Kiev Patriarchate (19 percent), Moscow Patriarchate (9 percent)], Ukrainian Greek Catholic (6 percent), Ukrainian
Ethnic Groups: Ukrainian (78 percent), Russian (17 percent), other (5 percent)
Capital: Kyiv
Ratings Change: Ukraine's civil liberties rating improved from 4 to 3 due to increases in media independence and associational rights resulting from widespread civic mobilization protesting fraudulent elections in November.

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

1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,3PF

Overview:

As 2004 drew to a close, opposition reformers led mass nonviolent public demonstrations against voter fraud in the second round of Ukraine's November presidential election. The "Orange Revolution" protests involved as many as one million participants. The upsurge in public demonstrations also contributed to opening up Ukraine's media, particularly TV and radio, which formerly had been under the tight control of the executive branch.

In December 1991, Ukraine's voters ratified a declaration of independence from the U.S.S.R. and elected Leonid Kravchuk president. In 1994, Communists won a plurality in parliamentary elections, and Leonid Kuchma, a former director of the U.S.S.R.'s largest missile production facility, defeated Kravchuk in the presidential poll. In the first years of his presidency, Kuchma struggled against a Communist-influenced parliament to effect reforms. However, over time, his government became the target of domestic and international criticism for extensive and high-level corruption and for the erosion of political and free speech rights.

In the 1999 presidential election, Kuchma defeated Communist Party leader Petro Symonenko in the second round of voting with 56.21 percent of the vote; Symonenko received 37.5 percent. Observers declared the election unfair because of harassment of independent media, biased coverage by state media, intimidation of candidates and their supporters, and illegal campaigning by state officials. The murder in 2000 of independent journalist Heorhiy Gongadze, credible evidence that appeared to implicate Kuchma in the journalist's abduction, and revelations contained in secretly recorded conversations of the president's conversations all contributed to sparking mass public demonstrations and calls for the president's dismissal.

Despite polls showing that reform-minded Prime Minister Viktor Yushchenko had an approval rating of 63 percent, a coalition of the Communist Party and parties controlled by economic oligarchs ousted Yushchenko in April 2001; he was replaced by Anatoly Kinakh.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe declared that the March 2002 parliamentary elections had "brought Ukraine closer to meeting international commitments and standards for democratic elections." However, reformers and domestic election monitors accused government authorities of falsifying the vote—particularly in single-mandate districts, where opposition candidates did poorly and where pro-government candidates captured some three-quarters of all seats. Yushchenko's Our Ukraine bloc emerged as the single largest political force in the party-list vote, marking the first electoral success for the democratic opposition since independence. However, the pro-presidential For a United Ukraine bloc received enough post-election support from the Social Democratic Party of Ukraine–United, independent candidates—and even some members of Our Ukraine—to create a parliament majority. Nevertheless, the success of Yushchenko's electoral bloc in the party-list vote signaled the growing strength of democratic forces in the country and galvanized thousands who took to the streets during the year to demonstrate against Kuchma's growing authoritarianism and corruption.

After the election, Ukraine continued to be plagued by pervasive corruption and ongoing violations of basic rights. Kuchma came under increased scrutiny from Western and other democratic leaders because of evidence—believed to be credible by the U.S. government—that he had authorized the sale of a powerful radar system to Saddam Hussein's Iraq in violation of a UN embargo.

Kinakh remained prime minister until November 2002, when Kuchma dismissed him, ostensibly for failing to implement economic reforms. He was replaced by Viktor Yanukovych, a former convicted felon and representative of the Russian-speaking Donbas region, where economic oligarchs tightly controlled the local media and political life.

With the ascendancy in 2002 of Kuchma's chief of staff, Viktor Medvedchuk,

authoritarian policies were reinforced amid unassailable evidence of pervasive government interference in the media through instructions, known as *temnyky* (theme directives). These directives were issued weekly, and failure to comply could result in various forms of harassment, such as tax audits, canceled licenses, and libel suits.

In 2003, Ukraine's reintegration with Russia appeared to be strengthened with the signing on September 19 of an agreement to create a Common Economic Space that could eventually link the two countries with Belarus and Kazakhstan in a common market and customs union. In April 2004, amid street protests, Ukraine's parliament ratified the agreement.

The main political events of 2004 revolved around the October-November presidential election. Despite high economic growth in 2003 and 2004, opinion polls showed that incumbent pro-government politicians were generally out of favor and that opposition reformer Yushchenko was by far the most popular candidate and the likely winner of the presidential vote.

To reduce the chances of an opposition victory, the government tightened control over radio and television broadcasting. In January 2004, a lower court order that a major opposition newspaper, *Silski Visti*, be shut down after it had published two anti-Semitic articles. Opposition leaders pressed the editors to apologize for the publication of the articles, but charged that the banning of the paper was a government effort to silence opposition media; the paper continued to publish as it challenged the court ruling. U.S.-sponsored Radio Liberty programs were removed from the radio airwaves in February, and in March, a court ordered that transmitting equipment be seized from opposition station Radio Kontynent. A national cable television station, Channel 5, with a national audience of approximately 3 percent, was subjected to tax inspections and frequently silenced in key urban centers.

In June, opposition members of parliament denounced the sale—for $800 million—of the Kryvorizhstal steelworks to a consortium headed by Donetsk industrialist Rinat Akhmetov (a financial supporter of Yanukovych) and Kuchma's son-in-law, Viktor Pinchuk. An alternative bid of $1.5 billion with a further $1 billion in capital improvements from a consortium led by Britain's LNM and U.S. Steel was turned down by the State Property Fund. Reformers claimed the bid process leading to privatization was rigged.

With Yushchenko and other opposition presidential candidates—including Socialist Party leader Oleksander Moroz—virtually banished from the national airwaves, opposition campaigning focused on mass meetings throughout the country. Once the election campaign moved into high gear in July, opposition candidates, especially front-runner Yushchenko, encountered harassment and obstacles to campaigning. Meeting halls were locked by local authorities at the last minute, public squares were blocked, and the campaign airplane was denied landing rights in nearby airports, creating delays as Yushchenko traveled from more distant airports to reach voters.

In September, with his grassroots campaign attracting large crowds around the country, Yushchenko took ill after a meeting with high-ranking State Security officials. His illness was life-threatening and debilitating, forcing the candidate off the campaign trail for several weeks. Forensic tests later determined the candidate had been poisoned with a large dose of dioxin in what was deemed an assassination attempt, only one of several attempts on his life.

In the first-round vote on October 31, which included significant evidence of voting irregularities, Yushchenko came in first among 24 candidates with 39.7 percent to 37.3 percent for Yanukovych, who enjoyed strong official backing from Russian president Vladimir Putin. Incumbent President Kuchma did not run as the Constitution precluded his seeking a third term.

In the November 21 runoff, Yushchenko faced off with Yanukovych. Exit polls conducted by a consortium of polling groups led by the Democratic Initiatives Foundation, found Yushchenko had won comfortably by a 10 percent margin. However, preliminary results from the Central Election Commission (CEC) showed Yanukovych the winner by less than 3 percent. The CEC's results, moreover, showed a near 100 percent voter turnout in Yanukovych's home region of Donetsk (well above the national average of 78 percent) as well as massive last-minute infusions of absentee ballots in southern and eastern Ukraine. Opposition politicians went public with tapes of high-ranking executive-branch officials indicating a conspiracy to commit massive voter fraud by tampering with the CEC's computer server. The opposition and international and domestic monitors denounced the results as tainted and the putative winner, Yanukovych, as "not legitimate."

As November 2004 drew to an end, millions massed peacefully in Kiev and other major Ukrainian cities to protest evidence of fraud in the second-round vote. Television journalists organized protests that helped surmount government censorship and content controls. There were signs that the Supreme Court and parliament would reexamine the results, which had not yet been officially published pending opposition court challenges. The "Orange Revolution" offered hope that the crisis would end in the eventual victory of due process, the likely election of Viktor Yushchenko, and an end to the corruption and criminality that had characterized the rule of President Leonid Kuchma.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Ukrainian voters are able to change their government democratically, although the bitterly disputed 2004 presidential election did not offer a level playing field in terms of legal protections, media access, and unfettered campaigning opportunities for opposition candidates. The elections were monitored by more than 4,000 foreign observers, the largest international mentoring effort in history, and 10,000 domestic monitors were deployed by the Committee of Voters of Ukraine. While some monitors faced impediments and hostility, monitors were generally able to collect significant data on election abuses. Despite the falsification of several million ballots and the rigging of the data coming to the computer server of the CEC, massive citizen protests offered hope that the attempt at voter fraud would fail and a democratically elected president would emerge from the process.

Citizens elect the president and delegates to the Verkhovna Rada, the 450-seat unicameral parliament. Under a 2001 election law adopted, half of parliament is elected in proportional voting and half in single-mandate constituencies. The president serves as the head of state and can appoint and dismiss the prime minister, who in turn appoints most other cabinet members in consultation with the president.

Ukraine has a number of political parties and coalitions, the most important of which are the pro-Yushchenko Our Ukraine bloc, the Yulia Tymoshenko bloc, the National Agrarian Party (linked to parliamentary speaker Yuri Lytvyn), the Socialist

Party, the Party of Regions (linked to Prime Minister Yanukovich), and the United Social Democrats (headed by President Kuchma's chief of staff, Viktor Medvedchuk). Corruption at the highest levels of the Kuchma administration was believed to be widespread, and there is significant petty corruption at the lower levels of authority. Ukraine was ranked 122 out of 146 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2004 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The 1996 constitution guarantees freedom of speech and expression, but the government has frequently violated these rights through direct and well-documented interference in media content. In October and November, journalists organized protests and hunger strikes against state control of media content. After the second-round presidential vote and amid massive street protests, controls over journalists were removed at private national TV channels 1+1, Novy Kanal, and ICTV.

During the months leading up to the 2004 presidential election, two small independent television broadcasters, cable station Channel Five (with a 3 percent national audience in November 2004) and Era-TV (which broadcasts in the mornings and late evenings through a licensing arrangement with state television) were crucial independent sources of news and information. Independent and opposition newspapers were published throughout the year and appeared in enlarged editions during the weeks leading up to the presidential vote. The rural antigovernment newspaper *Silski Visti* challenged a court order to cease publication and expanded its circulation in special editions to six million copies during the period between the first and second round of the elections.

As 2004 ended, opposition figures, who throughout the year had been frequently subjected to unbalanced reporting on nationwide television, began to appear and speak directly to the public on news and interview programs. Until November, state media reflected a pro-government bias, while private media outlets typically reflected the views of their owners, usually pro-government oligarchs.

Journalists who report on corruption or criticize the government are particularly subject to harassment and violence, and press freedom groups noted numerous such cases in 2004. Nearly 40 journalists have been murdered, and the killing of investigative journalist Heorhiy Gongadze remained unresolved amid significant evidence of a government cover-up. Under a law in effect since 2001, libel no longer carries criminal charges.

The constitution and the Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religion define religious rights in Ukraine, and these are generally well respected. There are limited restrictions on the activities of foreign religious organizations, and all religious groups with more than 10 members must register with the state. Acts of anti-Semitism are consistently investigated and condemned by state authorities. In 2004, political divisions emerged between religious denominations with clerics from the Ukrainian Orthodox Church–Kiev Patriarchate, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, and Protestant denominations generally critical of the ruling elite. Many hierarchs and clerics from the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) actively campaigned for the ruling elite's candidate for president, Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovych.

Academic freedom was generally respected in most disciplines, although students who engaged in opposition political activity were subject to threats of expulsion or suspension. Students were pressed in numerous universities to vote for the government candidate. Often these pressures were exerted by university adminis-

trators, including rectors and deans, who threatened students with expulsion from dormitories if high levels of support for Yanukovych were not forthcoming. New private universities played an important role in augmenting state-supported higher education, and their students played a key role as volunteers in election-monitoring efforts and in protests of voter fraud.

Ukraine has several thousand nongovernmental organizations and an increasingly vibrant civil society. The constitution guarantees the right to peaceful assembly but requires advance notification to government authorities. As 2004 progressed, civic groups—many of them led by young activists—became increasingly active in nonpartisan voter-education efforts and in preparations for election monitoring. In November, the strength of civil society was demonstrated in massive protests of voter fraud in which the authorities did not use force to interfere.

Trade unions function, but strikes and worker protests are infrequent. The leader of the country's largest national labor federation was forced to withdraw from an opposition parliamentary faction as the result of an orchestrated threat to his union leadership organized by allies of the presidential administration. A smaller independent labor federation that includes miners and railway workers is closely linked with democratic opposition parties.

The judiciary consists of the Supreme Court, regional courts, and district courts, as well as a Constitutional Court. The constitution guarantees equality before the law, but the president, members of parliament, and judges are immune from criminal prosecution unless parliament consents. The judiciary is inefficient and subject to corruption. Although the Constitutional Court as a rule has often functioned independently, the retirement in 2003 of its well-regarded chief justice raised questions about its ongoing independence. However, as 2003 drew to an end, there were signs the Supreme Court would take an objective look at the massive array of evidence suggesting voting fraud and a stolen election. Other courts traditionally have lacked independence. Judges are often penalized for independent decision making, and there is significant evidence of routine interference in judicial decisions by the executive branch.

In 2002, the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture issued a report that criticized the Ukrainian police for using methods of interrogation, including electric shocks, cigarette burns, asphyxiation, and suspension by the arms or legs.

In response to ongoing allegations of criminal attacks on opposition figures, in 2003, the prosecutor-general in charge of investigating these cases was dismissed from office and replaced with an official analyst regarded to be more resolutely loyal to the president.

While the country's Roma population suffers from discrimination, the government has actively interceded to protect the rights of most ethnic and minorities, including the Jewish minority and the Turkic Crimean Tatar community.

The government generally respects personal autonomy and privacy, and the constitution guarantees individuals the right to own property, to work, and to engage in entrepreneurial activity. However, crime, corruption, and the slow pace of economic reform have effectively limited these rights. In 2001, the Constitutional Court struck down the country's Soviet-era *propiska* system, which had required individuals to register with the Interior Ministry in their place of residence. Oppo-

nents of the provision had long argued that the regulation violated freedom of movement. Property rights are generally respected, unless the interests of oligarch clans are involved. In such cases, cronyism and protection of insider interests prevail.

Gender discrimination is prohibited under the constitution, but women's rights were not a priority for government officials. In some settings, women face discrimination in employment, but there is little effective redress through existing antidiscrimination mechanisms. The sexual trafficking of women abroad for the purpose of prostitution remains a major problem and a threat to women's rights and security.

United Arab Emirates

Population: 4,200,000
GNI/capita: $20,217
Life Expectancy: 74
Religious Groups: Muslim [Shia (16 percent)] (96 percent), other (4 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Emirati (19 percent), other Arab and Iranian (23 percent), South Asian (50 percent), European and East Asian (8 percent)
Capital: Abu Dhabi
Political Rights: 6
Civil Liberties: 6
Status: Not Free

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

1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,6NF	6,6NF

Overview:

Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, president of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) since its founding, died in 2004, setting off a transition of power to the next generation in the ruling family.

For most of its history, the territory of the UAE—a federation of seven separate emirates formerly known as the Trucial States—was controlled by various competing tribal forces. Attacks on shipping in waters off the coast of this territory led British forces to conduct raids against the tribes in the nineteenth century. In 1853, the tribal leaders signed a treaty with the United Kingdom agreeing to a truce, which led to a decline in the raids on shipping. Though never formal British colonies, the territories were provided protection by the British, and tribal leaders of the emirates often referred their disputes to the United Kingdom for mediation.

In 1971, the United Kingdom announced that it was ending its treaty relationships with the seven emirates of the Trucial States, as well as Bahrain and Qatar. Six of the seven states entered into a federation called the United Arab Emirates, and Ras al-Khaimah, the seventh state, joined in 1972. The 1971 provisional constitution kept significant power in the hands of each individual emirate.

In contrast to many of its neighbors, the UAE has achieved some success in diversifying its economy beyond dependence on the petroleum sector, building a leading free-trade zone in Dubai and a major manufacturing center in Sharjah, as well

as investing resources to develop its profile as a leading center for tourism in the region. In 2001, the government cracked down on corruption with arrests of senior officials. In the wake of the September 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, the government introduced reforms in its financial services and banking sectors to cut down on terrorist financing.

Economic reform has not been matched by political reform in the UAE, which has a closed political system in which the views of citizens are not taken into account. Recent reforms undertaken in the governance sector are generally more closely related to issues of trade, commerce, and the economy than to the enhancement of political rights and civil liberties. Political power remains in the hands of traditional tribal leaders.

After the death of President Sheikh Zayed in 2004, the UAE's Supreme Council of Rulers selected Zayed's oldest son, Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, as president. Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan replaced Khalifa as crown prince. This shift in power to the new generation did not result in any meaningful and substantive changes in the UAE's power structure, with the ruling family maintaining a firm grip on its monopoly of political power.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of the UAE cannot change their government democratically. The UAE has never held an election. All decisions about political leadership rest with the dynastic rulers of the seven separate emirates of the UAE in what is known as the Supreme Council of Rulers, the highest executive and legislative body in the country. These seven leaders select a president and vice president, and the president appoints a prime minister and cabinet. The UAE has a 40-member Federal National Council with delegates appointed by the seven leaders every two years. However, the council serves only as an advisory body, reviewing proposed laws and questioning federal government ministers.

The UAE does not have political parties. Rather, the allocation of positions in the government is largely determined by tribal loyalties and economic power. Abu Dhabi, the major oil producer in the UAE, has controlled the presidency of the UAE since its inception. Citizens have limited opportunities to express their interests through traditional consultative sessions.

The UAE is considered among the least corrupt countries in the region, with fewer reported cases of official corruption in 2004; it was ranked 29 out of 146 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2004 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Although the UAE's constitution provides for some freedom of expression, in practice the government severely restricts this right. The Printing and Publishing Law (No. 15 of 1980) applies to all media and prohibits "defamatory material and negative material about presidents, friendly countries, [and] religious issues, and [prohibits] pornography." Laws prohibit criticism of the government, ruling families, and friendly governments, and they also include vague provisions against statements that threaten society. As a consequence, journalists commonly practice self-censorship, and the leading media outlets in the UAE frequently publish government statements without criticism or comment. However, Dubai has a "Media Free Zone," where few restrictions have been reported on print and broadcast media produced for audiences outside of the UAE. Internet access is widely available, though there

were reports that a leading Internet service provider, the government-owned Etisalat, blocked sites deemed morally objectionable from time to time.

The UAE's constitution provides for freedom of religion. Islam is the official religion, and the majority of citizens are Sunnis. However, Shia minorities are free to worship without interference. The government controls content in nearly all Sunni mosques. Academic freedom is limited, with the Ministry of Education censoring textbooks and curriculums in both public and private schools.

The government places limits on freedom of assembly and association. Small discussions on politics in private homes are generally tolerated, but there are limits on citizens' ability to organize broader gatherings. Public meetings require government permits. All nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) must register with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, and registered NGOs reportedly receive subsidies from the government.

The UAE has no labor unions, although the government has mediated labor disputes. Foreign nationals, who make up the vast majority of the UAE's workforce, are generally not offered labor protections. In July 2003, the government issued a ban on a long-standing practice of employers forcing foreign employees to surrender their passports as a condition of employment.

The judiciary is not independent, with court rulings subject to review by the UAE's political leadership. An estimated 40 to 45 percent of judges in the court system are noncitizen foreign nationals. Although the constitution bans torture, Sharia (Islamic law) courts sometimes impose flogging sentences for individuals found guilty of drug use, prostitution, and adultery. In July 2004, the UAE passed new legislation setting stricter punishments for crimes involving terrorism, including financing terrorism and harboring terrorists.

Discrimination against noncitizens, who make up the vast majority of the population and at least half of the workforce, occurs in many aspects of life, including employment, access to education, housing, and health care.

The constitution provides for equality before the law but does not specifically mention gender equality. In practice, women's social, economic, and legal rights are not always protected because of incomplete implementation of the law and traditional biases against women. Women are under represented in government, although there are small signs of limited openings for women, with women receiving appointments at various levels of government in 2004. Sheikha Lubna Al Qasimi became the first woman minister in the UAE when she was appointed minister of the economy and planning. In addition, Sheikh Sultan Al Qasimi, the ruler of Sharja, one of the seven emirates, appointed five women to Sharja's consultative council.

Human trafficking and forced labor remain problems in the UAE. Despite a July 2002 ban on using children under the age of 15 as jockeys in camel races, several human rights monitors report continued problems with young children from South Asia being kidnapped or sold by relatives into slavery and trafficked to the UAE for use as camel jockeys in races. There are numerous allegations of physical abuse and malnourishment aimed at keeping the children jockeys under desired weight levels.

United Kingdom

Population: 59,700,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GNI/capita: $25,510 **Civil Liberties:** 1
Life Expectancy: 78 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Anglican, Roman Catholic, Muslim, Protestant, Sikh, Hindu, Jewish
Ethnic Groups: English (82 percent), Scottish (10 percent), Irish (2 percent), Welsh (2 percent), other [including Indian and Pakistani] (4 percent)
Capital: London

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

1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

The Labour government of Prime Minister Tony Blair suffered erosion in its popularity in 2004 owing to difficult conditions in Iraq and the slower-than-promised improvements in public services on which Labour has campaigned. Labour did poorly in the June elections for the European Parliament, whereas a party hostile to Britain's European Union (EU) membership achieved its best-ever result. This was partly due to British voters' concerns about the EU's draft constitution, finalized shortly before the elections.

The English state emerged before the turn of the first millennium and was conquered by Norman French invaders in 1066. Celtic-speaking Wales and Ireland were incorporated into the kingdom over the course of the centuries; Scotland joined on more favorable terms with the creation of Great Britain in 1707. The Glorious Revolution of 1688-1689 began a gradual—but eventually total—assertion of the powers of parliament, as Britain became one of the world's first democracies, with a significant extension of voting rights in 1832.

Separatism has persisted in the Celtic lands; most of Ireland won independence after World War I, with Protestant-majority Northern Ireland remaining part of the United Kingdom. Most of Britain's global empire, the most important portion of which was India, became independent in the decades after World War II, although many of Britain's former colonies maintain links with the country through the Commonwealth. Significant powers were devolved to a Scottish Parliament (and fewer to a Welsh assembly) established by the current Labour Party government, which was first elected in 1997 and was reelected in 2001. Peace negotiations restored home rule to Northern Ireland in 1998, but home rule has since been suspended because of breakdowns in the peace process.

After nearly two decades of Conservative Party rule Blair's "New Labour," so called because of its radical shift from its socialist past, adopted Conservative-style positions on a number of issues and swept general elections in May 1997. In June 2001 parliamentary elections, the Labour Party secured a second term in office with another landslide victory, trouncing the opposition Conservative Party. The United

Kingdom's third largest party, the Liberal Democrats, increased its representation in Parliament.

Despite a promise to focus on public services, particularly the ailing health and transport systems, Blair's second term as prime minister has been dominated by his support of the U.S.-led war in Iraq. Blair supported George W. Bush, the U.S. president, in the UN Security Council and on the world stage, despite anger within his own Labour Party and demonstrations on the streets. After the end of the initial hostilities in Iraq, however, the government suffered renewed criticism surrounding the case it had made for the war in the run-up to the conflict. In particular, the government clashed with the BBC over a report that it had exaggerated the threat from Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. Though a report cleared the government of deception, the suicide of a government scientist who had been a source for the BBC damaged the government's reputation. At the same time, Michael Howard, who became leader of the Conservative Party in late 2003, was unable to offer a strong challenge to Blair and the Labour Party from the opposition benches in 2004.

In 2004, the EU completed negotiations on a new draft constitution. The British government claimed that it had successfully negotiated Britain's relatively Euroskeptic views into the draft. In particular, a proposal that could have seen EU foreign policy and tax policy be subjected to "qualified majority votes" (in which more populous countries have a larger vote) was not included; instead, Britain and the other 24 EU members will retain a veto in these areas. However, the opposition Conservative Party successfully pressured the government into promising to hold a referendum on the constitution, which Blair had initially resisted. There is a significant threat that Britain will vote no on the document when the referendum is held, preventing it from coming into force. British skepticism about the EU was further demonstrated by the European Parliament elections in June, in which the Conservatives beat Labour and the virulently anti-EU UK Independence Party came in third, winning 16 percent of the vote. Turnout at that election was just 38 percent.

Despite sustained increases in spending, the government has failed to deliver major improvements in public services, notwithstanding repeated promises to the electorate to do so. Some improvement has come, notably in health care. The Conservative Party, which failed to take advantage of the government's disappointing progress, was seen as lacking in fresh ideas and compelling leadership. Conservatives' support for the war in Iraq also made it difficult for the party to appear as a viable and meaningfully different alternative to Labour.

Northern Ireland's peace process, anchored by the Good Friday agreement of 1998, remains stalled since the suspension of the power-sharing government in Belfast in October 2002. This occurred after Sinn Fein, a hard-line Catholic nationalist party allied to the Irish Republican Army, was caught spying on ministers of the Northern Ireland government and on other parties. In new elections for the Northern Ireland Assembly in December 2003, Sinn Fein and the Protestant and loyalist Democratic Unionist Party did best, edging out their more moderate rivals on both sides. The two parties have not been able to work together to restore home rule to the province, which is run from London as long as the Northern Ireland government is suspended. Nonetheless, the two parties negotiated with each other through British and Irish government intermediaries in 2004, and a breakthrough on the subject of weapons decommissioning could lead to fresh elections in 2005.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: The British can change their government democratically. Each of the 659 members of the House of Commons is elected in a single-member district. This procedure multiplies the power of the two largest parties, Labour and the Conservatives, at the expense of third parties. The Liberal Democrats are the most disadvantaged; although they won 16.8 percent of the vote in the 2001 election, they received only 7.9 percent of the seats in the House of Commons. The separation of powers is weak, with the prime minister and all members of his cabinet also being members of the legislature. The executive has in recent years become more powerful at the expense of the House of Commons. The monarch, currently Queen Elizabeth II, is the head of state but plays only a ceremonial role. The opposition party plays a crucial role in the Commons; although it is unable to block legislation, it holds ministers accountable in parliamentary debates that are widely covered in the press.

After a period of centralization under Conservative governments from 1979 to 1997, the Labour Party made constitutional reform a key part of its 1997 election platform. In government, it has delivered a far-reaching (though asymmetrical) devolution of power to Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. The first elections to the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly were held in 1999. The Scottish body has more power (including some tax-raising powers) than its Welsh counterpart, largely because of stronger separatist sentiment in Scotland. Welsh nationalism is largely cultural; with official protection and encouragement, the number of Welsh-language speakers actually grew 17 percent from 1991 to 2001. The Northern Ireland Assembly was suspended in October 2002 after complications in the peace process.

The government is largely free of pervasive corruption. The United Kingdom was ranked 11 out of 146 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2004 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The media market in Britain is free, lively, and competitive. Many daily newspapers across a broad spectrum of political opinions compete for readers. Although broadcasting is dominated by the state-owned BBC, the corporation is editorially independent of the government. In 2003, the BBC claimed that the government exaggerated evidence of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, leading to an extensive inquiry that eventually exonerated the government. While the episode tarnished the reputations of both the government and the BBC, more generally, it was a sign of the healthy political debate that is possible in Britain. Internet access is not restricted by the government.

Although the Church of England and the Church of Scotland are established churches, the government both prescribes freedom of religion in law and protects it in practice. Scientology is not recognized as an official religion for charity purposes. Muslims and other religious minorities complain of discrimination. The government respects academic freedom.

Civic organizations and nongovernmental organizations are allowed to operate freely, and the freedom to assemble is respected, as demonstrated by massive protests against the government's participation in the Iraq war in February 2003. The right to organize in unions is protected. Trade unions have traditionally played a strong role in the Labour Party, though this is weakening as the party moves to the center and seeks a larger role for the private sector in traditional public sector areas, such as health care.

A historical oddity in the justice system was removed in 2003 when the post of

Lord Chancellor was abolished. The position, the second-oldest office in Britain after the monarchy, combined a legislative seat in the House of Lords, a senior executive position in the cabinet, and a powerful judicial position as, effectively, the top judge in the country. As such, it was a serious breach of the separation of powers (already weak in Britain), and the Labour government abolished it in 2003, creating the cabinet position of secretary for constitutional affairs. However, the top judges in the land remain the Law Lords, a combination of legislative and judicial authority that weakens judicial independence. The police maintain high professional standards, and prisons generally meet international standards.

Britain has large numbers of immigrants and second-generation children of immigrants, who receive equal treatment under the law. In practice, their living standards are lower than the national average. Women also receive equal treatment under the law, but are under-represented in politics and the top levels of business.

United States of America

Population: 293,600,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GNI/capita: $35,400 **Civil Liberties:** 1
Life Expectancy: 77 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Protestant (52 percent), Roman Catholic (24 percent), Mormon (2 percent), Jewish (1 percent), Muslim (1 percent), other (20 percent)
Ethnic Groups: White (77 percent), black (13 percent), Asian (4 percent), Amerindian (1.5 percent), Pacific Islander (0.3 percent), other (4 percent)
Capital: Washington, DC

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

1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

In a year of intensified controversy over the domestic and international implications of the war in Iraq and the war on terrorism, the dominating political event of 2004 was the election of President George W. Bush to a second term. Bush won by a 3 percent margin, despite a series of investigations that called into question the administration's rationale for invading Iraq and criticized aspects of its conduct in the war on terrorism. There were, in addition, disturbing revelations of torture and prisoner abuse in U.S.-run facilities in Iraq and allegations of prisoner abuse at the U.S.-maintained detention camp in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

The United States of America was founded in 1776 during a revolution against British colonial rule. The current system of government began functioning in 1789, following the ratification of the country's constitution. Because the founders of the United States distrusted concentrated government power, they set up a system in which the federal government has three competing centers of power—executive,

legislative, and judicial branches—and they left many powers with the state governments and the citizenry.

In 2000, George W. Bush of the Republican Party was certified as the forty-third president of the United States following one of the closest and most controversial elections in the country's history. Despite having lost the popular vote to the Democratic nominee, former vice president Al Gore, by 47.88 percent to 48.39 percent, Bush won the Electoral College—which under the U.S. system determines the presidential election—by a narrow margin of 271 to 266. A third candidate, Ralph Nader, representing the environmentally oriented Green Party, received slightly less than 3 percent of the popular vote. An even greater source of controversy during the election was the outcome of the vote in the state of Florida, which was ultimately decided in Bush's favor by a 5-4 vote of the U.S. Supreme Court.

Bush achieved reelection in 2004 after one of the country's most bitterly contested and polarized presidential campaigns. The Democratic Party nominee, Senator John Kerry, a decorated veteran of the Vietnam War, accused the president of having misled the country about the reasons for launching the war in Iraq in 2003 and asserted that the Bush administration was mishandling the postwar occupation, which had claimed the lives of 1,000 U.S. troops. Nevertheless, voters whose principal motivation was national security tended to favor Bush, as did those who were influenced by what came to be known as "moral values," an elastic concept that, in the context of the 2004 election, referred principally to a stance against abortion, same-sex marriage, and the perceived exclusion of religion from the public sphere.

Bush and his running mate, Vice President Dick Cheney, gained 51 percent of the national vote to 48 percent for Kerry and his running mate, Senator John Edwards. According to the Electoral College, Bush won with 286 electoral votes to Kerry's 252. The clear-cut nature of the outcome helped dispel some of the cloud that hung over the 2000 presidential contest. In contrast, the 2004 election was conducted without major controversy, although concerns lingered regarding the Ohio vote, and some voting districts reported problems with long lines on election day and malfunctioning equipment. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe sent an observer mission to the United States to monitor the elections and issued a report that polling procedures adhered to international standards.

The 2004 contest was the first conducted since the adoption of legislation designed to curb the influence of financial contributions in presidential politics. However, the election was the most expensive in U.S. history, with tens of millions spent by the campaigns, parties, and advocacy groups on television advertising alone. Both parties conducted extensive drives to get their voters to the polls, with the result that the turnout figure, at 58 percent, was the highest since 1968.

In addition to winning the presidency, the Republican Party increased its majorities in the House of Representatives and the Senate. In the Senate, the Republicans added four members to their majority; they now control the 100-seat chamber by a 55-44 margin, with 1 independent. In the House, the Republicans enhanced their majority by 3; they now hold 232 seats, compared with the Democrats' 202. One seat is held by an independent who usually votes with the Democrats.

Aside from the election, the United States was mainly preoccupied with the conflict in Iraq, where insurgents operating primarily in the "Sunni triangle" continued to kill U.S. troops, foreign workers, and Iraqi security officials and civilians. In

April, news media outlets published reports that revealed that U.S. troops were responsible for acts of abuse, torture, and sexual humiliation of Iraqi prisoners at the Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad. The revelations were accompanied by shocking photographs, taken by prison guards, that showed prisoners in physically and sexually humiliating positions. Several of the guards responsible for the abuse were subsequently charged and placed before court-martial hearings. There were also charges of abuse of prisoners detained during the 2001 conflict in Afghanistan and interned at a U.S.-controlled facility in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

The prisoner abuse scandals occurred in the context of a debate over whether the United States should strictly adhere to the Geneva Convention in its treatment of prisoners captured in the course of the war on terrorism. A series of memorandums from the White House and the Defense Department argued that the Geneva accords need not be applied in cases involving terrorists or enemy combatants. Critics contended that such arguments contributed to an environment in which lower-level officials believed they had sanction to apply torture to prisoners in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Guantanamo.

Another controversy to emerge involved what were called "ghost prisoners"—alleged terrorists detained in various parts of the world and held in unspecified locations outside any judicial system or congressional oversight. This issue also reflected differences between the administration—which claims that existing laws and international covenants are inadequate instruments in cases of terrorism—and civil libertarians, who contend that the administration is routinely violating American and international laws. The administration has also drawn fire for its policy of "renditions," in which foreign nationals accused of involvement in terrorism are sent to foreign countries that have a reputation for tolerating torture of prisoners.

In addition to the furor over the treatment of prisoners, the Bush administration faced other problems related to its domestic conduct of the war on terrorism. The USA Patriot Act, a measure adopted in the wake of the terrorist assaults on the United States on September 11, 2001, continued to be a source of controversy. Legislation to modify the law was introduced in Congress, and federal courts rolled back some of its provisions. The Supreme Court and lower federal courts also issued rulings asserting jurisdiction over prisoners held at Guantanamo and elsewhere, rejecting the administration's claim that the prisoners were "enemy combatants" rather than prisoners of war subject to the dictates of international law.

In two noteworthy cases, the administration asserted that Jose Padilla and Yasser Hamdi, both of whom had claims to U.S. citizenship, were enemy combatants and were thus not entitled to normal constitutional protections. Both Padilla and Hamdi were incarcerated without formal charges or access to attorneys. After the Supreme Court issued a ruling that asserted that U.S. citizens held in military custody had the right to have their cases heard by an independent authority, Hamdi was released and left the United States for Saudi Arabia.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of the United States can change their government democratically. The United States has a bicameral legislature. The upper chamber, the Senate, consists of 100 members—two from each of the 50 states. Senators are elected to six-year terms. The lower chamber, the House of Representatives, consists of 435 members elected for

two-year terms. Members of this chamber are elected directly by voters in the districts they represent. The president and vice president are elected for four-year terms. By constitutional provision, the president is limited to two terms in office.

In the U.S. federal political system, a great deal of government responsibility devolves to the 50 individual states. Most law enforcement matters are dealt with at the state level, as is education, and states have been given wide powers to raise revenues through various forms of taxation. Some states give citizens wide powers to influence legislation through institutions of direct democracy, such as referendums on wide-ranging issues like same sex marriage, tax rates, and immigrant rights.

In electing a president, the United States uses a unique system that combines a popular vote and the ballots cast by an electoral college. The Electoral College apportions votes to each state on the basis of population and congressional representation. The electors in a particular state then usually cast all their ballots for the candidate who won the popular vote in their state, no matter what the margin. Two states, Maine and Nebraska, have chosen to apportion their electoral votes between the candidates according to the percentage of the state's votes each receives, and other states are considering similar changes. The Electoral College vote determines the winner of the election. Under this system, it is possible for a candidate to win the presidency even though an opposing candidate may have won a greater number of popular votes nationwide. In 2000, this system led to the anomalous situation in which the winning candidate, George W. Bush, actually received fewer popular votes than his main opponent, Vice President Al Gore, the Democratic nominee.

Presidential election campaigns in the United States are long and expensive. The various candidates for the Democratic nomination began campaign activities in early 2003, nearly two years before the actual polling day. In 2001, Congress passed a law, the McCain-Feingold bill, designed to limit the impact of moneyed interests on presidential politics. Nevertheless, the two parties and the constituency and interest groups that support them have drawn on various methods to circumvent the spirit of the legislation, and the 2004 race was the most expensive ever, with a total expenditure of $1.2 billion, much of which was spent by advocacy groups rather than by the parties themselves.

The United States has an intensely competitive political system dominated by two major parties, the Republicans and the Democrats. The U.S. electoral system is based on a "first past the post," or majoritarian, system for legislative seats, which tends to discourage a multiplicity of parties. In addition, the U.S. system is characterized by legal and other hurdles that act to discourage the rise of new, independent parties. Yet, on occasion, candidates representing third parties or particular causes have had a significant impact on presidential politics. In 2004, however, the most prominent third-party candidate, Ralph Nader, gained only approximately 1 percent of the national vote.

A serious problem for American democracy is the widespread practice of drawing districts for the House of Representatives and for state legislatures that are designed to guarantee the election of a particular party or to protect incumbent legislators, whatever their party. This practice, known as "gerrymandering," has been a part of the American system since its inception. Recently, however, sophisticated computer techniques have strengthened the ability of the dominant party in a state to carve out districts that considerably limit the competitive nature of legislative

elections. In the 2004 election for the House of Representatives, only five incumbents were defeated and in only 35 races did the winner receive 55 percent or less of the total vote.

The federal government has a high degree of transparency. A substantial number of auditing and investigative agencies function independently of party influence or the influence of incumbent officials. The press is generally vigorous in covering stories of official corruption, as it was in the case of the governors of the states of New Jersey and Connecticut, both of whom were forced to resign as a result of allegations of corruption. The efforts of these entities are reinforced by a number of private watchdog organizations that focus on such disparate issues as political campaign spending, open government, the impact of business lobbying on the legislative process, and the defense budget. The press also plays a major role in investigating and publicizing allegations of improprieties by officials at all levels. Federal agencies regularly place information relevant to their mandate on Web sites to broaden public access. The United States also has in place strict measures to reduce the level of corruption in the private sector. The most recent corporate governance legislation, the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002, was enacted after a series of scandals involving inflated earnings reports by major corporations.

The United States has a free, diverse, and constitutionally protected press. In recent years, a debate has arisen over the impact of media consolidation, accomplished through the purchase of large press entities—television networks, newspapers, and weekly magazines—by giant corporations with little or no previous interest in journalism. During 2004, controversy erupted over the attempts by federal prosecutors to compel journalists to divulge the names of confidential sources. In all, eight journalists were threatened with contempt-of-court citations. In the most noteworthy case, a special prosecutor demanded that reporters reveal the identity of administration officials who might have leaked the fact that the wife of Ambassador Joseph Wilson, a critic of the administration's Iraq policies, was an undercover employee of the CIA. Several reporters were threatened with imprisonment by a federal judge involved in the case. Internet access is widespread, and Internet journalists and "bloggers" have become an increasingly important force in political coverage and commentary.

The United States has a long tradition of religious freedom. Adherents of practically every major religious denomination, as well as many smaller groupings, can be found throughout the country, and religious belief and religious service attendance is high. There is an ongoing debate over the role of religion in public life, often centered on the question of whether government subsidies to schools sponsored by religious denominations meet constitutional standards. Issues such as same sex marriage and so-called partial-birth abortion and even the place of the words "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance are heavily loaded with religious overtones and serve to mobilize evangelical Christians—and their political counterparts—to engage in the political process.

Although a contentious debate has emerged over the university's role in society, academic life is notable for a healthy level of intellectual freedom. In 2004, academics and students participated in vigorous debates over public policy issues, especially the war in Iraq, the global economy, and U.S. policy toward Israel and Palestine. Organizations opposed to Israel's treatment of the Palestinians have or-

ganized campaigns on a number of campuses to encourage university administrations to withdraw investments from corporations doing business in Israel. A number of the country's prestigious universities have adopted policies of "political correctness" intended to combat harassment against traditionally marginalized groups. However, such policies are controversial as they may restrict the expression of opinions, usually voiced by political conservatives, that diverge from mainstream campus views.

Private discussion and public debate are vigorous. In general, the right to public protest is observed by public officials. A controversy emerged during the 2004 Republican Party national convention, held in New York City, over restrictions placed on the location and timing of public protests and over what civil libertarians called overly aggressive police tactics aimed at demonstrators. Serious restrictions were also placed on protest groups at the Democratic Party national convention in Boston. Likewise, during the election campaign period, the Bush campaign was criticized for segregating Kerry supporters in attendance at rallies from the rest of the assemblage or excluding them altogether.

Trade unions by law are guaranteed the right to organize workers and engage in collective bargaining with employers. The right to strike is also guaranteed. Over the years, however, the strength of organized labor has declined, to the point where less than 9 percent of the private workforce is represented by unions, one of the lowest figures among stable, economically advanced democracies. An important factor in labor's decline is the country's labor code, which is regarded as an impediment to organizing efforts. Union organizing efforts are also impeded by strong resistance from employers and the federal government's failure to strictly enforce the law against labor code violators. Several attempts to modify core labor laws have been defeated in Congress over the years. At the same time, trade unions remain an important force in political life. In recent years, unions have become more directly involved in Democratic Party affairs, and unions served as a crucial source of campaign funds and volunteer workers for the Democrats in the 2004 presidential election.

Judicial independence is respected, though the influence of the court system has become a source of sometimes bitter contention over the years, with critics claiming that judicial authority has expanded into areas of governance that are best left to the legislative branch. Despite a strong rule-of-law tradition, a number of controversies have emerged over the treatment of poor and especially minority defendants in criminal law cases. African Americans and Hispanics constitute a large portion of defendants in criminal cases involving murder, rape, assault, and robbery. The police in a number of large cities have been accused of using unnecessary force in dealing with black and Hispanic criminal suspects, although the number and intensity of complaints have declined in the past few years, and most urban police departments mandate some form of human rights training for new officers.

Civil liberty and other groups have advanced a broad critique of the criminal justice system, contending that there are too many Americans (especially minority group Americans) in prison, that prison sentences are often excessive, and that too many people are prosecuted for minor drug offenses. There are movements in several states toward shorter prison sentences and earlier releases for convicted felons. Nevertheless, the most recent survey showed that more than 2.2 million Americans—44 percent of whom were African American—were in federal, state, or local prisons.

Concern has also been raised about prison conditions, especially the disturbing levels of violence and rape and the reportedly inadequate medical attention for prisoners with mental illness. The United States has the highest rate of legal executions in the democratic world. As evidence of a growing controversy over the death penalty, several states have announced a moratorium on capital punishment while studies are undertaken on the death penalty's fairness. During 2003, 144 persons were sentenced to death in federal and state courts, the lowest figure in 30 years.

Civil libertarians and Arab American organizations have expressed concerns that the Justice Department, as part of its offensive against domestic terrorism, has engaged in the "racial profiling" of men who have come to the United States from countries in the Middle East or South Asia. In response, Justice Department officials contend that a measure of profiling is essential in the war against terrorism given the Middle Eastern or South Asian origins of the majority of those involved in terrorist plots against the United States. In its most recent annual report, the Federal Bureau of Investigation listed 149 instances of hate crimes against Arab Americans, which is a reduction from the level of complaints immediately following September 11, 2001.

Citizens of the United States enjoy a high level of personal autonomy. The right to own property is protected by law and is a jealously guarded part of the American "way of life," and business entrepreneurship is encouraged as a matter of government policy.

The United States is one of the world's most racially and ethnically diverse societies. In recent years, the country's population dynamics have shifted in important ways, as Americans of Latin American ancestry have replaced African Americans as the leading minority group and the percentage of whites in the population has declined somewhat. A complex variety of policies and programs are designed to protect the rights of minorities, including laws to prevent discrimination on the job, affirmative action plans for university admissions, quotas to guarantee representation in the internal affairs of some political parties, and policies to ensure that minorities are not treated unfairly in the apportionment of government-assistance efforts. African Americans, however, continue to lag in economic standing, education, and other social indicators. Black Americans are more likely to live in poverty, less likely to own businesses, less likely to have gained a university degree, and more likely to have served time in prison than members of other groups, including many recent immigrant groups.

The United States has a long history of liberal immigration policies. In recent years, there has been some debate over the degree to which new immigrants are assimilating into American society. Most observers, however, believe that the country has struck a balance that both encourages assimilation and permits new immigrants to maintain certain religious or cultural customs. The United States has in recent years not faced the kind of controversy that has erupted in other countries over the wearing of the *hijab* (headscarf) by Muslim girls in public schools or women in public buildings.

The U.S. government has been less successful in devising a policy for dealing with undocumented immigrants, several million of whom live and work in the country at any one time. Many immigrants' rights advocates assert that the country would not be able to meet labor needs if illegal immigration were curbed. At the beginning

of his first presidential administration, Bush indicated he was prepared to reach an agreement with Mexico to establish policies to regulate the flow of migrant workers who cross the border into the United States. After the events of September 11, 2001, negotiations with Mexico were dropped, and the administration adopted a tougher stance toward undocumented workers and visitors whose visas have expired. In 2004, the administration introduced legislation that would grant amnesty to many undocumented workers and establish a guest-worker program aimed primarily at immigrants from Mexico.

The Bush administration has drawn particular criticism for policies that, civil libertarians contend, discriminate against immigrants and visa applicants from countries in the Middle East and South Asia. These measures subject those from predominantly Muslim countries to special registration requirements, interviews by law enforcement officials, and lengthy visa application procedures. Concern has also been expressed about the federal government's policy of holding asylum seekers in detention facilities while their applications are being assessed. At the same time, the United States has not reduced the number of legal immigrants allowed into the country, which is high by global standards.

A major issue in 2004 was the right of homosexuals to marry. Referendums to define marriage as between a man and a woman, thus denying marriage rights to same sex couples, were adopted in 11 states.

Women have made important strides toward equality over the past several decades. Women are heavily represented in the law, medicine, and journalism, and predominate in the university programs that train students for these professions. Although the average compensation of female workers is 80 percent of that for male workers, women with recent university degrees have effectively attained parity with men. Nonetheless, there remain many female-headed families that live in conditions of poverty.

Uruguay

Population: 3,400,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GNI/capita: $4,340 **Civil Liberties:** 1
Life Expectancy: 75 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (66 percent), Protestant (2 percent), Jewish (1 percent), other (31 percent)
Ethnic Groups: White (88 percent), mestizo (8 percent), black (4 percent)
Capital: Montevideo

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

1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
2,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

On October 31, 2004, Uruguayans broke 170 years of political hegemony by the country's two traditional parties to elect former mayor of Montevideo, Tabare Vasquez, as president,

aligning the country with a regional shift to the left. Although he promised to join neighboring Brazil and Argentina in seeking closer relations with Fidel Castro's Cuba, Vazquez nonetheless showed some signs of moving to the political center, appointing moderate senator Danilo Astori as his choice for finance minister. Vasquez's Broad Front coalition also captured a majority of seats in both houses of congress in concurrent legislative elections.

After gaining independence from Spain, the Oriental Republic of Uruguay was established in 1830. The Colorado Party dominated a relatively democratic political system throughout the 1960s. However, from 1973 to 1985, the country was dominated by a military regime whose viciousness earned Uruguay the nickname "The Torture Chamber of Latin America."

In 1998, the country's other traditional party, the centrist National Party, racked by mutual accusations of corruption, joined the opposition Colorado Party in supporting the latter's presidential nominee, Jorge Batlle Ibanez, a five-time presidential candidate whose father and great-uncle had been respected Colorado Party presidents. Faced with dismal economic prospects and a choice between presidential candidates representing the moderate right or an eclectic left, in 1999, Uruguayans gave Batlle 52 percent of the vote, to 40 percent obtained by Vazquez. On taking office, the new president incorporated several National Party members into his cabinet.

Batlle immediately sought an honest accounting of the human rights situation under the former military regime. Batlle also showed equally firm determination to reduce spending and taxes and to privatize state monopolies. In 2001, crises in the rural sector and an increase in violent crime, in what was still one of Latin America's safest countries, dominated much of the public's attention, as did growing labor unrest.

A currency devaluation and default in Argentina at the end of 2001 shrank Uruguay's international reserves 80 percent in six months, with the country losing its coveted investment-grade status on Wall Street. By midyear of 2002, the government was forced to impose a weeklong bank holiday, Uruguay's first in 70 years, to staunch a run on the country's banks. The spillover effect from Argentina's economic crisis was blamed for a day of violence in August, when looters ransacked businesses and labor unions staged antigovernment protests that brought much of Uruguay's capital, Montevideo, to a standstill. In October, the National Party withdrew its members from Batlle's government.

Disputes with neighboring Brazil over regional free trade, and with Argentina over specific human rights issues festering since the 1970s, dominated Uruguay's political debate in 2003. The economy had shrunk by 11 percent in two years, and one of every three Uruguayans lived below the poverty line in the worst economic crisis in the country's history. A bond restructuring that year avoided a potentially catastrophic economic default and was accompanied by small economic rally.

Batlle also remained the region's only vociferous opponent of Cuba's leader, Fidel Castro. However, the luster of Batlle's human rights record dimmed after he chose as a naval attaché to Buenos Aires a navy captain accused of responsibility for the deaths of two Argentines when both countries were ruled by military dictatorships.

The October 2004 presidential and parliamentary elections proved to be a crushing defeat for the Colorado Party, whose presidential candidate, Guillermo Stirling

won just 10 percent of the vote, as well as for the National Party and its standard bearer Jorge Larranaga, who garnered 34 percent. Vazquez, whose Broad Front coalition ranged from Christian Democrats to former left-wing Tupamaro guerrillas, captured 51 percent in the first round of voting to be elected president. The Broad Front enjoyed a similar rout in both houses of congress, where for the first time in many years, the party in government could count on a majority.

After fiercely opposing the privatization of state companies and the shrinking of the state's role in Uruguay's economy, the newly elected Vazquez, who during the campaign had promised moderate economic policies and an emphasis on helping the poor, faced the challenge of creating a stable macroeconomic framework and attracting foreign capital. Astori, the new finance minister, sought to reassure the private sector by promising clear rules for investors, a free-floating exchange rate, fiscal discipline, and an inflation-targeted monetary policy. However, questions also remained about the personal ties maintained by the leftist Vazquez to the country's former rightist military dictatorship during the 1980s.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of Uruguay can change their government democratically. The 2004 elections were free and fair despite isolated acts of violence registered against several parties' local headquarters. The 1967 constitution established a bicameral congress consisting of the 99-member Chamber of Deputies and the 31-member Senate, with every member serving a five-year term. The president is also directly elected for a five-year term. In 1999, for the first time, Uruguayan parties selected a single presidential candidate in open primary elections. Previously, the parties had fielded a number of candidates, and the candidates with the most votes then accumulated the votes cast for the others.

Uruguay has three major political parties: the Colorado Party, the National Party, and the Broad Front. The Broad Front swept to victory in 2004 in coalition with the smaller left-wing social democratic New Space party headed by the son of Zelmar Michelini, a former senator assassinated in 1976 in Buenos Aires by a joint Argentine-Uruguayan military commando unit.

Uruguay, long a haven for anonymous foreign bank deposits as a result of its strict banking secrecy laws, has also taken measures to regulate financial activities in order to reduce the potential for money laundering. October 1998 saw the passage of antidrug legislation that made narcotics-related money laundering a crime. The Financial Investigations Unit (FIU) was established in order to present more complete evidence in narcotics-related prosecutions. On the request of the Central Bank, financial institutions must provide certain information, and banks (including offshore banks), currency exchange houses, and stockbrokers are required to report transactions of more than $10,000. The FIU also requires all entities under its jurisdiction to report suspicious financial transactions to a financial information analysis unit.

The Transparency Law (Ley Cristal) entered into force in January 1999. It criminalizes a broad range of potential abuses of power by governmental officeholders, including the laundering of funds related to public corruption cases. It also requires financial disclosure statements to be filed by high-ranking officials. Public officials who know of a drug-related crime or incident and do nothing about it may be charged with a "crime of omission" under the Citizen Security Law. Uruguay ranks

near the top of public transparency ratings for Latin America issued annually by Transparency International and in 2004 was cited by the group for a "perceived. . . fall in corruption" compared to the previous year. Uruguay was ranked 28 out of 146 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2004 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Constitutional guarantees regarding free expression are generally respected. The press is privately owned, and broadcasting is both commercial and public. Numerous daily newspapers publish, many associated with political parties; there are also a number of weeklies. In 1996, a number of publications ceased production because of a government suspension of tax exemptions on the import of newsprint. In addition, a June 1996 decree requires government authorization to import newsprint. Internet access is unrestricted.

Freedom of religion is a cherished political tenet of democratic Uruguay and is broadly respected. The government does not restrict academic freedom.

Civic organizations have proliferated since the return of civilian rule. Numerous women's rights groups focus on violence against women, societal discrimination, and other problems. Freedom of assembly and association are provided by law in Uruguay, and the government generally respected those rights in practice. Workers exercise their right to join unions, bargain collectively, and hold strikes. Unions are well organized and politically powerful. Strikes are sometimes marked by violent clashes and sabotage.

The judiciary is relatively independent, but has become increasingly inefficient in the face of escalating crime, particularly street violence and organized crime. The court system is severely backlogged, and suspects under arrest often spend more time in jail than they would were they to be convicted and serve the maximum sentence for their crime. Allegations of police mistreatment, particularly of youthful offenders, have increased; however, prosecutions of such acts are also occurring more frequently. Prison conditions do not meet international standards.

President Jorge Batlle's stance in favor of human rights appeared to waiver in 2003. In November, Batlle announced that the case of the daughter-in-law of Argentine poet Juan Gelman, detained in Buenos Aires in 1976 and later allegedly made to disappear in Uruguay, was included in a 1986 law that effectively granted amnesty to Uruguay's military and police accused of committing rights violations during the military's 12-year regime. Efforts by that regime in the mid-1970s to kill U.S. congressman Ed Koch, a fierce critic of the Uruguayan military, were also confirmed by independent investigators in 2003 after having been first reported in 1993.

The small black minority continues to face discrimination. Uruguay's continuing economic crisis has forced thousands of formerly middle-class citizens to join rural migrants in the shantytowns ringing Montevideo.

Violence against women continues to be a problem. However, the government generally protects children's rights and welfare, and has placed the education and health of children as a top priority.

Uzbekistan

Population: 26,400,000 **Political Rights:** 7
GNI/capita: $310 **Civil Liberties:** 6
Life Expectancy: 70 **Status:** Not Free
Religious Groups: Muslim [mostly Sunni] (88 percent), Eastern Orthodox (9 percent), other (3 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Uzbek (80 percent), Russian (6 percent), Tajik (5 percent), Kazakh (3 percent), other (6 percent)
Capital: Tashkent

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

1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
7,7NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF

Overview:

A series of suicide bombings and subsequent violent clashes in March and April and again in July 2004 underscored the tenuous nature of Uzbekistan's political stability, even as the government continued its repressive policies against perceived opponents of the regime. The authorities responded to the attacks with a wave of arrests and convictions, targeting suspected members of banned Islamic groups. Repression against media outlets and foreign-based nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) working in Uzbekistan intensified during the year, partly in an effort to stifle dissent in advance of the December parliamentary elections. Meanwhile, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the U.S. government cut financial assistance to the Uzbek government as a result of the regime's failure to implement meaningful political and human rights reforms.

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

On December 29, 1991, more than 98 percent of the country's electorate approved a popular referendum on Uzbekistan's independence. In a parallel vote, Islam Karimov, former Communist Party leader and chairman of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), the successor to the Communist Party, was elected president with a reported 88 percent of the vote. The only independent candidate to challenge him, Erk (Freedom) Party leader Mohammed Solih, charged election fraud. Solih fled the country two years later, and his party was forced underground. The opposition group Birlik (Unity) was barred from contesting the election and was later refused legal registration as a political party, and the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) and other religious-based groups were banned entirely. Only 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.

The government's repression of members of the political opposition and of Mus-

lims not affiliated with state-sanctioned religious institutions intensified following a series of deadly bombings in Tashkent in February 1999. The authorities blamed the attacks, which they described as an assassination attempt against Karimov, on the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), an armed group seeking the overthrow of Uzbekistan's secular government and its replacement with an Islamic state. The state justified its increasing crackdowns on moderate secular and religious groups under the pretext of fighting violent Islamist organizations, including the IMU.

Of the five parties that competed in the December 1999 parliamentary election, which was strongly criticized by international election observers, all supported the president and differed little in their political platforms. In the January 2000 presidential poll, Karimov defeated his only opponent, Marxist history professor Abdulhasiz Dzhalalov, with 92 percent of the vote. The government refused to register genuinely independent opposition parties or permit their members to stand as candidates. Meanwhile, in August 2000, the IMU engaged in armed clashes with government troops; the following month, the U.S. government placed the IMU on its list of international terrorist organizations for its ties to Osama bin Laden's terrorist network, al-Qaeda, and to the Taliban. As part of its declared effort to prevent renewed invasions by the IMU, Uzbekistan subsequently placed land mines along portions of its borders with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, leading to protests by both governments and reports of accidental deaths of civilians in the region.

After the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, Uzbekistan became a key strategic ally of the United States in its military operations in Afghanistan. Tashkent's decision to permit the deployment of U.S. troops on its territory for search-and-rescue and humanitarian operations was widely seen as an effort to obtain various concessions from the West, including economic assistance, security guarantees, and reduced criticism of its poor human rights record. In March 2002, the United States and Uzbekistan signed a Declaration on Strategic Partnership and Cooperation Framework, in which both countries agreed to cooperate on economic, legal, humanitarian, and nuclear proliferation matters. Uzbekistan's continued collaboration with the U.S.-led antiterrorism campaign led to American commitments of financial assistance in exchange for promises from Karimov of political reforms.

In March 2003, the EBRD set a one-year deadline for compliance with three broad benchmarks for reform in Uzbekistan: greater political openness and freedom of the media, free functioning of civil society groups, and implementation of the recommendations of the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture. The EBRD announced that it would limit investments in Uzbekistan if the benchmarks were not met. Two months later, the EBRD held its annual meeting in Tashkent, the first such large-scale function in Central Asia. In the weeks surrounding the meeting, police intensified harassment of human rights defenders and relatives of religious prisoners in an attempt to prevent them from staging public protests about government abuses.

For the January 2004 local elections, all candidates were vetted in advance by Karimov's administration. The government claimed a voter turnout of 97 percent. The elections were for local neighborhood committees (*mahallahs*), which the government uses to observe and control the general population.

The fragile state of Uzbekistan's political stability was highlighted by a series of suicide bomb attacks and related violent clashes in late March and early April in Bukhara and Tashkent, in which some 50 people lost their lives. Most media outlets

provided limited coverage of the events and focused almost exclusively on official government accounts, which led to widespread rumors about the identities and motives of the attackers. The fact that police appeared to be the main targets of the violence prompted speculation that the bombings were acts of revenge carried out by relatives of those imprisoned for alleged religious extremism. The authorities maintained that the bombings were the work of radical international Islamist groups—singling out the banned Hizb-ut-Tahrir group and the IMU—and dismissed charges of any links between the violence and the government's repressive political and economic policies. Meanwhile, a previously unknown Islamist group called Jamoat, a successor to the IMU, claimed responsibility.

In the days following the attacks, law enforcement agencies detained and arrested hundreds of alleged suspects and increased security measures in the capital and other large cities. According to Human Rights Watch, they targeted Muslims practicing outside of state-controlled mosques, including women. Dozens of defendants were convicted in the second half of the year for their alleged roles in the attacks, and all received lengthy prison sentences in trials that did not meet basic standards of due process. On July 30, several people were killed when suicide bombers struck again, in coordinated attacks on the U.S. and Israeli embassies and the office of Uzbekistan's prosecutor-general. Several Islamic groups, including the IMU and Jamoat, claimed responsibility.

In April, the EBRD announced its decision to limit investment in Uzbekistan, citing the government's lack of progress on democratic and economic reform benchmarks established one year earlier. Similarly, in July, the United States suspended $18 million of the $55 million originally earmarked for Uzbekistan in 2004; U.S. aid had peaked at $220 million in 2002. The decision was based on the 2002 Strategic Partnership and Cooperation Framework, which makes U.S. assistance to the Uzbek government conditional on Tashkent's introduction of meaningful political reforms and curbs in human rights abuses.

In the run-up to the December 26, 2004, elections for the lower house of the new bicameral parliament, only the country's five legal parties, all of which are considered to be pro-presidential, were granted registration to participate in the elections. Several opposition groups, including Erk and Birlik, announced in November that they will boycott the vote after being unable to register candidates. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) announced that it will send a limited observer mission to monitor the vote.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of Uzbekistan cannot change their government democratically. President Islam Karimov and the executive branch dominate the legislature and judiciary, and the government severely represses all political opposition. The national legislature largely confirms decisions made by the executive branch. The 1994-1995 and 1999 parliamentary elections and the 2000 presidential poll, in which only pro-government candidates could participate, were neither free nor fair. In a January 2002 nationwide referendum, 91 percent of voters allegedly approved amending the country's constitution to extend the presidential term from five to seven years. Karimov's current term in office will therefore end in 2007, rather than in 2005. In a parallel vote, 93 percent of voters officially supported replacing the country's 250-member single-

chamber legislature with a bicameral parliament consisting of a 120-seat lower house and a 100-member upper house (Senate). Independent observers raised serious doubts about the validity of the referendum, citing the presence of police at polling stations and the fact that some people had been able to vote on behalf of several individuals. In April 2003, parliament adopted legislation providing former presidents immunity from prosecution and lifelong state-funded security for them and their immediate family.

A 1997 law prohibits parties based on ethnic or religious affiliations and those advocating subversion of the constitutional order. Only five parties, all pro-government, have been registered, and no genuine political opposition groups function legally or participate in the government. Members of unregistered secular opposition groups, including Birlik and Erk, are subject to discrimination, and many are in exile abroad. Although the authorities allowed both Erk and Birlik to hold open meetings in Tashkent in 2003, neither group was allowed to register officially as a political party. In May 2004, several members of Erk and at least one member of Birlik were arrested or threatened with arrest in a move denounced by the opposition as politically motivated.

Corruption is reportedly widespread throughout various levels of government, with bribery a common practice to obtain lucrative positions. Uzbekistan was ranked 114 out of 146 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2004 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The state imposes strict limits on freedom of speech and the press, particularly with regard to reports on the government and Karimov. The government controls major media outlets and newspaper printing and distribution facilities. The country's private broadcast and print media outlets generally avoid political issues, are largely regional in scope, and suffer from administrative and financial constraints. Although official censorship was abolished in May 2002, the responsibility for censoring material was transferred to newspaper editors, who were warned by the State Press Committee that they would be held personally accountable for what they publish. Self-censorship is widespread, while the few journalists who dare to produce probing or critical reports of the authorities face harassment, physical violence, and closure of their media outlets. The government has blocked a number of non-Uzbek news Web sites, and access to controversial information on the Internet remains extremely difficult.

Most Uzbek media were slow to report the March and April 2004 bomb attacks, and coverage of both those and the July bombings was limited largely to official government statements. In September, the authorities ordered the international media training and support organization Internews-Uzbekistan to be shut down for six months for alleged technical violations. According to media watchdog groups, the closure represented an attempt by the authorities to stifle criticism in advance of the December parliamentary elections. The previous month, five independent television channels linked to Internews were stripped of their broadcasting licenses.

In a case that attracted international attention, independent journalist and human rights activist Ruslan Sharipov, who had written widely on government corruption, was sentenced in August 2003 to five and a half years in prison on charges of homosexuality—which is a criminal offense in Uzbekistan—and of having sexual relations with a minor. Sharipov reportedly confessed to the charges under duress

and was tortured while in custody. In September, an appeals court reduced his sentence to four years, and in March 2004, he was transferred from prison to house arrest. Following continuing international pressure, Sharipov's prison term was replaced in June 2004 with two years of community service in his hometown of Bukhara. In September, he was granted asylum in the United States.

The government exercises strict control over Islamic worship, including the content of imams' sermons, and is suspicious and intolerant of followers of Muslim organizations not sanctioned by the state. Many members of such groups have been arrested or imprisoned on charges of anti-constitutional activities, often under the pretext of the government's fight against militant Islamists. Muslim prisoners are frequently tortured for their religious convictions or to compel them to renounce their beliefs. Authorities have targeted members of the banned Hizb-ut-Tahrir (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. According to Forum 18, the authorities followed the wave of 2004 suicide bomb attacks with a new crackdown against religious Muslims, as well as believers of other faiths, including Protestants and Jehovah's Witnesses.

The government permits the existence of certain mainstream religions, including approved Muslim and Jewish communities, as well as the Russian Orthodox Church and some other Christian denominations. As of January 2004, the authorities had registered some 2,100 religious congregations and organizations. However, the activities of other congregations are restricted through legislation that requires all religious groups to comply with burdensome state registration criteria. Involvement in religious activities carried out by unregistered groups is punishable by fines or imprisonment, and meetings held by such groups have been raided and participants interrogated and arrested. The 1998 Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations prohibits activities including proselytizing and private religious instruction, and requires groups to obtain a license to publish or distribute materials.

The government limits academic freedom, according to the 2003 U.S. State Department Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, published in 2004. While professors generally are required to have their lectures pre-approved, implementation of this restriction varies, the report stated, and university professors reportedly practice self-censorship. Corruption is widespread throughout the educational system, with bribes commonly required to gain entrance into exclusive universities and to obtain good grades.

Open and free private discussion is limited by the mahalla committees, a traditional neighborhood organization that the government has turned into an official system for public surveillance and control. According to a 2003 Human Rights Watch report, the mahalla committees maintain files on those considered to be overly pious in their religious expression and alert the police of so-called suspicious religious and other activities.

Freedom of association is restricted. Although nonpolitical associations and social organizations are generally allowed to register, complicated regulations and governmental bureaucracy make the process difficult. Unregistered nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), including the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan (HRSU),

do not exist as legal entities and can face difficulties operating. Regulations require NGOs to confer with the Ministry of Justice about holding meetings and to allow ministry representatives to attend such gatherings. In December 2003, the government prevented a conference on the death penalty from being held in Tashkent just one day before it was scheduled to take place. The meeting was organized by a local group, Mothers against the Death Penalty and Torture, and supported by the OSCE, the British Embassy, and Freedom House. The authorities cancelled the conference on the grounds that the local group was not a legally registered organization. On February 16, 2004, police arrested Muidinjon Kurbanov, chairman of a regional branch of the HRSU, on weapons and narcotics charges. Civil society workers maintain that the evidence was planted and that Kurbanov's arrest was politically motivated.

In 2004, the government moved against foreign NGOs working in Uzbekistan by beginning enforcement of a 1999 order requiring all foreign NGOs to reregister with the Ministry of Justice. The government refused to allow the Open Society Institute, funded by businessman and philanthropist George Soros, to renew its registration. While authorities accused the institute of funding educational materials seeking to discredit government political and economic policies, critics of the move charged that it was part of a wider government attempt to control foreign NGO activities throughout the country. New banking restrictions requiring government oversight on foreign grant transactions has led to lengthy delays in grant payments to local recipients; Uzbek NGOs rely largely on international assistance to fund their operations.

Despite constitutional provisions for freedom of assembly, the authorities severely restrict this right in practice. Law enforcement officials have used force to prevent demonstrations against human rights abuses in the country, and participants have been harassed, detained, and arrested. In recent years, there have been some small protests by human rights activists and family members of people jailed for allegedly being members of violent Islamic groups. In November, thousands of merchants rioted in the Fergana Valley region when police and tax officials began confiscating goods belonging to traders who were not complying with new controversial and onerous trade regulations. Demonstrators burned police cars and beat three tax inspectors and a police officer. The Council of the Federation of Trade Unions is dependent on the state, and no genuinely independent union structures exist. Organized strikes are extremely rare.

The judiciary is subservient to the president, who appoints all judges and can remove them from office at any time. Police routinely physically abuse and torture suspects to extract confessions, which are accepted by judges as evidence and often serve as the basis for convictions. Law enforcement authorities reportedly often plant narcotics, weapons, and banned religious literature on suspected members of Islamic groups or political opponents to justify their arrest. Executions are regarded as state secrets, and relatives are sometimes not informed until months after the execution has occurred. The authorities conducted waves of arrests of alleged suspects following the suicide bomb attacks in March-April and July. According to Human Rights Watch, the police in many cases made arrests without warrants, conducted unsanctioned searches of people's homes, and planted evidence. Detainees experienced incommunicado detention, limited access to attorneys, and mistreatment during the investigative phases, and their trials failed to meet basic standards of due process, Human Rights Watch reported.

Prisons suffer from severe overcrowding and shortages of food and medicine. The Jaslyk prison camp is notorious for its extremely harsh conditions and ill-treatment of religious prisoners. Inmates, particularly those sentenced for their religious beliefs, are often subjected to ill-treatment or torture, and Human Rights Watch has documented a number of torture-related deaths in custody during the last few years. An estimated 5,000 to 6,000 political prisoners are being held in Uzbekistan's penal institutions.

Although racial and ethnic discrimination is prohibited by law, the belief that senior positions in government and business are reserved for ethnic Uzbeks is widespread.

The government severely limits freedom of movement and residence within the country and across borders. There are restrictions on foreign travel, including the use of a system of exit visas, which are often issued selectively. Permission is required from local authorities to move to a new city, and the authorities rarely grant permission to those wishing to move to Tashkent. Bribes are often paid to obtain the necessary registration documents. In July, the mayor of Tashkent ordered residents of the capital without official residence permits expelled and dismissed from their jobs; he justified the move as necessary to guard against terrorist attacks by Islamist groups.

Widespread corruption, bureaucratic regulations, and the government's tight control over the economy limit most citizens' equality of opportunity. There has been little reform in the country's large and predominantly centrally planned agricultural sector, in which the state sets high production quotas and low purchase prices for farmers. A series of government regulations and decrees over the last few years have placed increasing restrictions on market traders and their ability to continue to operate.

Women's educational and professional prospects are restricted by traditional cultural and religious norms and by ongoing economic difficulties throughout the country. Victims of domestic violence are discouraged from pressing charges against their perpetrators, who rarely face criminal prosecution. The trafficking of women abroad for prostitution remains a serious problem. Local authorities frequently use schoolchildren as free or cheap labor to harvest cotton; many children work long hours under unhealthy conditions, often receiving inadequate food and water.

Vanuatu

Population: 200,000 **Political Rights:** 2
GNI/capita: $1,080 **Civil Liberties:** 2
Life Expectancy: 67 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Presbyterian (36.7 percent), Anglican (15 percent), Roman Catholic (15 percent), indigenous beliefs (7.6 percent), Seventh-Day Adventist (6.2 percent), Church of Christ (3.8 percent), other (15.7 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Melanesian (98 percent), other [including French, Vietnamese, and Chinese] (2 percent)
Capital: Port Vila

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

1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
1,3F	1,3F	1,3F	1,3F	1,3F	1,3F	1,3F	1,2F	2,2F	2,2F

Overview:

Following a snap general election in July 2004, parliament elected Kalkot Mataskelekele as the new president on August 16 and confirmed Serge Vohor as the new prime minister. In September, the parliamentary opposition led a failed no-confidence vote against Vohor. To promote greater political stability, Vohor proposed several constitutional amendments, which must be voted on in a public referendum in 2005.

Vanuatu is an archipelago of 83 islands lying 1,300 miles northeast of Sydney, Australia. The British and French jointly governed it as a unique Anglo-French "condominium" in 1906 until it achieved independence in 1980. The Anglo-French legacy continues to split society along linguistics lines in all spheres of life from politics to religion and economics.

The left-leaning Vanua'aku Party (VP) led the country from 1980 through 1991. A split within the party allowed Maxime Carlot Korman, leader of the francophone Union of Moderate Parties (UMP), to become Vanuatu's first French-speaking prime minister in 1991. Serge Vohor, who headed a dissident faction of the UMP, replaced Carlot Korman in 1995. Barak Sope of the Melanesian Progressive Party took power in 1999 when Vohor was ousted by a no-confidence vote. Edward Natapei of the VP became prime minister in 2001.

Faced with a possibly successful no-confidence vote, Natapei called for a snap election in June 2004, and the election was held a month later. Independent candidates won 6 of the 52 seats, reflecting widespread public frustration with party and factional politics. However, no party won a clear mandate. Negotiations led parliament to elect Kalkot Mataskelekele, a former Supreme Court justice and a drafter of the constitution, as president. Vohor was chosen as prime minister to lead a coalition government. However, the issues in question were not resolved; a no-confidence vote called in September to unseat Vohor failed.

In December 2004, parliament approved the holding of a referendum in early 2005 on amendments to the constitution. If approved, elected representatives would lose their seats if they move from one political party to another after an election, no-con-

fidence votes would be limited to the 12 months after the general election and the last 12 months of the prime minister's four-year term, and parliamentary terms would be extended from four to five years. These amendments aim to restore stability to government, which has been severely compromised by intense rivalries between political parties and the frequent use of no-confidence votes to topple governments as power alignments shift.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of Vanuatu can change their government democratically. The constitution provides for parliamentary elections every four years. The prime minister, who appoints his own cabinet, is chosen from within the 52-member parliament to head the government. Members of parliament and the heads of the six provincial governments also form an electoral college to select the president for a five-year term. The president is the head of state, a largely ceremonial post. The National Council of Chiefs works in parallel with the parliament and exercises authority mainly over language and cultural matters.

No-confidence votes have forced several changes of government in recent years. Parliamentary coalitions have been formed and dissolved with increasing frequency since the 1990s, and fraud and bribery have become widespread in elections.

Many political parties are active. The leading parties are the VP and the National Union Party, which took eight and ten seats, respectively, in the last election in June 2004 and formed a coalition government. Another top vote getter was the UMP, which took nine seats. Other political parties are the Vanuatu Republic Party, the People's Democratic Party, the National United Party, the Melanesian Progressive Party, the Greens and the John Frum Movement, which is also a religious group. However, party loyalty is weak. Politicians frequently switch affiliations and rivalries are intense.

Corruption is a problem but not pervasive. In 2001, then-prime minister Barak Sope was forced to resign after allegations of corruption caused him to lose a parliamentary vote of no confidence. There have been individual reports of police corruption, but it does not appear widespread. Since 2003, the government has strengthened laws to stop money laundering and tax evasion in order to protect its offshore banking business, a significant source of revenue. These efforts helped persuade the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to remove Vanuatu from the list of uncooperative tax havens in May 2003.

The government generally respects freedom of speech and of the press. The state-owned Television Blong Vanuatu broadcasts in English and French. The weekly *Port Vila Press* and the privately owned *Vanuatu Daily*, *Nasara*, and *Port Vila News* supply international, national, and local news. Most media outlets deliver information in Bismala (a pidgin used throughout the islands), English, and French. The number of mobile phone and Internet users, although rising, remains small because of high costs and limited access outside the capital of Port Vila.

The government generally respects freedom of religion in this predominantly Christian country. There were no reports of restrictions on academic freedom. Port Vila hosts the Emalus Campus of the University of the South Pacific.

There have been no reports of government restrictions on civil society groups, and nongovernmental organizations are active in a variety of spheres. Many receive

support from foreign private foundations and bilateral aid donors. Public demonstrations are permitted by law and respected by the government in practice. Workers can organize unions, bargain collectively, and strike. There are five independent trade unions organized under the umbrella Vanuatu Council of Trade Unions, which represents about 40 percent of the country's 25,000-person workforce.

Although the judiciary is generally independent, it is weak and inefficient. Lack of resources has kept the government from hiring and retaining qualified judges and prosecutors. Criminal defendants are often held for long pretrial detentions, and prison conditions are poor. Vanuatu has no armed forces. The Vanuatu Mobile Force is a parliamentary wing of the small police force; both are under the command of a civilian police commissioner. There have been reports of police abuse, but such incidents appear to be infrequent and not widespread or severe.

The vast majority of the population is engaged in either subsistence farming or fishing. In January, parliament passed a new law to stop all mixed-race and naturalized citizens from farming kava, a native herb that has gained popularity among health supplement consumers in the West. Tourism, the civil service, and offshore banking provide employment in the service sector.

In September, the National Council of Chiefs passed a motion to require people to carry permits for movement between provinces because of concerns about crime in the capital.

Violence against women is common and particularly severe in rural areas. Spousal rape is not a crime, and no law prohibits wife beating or sexual harassment. Most cases go unreported because the victims fear reprisal or are discouraged by family pressure, and the police and courts generally hesitate to intervene or impose stronger punishment for offenders. Women's rights leaders consider village chiefs to be major obstacles to improving conditions for women. The traditional practice of "bride payment," or a dowry, is still widely used, which critics charge encourages the view of women as property.

Venezuela

Population: 26,200,000 **Political Rights:** 3
GNI/capita: $4,080 **Civil Liberties:** 4
Life Expectancy: 73 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (96 percent), Protestant (2 percent), other (2 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Arab, German, African, indigenous people
Capital: Caracas

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

1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
3,3PF	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	4,4PF	3,5PF	3,5PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF

Overview:

President Hugo Chavez consolidated his hold on power following the defeat of a presidential recall referendum in Au-

gust 2004 that was held amid charges of ballot rigging. Although he faced an economy in ruins and high levels of street crime and unemployment, Chavez devoted considerable attention during the year to advancing his influence over the judicial system, media, and other institutions of civil society.

The Republic of Venezuela was established in 1830, nine years after independence from Spain. Long periods of instability and military rule ended with the establishment in 1961 of civilian rule and the approval of a constitution. Until 1993, the social-democratic Democratic Action Party (AD) and the Social Christian Party (COPEI) dominated politics. Former president Carlos Andres Perez (1989–1993) of the AD was nearly overthrown by Chavez and other nationalist military officers in two 1992 coup attempts in which dozens were killed. In 1993, Perez was charged with corruption and removed from office by congress. Rafael Caldera, a former president (1969–1974) of the COPEI and a populist, was elected president in late 1993 as head of the 16-party National Convergence, which included Communists, other leftists, and right-wing groups. With crime soaring, public corruption unabated, oil wealth drying up, and the country in its worst economic crisis in 50 years, popular disillusionment with politics deepened.

In 1998, Chavez made his antiestablishment, anticorruption, populist message a referendum on the long-ruling political elite—famous for its interlocking system of privilege and graft, but also for its consensual approach to politics—in that year's presidential contest. As the country's long-ruling political parties teetered at the edge of collapse, last-minute efforts to find a consensus candidate to oppose Chavez were unsuccessful. In February 1999, Chavez won with 57 percent of the vote, taking the reins of the world's fifth-largest oil-producing country.

A constituent assembly dominated by Chavez followers drafted a new constitution that strengthened the presidency and allowed Chavez to retain power until 2013. After Venezuelans approved the new constitution in a national referendum on December 15, 2000, congress and the Supreme Court were dismissed. Although he was reelected as president, new national elections held in July 2000 marked a resurgence of a political opposition that had been hamstrung in its efforts to contest Chavez's stripping of congress and the judiciary of their independence and power. Opposition parties won most of the country's governorships, about half the mayoralties, and a significant share of power in the new congress. Nevertheless, that November, Chavez's congressional allies granted him special fast-track powers that allowed him to decree a wide range of laws without parliamentary debate.

In April 2002, following the deaths of 19 people in a massive protest against the government, Chavez was deposed in a putsch by dissident military officers working with major opposition groups. However, he was reinstated two days later when loyalist troops and supporters gained the upper hand in the streets and in barracks around the country. Opponents of Chavez cited as giving them a right to rebel Article 350 of the 1999 constitution, which permits citizens not to recognize a government that infringes on human and democratic rights—an article that was included by Chavez to justify his own 1992 coup attempts.

Throughout the year, the country was wracked by protests by a broad spectrum of civil society and saw unprecedented discontent among military officers. In October, an estimated one million Venezuelans marched in Caracas demanding that

Chavez call either early elections or a referendum on his rule—and threatening a general strike if he did not accede. When Chavez did not respond, the opposition called for a general strike in February 2003. Although the strike lasted 62 days, it was unsuccessful in forcing Chavez's hand. During the remainder of 2003, Chavez appeared on a collision course with a political opposition that seemed determined to force his resignation before the end of his elected term. However, the opposition also faced questions about its own democratic commitment given the failed coup attempt and its promotion of the failed strike, as well as more practical concerns about its own cohesion and effectiveness.

Following Chavez's successful quashing of the strike, opponents quickly mobilized behind a recall referendum, which is allowed under the constitution. The first attempt to collect the necessary signatures succeeded in gathering 2.8 million at a time when polls showed 65 percent of Venezuelans would vote to oust Chavez, but it was declared invalid by the National Elections Council (CNE). Opponents then quickly mobilized to collect new signatures. The last half of 2003 was marked by a series of government social services initiatives, including urban health care and literacy programs supported by the Cuban government, that appeared to give Chavez a lift in popularity in the face of the potential referendum. An increase in political violence in the country came as a crime wave continued unabated.

In March 2004, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights published a major country report highlighting serious and long-standing institutional issues related to the rule of law and the respect for civil and political rights. Meanwhile, congress, controlled by Chavez supporters, approved a measure allowing it to remove and appoint judges to the Supreme Court, which controls the rest of the judiciary. The Organic Law of the Supreme Court allowed Chavez to limit the tribunal's independence, while the body was expanded from 20 to 32 justices—appointed by a simple majority vote of the pro-government majority in parliament. The government also announced that it was studying a measure to unify municipal and state police forces into a single institution, thus wresting control from mayors and governors, many of whom oppose Chavez.

By midyear, more than four million people had signed petitions in favor of the recall vote against Chavez. The poll, which was the country's first-ever referendum to recall a president, was set for August 15. Chavez won the referendum with 58 percent of the vote. The European Union declined to monitor the referendum, saying that it had not been able to secure from Venezuelan officials "the conditions to carry out an observation in line with the Union's standard methodology." Other international observer groups that did monitor the vote issued findings that the election was legitimate, though flawed. Following the referendum, which was conducted in relative peace and characterized by a high turnout, domestic opposition groups continued to insist that there was a large discrepancy between the official results and their own exit polls. Independent observers said that there were credible reports of voter harassment, including physical intimidation and the reassignment of thousand of voters to far-away polling stations, and vote tampering; it was an open question, however, if these materially affected the overwhelming outcome. In October, regional and municipal elections, voters overwhelmingly backed pro-Chavez candidates.

In November, the assassination of a "super prosecutor" investigating the failed

2002 coup against Chavez gave the president an opportunity to blame Florida-based anti-Chavez "terrorists" for the crime; a lawyer suspected of participation in the crime was killed by police in what was described as a "shootout." In December, a law giving the government control over the content of radio and television programs was to go into effect, with Chavez claiming that the "Venezuelan people have begun to free themselves from. . .the dictatorship of the private media." The record high oil prices that in 2004 enabled the president to engage in spectacular social spending in poorer districts, his unbroken string of electoral victories, and the government's growing control over sectors of Venezuelan life all appeared to make Chavez largely unassailable in the 2006 presidential election.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens can change their government democratically. Under the constitution approved in 1961, the president and a bicameral National Assembly are elected for five years. The Senate has at least two members from each of the 21 states and the federal district of Caracas. The Chamber of Deputies has 189 seats. On the national level, there are no independent government institutions. The military high command is loyal to a single person, the president, rather than to the constitution and the law. Hugo Chavez's party, the Fifth Republic Movement, controls the National Assembly (though narrowly), as well as the Supreme Justice Tribunal and the intelligence services. It also controls the Citizen Power branch of government created to fight corruption by the 1999 constitution. This branch is made up of the offices of the ombudsman (responsible for compelling the government to adhere to the constitution and laws), the comptroller-general (who controls the revenues and expenses incurred by the government), and the public prosecutor (who provides opinions to the courts on the prosecution of criminal cases and brings to the attention of the proper authorities cases of public employee misconduct and violations of the constitutional rights of prisoners or accused persons).

The Chavez government has done little to free the government from excessive bureaucratic regulations, registration requirements, and other forms of control that increase opportunities for corruption. It has relied instead on attacking persons and social sectors it considers to be corrupt and selectively enforcing good-government laws and regulations against its opponents. A 2003 study by the World Bank found that Venezuela has one of the most regulated economies in the world. New regulations and controls over the economy have ensured that public officials have retained ample opportunities for personal enrichment enjoyed under previous governments. A July 2004 ruling by the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, a U.S. government agency, held that Venezuela illegally expropriated the assets of a U.S. company involved in a joint venture with the country's state-owned oil company.

On April 7, 2003, the Law against Corruption was put into effect. It establishes a citizen's right to know, and sets out the state's obligations to provide a thrice-yearly rendition of public goods and expenses, except those security and national defense expenditures as exempted by law. The law also requires most public employees to present a sworn declaration of personal assets within 30 days of assuming a post, as well as 30 days after leaving it; allows for the extradition of corrupt officials and their prohibition from holding office in the future; and includes a prohibition on officials holding secret foreign bank accounts. Venezuela was ranked 114

out of 146 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2004 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Although the constitution provides for freedom of the press, exercise of that right is becoming increasingly difficult in practice. In 2003, as the country moved toward a referendum on Chavez's presidency, the government proposed several measures to tighten its control over opposition newspapers and television and radio stations. A climate of intimidation and hostility against the press has been established in the past few years, in large part as a result of strong anti-media rhetoric by the government and a significant anti-Chavez slant on the part of media owners. The state allocates broadcast licenses in a biased fashion and engages in favoritism in the distribution of government advertising revenues. In July 2004, a new law was ratified that regulates the work of journalists, provides for compulsory registration with the national journalism association, and punishes reporters' "illegal" conduct with prison sentences of three to six months. A Supreme Court ruling upheld censorship laws that effectively declared that laws protecting public authorities and institutions from insulting criticism were constitutional. The Law on the Social Responsibility of Radio and TV, giving the government control over the content of radio and television programs, was to go into effect in December. The government does not restrict Internet access.

Freedom of religion, which the constitution guarantees on the condition that its practice not violate public morality, decency, or the public order, is generally respected by the government. Academic freedom traditionally is generally respected. However, government funding has been withheld from the country's universities, and the rectors of those institutions charged that the government did so to punish them; all of the major public university rectors were elected on antigovernment platforms.

Although professional and academic associations generally operate without official interference, the Supreme Court ruled in 2000 that nongovernmental organizations that receive funding from foreign governments or whose leaders are not Venezuelan are not part of "civil society." As a result, they may not represent citizens in court or bring their own legal actions. In January 2004, the Chavez government made an effort to undermine the legitimacy of reputable human rights organizations by questioning their ties to international organizations and making unsupported accusations of links to foreign governments. Freedom of peaceful assembly and association are guaranteed in the constitution, and the government generally respected these rights in practice. Public meetings and marches, the latter of which require government permits, were generally permitted without impediment, although government supporters often sought to disrupt these, frequently using violence.

The president and his supporters have sought to break what they term a "stranglehold" of corrupt labor leaders on the job market, a move that labor activists say tramples on the rights of private organizations. Opposition and traditional labor leaders say that challenges by insurgent workers' organizations mask Chavez's intent to create government-controlled unions; the president's supporters maintain that the old labor regime amounted to little more than employer-controlled workers' organizations. Security forces frequently break up strikes and arrest trade unionists, allegedly under the guidance of Cuban security officials. In early 2004, the government refused to recognize the elected leaders of the Confederation of Venezuelan Workers and ordered the arrest of its secretary-general, forcing him to flee the country.

Until Chavez took power, the judicial system was headed by a nominally independent Supreme Court that was nevertheless highly politicized, undermined by the chronic corruption (including the growing influence of narcotics traffickers) that permeates the entire political system, and unresponsive to charges of rights abuses. Under Chavez, the effectiveness and impartiality of the judicial branch remains tenuous. An unwieldy new judicial code, which has helped to reduce the number of people jailed while awaiting arraignment, has hampered some law enforcement efforts, resulting in low rates of conviction and shorter jail terms even for convicted murderers. Police salaries are inadequate.

Widespread arbitrary detention and torture of suspects, as well as dozens of extrajudicial killings by the often-corrupt military security forces and the police, have increased as crime continues to soar. Since the 1992 coup attempts, weakened civilian governments have had less authority over the military and the police, and overall rights abuses are committed with impunity.

Since Chavez's election, Venezuela's military, which is largely unaccountable to civilian rule, has become an active participant in the country's social development and delivery of public services. The 1999 constitution assigns the armed forces a significant role in the state but does not provide for civilian control over the military's budget or procurement practices, or for related institutional checks. A separate system of armed forces courts retains jurisdiction over members of the military accused of rights violations and common criminal crimes, and decisions cannot be appealed in civilian court.

Venezuela's indigenous peoples belong to 27 ethnic groups. The formal rights of Native Americans have improved under Chavez, although those rights, specifically the groups' ability to make decisions affecting their lands, cultures, and traditions, and the allocation of natural resources, are seldom enforced, as local political authorities rarely take their interests into account. Indigenous communities typically face deforestation and water pollution. Few Indians hold title to their land; many say that they do not want to, as they reject market concepts of individual property, preferring instead that the government recognize those lands traditionally held by them as native territories. At the same time, indigenous communities trying to defend their legal land rights are subject to abuses, including murder, by gold miners and corrupt rural police. The constitution creates three seats in the National Assembly for indigenous people and also provides for "the protection of indigenous communities and their progressive incorporation into the life of the nation." The lack of effective legal rights, however, has created an unprecedented migration by Indians to poverty-stricken urban areas.

Women are more active in politics than in many other Latin American countries and comprise the backbone of Venezuela's sophisticated grassroots network of nongovernmental organizations. However, there is substantial institutional and societal prejudice on issues of domestic violence and rape, and work-related sexual harassment is common.

Vietnam

Population: 81,500,000 **Political Rights:** 7
GNI/capita: $430 **Civil Liberties:** 6
Life Expectancy: 72 **Status:** Not Free
Religious Groups: Buddhist, Hoa Hao, Cao Dai, Christian, indigenous beliefs, Muslim
Ethnic Groups: Vietnamese (85-90 percent), other [including Chinese, Muong, Tai, Meo, Khmer, Man, and Cham] (10-15 percent)
Capital: Hanoi

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

1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF

Overview:

The Vietnamese government continued to deny its citizens basic freedoms in 2004, as evidenced by the adoption of a new law on religion that will further reinforce state control of religion and churches. Two trials—of a former academic and of a military historian—contributed to the ongoing political suppression of those who advocate political reform. The U.S. House of Representatives passed a bill to restrict official development assistance to Vietnam unless Hanoi improves its human rights record, beginning with the release of political and religious prisoners.

Vietnam won independence from France in 1954 after a century of colonial rule followed by Japanese occupation during World War II. At independence, the country was divided into the Western-backed Republic of South Vietnam and the Communist-ruled Democratic Republic of Vietnam in the North. A war erupted between the two sides, and U.S. military support for South Vietnam persisted for more than a decade. The violence and destruction killed tens of thousands of soldiers and civilians and maimed many more on both sides. Hostilities also spilled into neighboring countries. In 1975, the North claimed victory and united the country the following year.

Poor economic policies left the tattered country in deep poverty. In 1986, the government began to dismantle collectivized farms and encourage small-scale private enterprise. Economic reforms have since continued, spurring rapid economic growth. A stock exchange was set up in 2000, tourism became a major source of revenue, and the country has become a major exporter of foodstuff and manufactured products. Nevertheless, Vietnam's leadership continues to be divided over the pace and depth of privatization and other market reforms. Moderates see deep-rooted reforms as essential to modernizing the impoverished country and creating enough jobs to stave off social unrest. Hard-liners fear that further loosening of the state's control over the economy, including the privatization of state-owned businesses, will leave millions out of work and possibly lead to a social backlash.

Political reform has not followed economic change. Since 2001, after several thousand Montagnards held protests to demand greater religious freedom, increased land rights, and political autonomy for the region, Hanoi has cracked down on the

group, an ethnic and religious minority (mainly Christian) in the central highlands. More than 70 Montagnards ("mountain dwellers" in French) are serving long jail sentences for participating in protests or trying to flee to Cambodia. Several Montagnards were arrested by the Vietnamese government in April at a rally in Dak Lak province to protest government seizure of their lands. Vietnam is fast becoming the top producer of coffee beans in the world, and land seized from the highland Montagnards are often turned over to lowland Vietnamese to grow commercial crops like coffee beans. To date, hundreds of Montagnards have escaped to Cambodia's Ratanakiri province in the northeast, and nearly 400 have been airlifted or made their way to UN safe houses in the Cambodian capital. However, the Cambodian government has asserted it will not allow the refugees to remain in Cambodia, and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees has stated it will not petition the Vietnamese government on the refugees' behalf and interfere with internal affairs in Vietnam.

In 2001, the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) elected Nong Duc Manh as its new leader. The following year, Phan Van Khai was chosen as prime minister and Tran Duc Luong as state president. The appointment of these three men from northern, central, and southern Vietnam preserved the leadership troika's traditional regional balance. In the May 2002 parliamentary elections, the CPV vetted all candidates for the legislature.

In July 2004, Tran Khue, a former academic held since December 2002, was given a 19-month prison sentence for "abusing the right to democracy and freedom" and breaking a house arrest order made in October 2001. Tran was initially accused of espionage after publishing numerous articles and open letters critical of government policies and advocating political reform. Also in July, Pham Que Duong, a 73-year-old military historian, faced trial for signing a petition calling for reforms and measures against graft.

The continued suppression of political rights and civil liberties by the Vietnamese government was condemned by the United States, which cited Vietnam as among the worst violators of religious freedom in 2004. The U.S. House of Representatives passed legislation to restrict development aid transfers to Vietnam—reaching some $40 million in 2003—until the country begins to release its political and religious prisoners. However, the U.S. Senate was not expected to pass its own version of the bill or turn the House bill into law.

SARS—severe acute respiratory syndrome—and the bird flu had an enormous impact on the economy. The government confirmed in August that three persons died form the latest attack of the bird flu.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Ruled by the CPV as a single-party state, Vietnam is one of the most tightly controlled countries in the world. The CPV's Central Committee is the top decision-making body in Vietnam. The National Assembly, whose 498 members are elected to five-year terms, generally follows the party's dictates in legislation. The party-controlled Fatherland Front vets all assembly candidates and allows only CPV cadres and some independents to run. However, delegates speak out for grassroots complaints, influence legislation, question state ministers, and debate legal, social, and economic issues—within limits set by the party. They also regularly criticize officials' performance and governmental corruption and inefficiency.

Senior party and government officials have publicly acknowledged growing public discontent with official abuses and corruption. However, in the last several years, the government has largely responded with high-profile prosecutions, rather than fundamental reforms at all levels of government. For example, a deputy trade minister was arrested in November for selling export quotas to Vietnamese garment makers, and a former deputy sports minister was sentenced to eight years in prison in October for raping a 13-year old girl. The announcement by the CPV in 2004 to begin scrutinizing alleged corruption in the Transportation, Industry, and Education Ministries was notable because results of a survey paid for by a Swedish government grant will be made publicly available in January 2005. Vietnam was ranked 102 out of 146 countries surveyed in the 2004 Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index.

The Ministry of Culture and Information manages and supervises press and broadcasting activities. Officials have punished journalists who overstepped the bounds of permissible reporting by jailing or placing them under house arrest, taking away their press cards, or closing down newspapers. Publications deemed bad or inaccurate are subject to official bans. Government control also relies on a 1999 law that requires journalists to pay damages to groups or individuals found to be harmed by press articles, even if the reports are accurate. At least one suit has been filed under this law, although it was later withdrawn. While journalists cannot report on sensitive political or economic matters or openly question the CPV's single-party rule, they have reported on high-level governmental corruption and mismanagement, providing a small outlet for public grievances.

Television is the dominant medium. Vietnam Television broadcasts to the whole country, and there are many provincial television stations. Satellite television is officially restricted to senior officials, international hotels, and foreign businesses, but many Vietnamese homes and businesses pick up some foreign stations via satellite. About two million Vietnamese have access to the Internet, which is tightly controlled by the government. A 2003 law formally banned receipt and distribution of antigovernment e-mail messages, and Web sites considered "reactionary" are blocked. Owners of domestic Web sites are required to submit their Web content for official approval.

The regime sharply restricts religious freedom by regulating religious organizations and clergy and harassing independent religious groups and their leaders. All religious groups and most individual clergy must join a party-controlled supervisory body. One such body exists for each religion that the state officially recognizes—Buddhism; Roman Catholicism; Protestantism; Islam; Cao Daiism, a synthesis of several religions; and the Hoa Hao faith, a reformist Buddhist church. Religious groups must obtain permission to build or refurbish places of worship; run religious schools or do charitable work; hold conventions, training seminars, and special celebrations; and train, ordain, promote, or transfer clergy. These regulations hinder efforts by religious groups to expand schools, obtain teaching materials, publish religious texts, and increase the number of students training for the clergy.

Cao Daiists have largely been barred since 1975 from ordaining new priests. Protestants were largely prohibited from training new clergy until the government agreed in 2003 to allow Protestants in southern Vietnam to re-open a long-closed seminary. Reported abuses by local officials have been particularly severe: churchgoers were

jailed, religious gatherings were prohibited, children of Protestant families were barred from attending school beyond the third grade, and food rations were withheld from believers.

A new law on religion, the Ordinance on Beliefs and Religions took effect on November 15. The new law expands state control over freedom of worship. The government claims that the new law will ensure people's basic right to beliefs and religious freedom.

Academic freedom is limited. University professors must adhere to party views when teaching or writing on political topics and refrain from criticizing government policies. Nevertheless, ordinary Vietnamese, particularly those living in major cities, are increasingly free of government intrusion into their daily lives. The regime continues to rely on informers, block wardens, and a household registration system to keep tabs on individuals, but this surveillance is now directed mainly at known dissidents rather than the general population.

Human rights organizations and other private groups with rights-oriented agendas are banned. However, the leadership increasingly allows farmers and others to hold small protests over local grievances, which often concern land seizures. Thousands of Vietnamese 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 policies, government inefficiency, and opaque bureaucratic procedures.

Trade unions remain state controlled, but hundreds of independent "labor associations" are permitted to represent many workers at individual firms and in some service industries. Nevertheless, union membership is low given that most workers are small-scale farmers in rural areas. Enforcement of child labor, workplace safety, and other labor laws is poor.

Vietnam's judiciary is subservient to the CPV, which controls courts at all levels. Defense lawyers cannot call or question witnesses and sometimes are permitted only to appeal for leniency for their clients. While defendants have a constitutional right to counsel, scarcity of lawyers often makes this right impossible to enforce. Moreover, many lawyers reportedly are reluctant to take human rights and other sensitive cases because they fear harassment and retribution by the state.

Police at times beat suspects and detainees, and prison conditions are poor. Inmates generally are required to work, but receive little or no wages. The death penalty is applied mainly for violent crimes, but is sometimes also used against Vietnamese convicted of nonviolent crimes, including economic and drug-related offenses. The actual number of political prisoners is unknown. Since 2001, at least 10 Vietnamese Internet dissidents have been arrested, with 6 of them sentenced to long jail terms. The government denies holding any prisoners on political grounds.

Ethnic minorities face unofficial discrimination in mainstream society, and some local officials restrict minority access to schooling and jobs. Minorities generally have little input into development projects that affect their livelihoods and communities.

Economic opportunities have grown for women, but they continue to face discrimination in wages and promotion. Many women are victims of domestic violence, and thousands are trafficked internally and externally each year for the purpose of prostitution.

Yemen

Population: 20,000,000 **Political Rights:** 5
GNI/capita: $490 **Civil Liberties:** 5
Life Expectancy: 60 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Muslim [including Sunni and Shia], other
Ethnic Groups: Arab [majority], Afro-Arab, South Asian
Capital: Sanaa

Trend Arrow: Yemen received a downward trend arrow due to governmental restrictions on press freedom, including closing newspapers and detaining journalists on questionable charges.

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

1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
5,6NF	5,6NF	5,6NF	5,6NF	5,6NF	5,6NF	6,6NF	6,5NF	5,5PF	5,5PF

Overview:

Troubling signs of a weakening government commitment to press freedom emerged in Yemen, as the government jailed a prominent journalist—Abdel Karim al-Khaiwani, editor of the opposition weekly newspaper *Al-Shoura*—and closed several newspapers in 2004. Some of the government actions to limit press freedom were related to a crackdown following a bloody three-month rebellion, led by cleric and former member of parliament Hussein Badreddin al-Hawthi, in the northern region of Saada.

As part of the ancient Minaean, Sabaean, and Himyarite kingdoms, Yemen has a long history stretching back nearly 3,000 years. For centuries, a series of imams controlled most of northern Yemen and parts of southern Yemen. The Ottoman Empire ruled many of the cities from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, and the British Empire controlled areas in the southern part of the country in the first part of the twentieth century, including the port of Aden. Yemen was divided into two countries—the Yemen Arab Republic (North Yemen) and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (South Yemen)—that ultimately became unified in 1990 after decades of conflict and tension.

In the face of widespread poverty and illiteracy, tribal influences that limit the central government's authority in certain parts of the country, a heavily armed citizenry, and the threat of radical Islamist terrorism, Yemen has managed to take some limited steps to improve its record on political rights and civil liberties in the 14 years since unification.

In 1999, President Ali Abdullah Saleh won a five-year term in the country's first nationwide direct presidential election, gaining 96.3 percent of the vote. Saleh's only opponent came from within the ruling General People's Congress (GPC), and his term in office was extended from five to seven years in a 2001 referendum.

Yemen's April 2003 parliamentary election, its third in the last decade, took place despite concerns that popular unrest resulting from the war in Iraq might lead to a postponement. International election observers noted that Yemen had made sub-

stantial improvements in electoral management and administration. On the surface, the elections were competitive, with the opposition Islah party taking seats in constituencies that were former strongholds of the ruling party. However, there were numerous problems with the election. Voter registration was characterized by widespread fraud, and underage voting was a pervasive problem.

Yemen was plagued by continued economic woes in 2004, with price inflation in basic food staples such as flour, wheat, fruit, and vegetables causing hardship for many Yemenis. The World Bank criticized Yemen's slow pace of economic reform, saying that the government had failed to implement key reforms such as privatizing state-owned companies and reforming the civil service. In June, Saleh announced that the government would delay a proposed move to reduce diesel fuel subsidies.

Yemen has faced challenges from terrorist and secessionist movements over the past decade. In 2004, a Yemeni court convicted 15 men for their roles in plotting and conducting a series of terrorist attacks in Yemen over the last four years.

In June 2004, clashes broke out between government forces and supporters of Hussein Badreddin al-Hawthi, a prominent cleric in Yemen's Zaidi community in the northern region of Saada. Al-Hawthi, who formed an opposition group called Believing Youth, had become strongly critical of the Yemeni government's relationship with the United States, accusing the government of taking actions to please the United States at the expense of the Yemeni people. Hundreds of people were reportedly killed in the clashes, with several human rights organizations calling for inquiries into reports of extrajudicial killings, mass arrests, and incommunicado detentions by government forces. The government stamped out the rebellion by the fall of 2004. Saleh accused several opposition political parties of supporting al-Hawthi's insurgency.

Despite these worrying signs of backsliding on political reform, the government continued to take steps to present an image of a country moving forward on democratic reform, participating in numerous international conferences on democratic development and hosting an intergovernmental regional conference on democracy, human rights, and the role of the International Criminal Court in January 2004.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Yemen cannot change their government democratically. On the surface, Yemen appears to have a relatively open democratic system, with citizens of Yemen voting for president and members of parliament. In reality, Yemen's politics is monopolized by the ruling party, the GPC, which has increased the number of parliament seats it holds from 145 in 1993 to 237 in the current parliament. Yemen's government suffers from the absence of any real system of checks and balances of power and any significant limits on the executive's authority.

Yemen is headed by a popularly elected president, with a bicameral parliament composed of a 301-seat, popularly elected House of Representatives and an 111-member Majlis al-Shura, or Consultative Council, appointed by the president. The House of Representatives has legislative authority, and the Majlis al-Shura serves in an advisory capacity. Yemen is one of the few countries in the Arab world to organize regular elections on national and local levels, with limited competition among the ruling GPC party; two main opposition parties, Islah and the Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP); and a handful of other parties. Although local council members are popularly elected—the most recent local election was held in 2001—Presi-

dent Ali Abdullah Saleh appoints all local council chairpersons, who wield most of the decision-making authority.

Corruption is an endemic problem at all levels of government and society. Despite recent efforts by the government to step up efforts to fight corruption and institute a civil service reform program, Yemen lacks most legal safeguards to protect against conflicts of interest. Chief auditing and investigative bodies charged with fighting corruption are not sufficiently independent of the executive authorities. Yemen was ranked 112 out of 146 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2004 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The state maintains a monopoly over the media that reach the most people—television and radio. Access to the Internet is not widespread, and the government reportedly blocks Web sites it deems offensive.

Journalists face threats of violence and death, arbitrary arrest, and often unclear judicial processes. In February, unknown gunmen entered the house of Sadeq Nasher, editor of *Al-Khaleej* newspaper, and issued a death threat prompted by Nasher's investigations into the December 2002 assassination of political opposition leader Jarallah Omar. In February, Saleh ordered the release of Najeeb Yabli, who was detained for writing an article in *Al-Ayyam* daily newspaper critical of Saleh's policies. In March, a Yemeni court ordered the release of journalist Saeed Thabet, who was detained for publishing "false information" on an assassination attempt against the president's son, Colonel Ahmad Ali Abdullah Saleh. Thabet was later fined and banned from working as a journalist for six months by the Western Court of Sana'a. In April, Ahmed al-Hubaishy, editor of the weekly newspaper *May 22*, a newspaper that has been critical of Islamic militants, was beaten by unknown assailants.

Article 103 of the Press and Publications Law outlaws direct personal criticism of the head of state and publication of material that "might spread a spirit of dissent and division among the people" or "leads to the spread of ideas contrary to the principles of the Yemeni Revolution, [is] prejudicial to national unity or [distorts] the image of the Yemeni, Arab, or Islamic heritage."

Despite a call by Saleh in June to put an end to imprisonment penalties for press offenses, government authorities used the Press and Publications Law numerous times in 2004. In September, Abdel Karim al-Khaiwani, editor of the prominent opposition weekly *Al-Shoura*, was convicted of incitement, insulting the president, publishing false news, and encouraging divisions within society because of a series of opinion pieces criticizing the government's actions in Saada. Hundreds were killed in the three-month uprising, which was centered in the northern mountains along Yemen's border with Saudi Arabia. Al-Khaiwani was sentenced to one year in jail, and the government suspended *Al-Shoura* from publication for six months. While in prison, al-Khaiwani was attacked and severely beaten by another inmate in early November. The government took steps to withdraw the license of *Al-Hurriya* newspaper. The Information Ministry closed a new weekly, *Al-Neda*, for violating Article 37 of the Press and Publications Law, which requires a new newspaper or magazine to publish within six months of registration; *Al-Neda* had missed this deadline by two days.

Article 2 of the constitution states that Islam is the religion of state, and Article 3 declares Sharia (Islamic law) to be the source of all legislation. Yemen has few religious minority groups, and their rights are generally respected in practice. Strong

politicization of campus life, including tensions between supporters of the ruling GPC and opposition Islah parties, places limits on academic freedom.

Yemenis have the right to form associations, according to Article 58 of the constitution. Yemen has several thousand nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), although some observers question the viability and independence of these groups. In October, a Social Affairs Ministry official announced plans to establish new controls on foreign funding for Yemeni NGOs and new regulations for registering NGOs. The government respects the right to form and join trade unions, but some critics claim that the government and ruling party elements have stepped up efforts to control the affairs of these organizations.

Yemenis enjoy some freedom of assembly and demonstration, though the government restricts this from time to time. In March, thousands demonstrated in major cities across Yemen to protest Israel's extrajudicial killing of Hamas leader Sheikh Ahmad Yassin. However, in September, the government prevented a demonstration planned by opposition parties in Sana'a against government actions in quelling the Saada rebellion. In October, government security forces arrested members of the opposition Liberation Party for conducting a public demonstration.

The judiciary is nominally independent, but in practice it is weak and susceptible to interference from the executive branch. Government authorities have a spotty record of enforcing judicial rulings, particularly those issued against prominent tribal or political leaders. The lack of a truly independent judiciary impedes progress in all aspects of democracy and good governance; without an independent arbiter for disputes, people often resort to tribal forms of justice or direct appeals to the executive branch of government.

The 2004 trials of suspects involved in terrorist attacks in Yemen were held in secret, and several human rights groups criticized the fairness of these proceedings, saying that defense attorneys were not permitted to meet with their clients in private and were not provided with full access to all of the evidence.

Arbitrary detention occurs, sometimes because of a lack of proper training of law enforcement officials and at other times because of a lack of political will at the most senior levels of government. In May, the Yemeni press reported that more than 50 government security officers were prosecuted for violating human rights. Prison conditions remain poor and overcrowded, though the government took steps to upgrade the quality of some prisons in 2004 and provided human rights groups with access to some prisons.

Yemen is relatively homogenous ethnically and racially. The Akhdam, a small minority group, lives in poverty and faces social discrimination.

Women are afforded most legal protections against discrimination and provided with guarantees of equality. In practice, women continue to face pervasive discrimination in several aspects of life. Women are vastly under-represented in elected office. Despite the best efforts of women's rights groups to increase the number of women in parliament, only one woman won a seat in the 2003 parliamentary elections, out of 301 total seats. The number of women registered to vote increased nearly sevenfold in the past decade, from half a million in the 1993 parliamentary elections to more than three million in the 2003 parliamentary elections.

A woman must obtain permission from her husband or father to receive a passport and travel abroad. Unlike men, women do not have the right to confer citizen-

ship on a foreign-born spouse, and the process of obtaining Yemeni citizenship for a child of a Yemeni mother and a foreign-born father is in practice more difficult than that for a child born of a Yemeni father and a foreign-born mother.

Zambia

Population: 10,900,000 **Political Rights:** 4
GNI/capita: $340 **Civil Liberties:** 4
Life Expectancy: 35 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Christian (50-75 percent), Muslim and Hindu (24-49 percent), indigenous beliefs (1 percent)
Ethnic Groups: African (99 percent), other [including European] (1 percent)
Capital: Lusaka

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

1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
3,4PF	5,4PF	5,4PF	5,4PF	5,4PF	5,4PF	5,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF

Overview:

Friction escalated in 2004 between civil rights groups and President Levy Mwanawasa, whom they accused of dominating the country's constitutional reform process. The government's drive to punish graft under the previous administration showed signs of flagging, with just one conviction to date amid alleged mishandling of cases by the president's anticorruption task force.

President Kenneth Kaunda and the United National Independence Party (UNIP) ruled Zambia from independence from Britain in 1964 until the transition to a multiparty system in 1991. Kaunda's regime grew increasingly repressive and corrupt as it faced security and economic difficulties during the long guerrilla wars against white rule in neighboring Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and Portuguese-controlled Mozambique. UNIP's socialist policies, combined with a crash in the price of copper, Zambia's main export, precipitated an economic decline unchecked for two decades.

In the face of domestic unrest and international pressure, Kaunda permitted free elections in 1991. Former labor leader Frederick Chiluba and his Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) won convincingly. By contrast, the November 1996 presidential and parliamentary polls lacked legitimacy, largely because of a series of repressive measures instituted by the government. State resources and media were mobilized extensively to support Chiluba and the ruling MMD, and serious irregularities plagued election preparations. Voter lists were incomplete or otherwise suspect; independent monitors estimated that more than two million people were effectively disenfranchised. Candidate eligibility requirements were changed, which resulted in the exclusion of Kaunda, the most credible opposition candidate. Most opposition parties boycotted the polls, in which the MMD renewed its parliamentary dominance.

International observer groups that did monitor the polls, along with independent domestic monitors and opposition parties, declared the process and the results to be fraudulent.

Prior to the December 2001 presidential elections, the incumbent Chiluba supported a move within his party to change the constitution so that he could run for a third term. Dissension within his party, the opposition, and civil society forced him to retreat from that plan. Instead, the MMD nominated Mwanawasa, who narrowly won the vote by only 29 percent against a divided opposition. Both domestic and international election monitors cited serious irregularities with the campaign and election. The country's high court has so far withheld judgment on a petition by opposition candidates to overturn Mwanawasa's victory. During concurrent parliamentary elections, the MMD captured 69 seats out of 150 elected members. Hotly contested by-elections in 2003 increased the number of seats held by the MMD to 75. The main opposition party rejected the results.

Although widely perceived as former president Chiluba's handpicked successor, Mwanawasa has backed wide-ranging legal inquiries into alleged corruption by Chiluba and his senior associates while they were in power. However, a lack of concrete results has started to erode public confidence in the process. Only one official, Chiluba's former aide Richard Sakala, has gone to prison for corruption (in 2003). The government's campaign was dealt a further blow in August 2004, when a court dismissed more than 100 counts of corruption and theft against Zambia's former intelligence chief and its former ambassador to the United States, who had fled the country and were deemed beyond the court's jurisdiction. The two were considered key players in the plundering of an estimated $40 million from state coffers during Chiluba's tenure.

Despite promises of greater transparency and inclusiveness in the country's constitutional reform process, the government has relied on a commission whose members were mostly appointed by Mwanawasa, who has final authority over its proposals. A coalition of religious and civil society groups called the Oasis Forum is seeking the creation of a more representative Constituent Assembly to steer the review process, which would involve a national referendum.

Zambia was suspended from World Bank and IMF programs in 2003 because of a $125 million budget deficit. In July 2004, after the government slashed spending and announced a six-month freeze on the salaries of civil servants, the IMF approved a new $320 million loan. However, it postponed a final decision on forgiving a large portion of Zambia's crushing $6.5 billion debt until December. Independent monitors said in February that some funding intended for poverty relief had been spent on contracts that enriched top officials. The government's privatization drive ground to a halt in 2004, with no new sales of state-owned companies. Some 25 out of the original 284 state-owned enterprises are in various stages of transfer.

The country is among those suffering most from the AIDS pandemic; government figures indicate that Zambia already has nearly 700,000 AIDS orphans. UNAIDS estimated infection rates in 2002 at 21.5 percent.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Zambians cannot change their government democratically. While Zambians' constitutional right to change their government freely was honored in the 1991 elections, both the

1996 and 2001 elections won by the ruling MMD were subjects of intense controversy. President Levy Mwanawasa, who was reprimanded by Acting Chief Justice Ernest Sakala in 2002 for intimidating witnesses during the 2001 presidential election, has said he intends to drag the case out until the next election. The president and parliament are elected to serve concurrent five-year terms. The National Assembly includes 150 elected members, as well as 8 members appointed by the president and the Speaker of the Assembly.

Although the opposition is fragmented, together the biggest parties—the United Party for National Development, the United National Independence Party, and the Forum for Democracy and Development—hold a majority of 73 seats in the National Assembly.

High levels of corruption have burdened development, although Mwanawasa has taken the initiative in rooting out state graft. He earned praise for banning cabinet ministers and senior officials from bidding on government contracts and for sacking his own vice president, Enoch Kavindele, for involvement in an irregular oil contract. However, the long-awaited corruption trial of former president Chiluba has been repeatedly delayed, and a multi-agency task force appointed in 2002 has been accused of wasting taxpayer money and failing to produce results. Zambia was ranked 102 out of 146 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2004 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The constitution provides for freedom of speech and the press, although these rights are restricted in practice. The government dominates broadcasting, although an independent radio station, Radio Phoenix, presents nongovernmental views. The Public Order Act, among other statutes, has at times been used to harass and intimidate journalists. Other tools of harassment have included criminal libel suits and defamation suits brought by MMD leaders in response to stories on corruption.

A bill to expand the right of access to information and liberalize the broadcasting sector was abruptly withdrawn in November 2002 by Kavindele, who cited global security concerns after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the United States. Independent media organizations have since lobbied unsuccessfully for its passage. The government does not restrict access to the Internet.

Constitutionally protected religious freedom has been respected in practice. The government does not restrict academic freedom.

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) engaged in promoting human rights, such as the Zambian Independent Monitoring Team, the Zambian Civic Education Association, and the Law Association of Zambia, operate openly. In 1999, however, the government drafted a policy that would closely regulate NGOs. The police frequently denied rally permits to opposition and citizens' groups, and forcibly broke up demonstrations, resulting in one death in 2004.

Zambia's trade unions remain among Africa's strongest, and union rights are constitutionally guaranteed. The Zambia Congress of Trade Unions, an umbrella organization for Zambia's 19 largest unions, operates democratically without government interference. The 1993 Industrial and Labor Relations Act protects collective bargaining rights, and unions negotiate directly with employers. About two-thirds of the country's 300,000 formal (business) sector employees are union members.

The judicial system, which has at times been subject to political influence, is under considerable pressure, with several high-level cases pending. In late 2003,

Frederick Chiluba was formally charged with the theft of $41 million in state funds during his tenure as president, having lost his immunity from prosecution the year before. After nearly a year of delays, prosecutors dismissed the case against Chiluba in September 2004, only to re-arrest him hours later on six reduced charges that alleged the theft of $1 million. The change of strategy was due in part to the loss of two key witnesses and co-defendants who had fled the country in May. The new corruption trial of Chiluba and two businessmen is set for December.

The court system is severely overburdened. Pretrial detainees are sometimes held for years under harsh conditions before their cases reach trial. The Magistrates and Judges Association identified congestion in prisons and delayed trials as extremely serious problems; malnourishment and poor health care in prisons cause many deaths. Although Zambia technically has a death penalty, Mwanawasa is an outspoken opponent of capital punishment and has implemented a de facto moratorium. He has refused to sign any death warrants since taking office and has commuted the death sentences of dozens of death-row prisoners. The country's Constitutional Review Commission has taken up the issue of eliminating the death penalty altogether. Customary courts of variable quality and consistency, whose decisions often conflict with both national law and constitutional protections, decide many civil matters. The government human rights commission investigated frequent complaints about police brutality and denounced the torture of coup suspects, but it has no power to bring charges against alleged perpetrators.

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on race, tribe, gender, place of origin, marital status, political opinion, color, or creed. However, societal discrimination remains a serious obstacle to women's rights. A 1998 regional human development report noted that Zambia was one of the lowest-performing countries in southern Africa in terms of women's empowerment. Women are denied full economic participation and are discriminated against in rural land allocation. A married woman must have her husband's permission to obtain contraceptives. Discrimination against women is especially prevalent in traditional tribunals that are courts of first instance in most rural areas. Spousal abuse and other violence against women are reportedly common. An October 2004 survey by the U.S. Agency for International Development found that 48 percent of Zambian women have been subjected to physical or emotional abuse by their spouse or partner.

Zimbabwe

Population: 12,700,000 **Political Rights:** 7*
GNI/capita: $490 **Civil Liberties:** 6
Life Expectancy: 41 **Status:** Not Free
Religious Groups: Syncretic [part Christian, part indigenous beliefs] (50 percent), Christian (25 percent), indigenous beliefs (24 percent), other [including Muslim] (1 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Shona (82 percent), Ndebele (14 percent), other (4 percent)
Capital: Harare
Ratings Change: Zimbabwe's political rights rating declined from 6 to 7 due to government repression of political opponents, civil society activists, and independent media representatives.

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

1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	6,5PF	6,5PF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	7,6NF

Overview:

Zimbabwe descended further into crisis in 2004 as the authoritarian government of President Robert Mugabe continued to stifle dissent, and militia loyal to Mugabe attacked opposition supporters with impunity. Economic collapse, and with it serious food shortages, deepened as the government expanded its ruinous policy of expropriating white-owned commercial farmland, and as other economic mismanagement and corruption widened. The government further curtailed the freedom of journalists, opposition parties, and civil society organizations.

Zimbabwe gained independence in 1980 after a guerrilla war against a white-minority regime that had declared unilateral independence from Britain in 1965 in what was then Southern Rhodesia; Mugabe has ruled the country since then. For a few years, Zimbabwe was relatively stable, although from 1983 to 1987, the government suppressed resistance from the country's largest minority group, the Ndebele, to dominance by Mugabe's majority ethnic Shona group. Severe human rights abuses accompanied the struggle, which ended with an accord that brought Ndebele leaders into the government.

The 2000 parliamentary elections were deemed by observers to be fundamentally flawed prior to balloting. Candidates and supporters of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) faced violence and intimidation, including the use of rape as a weapon. A constitutional provision empowering Mugabe and allied traditional leaders to appoint one-fifth of parliament's members helped to ensure the continued majority in parliament of the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF). Voter registration, identification procedures, and tabulation of results were judged highly irregular by some independent observers. The state-controlled media offered limited coverage of opposition viewpoints, and the ZANU-PF used state resources heavily in campaigning. Mugabe issued a pardon

for thousands of people, most of them from ZANU-PF, for crimes committed during the election campaign, including assault, arson, kidnapping, torture, rape, and attempted murder. According to the Zimbabwe Human Rights Forum, the rights of more than 18,000 people were violated.

In 2002, Mugabe claimed victory in a deeply flawed presidential election that failed to meet minimum international standards for legitimacy. The election pitted Mugabe against the MDC's Morgan Tsvangirai, a popular trade union leader who was arrested and charged with treason in 2003 after organizing national strikes.

Parliamentary by-elections held in 2003 in two districts near the capital, Highfield and Kuwadzanaw, were marred by intimidation against the MDC, which nonetheless won the polls. Party members were prevented from undertaking normal campaign activities and were detained, beaten, and harassed.

The MDC announced in August 2004 that it would suspend its participation in parliamentary and local elections because it believed there was no hope of a fair poll. The move could backfire, however, by allowing ZANU-PF to gain the two-thirds majority necessary to rewrite the constitution and further restrict democratic rights. In September, ZANU-PF increased its seats in parliament to 98, versus the MDC's 51, after the opposition party boycotted by-elections. The next parliamentary poll is planned for March 2005.

In the biggest split in the ZANU-PF since independence, Information Minister Jonathon Moyo was reprimanded and six of the party's ten provincial chairmen were suspended after a failed revolt against the appointment of a new vice president, Joyce Mujuru.

In recent years, Mugabe has turned against student groups, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), labor unions, and white landowners to create the country's worst crisis since independence. War veterans and government-supported youth militias have occupied or disrupted opposition strongholds and white-owned land, with the overt or complicit backing of the government. Arrests of opposition members and protestors continued throughout 2004.

The government's seizures of white-owned farmland, which began in 2000, have prompted economic collapse, particularly in commercial farming on which exports, foreign exchange, and 400,000 jobs depended. Much of the seized land has gone to ZANU-PF officials, who often have no farming background, instead of to the landless rural black Zimbabweans who were supposed to benefit. The gross domestic product has fallen 30 percent since the land reform began, with the result that Zimbabwe has become one of the world's fastest shrinking economies. Fewer than 500 white-owned farms remain out of the 4,500 that existed when land invasions started. Unemployment exceeds 70 percent. Inflation was 132.6 percent in December 2004, down from a record 622.8 percent in January 2004 but still one of the highest in the world. Aid agencies have warned that nearly half of Zimbabwe's 12 million people need emergency food aid, largely because of faults in the redistribution policy. Party officials handling distribution have manipulated food aid that arrives, withholding relief from suspected opposition supporters. The situation is likely to worsen, considering the government's announcement in June that it planned to nationalize all productive farmland in the country.

Severe shortages of drugs and equipment have pushed hospitals and clinics close to ruin. Infant mortality rates have risen, and the resource-starved health sys-

tem cannot cope with an HIV epidemic—one of the worst in the world—that has infected one in four adults.

Zimbabwe is in arrears to internal and external creditors, which has led to suspension of disbursements and credit lines. This situation has created shortages of key imports, such as fuel. Concern about the land-reform program was one reason that the IMF suspended financial support to Zimbabwe.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Zimbabweans cannot change their government democratically. President Robert Mugabe and the ZANU-PF, which have dominated the political landscape since independence, manipulate political structures to ensure continued control. The party remains the predominant power through its control over the security forces, most of the media, and much of the economy. Since 1987, at least 15 amendments to the constitution—including scrapping the post of prime minister in favor of an executive president and abolishing the upper chamber of parliament, the Senate—have given the executive more power. In turn, popular opposition to Mugabe has deepened, with trade unions often at the forefront, and the opposition MDC has experienced rapid growth.

The last few years have seen political violence by ZANU-PF youth militias, which have disrupted meetings and campaigning by opposition members. Meanwhile, security forces have targeted church leaders and civic organizations. Mugabe has on several occasions invoked the Presidential Powers Act, which enables him to bypass normal governmental review and oversight procedures.

Corruption is rampant throughout the country, including at the highest levels of government. Charges of corruption emerged in the 1990s when Mugabe began to award government contracts to his relatives. Ruling party and government officials have been allocated extensive properties seized from white farmers. Reports of extensive corruption and nepotism have reduced public and investor confidence in Zimbabwe's economy. Zimbabwe was ranked 114 out of 146 countries surveyed in the 2004 Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of the press is severely restricted. No privately owned radio or television stations exist in Zimbabwe, and the state-controlled newspapers and radio and television stations serve as mouthpieces of the government. The Parliamentary Privileges and Immunities Act has been used to force journalists to reveal their sources, especially regarding reporting on corruption, before the courts and parliament. The government in June proposed to censor e-mail by requiring Internet service providers to turn over to the authorities "objectionable, obscene, unauthorized" messages.

The 2002 Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA), which gives the information minister sweeping powers to decide who can work as a journalist, has been used to silence media critics of the government. The AIPPA created a governmental commission that hands out "licenses" for journalists, and those operating without a license face fines or prison. In 2004, authorities shut down Africa Tribune Newspapers, whose publisher had criticized AIPPA, for failing to inform them of title and format changes. The previous year, the government closed down *The Daily News*, an independent newspaper that had harshly criticized Mugabe, for failing to register for an AIPPA license. A subsequent application for a license was rejected, and five of the newspaper's directors were arrested. Several other Zimbabwean journalists have been assaulted or detained over the years. In May, the

editor and a reporter of *The Standard*, an independent newspaper, were arrested for reporting on the murder of a mining boss. Foreign reporters face extreme difficulty gaining approval to work in or even visit the country, and several have been deported.

Freedom of religion is generally respected, but academic freedom is limited. Security forces and ruling party thugs harass dissident university students, who have been arrested or expelled from school for protesting against government policy.

The small nongovernmental sector is active, and several groups focus on human rights. However, NGOs report increased difficulty in operating due to intimidation and legal harassment. Public demonstrations and protests are essentially illegal under the 2002 Public Order and Security Act, which forbids criticism of the president, limits public assembly, and allows police to impose arbitrary curfews. Security forces often disrupt opposition meetings or declare them illegal or allow party militias to attack opposition activists with impunity. Intelligence agencies are among law enforcers empowered to disperse "illegal" assemblies and arrest participants. In 2004, the government drafted the Non-Governmental Organizations Bill, which would empower a government-appointed body to investigate and audit any group's activities and funding. The measure would ban foreign-funded organizations involved in governance and human rights issues.

The right to collective action is limited under the Labor Relations Act, which allows the government to veto collective bargaining agreements that it deems harmful to the economy. Strikes are allowed except for industries declared "essential" under the act. Mugabe has used his presidential powers to declare strikes illegal, and labor organizers are common targets of government harassment. Most notably, security forces arrested more than 400 people in response to a two-day general strike in 2003; many were beaten or tortured while in police custody. Because the labor movement provides the core of the most organized resistance to Mugabe's authoritarian rule, it has become a particular target for repression.

While some courts have struck down or disputed government actions, increasing pressure by the regime may soon end the judiciary's capacity to act independently. The high court in May quashed the defamation conviction of three journalists for a story that misreported facts surrounding the draft constitution. The government, however, has repeatedly refused to enforce court orders and has replaced senior judges or pressured them to resign. The judicial system has been burdened by the vacancy of nearly 60 magistrate posts, which has caused a backlog of 60,000 cases that require processing.

Security forces often ignore basic rights regarding detention, search, and seizure. With the decline in law and order, war veterans and ruling party militants have taken over traditional policing roles in land redistribution. The military has assumed more policing roles in food distribution and elections. The government has taken no clear action to halt the rising incidence of torture and mistreatment of suspects held by police or security services. In June, the government passed the Criminal Procedure and Evidence Amendment Act that allows police to hold suspects accused of economic crimes for up to four weeks without bail. Human rights activists assert this contravenes the constitutional right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty. The country's 47 prisons are bulging with 8,000 inmates above the nominal 16,600 capacity. This overcrowding has contributed to a rise in AIDS and TB infections

and to food shortages. Deaths in prisons are often caused by poor health conditions or beatings by guards.

The ruling party that is dominated by the Shona majority ethnic group continues to encourage political and economic discrimination against the minority Ndebele people. A clash between the two ethnic groups in the 1980s culminated in the government's massacre of thousands of Ndebele. Today, the Ndebele tend to be marginalized politically and their region (Matabele, which is an opposition stronghold) lags behind in economic development.

In theory, the state does not control travel or residence. But in practice the land confiscations prevent whites from living on big farms, and foreign critics of the regime are expelled or prevented from entering the country.

The government controls the prices of many major commodities and food staples, and state-linked companies dominate many sectors. The current political turmoil and investment flight does not bode well for the business environment. In September, Mugabe announced that the government would seize half of the country's private mining companies. A profound lack of transparency in government tenders and other operations has allowed corruption to thrive.

Women enjoy extensive legal protections, but de facto societal discrimination and domestic violence persist. Youth militias supporting Mugabe use rape as a political weapon. The Supreme Court declared that women who marry under customary law must leave their original families and cannot therefore inherit their property. Married women cannot hold property jointly with their husbands. Access to education for women is especially limited in rural areas. Female heads of households have borne the brunt of the current economic hardships.