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First published in 1999.

Introduction

Freedom House has prepared this overview report as a companion to our annual survey on the state of global political rights and civil liberties, *Freedom in the World*. We are publishing this report to assist policymakers, human rights organizations, democracy advocates, and others who are working to advance freedom around the world. We also hope that the report will be useful to the work of the United Nations Human Rights Council.

The reports are excerpted from *Freedom in the World 2008*, which surveys the state of freedom in 193 countries and 15 select territories. The ratings and accompanying essays are based on events from January 1, 2007, through December 31, 2007. The 17 countries and 3 territories profiled in this report are drawn from the total of 43 countries and 8 territories that are considered to be Not Free and whose citizens endure systematic and pervasive human rights violations.

Included in this report are eight countries judged to have the worst records: Burma, Cuba, Libya, North Korea, Somalia, Sudan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Also included are two territories, Chechnya and Tibet, whose inhabitants suffer intense repression. These states and regions received the Freedom House survey's lowest ratings: 7 for political rights and 7 for civil liberties. Within these entities, state control over daily life is pervasive and wide-ranging, independent organizations and political opposition are banned or suppressed, and fear of retribution for independent thought and action is part of daily life.

The report also includes nine further countries near the bottom of Freedom House's list of the most repressive: Belarus, Chad, China, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Laos, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Zimbabwe. The territory of Western Sahara is also included in this group. While these states scored slightly better than the "worst of the worst," they offer very limited scope for private discussion while severely suppressing opposition political activity, impeding independent organizing, and censoring or punishing criticism of the state.

Massive human rights violations take place in nearly every part of the world. This year's roster of the "most repressive" includes countries from the Americas, the Middle East, Central Asia, Africa, and East Asia; they represent a wide array of cultures and levels of economic development. This report from Freedom House focuses on states and regions that have seen some of the world's most severe repression and most systematic and brutal violations of human dignity. Our report seeks to focus the attention of the United Nations Human

Rights Council on states and territories that deserve investigation and condemnation for their widespread violations.

The fundamental violations of rights presented in this report are all the more alarming because they stand in sharp contrast to the significant expansion of human liberty over the last three decades. In that period, dozens of states have shed tyranny and embraced democratic rule and respect for basic civil liberties. There has also been growing public support around the world for the values of liberal democracy, including multiparty competition, the rule of law, freedom of association, freedom of speech, the rights of minorities, and other fundamental, universally valid human rights. According to our global survey *Freedom in the World* (whose findings can be accessed online at www.freedomhouse.org), at the beginning of 2008, of the 193 countries in the world, 90 (47 percent) were Free and could be said to respect a broad array of basic human rights and political freedoms. An additional 60 (31 percent) were Partly Free, with some abridgments of basic rights and weak enforcement of the rule of law. In all, some 3 billion people—46 percent of the world's population—lived in Free states in which a broad array of political rights were protected.

There is also growing evidence that most countries that have made measured and sustainable progress in long-term economic development are also states that respect democratic practices. This should hardly be surprising, as competitive, multiparty democracy provides for the rotation of power, government transparency, independent civic monitoring, and free media. These in turn promote improved governance and impede massive corruption and cronyism, conditions that are prevalent in settings where political power is not subject to civic and political checks and balances.

The expansion of democratic governance over the last several decades has important implications for the United Nations and other international organizations. Today, states that respect basic freedoms and the rule of law have greater potential than ever before to positively influence global and regional institutions. But they can only achieve that potential within international bodies by working cooperatively and cohesively on issues of democracy and human rights. Nowhere is the need for international democratic cooperation more essential than at the United Nations Human Rights Council.

Although democracy has scored impressive gains in recent times, we have also begun to experience a new drive to prevent the further spread of democracy and, where possible, roll back some of the achievements that have already been registered. A number of the countries featured in this report are prominent in this effort. The strategy of those involved in this campaign to roll back democracy has many facets: dismantling independent media, marginalizing the political

opposition, and preventing independent think tanks and NGOs from obtaining necessary resources. In addition, many of the world's worst violators of human rights and democratic standards have joined in loose coalitions at the United Nations to deflect attention from their records of repression. The failure of the United Nations to effectively address human rights problems played an important role in the decision to replace the old Commission on Human Rights with the new Human Rights Council. The Council is functioning under a set of procedures that will hopefully enable that body to deal with the core human rights problems in the world. We offer this report in the hope that it will assist the democratic world in pressing the case for freedom at the United Nations and in other forums.

Jennifer Windsor
Executive Director, Freedom House
May 2008

Belarus

Population: 9,700,000

Capital: Minsk

Political Rights: 7

Civil Liberties: 6

Status: Not Free

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

Year Under Review	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Rating	6,6,NF	6,6,NF	6,6,NF	6,6,NF	6,6,NF	6,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF

Overview:

Now serving his third presidential term, Alyaksandr Lukashenka continued to repress all forms of potential opposition in 2007, including nongovernmental organizations, independent media outlets, and educational establishments. The authorities particularly targeted the Youth Front, refusing to register the group and detaining and harassing several key members. The fragmented opposition political parties barely survived during the year and failed to parlay popular grievances against the regime into a broad coalition. Meanwhile, Lukashenka's regime was losing the political and economic backing it once received from Russia, which now demands higher prices for its oil and gas. However, Belarus remained unable to develop better ties with the West due to its atrocious human rights record.

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

In October 2000, Belarus held deeply flawed elections to the House of Representatives, the parliament's lower house. State media coverage of the campaign was limited and biased, and approximately half of all opposition candidates were denied registration. Following a boycott by seven opposition parties, only three opposition candidates were elected.

Lukashenka won a controversial reelection in September 2001 amid accusations by former security service officials that the president was directing a government-sponsored death squad aimed at silencing his opponents. Four politicians and journalists who had been critical of the regime disappeared during 1999 and 2000. Western observers judged the election to be neither free nor fair. On election day, Lukashenka declared himself the victor with 75 percent of the vote, while opposition candidate Uladzimir Hancharyk was credited with 15 percent. However, independent nongovernmental exit polls showed that Lukashenka had received 47 percent of the vote and Hancharyk 41 percent, an outcome that by law should have forced a second round. By 2002, Lukashenka had launched a campaign of political retribution against those who had opposed him during the presidential campaign.

Legislative elections and a parallel referendum on the presidency were held in October 2004. The Central Election Commission claimed that 90 percent of voters took part in the plebiscite, with some 79 percent of them endorsing the government's proposal to allow Lukashenka to run for a third term in 2006. According to official results, not a single opposition candidate entered the National Assembly. A monitoring effort by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) declared that the parliamentary elections fell "significantly short" of Belarus's OSCE commitments. An independent exit poll found that just 48.4 percent of eligible voters backed the referendum.

Ukraine's Orange Revolution, unfolding only five weeks after the Belarusian constitutional referendum, raised the regime's concerns that a similar protest movement could occur in Minsk. Lukashenka boosted the law enforcement agencies in 2005 and purged their ranks of potential dissenters. Amendments to the Law on Interior Troops introduced in February 2005 allowed for the discretionary use of firearms against protesters on orders from the president.

The March 19, 2006, presidential elections, in which Lukashenka won a third term, were neither free nor fair, and the OSCE declared that the voting did not meet democratic standards. Although four candidates competed, Lukashenka's victory was clear from the start. The government took harsh repressive measures against the opposition, detaining and beating many campaign workers, including Alyaksandr Kazulin, one of the opposition candidates. Though there were no reliable exit polls, the opposition asserted that Lukashenka could not have won the 83 percent of the vote that he claimed.

The elections provoked the largest public protest of Lukashenka's tenure, bringing 10,000 to 15,000 activists onto Minsk's October Square on election day. Between 500 and 1,000 individuals were arrested on March 25, including Kazulin. He remained in prison at the end of 2007, serving out a sentence of five and a half years for protesting the flawed elections and the subsequent crackdown. Most other protesters received sentences of 15 days or less. Opposition activity dwindled after the protests, and political prisoners remain behind bars.

The regime continued to harass its opponents throughout 2007. The strategy seemed to be to jail opposition leaders while intimidating rank-and-file

members with fees and warnings. The authorities particularly cracked down on the Youth Front, whose leader, Zmitser Dashkevich, was sentenced to 18 months in jail in November 2006. Repeated attempts to register the group have failed, meaning activists face up to two-year prison terms for participating in its operations. Many members were given short jail sentences and other punishments for taking part in unauthorized demonstrations and gatherings, such as book readings and distributing illegal literature. On August 22 the police broke up a theater performance by the group Free Theater, which had been banned from performing in Belarus, and on December 12 they disbanded a rally protesting the possible merger of Belarus and Russia.

The opposition failed to unite behind a common leader at the Congress of Democratic Forces, held May 26–27. Delegates removed Alyaksandr Milinkevich as head of the Political Council of the United Democratic Forces and replaced him with four cochairs. The authorities initially tried to prevent the congress from taking place but relented under foreign pressure. With its numerous internal divisions, the opposition has not been able to channel popular grievances against the regime into unified political action.

Russia has ratcheted up pressure on Belarus, demanding that it pay higher prices for natural gas and oil imports and sell a 50 percent stake in the gas transport system to Gazprom, the Russian state-owned energy giant. The increased pressure on the Belarusian economy could weaken Lukashenka's hold on power, but there were no signs that the economy or the regime were faltering in 2007. Belarusian overtures to the West have fallen flat due to the country's poor human rights record. During the year, Minsk looked farther abroad for allies and energy imports, receiving visits from Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Belarus is not an electoral democracy. Serious and widespread irregularities have marred all recent elections. The National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus is composed of two houses. The 110 members of the House of Representatives are popularly elected for four years on the basis of single-mandate constituencies. The upper house, the Council of the Republic, consists of 64 members serving four-year terms; 56 are elected by regional councils and 8 are appointed by the president. The constitution vests most power in the president, giving him control over the government, courts, and even the legislative process by stating that presidential decrees have a higher legal force than the laws. The National Assembly serves largely as a rubber-stamp body. The president is elected for five-year terms, and there are no term limits.

As a result of the concentration of power in the hands of the president, political parties play a negligible role in the political process. Opposition parties have no representation in the National Assembly, while pro-presidential parties serve only formal functions. In 2007, the authorities threatened to revoke the registration of opposition parties that were planning to compete in the 2008 parliamentary elections. The January 14, 2007, local elections failed to give

voters a choice, and the opposition declared that the outcome was falsified. There was minimal public participation.

Belarus was ranked 150 out of 180 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2007 Corruption Perceptions Index because of the overall lack of transparency in the government. Russian influence was also detrimental. Nepotism is a growing issue; President Alyaksandr Lukashenka appointed his son Viktor to the Security Council in January 2007, giving the newcomer equal ranking with the leaders of the KGB and Interior Ministry. The recent arrests of various law enforcement officers and the head of the state-run oil refining company have little to do with any real crackdown on corruption and more likely reflect various clan battles among the elite.

The Lukashenka regime systematically curtails press freedom. The Committee to Protect Journalists listed Belarus as one of the 10 most censored countries in the world in May 2006. Libel is both a civil and a criminal offense. State media are subordinated to the president, and harassment and censorship of independent media are routine. Belarusian national television is completely under the control and influence of the state and does not provide coverage of alternative and opposition views. The State Press Committee issues warnings to publishers for unauthorized activities such as distributing copies abroad or reporting on unregistered organizations; it also can arbitrarily shut down publications without a court order. The news bulletins and daily playlists of all FM radio stations are censored. The state-run press distribution monopoly refused in November 2005 to continue distribution of most of the country's independent newspapers.

Internet sites within the country are under the control of the government's State Center on Information Security, which is part of the Security Council, and their impact is limited. The authorities have filed criminal cases against bloggers and online media sites for alleged defamation and slander. On August 1, 2007, opposition politician Andrey Klimau was sentenced to two years in prison at a closed trial for publishing criticisms of the government on the internet. The next day Lukashenka called for greater state controls over the internet.

Despite constitutional guarantees that "all religions and faiths shall be equal before the law," government decrees and registration requirements have increasingly restricted the life and work of religious groups. Amendments in 2002 to the Law on Religions provide for government censorship of religious publications and prevent foreign citizens from leading religious groups. The amendments also place strict limitations on religious groups that have been active in Belarus for fewer than 20 years. The government signed a concordat with the Belarusian Orthodox Church in 2003, and the Church enjoys a privileged position. The authorities have discriminated against Protestant clergy and ignored anti-Semitic attacks, according to a U.S. State Department report. Lukashenka provoked an international scandal in October 2007 when he said, "Jews do not care for the place they live," in reference to conditions in the town of Bobruisk. Israeli officials condemned the remarks.

Academic freedom is subject to intense state ideological pressures, and institutions that use a Western-style curriculum, promote national consciousness, or are suspected of disloyalty face harassment and liquidation. Official regulations stipulate the immediate dismissal and revocation of degrees for students and professors who join opposition protests. On Sunday March 25, 2007, some universities scheduled exams to prevent students from participating in anti-Lukashenka rallies commemorating Freedom Day, the anniversary of the country's 1918 declaration of independence prior to absorption by the Soviet Union. Wiretapping by state security agencies limits the right to privacy.

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

Freedom of association is severely restricted. More than a hundred of the most active nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) were liquidated or forced to close down from 2003 through 2005. In December 2005, Lukashenka signed into law amendments to the criminal code that criminalized participation in an unregistered or liquidated political party or organization, allowing further punitive measures against groups that refused to shut down. As a result, most human rights activists operating in the country face potential jail terms ranging from six months to two years.

New regulations introduced in August 2005 ban foreign assistance to NGOs, parties, and individuals who promote "meddling in the internal affairs" of Belarus from abroad. In January 2007, the authorities threatened to throw the Belarusian Helsinki Committee out of its offices but relented under pressure from Western countries and rights groups. The organization remains under threat of closure. Independent trade unions are subject to harassment, and their leaders are frequently arrested and prosecuted for peaceful protests and dismissed from employment.

Although the country's constitution calls for judicial independence, courts are subject to significant government influence. The right to a fair trial is often not respected in cases with political overtones. The police in Belarus use excessive force, according to UN Special Rapporteur Adrian Severin. Human rights groups continue to document instances of beatings, torture, and inadequate protection during detention in cases involving leaders of the democratic opposition.

An internal passport system, in which a passport is required for domestic travel and to secure permanent housing, limits freedom of movement and choice of residence. On December 17, 2007, Lukashenka lifted a requirement for citizens to obtain a travel permit before going abroad, effective from the beginning of 2008. At the same time, the government created a database that will include nearly 100,000 people who cannot leave the country. Belarus's command economy severely limits economic freedom.

Ethnic Poles and Roma often face discrimination. Women are not specifically targeted for discrimination, but there are significant discrepancies in income between men and women, and women are poorly represented in leading

government positions. As a result of extreme poverty, many women have become victims of the international sex-trafficking trade.

↓ Burma (Myanmar)

Population: 49,800,000

Capital: Rangoon

Political Rights: 7

Civil Liberties: 7

Status: Not Free

Trend Arrow: Burma received a downward trend arrow due to increased economic mismanagement and exploitation, including dramatic fuel-price increases in August 2007, and for the violent repression of subsequent protests.

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

Year Under Review	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Rating	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF

Overview:

A 500 percent fuel-price increase in August 2007 exacerbated already dire economic conditions in Burma, leading to a series of public protests that culminated in mass marches in Rangoon in late September. Protesters led by Buddhist monks called for greater political rights and better economic management. A violent government response smothered the protests and resulted in thousands of arrests and an unknown number of deaths. Meanwhile, the National Convention, tasked with drafting a new constitution as an ostensible first step toward democracy, concluded in September and issued constitutional guidelines that would guarantee continued military dominance. A government-appointed body is currently composing the final draft of the charter. Separately, severe human rights abuses and mass displacement continued in ethnic minority states during the year.

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

The present junta, led by General Than Shwe, dramatically asserted its power in 1988, when the army opened fire on peaceful, student-led, prodemocracy protesters, killing an estimated 3,000 people. In the aftermath, a younger generation of army commanders created the State Law and Order

Restoration Council (SLORC) to rule the country. However, the SLORC refused to cede power after it was defeated in a landslide election by the National League for Democracy (NLD) in 1990. The junta jailed dozens of members of the NLD, which had won 392 of the 485 parliamentary seats in Burma's first free elections in three decades.

In an effort to improve the junta's international image, Than Shwe and several other leading generals refashioned the SLORC into the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) in 1997. In late 2000, encouraged by the efforts of UN special envoy Razali Ismail, the government began holding talks with NLD leader Aung San Suu Kyi, which led to an easing of restrictions on the party by mid-2002. Suu Kyi was released from house arrest and allowed to make several political trips outside the capital, and the NLD was permitted to reopen a number of its branch offices.

Suu Kyi's growing popularity and her revitalization of the NLD during the first half of 2003 apparently rattled hard-liners within the regime. On May 30, a deadly ambush on Suu Kyi's NLD motorcade by SPDC supporters left an unknown number of people killed or injured. Suu Kyi and dozens of other NLD officials and supporters were detained following the attack, NLD offices were again shut down, and universities and schools were temporarily closed in a bid to suppress wider unrest. Since then, authorities have continually tried to undermine the popularity of the NLD. Suu Kyi was released from prison in September 2003 but remains under house arrest, as do other senior party leaders. Periodic arrests and detentions of political activists, journalists, and students remain the norm.

The junta organized an October 2004 government purge in which Khin Nyunt, the prime minister and head of military intelligence, was removed from office and placed under house arrest. A relative moderate, he had advocated limited dialogue with both the NLD and Burma's armed ethnic factions. Hard-liner Lieutenant General Soe Win, who has been accused of masterminding the May 2003 attack on Suu Kyi, replaced him. In 2005, authorities began shifting the country's capital 600 kilometers (370 miles) inland, to a new site called Nay Pyi Taw, near the town of Pinyinmana. The city was officially designated the capital in 2006. Foreign embassies remain in Rangoon, however.

The National Convention, which was responsible for drafting principles for a new constitution but had not met since 1996, reconvened in May 2004 as part of a new "road map to democracy." However, the convention was boycotted by the main political parties, which refused to take part under conditions of extreme political repression. The format and conduct of the proceedings were heavily restricted, as authorities handpicked most of the delegates and limited the scope of permissible debate. Although the convention was reconvened in February 2005 and October 2006 for short sessions, it was again boycotted by the NLD and the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD). The National Convention concluded its 14 years of deliberation in August 2007. The delegates agreed to draft principles that enshrined the military's role in government, recommending that 25 percent of the seats in any future parliament be reserved for the military, and that the president have "significant" military

experience. One article calls “for the Tatmadaw [Burmese security forces] to...participate in the national political leadership role of the state.” A measure preventing individuals with foreign-national spouses from running for parliament effectively bars Suu Kyi from government. In October, the government appointed 54 officials to draft the constitution in line with the convention’s recommendations.

A series of protests in 2007 raised international awareness of the dire economic and political conditions in Burma. At least 30 percent of the Burmese population lives in extreme poverty as a result of years of economic mismanagement and government corruption. Health care and education are extremely poor throughout the country. In February 2007, a rare protest in Rangoon called for lower inflation and better social services. Police briefly detained three journalists and one protester. Another small protest focused on economic conditions took place in April. Protests broke out across the country in August following a 500 percent fuel-price increase. Demonstrations were initially led by students and sought better economic management and greater political freedom. The 88 Generation Students, an emerging group comprised of dissidents active in the 1988 protests, were at the forefront of many protests. Demonstrations continued through September, despite the arrest of 60 activists during the first week of major protests. In mid-September, soldiers fired over the heads of protesting Buddhist monks. Leading monks demanded an apology, and when they failed to receive one, thousands of monks took to the streets on September 17. Many carried prodemocracy banners. They were joined and encouraged by the general populace.

Protests peaked on September 24, when approximately 100,000 demonstrators marched through Rangoon. The scale of the march prompted the government, which had allowed the monk-led protests to proceed generally unmolested, to launch a major crackdown. Warnings were issued against further protests, and a two-month nighttime curfew was announced. Troops flooded Rangoon’s streets and surrounded monasteries. Over the next week, protesters were beaten, arrested, and in some cases killed. The city then became quiet. The government claimed that 10 people died and 3,000 were arrested in the course of the crackdown. The Democratic Voice of Burma, a Burmese news organization, estimated that 138 were killed and 6,000 arrested.

The international community generally condemned the crackdown. In October, the United States and the European Union stepped up sanctions, but China and India, Burma’s key trading partners, did not follow suit. UN special envoy Ibrahim Gambari traveled to Burma during the protests and again in November in an attempt to mediate between the junta and opposition leaders. Suu Kyi met with government officials in October, and in November she was allowed to meet with members of the NLD for the first time in three years. However, the junta has rejected a UN mediation plan and shown no sign of deviating from its “roadmap to democracy.”

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Burma is not an electoral democracy. The country continues to be governed by one of the world's most repressive regimes. The SPDC rules by decree; controls all executive, legislative, and judicial powers; suppresses nearly all basic rights; and commits human rights abuses with impunity. Military officers hold most cabinet positions, and active or retired officers hold most top posts in all ministries, as well as key positions in the private sector.

Since rejecting the results of the 1990 elections and preventing the unicameral, 485-seat People's Assembly from convening, the junta has all but paralyzed the victorious NLD party. Authorities have jailed many NLD leaders, pressured thousands of party members and officials to resign, closed party offices, harassed members' families, and periodically detained hundreds of NLD supporters at a time to block planned party meetings. Hundreds of NLD members were arrested in the course of the fall 2007 protests, including several members of the central committee. The Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA), a state-sponsored organization, frequently harassed, intimidated, and attacked opposition party members in 2007. Besides the NLD, there are more than 20 ethnic political parties that remain suppressed by the junta.

In a system that lacks both transparency and accountability, official corruption is rampant at both the national and local levels. Transparency International gave Burma, along with Somalia, the worst ranking out of 180 countries surveyed in its 2007 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The junta sharply restricts press freedom and either owns or tightly controls all daily newspapers and broadcast media. Although the market for private publications is growing, the government subjects private periodicals to prepublication censorship and also restricts the importation of foreign news periodicals. Following the publication of a subversive advertisement in a state-run paper in August 2007, the government issued 28 new guidelines designed to tighten censorship of advertising. A Japanese cameraman was killed while covering the fall protests, and the government detained at least 15 other journalists. Rangoon journalists were warned not to cover the protests, and many local publications made no mention of the demonstrations for fear of government reprisal. The internet, which operates in a limited fashion in the cities, is tightly regulated and censored. During the September protests, dissidents used the internet to transmit images and videos to international news agencies, which then broadcasted the material into Burma through the internet or satellite television. In response, the government cut internet access in late September. Access was restored on October 6.

Ordinary Burmese can worship with some freedom. However, the junta shows a preference for Theravada Buddhism, discriminating against non-Buddhists in the upper levels of the public sector and coercively promoting Buddhism in some ethnic-minority areas. Nonetheless, during protests in October 2007, monks were beaten, arrested, and in some cases killed by the Tatmadaw. The government also banned public gatherings by monks and

maintained close surveillance on monasteries, many of which have now been abandoned. Many of the thousands of monks arrested in the crackdown were still being held without charge at year's end. Meanwhile, violence and discrimination against the Muslim and Christian minorities continues to be a problem.

Academic freedom is severely limited. Teachers are subject to restrictions on freedom of expression and publication and are held accountable for the political activities of their students. Since the 1988 student prodemocracy demonstrations, the junta has sporadically closed universities, limiting higher education opportunities for a generation of young Burmese. Most campuses have been relocated to relatively isolated areas to disperse the student population.

Freedoms of association and assembly are restricted. An ordinance prohibits unauthorized outdoor gatherings of more than five people, and authorities regularly use force to break up peaceful demonstrations and prevent prodemocracy activists from organizing events or meetings. During the fall 2007 protests, the government imposed curfews and beat or arrested thousands of peaceful protesters. Several hundred are estimated to have been killed by the Tatmadaw.

Some public-sector employees, as well as other ordinary citizens, are compelled to join the USDA. Domestic human rights organizations are unable to function independently, and the regime generally dismisses critical scrutiny of its human rights record by international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). In February 2006, the government released new guidelines that further restricted NGOs, leading Medecins Sans Frontieres and the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue to cease activities in Burma. However, many small NGOs provide social services in remote areas.

Independent trade unions, collective bargaining, and strikes are illegal, and several labor activists are serving long prison terms for their political and labor activities. The regime continues to use forced labor despite formally banning the practice in October 2000. Laborers are commandeered to construct roads, clear minefields, porter for the army, or work on military-backed commercial ventures. The practice appears to be most widespread in states populated by ethnic minorities. In February 2007, however, the government pledged to allow victims of forced labor to submit complaints to local offices of the International Labor Organization without fear of retaliation.

The judiciary is not independent. Judges are appointed or approved by the junta and adjudicate cases according to the junta's decrees. Administrative detention laws allow people to be held without charge, trial, or access to legal counsel for up to five years if the SPDC feels they have threatened the state's security or sovereignty. Some basic due process rights are reportedly observed in ordinary criminal cases, but not in political cases, according to the U.S. State Department's 2007 human rights report.

Detailed reports issued by Amnesty International have raised a number of concerns about the administration of justice, highlighting laws and practices regarding detention, torture, trial, and conditions of imprisonment. The

frequently used Decree 5/96, issued in 1996, authorizes prison terms of up to 20 years for aiding activities “which adversely affect the national interest.” Although the junta released some political prisoners in early 2007, prior to the fall protests there were about 1,150 political prisoners in Burma. Thousands more were arrested in September and October, many of whom remained in custody at year’s end. Political prisoners are frequently held incommunicado in pretrial detention, facilitating the use of torture and other forms of coercion, and are denied access to family members, legal counsel, and medical care. Prisons are often overcrowded, and in 2006 the International Committee for the Red Cross was barred from conducting visits to prison facilities.

Some of the worst human rights abuses take place in the seven states populated by ethnic minorities, who comprise roughly 35 percent of Burma’s overall population. In these border states, the Tatmadaw kill, beat, rape, and arbitrarily detain civilians. The Chin, Karen, and Rohingya minorities are frequent victims of violence and repression. According to a March 2007 report released by the Women’s League of Chinland, Burmese soldiers rape and beat Chin women with impunity and are promised 100,000 kyat (\$16,000) for marrying Chin women as part of a strategy of “Burmanization.” A 2006 British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) news report noted that the vast majority of Rohingya are denied citizenship and face severe restrictions on their freedom of movement, their right to own land, and their ability to marry. However, in January 2007, some 35,000 identification cards were issued to Rohingya in a first step toward citizenship.

Seventeen rebel groups have reached ceasefire deals with the junta since 1989, under which they have been granted effective administrative authority in the areas under their control and are able to retain their own militias. However, the junta continues to face low-grade insurgencies by the Karen National Liberation Army and at least five other ethnic rebel armies. Some rebel groups have displaced villagers, used forced labor, and recruited child soldiers, according to the U.S. State Department’s 2007 human rights report. In November 2005, the army stepped up its attacks in Karen State, leading to a prolonged offensive that has continued through 2007. Several reports have accused the Burmese military of targeting civilians and destroying fields and food supplies. Approximately 40,000 Karen have been displaced as a result of the attacks. Tens of thousands of ethnic minorities in Shan, Karenni, Karen, and Mon states remain in squalid and ill-equipped relocation centers set up by the military. In addition, according to Refugees International, several million Burmese have fled to neighboring countries. Thailand hosts at least 150,000 Karen, Mon, and Karenni in refugee camps near the Burmese border, as well as hundreds of thousands more who have not been granted refugee status. An estimated 26,000 Rohingya live in refugee camps in Bangladesh.

Burmese women have traditionally enjoyed high social and economic status, but domestic violence is a growing concern, and women remain underrepresented in the government and civil service. Several 2007 reports by the Women’s League of Burma detailed an ongoing nationwide pattern of sexual violence—including rape, sexual slavery, and forced marriage—against women

by SPDC military personnel and other authorities. Violence against women is particularly common in minority states. Criminal gangs have in recent years trafficked thousands of women and girls, many from ethnic minority groups, to Thailand and other destinations for prostitution, according to reports by Human Rights Watch and other organizations.

Chad

Population: 10,800,000

Capital: N'Djamena

Political Rights: 7 ↓

Civil Liberties: 6

Status: Not Free

Ratings Change: Chad's political rights rating declined from 6 to 7 due to increased corruption associated with a lack of transparency in the management of oil revenues.

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

Year Under Review	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Rating	6,4,NF	6,5,NF	6,5,NF	6,5,NF	6,5,NF	6,5,NF	6,5,NF	6,5,NF	6,6,NF	7,6,NF

Overview:

Between January and April 2007, as many as 30,000 Chadians fled across the border to Sudan's Darfur region to escape militia attacks and communal violence. In September, the UN Security Council passed a resolution authorizing the establishment of a joint United Nations–European Union peacekeeping mission to Chad and the Central African Republic. Renewed fighting erupted in late October between the government and members of the United Front for Change (FUC) rebel group. The government that month declared a state of emergency for three regions in the north and east in response to continuing ethnic conflict. Corruption related to the use of oil revenue remained a significant problem during the year, as Chadian authorities continued to divert resources away from poverty alleviation and toward security measures.

Civil conflict and rebellions have been common in Chad since it gained independence from France in 1960. In 1982, Hissene Habre seized control of the government and led a one-party dictatorship characterized by widespread atrocities against individuals and ethnic groups perceived as threats to the regime. In 1989, Idriss Deby, a military commander, launched a rebellion against Habre from Sudan. With support from Libya and no opposition from French troops stationed in Chad, Deby overthrew Habre in 1990.

Voters approved a new constitution in a March 1996 referendum, and presidential elections were held in June and July, despite the ongoing threats posed by rebel insurgencies. Deby won with nearly 70 percent of the second-round vote. In legislative elections held the following year, members of his

Patriotic Salvation Movement (MPS) party won 65 of the National Assembly's 125 seats. International observers charged that both elections were beset by irregularities.

In 2001, Deby was reelected president with more than 63 percent of the vote. Alleging fraud, the six opposition candidates called for the results to be annulled and were briefly arrested. Political protests continued despite the government's ban on gatherings of more than 20 people. The number of seats in the National Assembly had been increased to 155 in 2000, and MPS candidates secured a firm majority of 110 seats in the 2002 legislative elections, although several opposition parties boycotted the polls. A constitutional referendum to eliminate presidential term limits passed in June 2005 with just under 66 percent of the vote. There were reports of irregularities, however, and the government cracked down on independent media during the campaign period.

Tensions rose sharply before the May 2006 presidential election, and several officials defected from Deby's government to join dissident groups in eastern Chad. In April, rebel forces backed by the Sudanese government launched an attack on the capital. With the aid of French intelligence and aircraft, the government fended off the rebels, and the presidential election was held on schedule despite an opposition boycott and calls for postponement. Deby secured a third term with just under 65 percent of the vote. French forces assisted the government in a renewed assault against the rebels in September 2006. The subsequent fighting led many international humanitarian organizations to withdraw staff from the region in November and December. The government declared a six-month state of emergency in November for most of the eastern part of the country and the capital. The declaration included a ban on media coverage of sensitive issues, which prompted privately owned newspapers to suspend publication and radio stations to alter programming in protest.

Chad continued to experience widespread insecurity in 2007. The United Nations estimated that between January and April, as many as 30,000 Chadians fled to Sudan's Darfur region to escape militia attacks and communal violence in eastern Chad. In March, between 200 and 400 Chadians were killed in the southeastern villages of Tiero and Marena in attacks the Chadian government attributed to Sudanese janjaweed and Chadian Arab militias. Meanwhile, beginning in January, over 1,700 refugees fled to Chad to escape fighting between government and rebel forces in the Central African Republic (CAR). The United Nations reported that the refugee population in Chad at the end of 2006 already numbered about 300,000, consisting of Sudanese fleeing violence in Darfur, CAR citizens fleeing their home country, and internally displaced Chadians. In an added blow to these groups, the activities of humanitarian organizations in eastern Chad were hampered by severe flooding beginning in August 2007.

In September 2007, the UN Security Council passed a resolution authorizing the establishment of a joint United Nations-European Union peacekeeping mission to Chad and the CAR. By year's end, the mission had not yet deployed due to burden-sharing disputes among EU member states. In early

October, the Chadian government and four rebel groups reached an agreement to end fighting. Within weeks, however, renewed clashes erupted between the government and members of the United Front for Change (FUC), the rebel group responsible for the April 2006 assault on the capital. In response to ongoing interethnic fighting, the government on October 16 declared a state of emergency for three regions in the north and east. Combat between the government and rebel forces including the FUC, the Union of Forces for Democracy and Development (UFDD), and the Rally of Forces for Change (RFC) continued in the east of the country at year's end.

Relations between the Chadian and Sudanese governments remained strained following an April 2006 rupture over accusations that Sudan had increased support for Chadian rebels. An agreement reached in August 2006 called for each country to expel rebel groups that launched cross-border attacks on the other's territory, but tensions mounted over the Sudanese government's claim that Chadian forces had killed 17 Sudanese soldiers in April 2007 while pursuing Chadian rebels over the border. The two sides in May concluded an agreement aimed at stopping cross-border incursions.

The government announced in June 2007 that local elections, originally scheduled for 2005, would be held in 2008. In August 2007, the government and opposition groups agreed to reform the organization of legislative elections and conduct a new census. The legislative elections were postponed until 2009.

Despite its mineral wealth, including hundreds of millions of dollars in oil revenues earned since 2004, Chad is one of the world's poorest and least developed countries. In return for World Bank financing of loans to cover its stake in the oil industry, Chad had initially promised to spend 80 percent of its oil revenue on development projects and to set aside 10 percent for future generations. Since 2005, however, the government has sought greater control over oil revenues, increasing the potential for corruption. In January 2006, the World Bank suspended loans following the government's announcement that it would eliminate the fund for future generations. An agreement was reached in July 2006 that required Chad to devote 70 percent of its budget to poverty-reduction programs. However, under the terms of the agreement, spending on security is permitted as a poverty-reduction activity.

An international arrest warrant issued in Belgium in 2005 charged former president Habre with crimes against humanity dating to his 1982–90 dictatorship, and the African Union ruled in 2006 that he could be prosecuted in Senegal, where he lives in exile. At the end of 2007, Senegalese authorities were finalizing trial preparations with the assistance of EU member states.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Chad is not an electoral democracy. The country has never experienced a free and fair transfer of power through elections. The constitution provides for the direct election of the president every five years. An amendment passed in 2005 abolished term limits. The last presidential election was held on schedule in May 2006 despite opposition calls for a postponement. Many opposition

members boycotted the election, and observers charged that there were irregularities. Voter turnout figures were widely disputed, and may have been as low as 10 percent in some areas. The unicameral National Assembly consists of 155 members elected for four-year terms. The last legislative election, in April 2002, was also marked by widespread irregularities. The prime minister is appointed by the president.

The August 2007 political accord on the organization of elections mandated that future votes be conducted and monitored by the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI), composed of 15 members from the governing party and 15 from the opposition. In past elections, representatives and allies of the ruling party have dominated the electoral commission.

There are over 70 political parties in Chad, although a number were created by the government to divide the opposition. Parties other than the ruling MPS have limited influence. Despite rivalries within President Idriss Deby's northeastern Zaghawa ethnic group, members of that and other northern ethnic groups continue to control Chad's political and economic levers, causing resentment among the country's more than 200 other ethnic groups.

Corruption is rampant within Deby's inner circle. Weaknesses in revenue management and oversight facilitate the diversion of oil revenues from national development projects to private interests as well as growing military expenditures, which amount to at least 12 percent of the budget. The government's decision in late 2005 to amend provisions of the oil law and assert greater control over revenues has increased opportunities for graft. Chad was ranked 172 out of 180 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2007 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of expression is increasingly restricted in Chad, and self-censorship is common. There are at least four private weekly newspapers that circulate in the capital and carry articles critical of the government, but these have limited influence on the overwhelmingly illiterate population. Radio is the principal source of news, and broadcast media are controlled by the state. The High Council of Communications, Chad's media regulatory body, exerts control over the content of most radio broadcasts and restricts private outlets through high licensing fees and closures for coverage deemed inappropriate. There are roughly a dozen private radio stations, and in addition to state-owned Telechad, the first privately owned television station was launched in September 2007.

Radio Brakos, a small independent station, has been repeatedly closed by the government. The authorities have arrested members of its staff, including the station manager, who was imprisoned in April 2006 for advocating the postponement of the presidential election. In March 2007, a court in N'Djamena sentenced the director of the bimonthly *Le Miroir* to a six-month suspended prison term for accusing a Catholic priest of corruption. The general censorship decree issued in November 2006 in connection with rebel activity in the east was lifted in May 2007. Nonetheless, journalists attempting to cover events in eastern Chad do so at great personal risk, and several have been abducted by rebel or government forces. There are no restrictions on internet access, but the government reportedly monitors online communications.

Although Chad is a secular state, religion is a divisive force. Muslims, who make up slightly more than half of the population, hold a disproportionately large number of senior government posts, and some policies favor Islam in practice, such as government sponsorship of hajj trips to Mecca. Islamic congregations are thought to receive preferential treatment when requesting approval for certain activities. The government does not restrict academic freedom.

Despite the constitutional guarantee of free assembly, Chadian authorities restrict this right through bans on demonstrations by groups thought to be critical of the government. Despite harassment and occasional physical intimidation, Chadian human rights groups operate openly and publish findings that are critical of the government. However, the worsening security situation in N'Djamena and parts of eastern and southern Chad in 2007 has made it increasingly difficult for members of these groups to carry out their activities.

The constitution guarantees the rights to strike and unionize, which are generally respected in practice. Civil servants in 2006 were successful in negotiating a wage increase with the government. A general strike launched by public-sector workers in May 2007 led to the closure of schools and hospitals, but it was suspended in August after the government announced a 15 percent salary increase and pension improvements.

The rule of law and the judicial system remain weak, with courts heavily influenced by the executive branch. Civilian authorities do not maintain effective control of the security forces, which routinely ignore constitutional protections regarding search, seizure, and detention. Human rights groups credibly accuse Chadian security forces and rebel groups of killing and torturing with impunity. Overcrowding, disease, and malnutrition make prison conditions harsh, and many inmates are held for years without charge.

Interethnic clashes are common between Christian farmers of the various Nilotic and Bantu ethnic groups, who generally inhabit the south, and Muslim Arab groups living largely in the north. Turmoil linked to ethnic and religious differences is exacerbated by clan rivalries and external interference along the insecure borders. Communal tensions in eastern Chad have worsened due to the proliferation of small arms and ongoing disputes over the use of land and water resources. Reports of armed violence and vandalism throughout Chad are on the rise.

The government restricts the movement of citizens within the country, a practice that has increased in tandem with the civil conflicts. The Chadian army and its paramilitary forces, as well as rebel forces, have recruited child soldiers. The government has been slow to follow through on its agreement to demobilize them.

Chadian women face widespread discrimination and violence. Female genital mutilation is illegal but routinely practiced by several ethnic groups. Abortion is prohibited, with exceptions to preserve the health of the mother or in cases of fetal impairment. Prostitution, also illegal, has increased in the southern oil-producing region. Chad is a source, transit, and destination country for child trafficking, and the government has not made significant efforts to eliminate the

problem. Six French aid workers with the nongovernmental organization Zoe's Ark were arrested in late October 2007 for the attempted trafficking of 103 children out of the country; they were sentenced to eight years of hard labor, but were returned to France to serve their sentences in December.

China

Population: 1,318,000,000

Capital: Beijing

Political Rights: 7

Civil Liberties: 6

Status: Not Free

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

Year Under Review	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Rating	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF

Overview:

The Chinese Communist Party continued to implement “democracy with Chinese characteristics” in 2007, appointing the first nonparty government ministers since the 1970s, passing significant legislation after public consultation, and allowing the most open debate on economic and political reform since 1989. However, the government’s overriding concern with stability, especially in the run-up to the party’s 17th national congress in October, led to continued restrictions on the media and repression of those seen as challenging the regime.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) took power in mainland China in 1949. Aiming to hasten the country’s socialist transformation, CCP leader Mao Zedong oversaw devastating mass-mobilization campaigns, such as the Great Leap Forward (1958–61) and the Cultural Revolution (1966–76), that resulted in millions of deaths. Following Mao’s death in 1976, Deng Xiaoping emerged as China’s paramount leader. Over the next two decades, he maintained the CCP’s absolute rule in the political sphere while initiating limited market-based reforms to stimulate the economy.

The CCP signaled its resolve to maintain political stability with the deadly 1989 assault on prodemocracy protesters in Beijing’s Tiananmen Square. Following the crackdown, Jiang Zemin replaced Zhao Ziyang as general secretary of the party. Jiang was named state president in 1993 and became China’s top leader following Deng’s death in 1997. Jiang continued Deng’s policy of rapid economic growth, recognizing that regime legitimacy now rested largely on the CCP’s ability to boost living standards.

Hu Jintao succeeded Jiang as party general secretary in 2002, state president in 2003, and head of the military in 2004. Hu faced pressing socioeconomic problems that had emerged in the course of China’s modernization, including a rising income gap, unemployment, the lack of a social safety net, environmental degradation, and corruption. The CCP viewed

these developments as the source of rising social unrest and a threat to its ruling status.

In response, Hu and Prime Minister Wen Jiabao promoted policies aimed at building a “harmonious society.” The 11th Five-Year Program (2006–10) signaled a shift in China’s declared economic development model from the pursuit of gross domestic product (GDP) growth to a balancing of growth with social welfare and environmental protection, although implementation of these goals has been halting. The drive to bridge the income gap and reduce social tensions included programs aimed at establishing a “new socialist countryside,” boosting spending on rural areas, and issuing regulations to protect the rights of internal-migrant workers.

Fighting corruption remained a priority. Shanghai mayor Chen Liangyu and other high-ranking officials were arrested in 2006, and the former head of the State Food and Drug Administration (SFDA) Zhen Xiaoyu was executed in July 2007 after being convicted of bribery. Also in 2007, new regulations compelling local governments to disclose information of public interest and the establishment of the National Corruption Prevention Agency were partially aimed at curbing malfeasance by local officials. Meanwhile, the utility of village elections in reducing corruption continued to be compromised due to violence allegedly condoned by local authorities, who also apparently authorized attacks on journalists attempting to report wrongdoing. In January 2007, reporter Lan Chenzhang was beaten to death while investigating illegal coal mines in Shanxi Province.

As part of the larger effort to improve governance, the CCP continued to implement “democracy with Chinese characteristics,” a concept outlined in a 2005 government White Paper. It called for establishing a consultative style of rule that combined CCP leadership with an expanded role for experts and public opinion in the decision-making process and for greater reliance on law in policy implementation, while rejecting political reforms that would challenge the party’s monopoly on power. In 2007, nonparty ministers were appointed to the government for the first time since the 1970s, and draft legislation—including the Property Rights Law, the Labor Contract Law, and the Emergency Response Law—was changed to reflect input from society.

Although it permitted the most open debate on China’s political and economic reforms since 1989, the CCP in 2007 remained preoccupied with stability, especially in the run-up to the 17th party congress in October. This overriding concern prompted continued restrictions on political rights and the media, and the repression of critics of the regime.

China began to feel a backlash against its more assertive foreign policy in 2007 and faced international criticism for concluding economic deals in Africa without addressing serious human rights concerns, particularly in Sudan. Relations with the United States were strained by China’s surprise testing of an antisatellite missile in January and a series of scandals involving the safety of Chinese-made consumer products.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

China is not an electoral democracy. Although the state has permitted the growth of private-sector economic activity, Chinese citizens cannot democratically change their leaders at any level of government. As stipulated in the Chinese constitution, the CCP possesses a monopoly on political power. Party members hold almost all top national and local posts in government, the military, and the internal security services. A 3,000-member National People's Congress (NPC) is, in principle, China's parliament. While it has shown signs of independence, sometimes questioning proposed legislation before approving it, the NPC remains subordinate to the party. The only competitive elections are for village committees and urban residency councils, both of which are technically "grassroots" rather than government organs. Citizens can also vote for local people's congress representatives at the county level and below.

The state closely monitors political activity and uses an opaque State Secrets Law to justify the detention of those who engage in political activity without party approval. Opposition groups, such as the China Democracy Party, are suppressed.

Corruption remains a severe problem. In the first five months of 2007, over 15,000 officials were under investigation, including more than 1,000 above the county level. The number of commercial bribery cases was up 8.2 percent in the first seven months as compared with the same period in 2006, reaching 4,406; some 94 percent of those cases involved public servants. The new regulations compelling local governments to disclose information of public interest, such as budgets and financial plans, and the establishment of the National Corruption Prevention Agency, which transferred oversight from the local to the central government, were aimed in part at combating endemic corruption at the local level, where personal connections among party, government, and business leaders perpetuates the problem. China was ranked 72 out of 180 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2007 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Under the constitution, Chinese citizens are guaranteed freedom of speech and freedom of the press. Although freedom of speech continues to expand in practice, as indicated by the public debate on both economic and political reform in 2007, expression on topics deemed sensitive by the CCP remains severely limited. In December 2007, prominent AIDS activist Hu Jia was arrested. The tightly controlled media are barred from criticizing senior leaders. Journalists who do not adhere to party dictates are harassed, fired, or jailed. Singapore Straits Times reporter Ching Cheong and Bijie Daily reporter Li Yuanlong remained imprisoned in 2007. Writer Lu Gengsong was detained in October 2007.

A number of restrictive regulations issued since 2005 remain in place, requiring publishers not to reprint politically sensitive books, restricting popular access to foreign films and television programs, and encouraging media self-censorship. While the Emergency Response Law passed in August 2007 did not include provisions from the original draft that would have resulted in heavy

finances for media outlets, the legislation still allowed media licenses to be revoked for the reporting of “false information.” Amid criticism of 2006 regulations authorizing China’s official news agency, Xinhua, to censor foreign news agencies’ reports, the government in January 2007 issued new rules allowing foreign journalists unfettered access to cover preparations for the 2008 Olympic Games. Nevertheless, local officials continued to block foreign reporters. An Economist journalist was briefly detained in Henan in January, and a British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) team was expelled from Hunan in March. Some international radio and television broadcasts remain jammed.

The government routinely cracks down on the internet and monitors personal communications, including cellular telephone text-messaging. The authorities block websites they deem politically threatening and detain those responsible for posting content; cyberdissident Zhang Jianhong was jailed for six years in March 2007, and Chen Shuqing was jailed for four years in August. Foreign internet companies cooperate with the Chinese government on censorship enforcement. Although government plans to make it obligatory for bloggers to register under their real names were abandoned, major internet companies including Yahoo! and Microsoft signed on to a “self-discipline code” in August 2007 that leaves the door open for censorship. Between April and September, access to over 18,400 websites was blocked. The popular site MaoFlag.net was shut down temporarily, and the online publication China Development Brief was closed.

Though constitutionally recognized, religious freedom is narrowly circumscribed. All religious groups are required to register with the government. While officially sanctioned groups are tolerated, members of unauthorized religious groups are harassed and imprisoned. The crackdown on “underground” Christian churches and other groups like Falun Gong continued in 2007. Thirty “house church” leaders were detained in May, and four Americans meeting with the group were expelled from China. In June, two house church leaders were sentenced to a year of “reeducation through labor.” In the Xinjiang Autonomous Region, the government has used the pretext of counterterrorism to crack down on members of Islamic organizations, labeling them religious extremists. Restrictions on Muslims’ religious activity, teaching, and places of worship in Xinjiang are “implemented forcefully,” according to the U.S. State Department’s 2006 human rights report, published in 2007.

Academic freedom has expanded but remains restricted with respect to sensitive political issues. Many scholars practice self-censorship in the interest of personal safety and risk losing their positions if they publicly criticize the party.

Freedom of assembly is severely restricted in China. Nongovernmental organizations are required to register with the government and follow strict regulatory guidelines, with the constitution specifically prohibiting activities that go against the “interests of the state.”

Chinese workers are not allowed to form independent labor unions. The only union permitted is the government-controlled All China Federation of Trade Unions. Independent labor leaders are harassed and jailed. Collective

bargaining is nominally legal but actually prohibited. Although workers lack the legal right to strike, there has been a rise in labor unrest; from 1995 to 2006, the number of labor disputes rose by 13.5 percent. Concerns over social unrest prompted the government to solicit opinions from over 190,000 people before passing the Labor Contract Law in 2007. Employers frequently flaunt such regulations, however, and fail to implement required health and safety measures. Chinese officials claimed that the number of workplace accidents fell by 10 percent from 2006 to 2007, though the accidents that did occur killed 101,480 people.

The party controls the judiciary. The CCP directs verdicts and sentences, particularly in politically sensitive cases. Despite advances in criminal procedure reforms, trials—which are often mere sentencing hearings—are frequently closed, and few criminal defendants have access to counsel in practice. Regulations issued in July 2006 failed to stop authorities from using torture to coerce confessions, which are frequently admitted as evidence. Police conduct searches without warrants and monitor personal communications to collect evidence against suspected dissidents. Many defendants are deprived of trials altogether, detained instead by bureaucratic fiat in “reeducation through labor” camps. Endemic corruption exacerbates the lack of due process in the judicial system. According to officials, who did not disclose exact figures, executions reached a “10-year low” in 2007 after the Supreme People’s Court (SPC) began reviewing all death sentences handed out by lower courts in January. Some 65 crimes carry the death penalty, but in September, the SPC called on all courts to limit capital punishment and commute death sentences for crimes such as corruption and family-related murder cases.

Though in most cases security forces are under direct civilian control, they work closely with the party leadership at each level of government, which contributes to frequent misuse of authority. Cases of extrajudicial and politically motivated murder, torture, and arbitrary arrest continue to be reported. Ahead of the 17th party congress, authorities harassed and detained those viewed as potential threats to the regime, including activists Hu Jia, Yao Lifa, and Lu Banglie. Lawyers who are overly vocal in defending the rights of their clients are frequently harassed or detained; civil rights lawyer Li Jianqiang’s license was not renewed in August 2007, Gao Zhisheng was detained in September, and Li Heping was abducted and beaten in October.

The Ministry of Public Security reported that the number of “mass incidents” fell by a fifth in the first nine months of 2006, to 17,900. However, “mass incidents” are more narrowly defined than “public order disturbances,” of which 87,000 were reported in 2005. One of the major sources of discontent is the confiscation of land without adequate compensation, often involving collusion between local government and rapacious developers. Local authorities continue to employ excessive force to quell the disturbances. In August 2007, one person was reportedly killed when villagers clashed with police over a land dispute in Heilongjiang.

In response to such incidents, in August 2007 the central government announced a review of all land sales concluded between January 2005 and

December 2007 and recentralization of urban land-sales management through a new “land superintendency.” A landmark Property Rights Law, which gives equal protection to state and private property, was passed in March 2007. An October amendment to property management regulations also increased protection for private owners.

Despite antidiscrimination legislation, minorities, the disabled, and people with HIV/AIDS face severe bias in mainstream society. A new law passed in September 2007 will give employees the right to sue for illegal discrimination. Concerns over the need to control China’s “floating population” of some 140 million internal-migrant workers have prompted the government to experiment with reform of the household registration, or hukou, system, to allow greater mobility. However, restrictions remain on changing one’s employer or residence, and with quotas limiting the number of temporary residence permits issued in urban areas, many migrants remain outside the system, unable to gain full access to social services.

China’s population-control policy remains in place. Couples may have no more than one child, though the policy is less stringently enforced in rural areas. Legislation requires couples who have unapproved children to pay extra fees and gives preferential treatment to couples who do not. Compulsory abortion or sterilization by local officials citing family-planning rules still occurs but is illegal and far less common than in the past. In May 2007, disputes over family-planning policies led to major riots across two counties in Guangxi.

Serious human rights violations against women and girls continue. The one-child policy and cultural preference for boys over girls have led to sex-selective abortion and a general shortage of females, which exacerbates the problem of human trafficking.

Cuba

Population: 11,200,000

Capital: Havana

Political Rights: 7

Civil Liberties: 7

Status: Not Free

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

Year Under Review	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Rating	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF

Overview:

Acting president Raul Castro managed Cuba's day-to-day affairs in 2007 as his ailing brother, Fidel Castro, remained largely in the background, although he did write regular essays on international affairs and occasionally appeared in prerecorded television interviews. Raul Castro opened up limited debate on economic reform but implemented few policy changes. Also during the year, the number of political prisoners in Cuba dropped below 250, marking a 20 percent decline from the previous year.

Cuba achieved independence from Spain in 1898 as a result of the Spanish-American War. The Republic of Cuba was established in 1902 but remained under U.S. tutelage until 1934. In 1959, the U.S.-supported dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista, who had ruled Cuba for 18 of the previous 25 years, was ousted by Fidel Castro's July 26th Movement. Castro declared his affiliation with communism shortly thereafter, and the island's government has been a one-party state ever since.

Following the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of some \$5 billion in annual Soviet subsidies, Castro opened some sectors of the island's economy to direct foreign investment. The legalization of the U.S. dollar in 1993 created a new source of inequality, as access to dollars from remittances or through the tourist industry enriched some while the majority continued to live on peso wages averaging less than \$10 a month.

The Castro government remains highly repressive of political dissent. Although the degree of repression has ebbed and flowed over the past decade, the neutralization of organized political dissent remains a regime priority. In February 1999, the government introduced tough legislation against sedition, with a maximum prison sentence of 20 years. It stipulated penalties for unauthorized contacts with the United States and the import or supply of

“subversive” materials, including texts on democracy and documents from news agencies and journalists. The government has undertaken a series of campaigns to undermine the reputations of leading opposition figures by portraying them as agents of the United States.

In 2002, the Varela Project, a referendum initiative seeking broad changes in the decades-old socialist system, won significant international recognition. Former U.S. president Jimmy Carter praised the project on Cuban television during his visit to the island, and its leader, Oswaldo Paya of the Christian Liberation Movement, later received the European Parliament’s Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought. However, the referendum proposal was rejected by the constitutional committee of the National Assembly, and the government instead held a counterreferendum in which 8.2 million people supposedly declared the socialist system to be “untouchable.”

The government initiated a crackdown on the prodemocracy opposition in March 2003. Seventy-five people, including 27 independent journalists, 14 independent librarians, and more than 40 signature collectors for the Varela Project, were sentenced to an average of 20 years in prison following one-day trials held in April. Cuba’s “Ladies in White,” a group of wives of those imprisoned in 2003 who hold weekly public demonstrations for the release of their husbands, won the Sakharov Prize in 2005, following in the footsteps of Paya.

On July 31, 2006, Fidel Castro passed power on a provisional basis to his younger brother, military chief Raul Castro, after serious internal bleeding forced him to undergo emergency surgery and begin a slow convalescence. The transfer of authority, which occurred shortly before Fidel’s 80th birthday on August 13, marked the first time he had relinquished control since the 1959 revolution. In addition to Raul Castro, six ministers were named to manage the portfolios for health, education, energy, and finance. The 75-year-old Raul subsequently kept a low profile, while other top officials, including Vice President Carlos Lage, Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque, and National Assembly president Ricardo Alarcon, took on more prominent roles. The authorities declared the state of Fidel’s health to be a state secret, but later released several video recordings of him meeting with foreign dignitaries in his hospital room. Although most Cubans were initially stunned by news of the president’s illness, routine life continued without disruption. Increased security measures were evident in major cities in the days following the transfer of power, including the deployment of military personnel to prevent possible public demonstrations.

In February 2007, five dissidents held without trial since July 2005 were sentenced to two years in prison. The well-known Catholic magazine *Vitral*, which was often critical of the government, was closed in April when a conservative new bishop was appointed to the Pinar del Rio diocese. In June, the leading domestic human rights group reported that Raul Castro’s government had not improved the plight of dissidents, but it acknowledged that the number of political prisoners had declined to 246, a drop of more than 20 percent from the previous year (12 more were released during the course of the year). By the

end of 2007, 59 of the activists arrested in 2003 remained in prison, 16 won conditional release for health-related reasons, and two subsequently left the country.

The United States continued to put pressure on the Cuban regime in 2007. The U.S. Congress in September appropriated \$46 million to support democracy groups in Cuba, although many dissidents complained that such money never reaches the island. U.S. president George W. Bush had long sought to destabilize the Castro government, announcing plans in 2004 to increase broadcasts to Cuba, aid dissidents, and limit the amount of money Cuban Americans could pass to the country on visits or through remittances. In 2005, the U.S. State Department had appointed a “transition coordinator” to oversee efforts to usher in democratic change.

Meanwhile, Cuba’s relations with Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez continued to deepen. Chavez met with Fidel Castro several times in 2007, and Vice President Lage traveled to Venezuela to discuss a regional trade pact and joint ventures in telecommunications. In February, the two countries signed agreements on projects worth \$1.5 billion, including the development of 11 ethanol plants. The Venezuelan state oil company announced in August that it was partnering with Cuban enterprises to explore for oil off the island’s shores. Cuba also enjoyed warmer ties with a range of other countries. Honduras named its first full ambassador to Cuba in 45 years. In April, Spanish foreign minister Miguel Angel Moratinos became the most senior Spanish official to visit Cuba in more than a decade. He met with Raul Castro and carried a letter to Fidel Castro from King Juan Carlos. Top Chinese officials met with Raul Castro to pledge continuing political and economic cooperation. Also during the year, Russia announced that it was considering restructuring Cuba’s \$166 million in debt.

The Cuban government forecast an economic growth rate of 10 percent for 2007, slightly lower than the 12.5 percent growth reported in 2006. Outside analysts put Cuba’s growth figures at closer to 7 percent for the year. Several top officials hinted that the government was considering economic changes, but only minor adjustments were implemented, such as the liberalization of milk prices and a temporary moratorium on fines for illegal taxicabs.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Cuba is not an electoral democracy. President Fidel Castro and, more recently, his brother Raul Castro dominate the political system. The country is a one-party state with the Cuban Communist Party (PCC) controlling all government entities from the national to the local level. The 1976 constitution provides for a National Assembly, which designates the Council of State. That body in turn appoints the Council of Ministers in consultation with its president, who serves as chief of state and head of government. However, Fidel Castro controls every lever of power through his various roles as president of the Council of Ministers, chairman of the Council of State, commander in chief of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR), and first secretary of the PCC. The

most recent PCC congress took place in 1997, and no date has been set for the next meeting.

In October 2002, some eight million Cubans voted in tightly controlled municipal elections. An election was held for the National Assembly in 2003, with just 609 candidates—all supported by the regime—vying for 609 seats. Members of the body serve five-year terms. In 2007, officials began preparations for the January 2008 National Assembly elections and vowed that Fidel Castro would again be on the ballot.

All political organizing outside the PCC is illegal. Political dissent, spoken or written, is a punishable offense, and dissidents frequently receive years of imprisonment for seemingly minor infractions. The government has continued to harass dissidents, often using arbitrary sweeps and temporary detentions of suspects. The regime has also called on its neighbor-watch groups, known as Committees for the Defense of the Revolution, to strengthen vigilance against “antisocial behavior,” a euphemism for opposition activity. Several dissident leaders have reported “acts of repudiation” by state-sponsored groups that attempt to intimidate and harass government opponents. However, the absolute number of political prisoners in Cuba declined by about one-fifth in 2007.

Official corruption remains a serious problem, with a culture of illegality shrouding the mixture of private and state-controlled economic activities that are allowed on the island. Cuba was ranked 61 out of 180 countries surveyed in Transparency International’s 2007 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of the press is tightly curtailed, and the media are controlled by the state and the Communist Party. The government considers the independent press to be illegal and uses Ministry of Interior agents to infiltrate and report on the media outlets in question. Independent journalists, particularly those associated with a dozen small news agencies established outside state control, have been subjected to continued repression, including terms of hard labor and assaults by state security agents. Foreign news agencies may only hire local reporters through government offices, limiting employment opportunities for independent journalists. More than 20 independent journalists arrested in March 2003 remain imprisoned in degrading conditions, including physical and psychological abuse; acts of harassment and intimidation have also been directed against their families.

Access to the internet remains tightly controlled. It is illegal for Cubans to connect to the internet in their homes. State-owned internet cafes exist in major cities, but websites are closely monitored, and costs put access beyond the reach of most Cubans. Only select state employees are permitted workplace access to e-mail and to an intranet system that blocks websites deemed inappropriate.

In 1991, Roman Catholics and other believers were granted permission to join the Communist Party, and the constitutional reference to official atheism was dropped the following year. In 1998, Pope John Paul II visited Cuba and called for greater religious freedom; his visit was followed by a temporary

easing of restrictions on religious worship. However, according to the Cuban Conference on Catholic Bishops, official obstacles to religious freedom remain as restrictive as before the pope's visit. Cuba continues to employ authoritarian measures to control religious belief and expression. Churches are not allowed to conduct educational activities, and church-based publications are subject to control and censorship by the Office of Religious Affairs. An estimated 70 percent of the population practices some form of Afro-Cuban religion.

The government restricts academic freedom. Teaching materials for subjects including mathematics and literature must contain ideological content. Affiliation with official Communist Party structures is generally needed to gain access to educational institutions, and students' report cards carry information regarding their parents' involvement with the Communist Party. In 2003, state security forces raided 22 independent libraries and sent 14 librarians to jail with terms of up to 26 years. Many of the detainees were charged with working with the United States to subvert the Cuban government. Several political prisoners have subsequently been released for health reasons, but they are subject to rearrest at any time.

Limited rights of assembly and association are permitted under the constitution. However, as with all other constitutional rights, they may not be "exercised against the existence and objectives of the Socialist State." The unauthorized assembly of more than three people, even for religious services in private homes, is punishable by law with up to three months in prison and a fine. This prohibition is selectively enforced and is often used to imprison human rights advocates.

Workers do not have the right to bargain collectively or to strike. Members of independent labor unions, which the government considers illegal, are often harassed, dismissed from their jobs, and barred from future employment. The government has also been reducing opportunities for private economic activity; a trend toward revoking self-employment licenses continues, and privately run farmers' markets have also come under increased scrutiny.

The executive branch controls the judiciary. The Council of State, of which Castro is chairman, serves as a de facto judiciary and controls both the courts and the judicial process as a whole.

According to a domestic monitoring group, the Cuban Commission for Human Rights and National Reconciliation, there were 234 prisoners of conscience in Cuba at the end of 2007, most held in cells with common criminals and many convicted on vague charges such as "disseminating enemy propaganda" or "dangerousness." Members of groups that exist apart from the state are labeled counterrevolutionary criminals and are subject to systematic repression, including arrest; beatings while in custody; loss of work, educational opportunities, and health care; and intimidation by uniformed or plainclothes state security agents. Dissidents reported being subject to even tighter surveillance following Fidel Castro's illness, as the government mobilized to thwart any potential public disruptions.

Since 1991, the United Nations has voted annually to assign a special investigator on human rights to Cuba, but the Cuban government has refused to

cooperate. Cuba also does not allow the International Committee of the Red Cross or other humanitarian organizations access to its prisons. Cuba's prison population is disproportionately black.

Many Afro-Cubans have only limited access to employment in the dollar-earning sectors of the economy, such as tourism and joint ventures with foreign companies.

Freedom of movement and the right to choose one's residence and place of employment are severely restricted. Attempting to leave the island without permission is a punishable offense. Intercity migration or relocation is also restricted and requires permission from the local Committee for the Defense of the Revolution and other local authorities. In the post-Soviet era, only state enterprises can enter into economic agreements with foreigners as minority partners; regular citizens cannot participate. PCC membership is still required to obtain good jobs, serviceable housing, and real access to social services, including medical care and educational opportunities. The government systematically violates international salary standards, terms of contract, and other labor codes for workers employed on the island by foreign-owned firms.

About 40 percent of all women work, and they are well represented in most professions. However, Cuba's dire economic situation ensures that prostitution remains commonplace.

Equatorial Guinea

Population: 500,000

Capital: Malabo

Political Rights: 7

Civil Liberties: 6

Status: Not Free

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

Year Under Review	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Rating	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	6,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF

Overview:

Equatorial Guinea signed a series of new oil contracts in October 2007, continuing to reap huge profits from its natural resources even as the majority of its citizens remained mired in poverty. Meanwhile, President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo maintained his stranglehold on power in a country with one of the worst human rights records in Africa.

Equatorial Guinea achieved independence from Spain in 1968 and has since been one of the world's most tightly closed and repressive societies. Current president Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo seized power in 1979 by deposing and murdering his uncle, Francisco Macias Nguema. Pressure from donor countries forced Obiang to legalize a multiparty system in 1992, though he and his clique continued to control political power.

Obiang won the 1996 presidential election amid official intimidation, a boycott by the political opposition, and very low voter turnout. The ruling Democratic Party of Equatorial Guinea (PDGE) won 75 of 80 seats in similarly flawed parliamentary elections in 1999. The president secured another seven-year term with 99.5 percent of the vote in 2002, after four opposition challengers withdrew to protest fraud and irregularities. Following the election, Obiang formed a "government of national unity" that included eight smaller parties, but key portfolios were held by presidential relatives and loyalists. The PDGE won 68 of 100 seats in 2004 parliamentary elections, with allied parties taking 30. The opposition Convergence for Social Democracy (CPDS) won the remaining two seats.

An apparent coup attempt involving foreign mercenaries was foiled in March 2004 with the arrests of 19 men in Equatorial Guinea and 70 others in Zimbabwe. A crackdown on foreigners ensued, and hundreds of immigrants were deported or fled. The government accused three men of plotting the coup:

Severo Moto, an opposition figure living in exile in Spain; South African financier and oil broker Eli Calil; and Sir Mark Thatcher, son of former British prime minister Margaret Thatcher. Tried in a South African court, Thatcher testified as part of a plea bargain that he had unwittingly helped bankroll the coup attempt. Moto and eight of his political allies were tried in absentia and convicted of treason. A separate group of 19 Equatorial Guineans accused of involvement in an October 2004 coup attempt were tried in Malabo and received sentences of up to 30 years in prison in September 2005.

Amnesty International expressed concern over the likely use of torture in extracting confessions from the defendants in Malabo, particularly in the case of a German suspect who died in custody. In 2005, Obiang granted amnesty to six Armenian pilots convicted of involvement in the mercenaries' coup. Under international pressure, he freed several South Africans citizens in the group as part of a larger clemency granted to 41 political prisoners in June 2006. Obiang has pledged to free all political prisoners but has not done so to date.

Equatorial Guinea is Africa's third-largest oil producer, and its energy sector has drawn billions of dollars in foreign investment from the United States, China, and other countries. In October 2007, contracts to develop seven new oil blocks were awarded to groups including the South African oil and gas company Ophir, India's Oil and Natural Gas Corporation, the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, and Swiss-based Glencore. Equatorial Guinea's surging oil revenues have yet to reach the majority of the population, which continues to suffer from poverty, very low literacy rates, and lack of access to clean water. Health care facilities are basic in urban areas and virtually nonexistent in rural areas. Equatorial Guinea ranked 127 out of 177 countries on the UN Development Programme's 2007 Human Development Index.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Equatorial Guinea is not an electoral democracy, and the country has never held a credible election. President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, whose current seven-year term will end in 2009, holds broad powers and limits public participation in the policymaking process. The 100 members of the unicameral House of People's Representatives are elected to five-year terms but wield little power, and 98 of the seats are held by the ruling PDGE and allied parties. The activities of the few opposition parties, in particular the CPDS, are closely monitored by the government. A clan network linked to the president underlies the formal political structure and plays a major role in decision making.

Equatorial Guinea is considered one of the most corrupt countries in the world. Obiang and members of his inner circle and clan continue to amass huge personal profits from the oil windfall. The president has argued that information on oil revenues is a "state secret," resisting calls for transparency and accountability. Equatorial Guinea was ranked 168 out of 180 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2007 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Although the constitution guarantees press freedom, the 1992 press law authorizes government censorship of all publications. A few private newspapers and underground pamphlets are published irregularly, but they face financial and political pressure. Libel remains a criminal offense, and all journalists are required to register with the government. The state holds a monopoly on broadcast media except for RTV-Asonga, a private radio and television outlet owned by the president's son, Teodorino Obiang Nguema. Satellite television is increasingly popular, and Radio Exterior, Spain's international shortwave service, is listened to widely. Equatorial Guinea's only internet service provider is state affiliated, and the government reportedly monitors internet communications.

The constitution protects religious freedom, and government respect for freedom of individual religious practice has generally improved. Most of the population is Roman Catholic. Although the government does not restrict academic freedom, self-censorship among faculty is common.

Freedoms of assembly and association are severely restricted, and official authorization is mandatory for gatherings deemed political. There are no effective human rights organizations in the country, and the few international nongovernmental organizations are prohibited from promoting or defending human rights. The constitution provides for the right to organize unions, but there are many legal barriers to collective bargaining. While it has ratified key International Labor Organization conventions, the government has refused to register the Equatorial Guinea Trade Union, whose members operate in secret. The country's only legal labor union, the Small Farmers' Syndicate, received legal recognition in 2000.

The judiciary is not independent. Laws on search and seizure—as well as detention—are ignored by security forces, which generally act with impunity. Civil cases rarely go to trial, and military tribunals handle cases tied to national security. Prison conditions, especially in the notorious Black Beach prison, are extremely harsh. The authorities have been accused of widespread human rights abuses, including torture, detention of political opponents, and extrajudicial killings. The UN Human Rights Council's Working Group on Arbitrary Detention cited the country in an October 2007 report for apparently holding detainees in secret, denying them access to lawyers, and jailing them for long periods without charge.

Obiang's Mongomo clan, part of the majority Fang ethnic group, has monopolized political and economic power to the exclusion of other groups. Differences between the Fang and the Bubi are a major source of political tension that has often erupted into violence. Fang vigilante groups have been allowed to abuse Bubi citizens with impunity.

All citizens are required to obtain exit visas to travel abroad, and some members of opposition parties have been denied such visas. Those who do travel abroad are sometimes subjected to interrogation on their return.

Constitutional and legal guarantees of equality for women are largely ignored, and violence against women is reportedly widespread. Traditional practices including primogeniture and polygamy discriminate against women.

Abortion is permitted to preserve the health of the mother, but only with spousal or parental authorization.

Eritrea

Population: 4,900,000

Capital: Asmara

Political Rights: 7

Civil Liberties: 6

Status: Not Free

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

Year Under Review	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Rating	6,4,PF	7,5,NF	7,5,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF

Overview:

The government of Eritrea continued its long-standing suppression of democratic and human rights in 2007, and a group of independent journalists imprisoned in 2001 remained behind bars. There was no movement toward developing pluralist political institutions during the year. Eritrea maintained its activist foreign policy in the region, which has included conflict with Ethiopia, support for antigovernment forces in Somalia, tension with Yemen, and involvement in Sudanese civil conflicts.

Britain ended Italian colonial rule in Eritrea during World War II, and the country was formally incorporated into Ethiopia in 1952. Its independence struggle began in 1962 as a nationalist and Marxist guerrilla war against the Ethiopian government of Emperor Haile Selassie. The seizure of power in Ethiopia by a Marxist junta in 1974 removed the ideological basis of the conflict, and by the time Eritrea finally defeated Ethiopia's northern armies in 1991, the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) had discarded Marxism. Internationally recognized independence was achieved in May 1993 after a referendum supervised by the United Nations produced a landslide vote for statehood.

War with Ethiopia broke out again in 1998. In May 2000, an Ethiopian military offensive made significant territorial gains. The two sides signed a truce in June 2000, and a peace treaty was signed that December. The agreement provided for a UN-led buffer force to be installed along the Eritrean side of the contested border and stipulated that further negotiations should determine the final boundary line. The war had dominated the country's political and economic agenda, reflecting the government's habitual use of real or perceived national security threats to generate popular support and political unity.

In May 2001, 15 senior ruling-party members known as the Group of 15 publicly criticized President Isaias Afwerki and called for "the rule of law

and for justice, through peaceful and legal ways and means.” Eleven members of the dissident group were arrested for treason in September 2001 and remain incarcerated. The small independent media sector was also shut down, and 18 journalists were imprisoned.

The Eritrean government in 2005 clamped down on nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) by withdrawing tax exemptions, increasing registration requirements, and ordering the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to end its operations in the country. Separately, tensions remained high with Ethiopia, as Eritrea objected to the inconclusive results of international mediation on its long-standing border dispute. It claimed that the Ethiopians were not respecting the 2000 agreement, and the authorities banned UN helicopter flights in Eritrean airspace, restricted UN ground patrols, and expelled some of the peacekeepers.

In 2006, reports emerged that hundreds of followers of various unregistered churches (mostly Protestant) were being detained, harassed, and abused. Approximately 2,000 individuals remained in detention at the end of 2007 because of their religious affiliation, according to the NGO Compass Direct. The government in 2006 also expelled several development NGOs, including Concern Worldwide, Mercy Corps, and Acord. Official suppression of democratic and human rights continued throughout 2007. Especially given evidence of Eritrea’s support for Islamist rebels in Somalia, the U.S. government was considering placing Eritrea on its list of state sponsors of terrorism.

The 2007 UN Human Development Index ranked Eritrea at 157 out of 177 countries measured. Per capita gross domestic product (GDP) was \$1,109. According to a recent study by the Peace and Conflict Review, Eritrea has the world’s highest level of military spending as a percentage of GDP.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Eritrea is not an electoral democracy. Created in February 1994 as a successor to the EPLF, the Popular Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ) maintains complete dominance over the country’s political life. Instead of moving toward a democratic political system, the PFDJ has taken significant steps backward since the end of the war with Ethiopia. The 2001 crackdown on those calling for greater political pluralism and subsequent repressive steps clearly demonstrate the Eritrean government’s authoritarian stance.

In 1994, a 50-member Constitutional Commission was established. A new constitution was adopted in 1997, authorizing “conditional” political pluralism with provisions for a multiparty system. The constitution calls for the 150-seat legislature, the National Assembly, to elect the president from among its members by a majority vote. However, national elections have been postponed indefinitely. Regulations governing political parties have never been enacted, and independent political parties do not exist. In 2004, regional assembly elections were conducted, but they were carefully orchestrated by the PFDJ and offered no real choice.

Eritrea has long maintained a reputation for a relatively low level of corruption. In recent years, however, graft appears to have increased somewhat. Eritrea was ranked 111 out of 180 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2007 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Government control over all broadcasting outlets and the repression of independent print publications have eliminated the vehicles for dissemination of opposing or alternative views. In its September 2001 crackdown, the government banned all privately owned newspapers while claiming that a parliamentary committee would examine conditions under which they would be permitted to reopen. Journalists arrested in 2001 remain imprisoned, and other journalists have subsequently been arrested. The Committee to Protect Journalists lists Eritrea as one of the five worst countries for press freedom in the world. Internet use remains limited but growing, with an estimated 100,000 users in 2007 out of a population of nearly five million.

The government places significant limitations on the exercise of religion. It officially recognizes only four faiths—Islam, Orthodox Christianity, Roman Catholicism, and Lutheranism as practiced by the Evangelical Church of Eritrea. Persecution of minority Christian sects has escalated in recent years, particularly against Jehovah's Witnesses, who were stripped of their basic civil rights in 1994, and evangelical and Pentecostal churches. Amnesty International cites Abune Antonios, patriarch of the Eritrean Orthodox Church, as a prisoner of conscience; he has been under house arrest since January 2006. According to Amnesty, members of other minority churches have been jailed and tortured or ill-treated to make them abandon their faith, and about 2,000 are currently imprisoned. Some Muslims have also been targeted. In 2007 the U.S. State Department renewed its classification of Eritrea as a "country of concern" with regard to its restrictions on religious liberty.

Academic freedom is constrained. High school students are required to comply with a highly unpopular policy of obligatory military service, and they are often stationed at bases far from their homes, such as the training camp in Sawa, in the far western part of the country near the Ethiopian border. The conscription periods can be open-ended, and no conscientious objector clause exists.

Freedom of assembly does not exist. The government continues to maintain a hostile attitude toward civil society. Independent NGOs are not allowed, and the legitimate role of human rights defenders is not recognized. In 2005, Eritrea enacted legislation to regulate the operations of all NGOs, requiring them to pay taxes on imported materials, submit project reports every three months, renew their licenses annually, and meet government-established target levels of financial resources. International human rights NGOs are barred from the country, and in 2006 the government expelled three remaining development NGOs.

The civil service, the military, the police, and other essential services have some restrictions on their freedom to form unions. In addition, groups of 20 or more persons seeking to form a union require special approval from the

Ministry of Labor. The military conscription of men aged 18 to 45 has also created a scarcity of skilled labor.

A judiciary was formed by decree in 1993. It has never issued rulings significantly at variance with government positions, and constitutional guarantees are often ignored in cases related to state security. The provision of speedy trials is limited by a lack of trained personnel, inadequate funding, and poor infrastructure.

According to Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, torture, arbitrary detentions, and political arrests are widespread. Religious persecution and ill-treatment of those trying to avoid military service are increasing, and torture is systematically practiced by the army. Prison conditions are poor, and outside monitors such as the International Committee of the Red Cross have been denied access to detainees.

There have been reports of government and societal discrimination against the Kunama, one of the country's nine ethnic groups. Historically, the Kunama, who reside primarily in the west, have resisted attempts to integrate them into the national society.

Official government policy is supportive of free enterprise, and citizens generally have the freedom to choose their employment, establish private businesses, and operate them without government harassment. Critics have alleged that the system of military conscription constitutes forced labor. In addition, according to the World Bank, Eritrea ranks poorly in terms of regulatory checks on the economy.

Women played important roles in the guerrilla movement, and the government has worked to improve the status of women. In an effort to encourage broader participation by women in politics, the PFDJ in 1997 named three women to its executive council and 12 women to its central committee. Women participated in the Constitutional Commission, filling almost half of the positions on the 50-member panel, and hold senior government positions, including minister of justice and minister of labor. Approximately 40 percent of all households are headed by women. Equal educational opportunity, equal pay for equal work, and penalties for domestic violence have been codified. However, traditional societal discrimination against women persists in the largely rural and agricultural country.

Laos

Population: 5,900,000

Capital: Vientiane

Political Rights: 7

Civil Liberties: 6

Status: Not Free

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

Year Under Review	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Rating	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF

Overview:

In 2007, the government continued to push ahead with plans to construct a new hydroelectric dam and export the resulting power to neighboring countries. While the government maintains that the project will create wealth for development, critics charge that it threatens wildlife and displaces communities.

Laos, a landlocked and mountainous country, won independence in 1953 after six decades of French rule and Japanese occupation during World War II. The new constitutional monarchy soon entered into a civil war with communist Pathet Lao (Land of Lao) guerrillas, who were backed by the Vietnamese Communist Party. As the civil conflict raged on, Laos was drawn into the Vietnam War in 1964, when the United States began bombing North Vietnamese forces operating inside Laos. The Pathet Lao seized power in 1975 and set up a one-party state under Prime Minister Kaysone Phomvihane's Lao People's Revolutionary Party (LPRP).

By the 1980s, the Laotian economy was in tatters after years of civil war and the inept economic policies of the LPRP. Seeing the success of China's economic opening, the party began to relax controls on prices, encouraged foreign investment, and privatized farms and some state-owned enterprises. These actions spurred much-needed economic growth, but the government has rejected deeper economic reform for fear of losing power.

General Khamtay Siphandone took over leadership of the LPRP in 1992 and the presidency in 1998. He stepped down in March 2006, leaving the party in the hands of Choummaly Sayasone, a 70-year-old former vice president and defense minister. In April 2006 elections, LPRP candidates won 113 of the 115 National Assembly seats, while the remaining two went to independent candidates. The Assembly endorsed Choummaly as the new president in June of that year. He was expected to follow the policies set by Khamtay.

Poverty is widespread, and the economy remains dependent on subsistence agriculture. Many Laotians have become economic migrants, seeking work in nearby Thailand. Trade, tourism, and sales of hydroelectric power to Thailand are the key sources of foreign revenue for the government. An expansion of the Nam Theun hydroelectric dam in southern Laos—the “Nam Theun 2 Project”—will produce more electricity for export. Thailand has committed to buying 95 percent of the 1,070 megawatts the dam will generate beginning in 2010. Cambodia and Malaysia will also be buyers. The government expects to collect \$2 billion in revenue in the first 25 years of operation. The World Bank has agreed to provide \$270 million in funding and risk guarantees for the project, which critics say will threaten wildlife and displace thousands of subsistence farmers and hill-tribe populations. These two groups—who rely heavily on the illegal growth and sale of opium poppies for their economic livelihood—have also suffered recently from the government’s antidrug campaign, which has been conducted with rigor in order to secure aid from Europe and the United States. Pushed into extreme poverty, some are forced to leave their land to find legitimate work elsewhere or go deeper into the mountains to continue their illegal trade.

In March 2007, Laos registered its first official human fatality from avian influenza. A 6.1 magnitude earthquake hit western Laos in May; there were no reports of death or injury.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Laos is not an electoral democracy. The 1991 constitution makes the LPRP the sole legal political party and grants it a leading role at all levels of government. The LPRP vets all candidates for election to the rubber-stamp National Assembly, whose 115 members elect the president. Elections are held every five years. General Khamtay Siphandone succeeded Kaysone Phomvihane as head of the LPRP in 1992 and assumed the presidency from Nouhak Phoumsavanh in 1998. The National Assembly reelected Khamtay as president in March 2001. Choummaly Sayasone took over as head of LPRP in March 2006 and assumed the presidency in June of that year.

Corruption and abuses by government officials are widespread. Official announcements and new laws aimed at curbing corruption are rarely enforced. Government regulation of virtually every facet of life provides corrupt officials with many opportunities to demand bribes. High-level personnel in government and the military are also frequently involved in commercial logging, mining, and other enterprises aimed at exploiting Laotian natural resources. The country was ranked 168 out of 180 countries surveyed in Transparency International’s 2007 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of the press is severely restricted. Any journalist who criticizes the government or discusses controversial political topics faces legal punishment. The state owns all media, including three newspapers with extremely low circulations, Lao National Television, Laos Television 3 (a joint venture with a Thai company), and the country’s only radio station. Residents

within frequency range of Radio Free Asia and other foreign broadcasts from Thailand can access these alternative media sources. Internet access is heavily restricted, and content is censored.

Religious freedom is tightly restricted. Dozens of Christians have been detained on religious grounds, and several have been jailed for proselytizing or conducting other religious activities. The government forces Christians to renounce their faith, confiscates their property, and bars them from celebrating Christian holidays. The majority Buddhist population is restricted through LPRP control of clergy training and oversight of temples and other religious sites.

Academic freedom is not respected. University professors cannot teach or write about democracy, human rights, and other politically sensitive topics. A small number of young people have been allowed to travel overseas, including to the United States, for university and graduate-level training. However, they are carefully screened by the government and are generally children of officials and military leaders.

Government surveillance of the population has been scaled back in recent years, but searches without warrants still occur.

The government severely restricts freedom of assembly. Laws prohibit participation in organizations that engage in demonstrations or public protests, or that in any other way cause “turmoil or social instability.” Those found guilty of violating these laws can receive sentences of up to five years in prison. Laos has some nongovernmental welfare and professional groups, but they are prohibited from pursuing political agendas and are subject to strict state control. All unions must belong to the official Federation of Lao Trade Unions. Strikes are not expressly prohibited, but workers rarely stage walkouts, and they do not have the right to bargain collectively.

The courts are corrupt and controlled by the LPRP. Long delays in court hearings are common, particularly for cases dealing with public grievances and complaints against government abuses. Security forces often illegally detain suspects, and some Laotians have allegedly spent more than a decade in jail without trial. Hundreds of political activists have also been held for months or years without trial. Prisoners are often tortured and must bribe prison officials to obtain better food, medicine, visits from family, and more humane treatment.

Discrimination against members of minority tribes is common at many levels. In June 2005, four U.S. nationals were detained and three were deported by the government for “illegally liaising” with members of the Hmong ethnic minority, which allied with U.S. forces during the Vietnam War. All seven were members of the Fact Finding Commission, a U.S.-based nonprofit organization, and were ascertaining the safety of 170 relatives of Hmong rebels who were surrendering to the government. Thousands of Hmong refugees in Thailand were forced by the Thai government to return to Laos in 2005, despite international warnings that they could face political persecution. Laotian government actions to destroy the remnant Hmong guerrilla army and alleged rebel elements have created significant hardships for these mountain people, and thousands have been forced off their land to make way for the exploitation of timber and other natural resources. In December 2006, a group of more than 400

Hmong, mostly children, surrendered to government forces. It was the latest of several bands to do so, according to the Fact Finding Commission.

Although women are guaranteed many of the same rights as men under Laotian laws, gender-based discrimination and abuse are widespread. Tradition and religious practices have contributed to women's inferior position with respect to access to education, equal employment opportunities, and worker benefits. Poverty exacerbates these hardships and puts many women at greater risk of exploitation and abuse by the state and society at large. Domestic violence is a major cause of divorce, and abortion is allowed only to save the life of the mother. An estimated 15,000 to 20,000 Laotian women and girls, including many lowland Laotians and an increasing number of highland ethnic minorities, are trafficked each year for prostitution. The United Nations has reported that Laos is a source, transit, and destination country for human-smuggling rings.

Libya

Population: 6,200,000

Capital: Tripoli

Political Rights: 7

Civil Liberties: 7

Status: Not Free

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

Year Under Review	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Rating	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF

Overview:

Libya continued to improve its relations with the United States and Europe in 2007, in part by making major arms purchases and releasing a group of six foreign health workers who had been sentenced to death on dubious charges. In November, al-Qaeda announced an alliance with a Libyan Islamist militant group, highlighting the Libyan regime's interest in antiterrorism cooperation with the West. However, the oil-rich country's poor human rights performance showed no signs of improvement during the year, and the warmer diplomatic climate appeared to dim prospects for concerted international pressure on the issue.

Libya was part of the Ottoman Empire until the Italian conquest of the country in 1911. It achieved independence in 1951 after a brief period of UN trusteeship in the wake of World War II. Until 1969, the sparsely populated country was ruled by a relatively pro-Western monarch, King Idris. A group of young army officers, led by 27-year-old captain Mu'ammarr al-Qadhafi, overthrew the king while he was traveling abroad.

Al-Qadhafi believed that foreign oil companies were profiting from the country's natural-resource wealth at the expense of the Libyan people, and he moved to nationalize oil assets, claiming that oil revenues would be shared among the population. In the early phase of his leadership, al-Qadhafi published a multivolume treatise, the Green Book, in which he expounded his political philosophy and ideology, a fusion of Arab nationalism, socialism, and Islam. Although he has been Libya's undisputed leader since 1969, making him one of the world's longest-serving rulers, he officially holds no title and is referred to as the Brotherly Leader and Guide of the Revolution.

Al-Qadhafi adopted decidedly anti-Western policies, and after the regime was implicated in several international terrorist attacks, the United States imposed sanctions on Libya in 1981. Relations between the two countries

continued to worsen, and in 1986 the United States bombed several targets in Libya, including al-Qadhafi's home. The attack led to more provocations. In 1988, a Pan Am airliner exploded over Lockerbie, Scotland, killing all 259 people aboard as well as 11 residents of the town. After an exhaustive investigation, Scottish police issued arrest warrants for two Libyan men, including a Libyan intelligence agent. The UN Security Council then imposed trade sanctions on the country. For the next several years, Libya was economically and diplomatically isolated.

In 1999, al-Qadhafi moved to mend his international image and handed over the two Lockerbie bombing suspects for trial. He accepted responsibility for past acts of terrorism and offered compensation packages to the families of victims. The United Nations suspended its sanctions, and the European Union (EU) began reestablishing diplomatic and trade relations with Tripoli. In 2001, the International Court of Justice in The Hague, the Netherlands, found one of the Lockerbie suspects guilty of masterminding the attack. Libya agreed to pay a \$10 million compensation package to the families of each of the 270 victims in 2003. The following year, al-Qadhafi made his first trip to Europe in more than 15 years, and European leaders in turn traveled to Libya. The EU subsequently lifted its arms embargo and normalized diplomatic relations; Libya purchased hundreds of millions of dollars in European weapons systems in 2007. The regime has also improved its relations with the United States. In 2004, a year after al-Qadhafi's government announced that it had scrapped its nonconventional weapons programs, the United States established a liaison office in Tripoli. The United States eventually removed Libya from its list of state sponsors of terrorism, and established a full embassy in Tripoli in May 2006.

Many observers have speculated that Saif al-Islam al-Qadhafi, the leader's son, is behind some of the policy moves of the past few years. He runs a charitable organization, the Gaddafi International Foundation for Charity Associations, and has facilitated visits by foreign human rights activists. According to press reports, his foundation has made it possible for Libyan citizens to report abuses by the authorities. Saif al-Islam has also publicly criticized current conditions in Libya and advocated changes in the leadership. Nevertheless, the diplomatic and economic shifts to date have not been accompanied by noticeable improvements in political rights or civil liberties.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Libya is not an electoral democracy. Power theoretically lies with a system of people's committees and the General People's Congress, but those structures are manipulated in practice to ensure the continued dominance of Mu'ammār al-Qadhafi, who holds no official title. It is illegal for any political group to oppose the principles of the 1969 revolution, which are laid out in al-Qadhafi's Green Book, although market-based economic changes in recent years have diverged from the regime's socialist ideals.

Political parties have been illegal for over 35 years. The government strictly monitors political activity, and those who appear to be attempting to establish anything akin to a political party face imprisonment. Many Libyan opposition movements and figures operate outside the country.

Corruption is pervasive in both the private sector and the government in Libya, which ranked 131 out of 180 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2007 Corruption Perceptions Index.

There is no independent press in Libya. State-owned media largely operate as mouthpieces for the authorities, and journalists work in a climate of fear and self-censorship. Those who displease the regime face harassment or imprisonment on trumped-up charges. According to the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), three suspects were sentenced to death in 2007 for the 2005 murder of journalist Dayf al-Ghazal al-Shuhaibi. He had worked for state-owned media but also contributed to London-based websites focused on Libya, and had criticized the authorities in the months leading up to his death. CPJ reported that little information was released on the trial of the three suspects, prompting concerns about the sincerity of the process.

Nearly all Libyans are Muslim. The government closely monitors mosques for Islamist activity, and there have been unconfirmed reports of Islamist militant groups allied to al-Qaeda operating against the government. In November 2007, al-Qaeda declared that the so-called Libyan Islamic Fighting Group had joined its international network. The few non-Muslims in Libya are permitted to practice their faiths with relative freedom. Academic freedom is tightly restricted.

The government does not uphold freedom of assembly. Those demonstrations that are allowed to take place are typically meant to support the aims of the regime. In February 2007, the authorities arrested 12 men for planning a peaceful demonstration in Tripoli to commemorate clashes between security forces and demonstrators the previous year. (The clashes had occurred after the demonstrators attacked the Italian embassy in connection with the publication in Denmark of cartoons that were critical of the prophet Muhammad.) The 12 arrested men face serious punishment, including possible death sentences. The law allows for the establishment of nongovernmental organizations, but those that exist are directly or indirectly linked to the government. There are no independent labor unions.

The infamous People's Court, which had been used to punish dissidents, has been closed, but the judiciary as a whole remains subservient to the political leadership. In July 2007, a high-profile case involving five Bulgarian nurses and a Palestinian doctor came to an end when the six defendants were released. They had been arrested in 1999 after being accused of deliberately infecting 400 Libyan children with HIV, and had since faced death sentences as the case moved through the courts. Experts have cited ample evidence that the prosecution was politically motivated, and the defendants claimed to have been tortured in custody. Their release followed intense diplomatic efforts by European nations, and the EU agreed to provide lifelong treatment for the infected children. In addition, Libya was able to improve its

commercial ties with Europe in the wake of the deal, and al-Qadhafi and French President Nicolas Sarkozy visited each another in their respective capitals.

A large number of migrants from sub-Saharan Africa work in Libya or pass through in attempts to reach Europe. Human rights organizations have documented and criticized the country's treatment of these migrants. The regime has been more aggressive in its crackdown on illegal laborers in recent years, increasingly the likelihood of abuses.

Women enjoy many of the same legal protections that men do, but certain laws and social norms perpetuate many forms of discrimination, particularly in areas such as marriage, divorce, and inheritance.

North Korea

Population: 23,300,000

Capital: Pyongyang

Political Rights: 7

Civil Liberties: 7

Status: Not Free

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

Year Under Review	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Rating	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF

Overview:

After testing ballistic missiles and a nuclear device in 2006, North Korea was more cooperative with its neighbors in 2007. In February, the regime agreed to denuclearize in three phases, and in October it pledged to disable its nuclear facilities by the end of the year in return for fuel aid and other concessions. However, the disablement was not completed on schedule and continued at a slow pace. The regime cited “technical reasons” for the delay. Also in October, North Korea hosted South Korea’s president for a three-day summit; the two sides agreed in principle to work toward a formal peace treaty and approved several joint development projects. The human rights problem was not seriously addressed at any of the year’s international meetings, and North Korea made no progress on its own. The December election of a conservative opposition candidate, Lee Myung-bak, to the South Korean presidency increased the likelihood of a greater emphasis on human rights in inter-Korean relations. Meanwhile, severe floods hit North Korea during the summer, raising expectations of additional food shortages in the country.

The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK, or North Korea) was established in 1948 after three years of post–World War II Soviet occupation. The Soviet Union installed Kim Il-sung, an anti-Japanese resistance fighter, as the new country’s leader. In 1950, North Korea invaded South Korea in an attempt to reunify the peninsula under communist rule. Drawing in the United States and then China, the ensuing three-year conflict killed at least 2.5 million people and ended with a ceasefire rather than a full peace treaty. Since then, the two Koreas have been on a continuous war footing, and the border remains one of the most heavily militarized places in the world.

Kim Il-sung solidified his control after the war, purging rivals, throwing thousands of political prisoners into labor camps, and fostering an

extreme personality cult that promoted him as North Korea's messianic, superhuman "Great Leader." For over four decades Kim Il-sung perfected his totalitarian state by reviving old social and political institutions as well as inventing modern ones. These included self-isolation, a hereditary class structure, extensive slave-labor, metaphysical Neo-Confucianism, emperor worship, and collective punishment for political dissent. Marxism was eventually replaced by the DPRK's "Juche ideology" (translated as self-reliance), which combined extreme nationalism, xenophobia, and the use of state terror. After Kim Il-sung died in 1994, he was proclaimed "Eternal President," but power passed to his son, "Dear Leader" Kim Jong-il.

The end of the Cold War and its associated Soviet and Chinese subsidies led to the collapse of North Korea's command economy. Although the severe floods of 1995 and 1996 compounded the problem, the famine of the 1990s, which killed at least a million people, was caused by decades of severe economic mismanagement. As many as 300,000 North Koreans fled to China in search of food, despite a legal ban on leaving the DPRK. In 1995, North Korea allowed the United Nations and private humanitarian aid organizations from Europe, North America, and South Korea to undertake one of the world's largest famine-relief operations. Despite continuing food shortages over the next decade, the DPRK in 2005 instructed the UN World Food Programme (WFP) to either switch from humanitarian relief to development assistance or leave North Korea. The DPRK continues to force the international community to bear the burden of feeding its citizens while it devotes its resources to its military-first policy.

The economic breakdown prompted the emergence of black markets to deal with the extreme shortages. The degraded state turned a blind eye, allowing illicit trade to flourish. Meanwhile, the regime instituted halting economic reforms in 2002, which included easing price controls, raising wages, devaluing the currency, and giving factory managers more autonomy. More extensive changes, which could ultimately undermine the dictatorship's grip on power, were rejected.

Kim Jong-il's regime was kept afloat by Chinese and South Korean aid, as both neighbors feared that a state collapse could lead to massive refugee outflows, military disorder, the emergence of criminal gangs and regional warlords, and a loss of state control over nuclear weapons.

The DPRK had withdrawn from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 2003, and it raised alarm in the region by testing ballistic missiles and a nuclear device in 2006. However, the country was more cooperative in 2007. In February, it reentered the Six-Party Talks with its neighbors and the United States, having boycotted the nuclear negotiations since September 2005. The resulting "February 13 Agreement" sought to denuclearize North Korea in three phases, with a reward for the DPRK at the completion of each phase. In one early concession that spring, the U.S. Treasury Department allowed Macao's Banco Delta Asia to return \$25 million in North Korean assets to the DPRK; the funds had been frozen because of North Korea's currency-counterfeiting and other illicit activities. In October, North Korea announced that it would disable

its nuclear facilities and disclose all of its nuclear programs by the end of 2007. In return, it would receive one million tons of fuel oil or its equivalent in aid. At year's end, however, the DPRK stalled the completion of the disabling and disclosure process, citing delays in the delivery of economic aid and other concessions by the other five countries. Also in October, Kim Jong-il hosted South Korean president Roh Moo-hyun for a three-day summit. The two Koreas concluded plans for a number of joint development projects, and agreed in principle to work toward a formal peace treaty. Whether the agreements would be sustained by Lee Myung-bak, a conservative leader who was elected as South Korea's new president in December, remained to be seen. Lee had been critical of North Korea's lack of reciprocity. Separately, severe floods hit North Korea again in the summer of 2007, raising expectations of more acute food shortages.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

North Korea is not an electoral democracy. Kim Jong-il has led the DPRK since the 1994 death of his father, founding leader Kim Il-sung. He has many titles but rules as the chairman of the National Defense Commission, the "highest office of state" since the office of president was permanently dedicated to Kim Il-sung in a 1998 constitutional revision. North Korea's parliament, the Supreme People's Assembly, is a rubber-stamp institution elected to five-year terms; the latest elections were held in August 2003. The body meets irregularly for only a few days each year. It last elected Kim Jong-il as National Defense Commission chairman in September 2003. All candidates for office, who run unopposed, are preselected by the ruling Korean Workers' Party and two subordinate minor parties.

North Korea was not ranked in Transparency International's 2007 Corruption Perceptions Index, though corruption is believed to be endemic at every level of the state and economy.

The constitution provides for freedom of speech and the press, but in practice these rights are nonexistent. All media outlets are run by the state. Televisions and radios are permanently fixed to state channels, and all publications are subject to strict supervision and censorship. Internet access is restricted to a few thousand people with state approval, and foreign websites are blocked. Still, the emergence of black markets has provided alternative information sources. Some entrepreneurs carry cellular telephones, and a significant portion of North Koreans have access to pirated videotapes and DVDs from China.

Although freedom of religion is guaranteed by the constitution, it does not exist in practice. State-sanctioned churches maintain a token presence in Pyongyang, and some North Koreans living near the Chinese border are known to practice their faiths furtively. However, intense state indoctrination and repression preclude free exercise of religion as well as academic freedom. Nearly all forms of private communication are monitored by a huge network of informers. Freedom of assembly is not recognized, and there are no known

associations or organizations other than those created by the state. Strikes, collective bargaining, and other organized-labor activities are illegal.

North Korea does not have an independent judiciary. The UN General Assembly has recognized and condemned severe DPRK human rights violations including the use of torture, public executions, extrajudicial and arbitrary detention, and forced labor; the absence of due process and the rule of law; death sentences for political offenses; and a large number of prison camps.

The regime subjects thousands of political prisoners to brutal conditions, and collective or familial punishment for suspected dissent by an individual is also a common practice. The government operates a semihereditary system of social discrimination whereby all citizens are classified into 53 subgroups under overall security ratings—"core," "wavering," and "hostile"—based on their family's perceived loyalty to the regime. This rating determines virtually every facet of a person's life, including employment and educational opportunities, place of residence, access to medical facilities, and even access to stores.

Freedom of movement does not exist, and forced internal resettlement is routine. Access to Pyongyang, where the availability of food, housing, and health care is somewhat better than in the rest of the country, is tightly restricted. Emigration is illegal, but many North Koreans, especially women, have escaped to China or engaged in cross-border trade. Among them, there have been widespread reports of trafficked women and girls. Ignoring international objections, the Chinese government continues to return defectors to North Korea, where they are subject to torture, harsh imprisonment, or execution. The UN Commission on Human Rights and the UN General Assembly have also noted the use of forced abortions and infanticide against pregnant women who are forcibly repatriated.

The economy remains both centrally planned and grossly mismanaged. Corruption is rampant, and the military garners over a third of the state budget. Development is also hobbled by a lack of infrastructure, a scarcity of energy and raw materials, and an inability to borrow on world markets or from multilateral banks because of sanctions, lingering foreign debt, and ideological isolationism. Ironically, the degradation of the state has provided a very narrow opening for North Korean citizens to participate in the underground economy. This proliferation of black-market trade has given many North Korean citizens a field of activity that is largely free from government control.

Saudi Arabia

Population: 27,600,000

Capital: Riyadh

Political Rights: 7

Civil Liberties: 6

Status: Not Free

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

Year Under Review	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Rating	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF

Overview:

King Abdullah's government moved forward with institutional reforms in 2007, formalizing the organization of a royal succession committee and preparing for the creation of national appellate courts. However, the government continued to crack down on activists who called for expanded human rights and comprehensive political reform, while the country's Shiites experienced increased discrimination and harassment during the year. Meanwhile, women's rights activists intensified their public efforts to obtain greater personal and political freedoms.

Since its unification in 1932 by King Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud, Saudi Arabia has been controlled by the al-Saud family, and the current king, Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz al-Saud, is the sixth in the ruling dynasty. The Saudi monarchy rules in accordance with a conservative school of Sunni Islam. In the early 1990s, Saudi Arabia embarked on a limited program of political reform, introducing an appointed Consultative Council, or Majlis al-Shura. However, this step did not lead to any substantial shift in political power. In 1995, King Fahd bin Abdul Aziz al-Saud suffered a stroke, and in 1997, Abdullah, then the crown prince, took control of most decision making.

After experiencing a series of terrorist attacks in 2003 and 2004, the Saudi government intensified its efforts to crush terrorism at home and abroad. The authorities killed dozens of suspects over the subsequent years and detained thousands of others. While officials also took steps to stem the flow of financial support to terrorist groups, implementing new rules against money laundering and scrutinizing the work of charitable organizations, they were not successful in preventing Saudi citizens from committing acts of terrorism abroad. Thousands of Saudis went to Iraq in the years following the U.S.-led invasion in 2003, to participate in what they believed to be an anti-American and anti-Shiite jihad.

The formal transition of power from King Fahd, who died in August 2005, to King Abdullah led to increased expectations of political reform. Prince Talal bin Abdul Aziz, a former finance minister and a half-brother of Abdullah's, repeated his earlier calls for political reform and a constitution in Saudi Arabia. Such comments by Prince Talal, who had been an outspoken advocate for political reform since the 1960s, were generally supported in Saudi society but were not widely embraced within the royal family, which was reticent to part with any political power.

Saudi Arabia organized elections for municipal councils in 2005, giving Saudi men a limited opportunity to select some of their leaders at the local level. Women were completely excluded from the process. The eligible electorate consisted of less than 20 percent of the population: male citizens who were at least 21 years old, not serving in the military, and resident in their electoral district for at least 12 months. Half of the council seats were open for election, and the other half were appointed by the monarchy. Officials in the Municipal and Rural Affairs Ministry and the Interior Ministry screened candidates, and all results were subject to final approval by the government. Candidates supported by conservative Muslim scholars triumphed in the large cities of Riyadh and Jeddah, and minority Shiite Muslim voters participated in large numbers, seizing the opportunity to voice their opinion. In December 2005, the final composition of the 178 municipal councils was announced. By 2007, it was clear that the elections had not resulted in greater citizen participation in governance. In August, Saudi authorities determined that the councils would serve only as a source of advice for local governors and would possess no authority to act on the grievances of the electorate. Also during the year, Prince Talal called for the creation and legalization of political parties.

In October 2007 King Abdullah followed up on the previous year's pledge to create a formal royal succession process. He announced by-laws for the composition and operation of the Allegiance Institution, composed of the sons (or grandsons in the event of their deaths) of the founding king, Abdul Aziz. The committee, chaired by the oldest surviving son, would make decisions on the succession by majority vote using secret ballots and would require a quorum of two-thirds of the members. The arrangement would be added to the Basic Law but would not apply until after the current crown prince, Sultan bin Abdul Aziz al-Saud, became king. The new committee would also have the authority to deem a king or crown prince medically unfit to rule, based on the advice of an expert panel.

The government's claims to have destroyed the major terrorist networks operating in the kingdom suffered a setback in April 2007, when authorities arrested 172 militants suspected of plotting attacks on major oil facilities. The arrest of another 208 suspected militants was announced in November. Militant Saudi dissidents were also active in the Fatah al-Islam terrorist group, which established a presence in the Nahr al-Bared Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon and battled government forces there from May until September. Fearful that Saudis would continue to foment violence abroad,

several of the country's leading religious figures issued statements declaring terrorism in Iraq and elsewhere to be un-Islamic.

Saudi Arabia has the largest proven oil reserves in the world. The country's oil resources and importance to the global economy are key factors affecting its external relations, and the al-Saud dynasty uses its unmatched wealth to shape and control internal politics. However, the government's dominance of the economy, endemic corruption, and financial mismanagement have led to mounting economic problems, including a decline in real gross domestic product (GDP) per capita over the last decade. Unemployment is estimated at about 25 percent, and a growing youth population is adding to pressure on the government to create new jobs. Recent estimates suggest that over half of the Saudi population is between the ages of 15 and 64, and 38.2 percent is under the age of 15. Saudi Arabia joined the World Trade Organization (WTO) in December 2005.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Saudi Arabia is not an electoral democracy. The country's 1992 Basic Law declares that the Koran and the Sunna (the guidance set by the deeds and sayings of the prophet Muhammad) are the country's constitution. The king appoints a 150-member Majlis al-Shura (Consultative Council) every four years. This council has limited powers, serving only in an advisory capacity. The Council of Ministers, an executive body appointed by the king, passes legislation that becomes law once ratified by royal decree. The monarchy has a tradition of consulting with select members of Saudi society, but this process is not equally open to all citizens.

The al-Saud dynasty dominates and controls political life in the kingdom. The royal family forbids the formation of political parties, and the only semblance of organized political opposition exists outside of the country, with many activists based in London. The government has consistently cracked down on Saudi citizens who press for greater political freedoms. Then crown prince Abdullah appeared to support domestic calls for political reform in 2003 by holding several high-profile meetings with leading activists, but tolerance of the nascent reform lobby proved short-lived. In early 2004, the authorities splintered the movement by arresting several key figures who had attempted to create an independent human rights organization, including Abdullah al-Hamed. The government continued to imprison reformers in 2007; al-Hamed was arrested again in July. In November he and his brother Issa al-Hamed were sentenced to six months and four months in jail, respectively, on charges of inciting women's protests, although both remained free on appeal at year's end. State authorities have attempted to undermine the credibility of the reform movement and justify their crackdown by falsely linking activists to religious militants.

Corruption is a significant problem, with foreign companies reporting that they often pay bribes to middlemen and government officials to secure

business deals. Saudi Arabia was ranked 79 out of 180 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2007 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The government tightly controls content in domestic media and dominates regional print and satellite television coverage. Members of the royal family own major shares in news outlets across the region. Government officials have banned journalists and editors who publish articles deemed offensive to the country's powerful religious establishment or the ruling authorities. The regime has also taken steps to limit the influence of new media, blocking access to some websites that are deemed immoral or politically sensitive. In December 2007, police arrested Fouad al-Farhan, a prominent blogger who criticized corruption and persistently called for political reform. He remained in detention without charges at the end of the year.

Religious freedom does not exist in Saudi Arabia, the birthplace of Islam and home to the faith's two holiest cities—Mecca and Medina. Islam is Saudi Arabia's official religion, and all Saudis are required by law to be Muslims. The government prohibits the public practice of any religions other than Islam and restricts the religious practices of both the Shiite and Sufi Muslim minority sects. Although the government recognizes the right of non-Muslims to worship in private, it does not always respect this right in practice.

Academic freedom is restricted in Saudi Arabia, and informers monitor classrooms for compliance with limits on curriculums, such as a ban on teaching Western philosophy and religions other than Islam. In 2004, the government began efforts to reform school curriculums by deleting disparaging references to non-Muslims in textbooks. However, in February 2005, Abdullah bin Saleh al-Obaid, a religious conservative, was appointed to the prestigious post of education minister, replacing a reformer who had been accused of secularism. Al-Obaid announced the formation of a committee of experts to make fresh curriculum revisions in January 2006. Despite the changes to textbooks, intolerance in the classroom remains an important problem, as some teachers continue to espouse discriminatory and hateful views of non-Muslims and Muslim minorities such as Shiites.

Saudis do not enjoy freedoms of association and assembly. The government frequently arrests and detains political activists who stage demonstrations or engage in other civic advocacy. In 2003, the government approved the establishment of the National Human Rights Association (NHRA), a semiofficial organization charged with reviewing allegations of human rights violations and monitoring the country's compliance with international human rights agreements. Although the NHRA reported in June 2005 that it had received about 2,000 human rights complaints, it has reportedly taken little action.

In 2005, the government approved new labor legislation aimed at bringing Saudi law into line with international standards as the country prepared to join the WTO. The law extended protections to previously unregulated categories of workers, set end-of-service benefits, established clear terms for terminating employment, and required large companies to provide nurseries to help working mothers. It also banned child labor and set provisions for resolving

labor disputes. In addition, the new law sought to advance the goal of the “Saudization” of the country’s workforce by stipulating that Saudis must make up at least 75 percent of a company’s employees. Finally, the law stated that women are permitted to work in “all sectors compatible with their nature.” There continues to be virtually no protection for the more than six million foreign workers in Saudi Arabia. Many of these laborers, falsely lured to the kingdom with promises of great wealth, are forced to endure dangerous working and living conditions. There continue to be public reports of female domestic workers suffering regular physical, sexual, and emotional abuse.

The Saudi judiciary is set to undergo a significant overhaul. Two years after indicating that judicial reform was imminent, King Abdullah in October 2007 formally announced the establishment of a new Supreme Court and an Appeals Court, whose members will be appointed by the king. The new higher courts will replace the old judiciary council, which was widely considered reactionary and inconsistent. The government has allocated \$2 billion for new training programs and facilities for the reformed judiciary. It is unclear when the new system will go into effect. Although the reforms are intended to modernize and standardize the judicial system, there are no plans to codify the country’s laws, which leaves judges considerable room for abuse. In 2001, the Council of Ministers approved a penal code that bans torture. However, allegations of torture by police and prison officials are frequent, and access to prisoners by independent human rights and legal organizations is strictly limited.

Substantial prejudice against ethnic, religious, and national minorities prevails. Roughly two million Shiites live in Saudi Arabia, representing 10 to 15 percent of the population. Shiites are underrepresented in major government positions; no Shiite has served as a minister or member of the royal cabinet. Shiites reported a rise in incidents of prejudice and discrimination in 2007, including a series of physical assaults throughout the kingdom. The war in Iraq has increased sectarian anxiety in Saudi Arabia.

Saudis have the right to own property and establish private businesses. While much business activity is connected with members of the government, the ruling family, or other elite families, officials took important steps to promote private business in 2007, including the creation of new industrial and commercial zones that are free from royal-family interference. Unlike in previous years, the government is also spending rather than saving its oil revenues, servicing the debt, and encouraging private investment. The result has been several years of sustained growth and increasing confidence in the long-term viability of the nonpetroleum sector. The kingdom’s new economic initiatives are partly the result of its gaining membership in the WTO in 2005.

Women are not treated as equal members of society, and many laws discriminate against them. They may not legally drive cars, and their use of public facilities is restricted when men are present. By law and custom, women cannot travel within or outside of the country without a male relative. In November 2007, a court sentenced a Shiite woman from Qatif, who had been gang raped by seven men, to 200 lashes and six months in jail for being alone with a man who was not her relative at the time of the attack; the man was also

raped by the attackers and punished by the court. The rapists were sentenced to flogging and jail terms ranging from two to nine years. After an international outcry, the king pardoned the two victims in December. According to interpretations of Sharia (Islamic law) in Saudi Arabia, daughters receive half the inheritance awarded to their brothers. The testimony of one man is equal to that of two women in Sharia courts. Unlike Saudi men, Saudi women who marry non-Saudis are not permitted to pass their nationality on to their children, and their spouses cannot receive Saudi nationality. Saudi women are not permitted to serve as lawyers, and women seeking access to the courts must work with a male. The Committee to Prevent Vice and Promote Virtue, a semiautonomous religious police force commonly known as the mutawa'een, enforces a strict policy of segregation between men and women and often uses physical punishment to ensure that women meet conservative standards of dress in public.

The government did not allow women to participate in the municipal elections that took place in early 2005. State authorities have not determined whether they will grant women the right to vote in the next such elections, scheduled for 2009.

Education and economic rights for Saudi women have improved. Girls were not permitted to attend school until 1964, but now more than half of the country's university students are female. In May 2004, women won the right to hold commercial licenses, which opened the door for greater economic participation. In addition, women have generally become more visible in society. In 2005, Saudi state television began using women as newscasters, and two women became the first females elected to Jeddah's chamber of commerce, a small step forward for women's leadership in business. In September 2007, women activists presented King Abdullah with a petition containing over 1,100 signatures from women demanding the right to drive.

↓ Somalia

Population: 9,100,000

Capital: Mogadishu

Political Rights: 7

Civil Liberties: 7

Status: Not Free

Trend Arrow: Somalia received a downward trend arrow as a result of increased restrictions on media freedom, an upsurge in corruption, and the return of widespread chaos and violence following the ouster of the Islamic Courts Union in early 2007.

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

Year Under Review	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Rating	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	6,7,NF	6,7,NF	6,7,NF	6,7,NF	6,7,NF	6,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF

Overview:

War continued to ravage Somalia in 2007, as insurgents—some of them supported by Eritrea—battled Ethiopian and Ethiopian-backed transitional government forces in the streets of Mogadishu. Thousands of civilians were killed, hundreds of thousands fled their homes, and all sides in the conflict were accused of committing war crimes. Meanwhile, corruption increased and media outlets suffered amid the total breakdown of law and order.

Somalia gained independence in 1960 as an amalgam of former British and Italian colonies populated largely by ethnic Somalis. A 1969 coup by an army general, Siad Barre, led to two decades of instability, brutal civil strife, and the manipulation of clan loyalties for political purposes. Somalia was also plagued by natural disasters including floods, drought, and famine. When Barre's government was toppled in 1991, the clan-based militias began fighting one another, and Somalia has lacked an effective central government ever since.

Extensive television coverage of famine and civil strife that took some 300,000 lives in 1991 and 1992 prompted a UN humanitarian mission led by U.S. forces. The intervention soon deteriorated into urban guerrilla warfare with the Somali militias, and over 100 UN peacekeepers, including 18 U.S. soldiers, were killed. The \$4 billion operation was eventually terminated, and international forces had departed by March 1995. Civil conflict continued over the subsequent decade with varying degrees of intensity.

In 2000, many of the faction leaders agreed to participate in a Transitional National Government established at the Conference for National

Peace and Reconciliation, hosted by neighboring Djibouti. The conference charter called for a three-year transitional government with a 245-seat Transitional National Assembly. In August, the Assembly elected Abdiqassim Salad Hassan as transitional president. The government and more than 20 rival factions signed a ceasefire in Kenya in October 2002, an initial step toward establishing a lasting federal system. Serious fissures in the process developed over the next year, as some factions launched their own power-sharing negotiations in Mogadishu.

The political process was revitalized in 2004 at another conference in Kenya, which resulted in the establishment of a 275-seat parliament, the Transitional Federal Assembly (TFA), and a new Transitional Federal Government (TFG). The country's four largest clans were each given 61 TFA seats, and an alliance of minor clans took the remaining 31. The members in October elected controversial Ethiopian-backed warlord Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed to serve a five-year term as the first transitional president. Yusuf had previously been the leader of the breakaway region of Puntland. A month later, he appointed Ali Muhammad Gedi as his prime minister.

Despite the political process, clashes between rival factions continued and hundreds of civilians were killed. The TFG moved from its base in Nairobi, Kenya, in 2005 and established itself by early 2006 in Baidoa, a town about 155 miles north of Mogadishu.

In 2006, a fierce battle for control of Mogadishu broke out between an alliance of warlords and the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), a local Islamist group. Critics of the ICU, including Ethiopia and the United States, accused it of links to the terrorist network al-Qaeda. The ICU alleged that the United States was violating a UN weapons embargo by supplying arms to the anti-ICU warlords. By June 2006, the ICU had taken control of Mogadishu and much of southern Somalia, gaining a popular following for its promise to deliver law and order. The TFG in Baidoa feared that it would lose any claims on control of the country and called for the intervention of East African peacekeeping troops, a move bitterly opposed by the ICU.

Meanwhile, the ICU had taken control of the southern city of Kismayo in September 2006 and appeared poised to move on the small territory left to the TFG. By November, peace talks between the TFG and ICU had broken down. Ethiopia said it was obliged to repel the ICU threat, and in December Ethiopian troops were openly deployed in Somalia. A major Ethiopian and TFG offensive ensued late that month, and by year's end the ICU had been driven from Mogadishu and forced to retreat to the extreme south of the country.

While some international observers hailed the expulsion of the ICU as a new beginning, the following year proved much bloodier for Somalia, as insurgent groups backed by Eritrea—Ethiopia's bitter rival in the region—began fighting the TFG and Ethiopian troops. In March and April 2007, combat intensified in Mogadishu, and about 400,000 people fled from their homes. According to human rights groups, all sides in the conflict were guilty of war crimes, including attacks on civilian populations. Fighting flared again in November, as UN officials declared that the situation was currently Africa's

worst humanitarian crisis. Also that month, the TFA approved Nur Adde Hassan Hussein as the new prime minister; the increasingly unpopular Gedi had resigned weeks earlier.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Somalia is not an electoral democracy. The Somali state has in many respects ceased to exist. Technically, the country is governed by an internationally recognized Transitional Federal Government (TFG), led by President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed and Prime Minister Nur Adde Hassan Hussein. A 275-member Transitional Federal Assembly convened in 2004 and elected Yusuf to a five-year term as president. However, the TFG's actual control over the country, including the capital—is minimal. Over the course of 2007, Mogadishu was the scene of intense fighting between various groups of Islamist and clan-based insurgents, some of them supported by Eritrea, and the Ethiopian-backed TFG. The country has no effective political parties, and the political process is driven largely by clan loyalty.

Since May 1991, the northwestern region of Somaliland, roughly comprising the territory of the former British colony, has functioned with considerable stability as a de facto independent state, though it has not received international recognition. The region of Puntland, in the northeastern corner of the country, has also been relatively autonomous since 1998. However, unlike Somaliland, it has not sought full independence, declaring only a temporary secession until Somalia is stabilized.

Because of mounting civil unrest and the breakdown of the state, corruption in Somalia is rampant. The situation grew worse in 2007 as the modicum of law and order established by the ICU in 2006 broke down after its ouster. Somalia was ranked 179 in Transparency International's 2007 Corruption Perceptions Index, tying with Burma at the bottom of the list of 180 countries.

Somalia's charter provides for press freedom, but in practice the media operate under highly dangerous conditions, and the year 2007 proved particularly deadly for Somali journalists. Photocopied dailies and low-grade radio stations have proliferated in Mogadishu and elsewhere since 1991. However, a number of independent outlets ceased operations in 2007, and many of those that remain operate largely as public information sources for the factions they support in the fighting. According to the National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ), which represents journalists in southern Somalia, the TFG shut down five private radio stations in Mogadishu as well as one in Baidoa in 2007. In December the TFA approved a media code that was criticized by press freedom groups for vague and severe restrictions, and it had yet to be signed into law at year's end. However, given the TFG's tenuous control over the country, the implementation of any such law would be uncertain. Also in 2007, the mayor of Mogadishu, former warlord Mohamed Omar Habeb, sought to restrict the media with a decree forbidding journalists from reporting on any TFG or Ethiopian military operations.

The NUSOJ reported that eight journalists were assassinated, 53 were arrested, and more than 55 fled the country during the year. Among those killed was Mahad Ahmed Elmi, head of the popular Mogadishu radio station Capital Voice, and two journalists from Horn Afrik radio, including the station's founder. Foreign journalists rarely venture into central and southern Somalia, and when they do it is at great risk. In December 2007 a French journalist was kidnapped in Puntland but later released. The Mogadishu bureau of Qatar-based Al-Jazeera television was closed by the TFG in March.

Somalia has a rich internet presence, maintained predominantly by the Somali diaspora in Europe, North America, and the Gulf states. Internet and mobile telephone services are widely available in large cities, and users enjoy a fast and inexpensive connection. Nevertheless, owing to pervasive poverty, and the internal displacement of Somalis from Mogadishu and elsewhere, the domestic population has limited access to these resources.

Nearly all Somalis are Sunni Muslims, but there is a very small Christian community. It is difficult to claim that the religious freedom has improved markedly since the ICU's ouster in late 2006 and early 2007, but the TFG is not as overtly Islamist as the ICU.

The educational system is severely degraded due to the breakdown of the state. As a result, the TFG has had little reason to restrict academic freedom to date.

Freedom of assembly is not respected amid the ongoing violence, and the largely informal economy is inhospitable to organized labor. According to New York-based Human Rights Watch (HRW), the conflict has also had implications for local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and other international agencies. The group found that aid workers have been targeted by the warring parties, and that a local human rights group was shuttered during 2007. HRW also reported that the TFG has prevented humanitarian organizations, including the UN World Food Program, from doing their work, affecting the food supply for tens of thousands of people.

There is no judicial system functioning effectively at the national level. In many regions, local authorities administer a mix of Sharia (Islamic law) and traditional Somali forms of justice and reconciliation. The courts of the ICU interpreted Sharia with varying degrees of severity, but some judges have been accused of supporting a radical Islamist style of leadership akin to al-Qaeda or Afghanistan's Taliban.

Over the course of 2007, the human rights situation in Somalia—which was dismal before the current phase of hostilities—grew even worse. Several international watchdog organizations reported on mass violations of human rights by the Ethiopian military, the TFG, and insurgent groups. According to HRW, thousands of people were killed in indiscriminate attacks on civilian population centers, and hundreds of thousands of people fled their homes.

Most Somalis share the same ethnicity and religion, but clan divisions have long fueled violence in the country. The larger, more powerful clans continue to dominate political life and are able to use their strength to harass the weaker clans.

Women in Somalia face a great deal of discrimination. Female genital mutilation is still practiced in some form on nearly all Somali girls. In its recent report on the conflict in Somalia, HRW recounted cases of women who had been subjected to sexual violence in the course of the war.

Sudan

Population: 38,600,000

Capital: Khartoum

Political Rights: 7

Civil Liberties: 7

Status: Not Free

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

Year Under Review	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Rating	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF

Overview:

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which ended the war between northern and southern Sudan in 2005, began unraveling in 2007 amid accusations that the north was not adhering to its commitments. Meanwhile, the situation in western Sudan's conflict-ridden Darfur region remained grim, and nationally there were few positive developments with respect to political rights and civil liberties.

Sudan, Africa's largest country, achieved independence from Britain and Egypt in 1956, and it has been embroiled in civil wars for most of its subsequent history. The Anyanya movement, representing mainly Christian and animist black Africans in southern Sudan, battled Arab Muslim-dominated government forces from 1956 to 1972. In 1969, General Jafar Numeiri toppled an elected government and established a military dictatorship. The south gained extensive autonomy under a 1972 accord, and an uneasy peace prevailed for the next decade. In 1983, Numeiri restricted southern autonomy and imposed Sharia (Islamic law). Civil war between the north and the south resumed and would continue until 2004, causing the deaths of some two million people and the displacement of millions more. Meanwhile, Numeiri was overthrown in 1985.

Civilian rule was restored in 1986, with the election of a government led by Prime Minister Sadiq al-Mahdi of the moderate Islamic Ummah Party. Lieutenant General Omar al-Bashir ousted al-Mahdi in a 1989 coup, and the deposed leader 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 Party (NCP) leader and speaker of the National Assembly.

Tensions between al-Bashir and al-Turabi climaxed in December 1999. On the eve of a parliamentary vote on a plan by al-Turabi to curb presidential

powers, al-Bashir dissolved the legislature and declared a state of emergency. He fired al-Turabi as NCP head, replaced the cabinet with his own supporters, and held deeply flawed presidential and parliamentary elections in December 2000, which the NCP 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 would not 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 Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), the main southern rebel group. In May 2001, al-Turabi and four aides were charged with conspiracy to overthrow the government; al-Turabi was placed under house arrest. He was moved to a high-security prison in September 2002 and then released in October 2003.

By sidelining al-Turabi, who was considered a leading force behind Sudan's efforts to export Islamic extremism, al-Bashir began to lift Sudan out of international isolation. Although Vice President Ali Osman Mohammed Taha—who replaced al-Turabi as Islamic ideologue—remained committed to Sudan's status as an Islamic state and to the government's self-proclaimed jihad against non-Muslims, al-Bashir managed to repair relations with several countries. After the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks against the United States, he offered his country's cooperation in combating terrorism. Sudan had previously provided a safe haven for Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda, his international terrorist network. In March 2004, al-Turabi was again placed under house arrest, this time on suspicion of plotting a coup with sympathizers of rebel groups in the western region of Darfur; al-Turabi had been outspokenly critical of the government's tactics in the region.

The Sudanese government also focused on ending its long-running conflict with the SPLA. After intense negotiations, the two sides signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in January 2005. The pact included power-sharing provisions, with the NCP retaining a slight majority in parliament, as well as measures to share state revenues. The civil war had been fueled in part by competition for control of southern oil resources. However, the new agreement failed to address the human rights abuses committed by both sides. The government had bombed and destroyed civilian targets, denied humanitarian relief to rebel-held areas and internally displaced people, and forced conversions to Islam. For its part, the SPLA had also regularly attacked civilian targets and recruited child soldiers.

A key provision of the CPA allowed a referendum on southern independence to be held after a six-year transitional period, during which the government was obliged to withdraw 80 percent of its troops stationed in the south. In a serious disruption to the pact's implementation, longtime SPLA leader John Garang died in an August 2005 helicopter crash just 20 days after he was sworn in as first vice president of Sudan under an interim constitution. The incident sparked riots by supporters who suspected that the crash was not an

accident, leading to at least 130 deaths and some 2,000 arrests. Garang's deputy, Salva Kiir, replaced him as SPLA leader and first vice president.

In 2007, SPLA leaders warned that the CPA was near collapse, accusing the NCP of renegeing on its terms. For example, al-Bashir refused to recognize a special panel's decision that designated the resource-rich Abyei area as part of autonomous Southern Sudan.

As Sudan's northern and southern leaders were negotiating an end to the civil war, another violent internal conflict had been escalating. In 2003, rebel groups in Darfur began attacking Sudanese military positions, although some observers have dated the first attacks to 2001 and 2002. The residents of Darfur, mostly black Muslim farmers or herders, had long clashed with some of the region's nomadic Arab tribes, and with one another, over land use. The rebels also complained of discrimination by the Arab-dominated government. There had been periods of violence in Darfur since Sudanese independence, but the new conflict was on a different scale. By early 2004, government-supported Arab militias known as janjaweed had begun torching villages, massacring the inhabitants, slaughtering and stealing livestock, and raping women and girls. The military also employed some of the same scorched-earth tactics it had used in the south, bombing and strafing settlements from the air. Those who were not killed fled the violence, and one of the world's most acute refugee crises was born. Many arrived in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps within Darfur, while others gathered in refugee camps in neighboring Chad.

The African Union deployed a force to monitor a ceasefire signed by Sudan and two of the major rebel groups in April 2004, and increased the size of the force to 7,000 troops in 2005. However, it remained underfunded and was not authorized to intervene directly in the fighting, leading to calls for a larger UN force.

The scale of the killing and displacement led to charges of genocide by international human rights groups, and the UN Security Council in September 2004 passed a resolution calling for a commission of inquiry. The commission's report, delivered to the Security Council in January 2005, stated that although the panel could not designate the killing as genocide, there was mass killing and rape. The commission requested that the case be referred to the International Criminal Court. In 2007, the ICC indicted Ahmed Haroun, a Sudanese official, and charged him with almost two dozen crimes including crimes against humanity. Haroun was subsequently appointed as a cabinet minister.

In May 2006, the government signed the Darfur Peace Agreement with a faction of the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA), one of the western region's rebel groups, led by Minni Minnawi. All the other major rebel groups refused to sign the agreement, saying it did not address their concerns. After the signing of the pact, there were demonstrations and riots in the camps by those who opposed it. Throughout 2006, the UN Security Council reiterated its position that a UN force should be deployed, but the Sudanese government refused, saying the move would compromise its sovereignty. Finally, in February 2007, Sudan agreed to allow UN peacekeepers. However, the deployments were subsequently stalled due to a combination of Sudanese obstruction and contributing countries'

reluctance to commit troops and key equipment. In May, the United States signaled its displeasure with Sudan by imposing new sanctions on Sudanese firms and individuals.

Despite the peace efforts, the killing in Darfur continued. As of 2007, credible estimates of the dead ranged from 70,000 to over 400,000, with more than two million displaced. Many in the IDP and refugee camps suffered from disease and starvation.

Sudan's economy, while weak, has been improving thanks to high oil prices. China has been harshly criticized for lending Sudan diplomatic support and actively participating in its oil industry and other ventures. Pressure on world leaders to boycott the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics over the Darfur issue and other human rights concerns increased steadily in 2007.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Sudan is not an electoral democracy. The last national elections took place in 2000, but major opposition parties boycotted the process and the European Union refused an invitation to monitor the balloting. President Omar al-Bashir and his NCP won easily, and the NCP remained the dominant party until the peace agreement with the SPLA was implemented in 2005. The SPLM—the SPLA's postconflict political incarnation—and the existing Sudanese government formed a joint transitional administration, with the SPLM leader as first vice president. The joint presidency appointed members of the 450-seat lower house of parliament, the National Assembly, with the NCP holding 52 percent, the SPLA controlling 28 percent, and the rest of the seats divided among other northern and southern parties. The parliament's upper house is the 50-member Council of States. Although the current members of parliament were appointed, members of both chambers would serve five-year terms after the first elections, scheduled for 2008–09. The government's reluctance to give Darfur rebel groups more power in Khartoum stems in part from its desire to maintain its majority in parliament. Nine of Sudan's 30 cabinet ministries are now headed by members of the SPLM.

Sudan is one of the world's most corrupt states. It is ranked 172 out of 180 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2007 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The news media face significant obstacles despite some improvements in the years since the signing of the CPA. Journalists were harassed for their work on several occasions in 2007. Article 39 of the 2005 interim national constitution recognizes the right to freedom of expression and the media, but the Press and Printed Material Act, passed in 2004, introduced a number of restrictions on journalists. The National Press Council, dominated by government appointees, licenses newspapers and monitors journalists, and the Ministry of Information tightly controls broadcast media. While some private radio stations broadcast in Khartoum and in Southern Sudan, the government monitors programming for offending material. The state-owned Sudan Radio and Television Corporation (SRTC) remains the only television broadcaster.

Private ownership of newspapers is common, however, with numerous dailies and weeklies reflecting different points of view, including opposition publications and outlets with a Southern Sudanese perspective.

Internet penetration in Sudan is among the highest in sub-Saharan Africa but is limited to urban areas. The government has not displayed much interest in censoring this new medium, apart from the blocking of pornographic content. Political debates online are flourishing on highly popular websites, which are frequented by local users and Sudanese living abroad.

Press freedom conditions in Southern Sudan are better than in areas controlled directly by Khartoum. Journalists in the south are not as restricted as those in the north and have more leeway to criticize government policies.

The 2005 interim constitution guarantees freedom of worship. Before the CPA was implemented, Islam was the state religion, and Sharia (Islamic law) was described as the source of legislation. The majority of the population in the north is Sunni Muslim, while the majority in the south is animist and Christian. There is also a sizeable Christian population in Khartoum. Sudan's northern states are now subject to Sharia, but those in the south are not. Christians face discrimination and harassment in the north, where permits to build churches are sometimes denied. Under the 1994 Societies Registration Act, religious groups must register in order to legally gather, and registration is reportedly difficult to obtain. The north-south conflict was characterized as jihad by the government, and in some cases non-Muslims were forced to convert to Islam.

Both the Ministry of Higher Education and the Ministry of Education are headed by SPLM members. The government administers public universities, but there are private institutions of higher learning with prominent professors as well. Sudan's universities have been the sites of debate and more open discussion of critical issues, but security services do monitor them, and there is a certain amount of self-censorship.

As the Darfur crisis garners more negative attention for Sudan, the government is growing more hostile toward international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operating in the country, particularly because many NGOs are spearheading pressure campaigns against it from cities like London, Washington, and New York. Many local and international NGOs still operate in the country, but the government restricts their activities at times and can suspend or expel foreign NGOs it considers troublesome. NGOs are also subject to physical danger if they operate in conflict areas like Darfur.

Sudanese trade unions were very active politically until the al-Bashir regime seized power in the 1989 coup. Since then, they have been effectively destroyed. Some union leaders were forced from their jobs and harassed by authorities. The Sudan Workers Trade Unions Federation, the union umbrella organization, has been co-opted by the government and is not a credible, independent advocate of workers' interests.

The judiciary is not independent. The head of the judiciary, the chief justice of the Supreme Court, is a government appointee. Lower courts like the Town Benches and District Courts provide some due process safeguards, but

higher courts are subject to political control, and special security and military courts do not apply accepted legal standards. In response to the International Criminal Court investigation into crimes related to Darfur, the government created the Special Courts for Darfur; their credibility has been challenged by legal experts. Sudanese criminal law is based on Sharia and provides for punishments such as flogging and amputation, although non-Muslim southern states are not subject to Sharia. Police and security forces practice arbitrary arrest and torture with impunity, and prison conditions do not meet international standards. With the signing of the CPA, the government created the National Judicial Service Commission (NJSC) to manage the judicial system; coordinate the relationships between judiciaries at the national, Southern Sudan, and state levels; and oversee the appointment, approval, and dismissal of judges. However, the NJSC is not independent or free from government pressure.

Credible reports have described the mass scale of killing and rights violations in Darfur. While some groups have not characterized the killings as genocide, it is widely accepted that for the past five years, the Sudanese government has directed and assisted the systematic killing of tens or, more likely, hundreds of thousands of people in the region. In March 2007, a UN panel headed by Nobel laureate Jody Williams issued a report finding that the government “has manifestly failed to protect the population of Darfur from large-scale international crimes, and has itself orchestrated and participated in these crimes.” The report also said that “the principal pattern is one of a violent counterinsurgency campaign waged by the government of the Sudan in concert with janjaweed militia, and targeting mostly civilians.” It added, “Rebel forces are also guilty of serious abuses of human rights and violations of humanitarian law...but the overwhelming burden of guilt lies with the government and the militia (janjaweed).” The government rejected the report and tried to stop the UN Human Rights Council from considering it.

Female politicians and activists play a role in public life, but they face extensive legal and societal discrimination. Islamic law denies northern women equitable rights in marriage, inheritance, and divorce. Female genital mutilation is widely practiced in both northern and southern Sudan. Local and international human rights groups have gathered a great deal of evidence on the use of rape in the Darfur conflict in an attempt to bring perpetrators to justice and end the practice. Sudan has not ratified the international Convention on the Eradication of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, arguing that it contradicts Sudanese values and traditions.

↓ Syria

Population: 19,900,000

Capital: Damascus

Political Rights: 7

Civil Liberties: 6

Status: Not Free

Trend Arrow: Syria received a downward trend arrow due to the authorities' suppression of opposition activities.

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

Year Under Review	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Rating	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF

Overview:

Syria held parliamentary and municipal elections as well as a presidential referendum in 2007, but candidate eligibility remained tightly circumscribed. New measures to monitor and control internet activity were put in place during the year. Meanwhile, prominent reformists received sentences for signing the 2006 Beirut-Damascus Declaration on Lebanese sovereignty.

The modern state of Syria was established by the French after World War I and formally granted independence in 1946. Democratic institutions functioned intermittently until the Arab Socialist Baath Party seized power in a 1963 coup and transformed Syria into a one-party state governed under emergency law. During the 1960s, power shifted within the party from civilian ideologues to army officers hailing mostly from Syria's Alawite minority (adherents of an offshoot Islamic sect comprising 12 percent of the population), culminating in General Hafez al-Assad's rise to power in 1970.

Although the regime cultivated a base of support among public-sector employees, peasants, and select private-sector beneficiaries that transcended sectarian and ethnic divisions, it fundamentally relied on Alawite domination of the military-security establishment and the suppression of dissent. In 1982, government forces stormed the northern town of Hama to crush a rebellion by the Muslim Brotherhood, one of the main opposition movements, and killed as many as 20,000 insurgents and civilians. By the time of al-Assad's death in 2000, Baathist rule and socialist economic policies had made Syria one of the Arab world's poorest countries.

Bashar al-Assad, who succeeded his late father, pledged to liberalize Syria's politics and the economy. The first six months of his tenure featured the release of political prisoners, the return of exiled dissidents, and open discussion of the country's problems. In February 2001, however, the regime abruptly halted this so-called Damascus Spring. Most leading reformists were arrested and sentenced to lengthy prison terms, while others faced constant surveillance and intimidation by the secret police. Economic reform fell by the wayside, and Syria under Bashar al-Assad proved to be less free than under his father and equally resistant to political change.

Reinvigorated by the toppling of Iraq's Baathist regime in 2003, Syria's secular and Islamist dissidents began cooperating and pushing for the release of all political prisoners, the cancellation of the state of emergency, and legalization of political parties. Syria's Kurdish minority, apparently inspired by the political empowerment of Iraqi Kurds, erupted into eight days of rioting in March 2004. At least 30 people were killed as security forces suppressed the riots and arrested some 2,000 people.

The domestic opposition was also strengthened by international frustration over Syria's failure to combat terrorist infiltration into Iraq and its continuing occupation of Lebanon. Syrian troops had entered Lebanon in 1976, during the latter country's civil war, but they had stayed on after peace was restored in 1990. In September 2004, UN Security Council Resolution 1559 called on Damascus to immediately end the occupation. Syria was widely suspected of involvement in the February 2005 assassination of former Lebanese prime minister Rafiq Hariri, prompting fresh international pressure for a Syrian withdrawal as well as massive anti-Syrian demonstrations in Beirut. The UN Security Council then passed Resolution 1636, calling on Syria to cooperate unconditionally with the UN investigation into Hariri's death. Syrian troops pulled out of Lebanon in April 2005, but al-Assad refused to fully cooperate with the Hariri probe. An interim report on the investigation issued in 2005 cited circumstantial evidence implicating members of al-Assad's regime.

In the face of growing internal opposition, the government released hundreds of political prisoners in 2005. Despite repeated hints that sweeping political reforms would be drafted at a major Baath Party conference that year, no substantial measures were undertaken, and al-Assad openly ruled out any major constitutional reforms or loosening of Baath Party control. In October 2005, representatives of all three opposition currents—the Islamists, the Kurds, and secular liberals—signed the Damascus Declaration for Democratic and National Change, which called for the country's leaders to step down and endorsed a broad set of liberal democratic principles.

A major cabinet shuffle in February 2006 introduced 14 new ministers and replaced the foreign, interior, and information ministers. In May, exiled opposition leaders announced the creation of the National Salvation Front (NSF) to bring about regime change. Also that month, a number of Syrian political and human rights activists signed the Beirut-Damascus Declaration, which called for a change in Syrian-Lebanese relations and the recognition of Lebanese sovereignty. Many of the signatories were subsequently detained or sentenced to

prison, part of a renewed government crackdown on dissidents in 2006 that reversed the previous partial leniency on personal freedom. A Syrian military court that year charged former vice president Abdel Halim Khaddam, a leader of the NSF, in absentia with inciting foreign attacks against Syria.

The president in January 2007 decreed a series of largely cosmetic electoral reforms ahead of the April parliamentary elections, a May presidential referendum, and August municipal elections. Al-Assad obtained approval for another term as president with 97.6 percent of the vote. In results that were preordained by the electoral framework, the ruling Baath-dominated coalition won the majority of seats in the parliamentary and municipal polls. Opposition groups boycotted the elections and announced plans for new laws on elections and political parties. Meanwhile, the National Council of the Damascus Declaration for Democratic Change renewed its activities in 2007, prompting a government crackdown on its members.

Like its neighbors, Syria is struggling with an influx of Iraqi refugees; in 2007, the Syrian Foreign Ministry sought to stem the flow by requiring Iraqis to obtain visas before entering. Syria still stands accused of lax border monitoring, allowing militants to enter Iraq to conduct attacks. The Syrian regime is also suspected of involvement in the recent assassinations of several anti-Syrian Lebanese lawmakers.

On September 6, 2007, Israeli forces conducted an air strike against a rumored nuclear facility in Syria. The event was clouded by suspicious charges and incomplete information and made any future Syrian-Israeli peace talks more difficult. Nevertheless, Syria did participate in the U.S.-sponsored Annapolis Conference on the Arab-Israeli issue in November 2007.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Syria is not an electoral democracy. Under the 1973 constitution, the president is nominated by the ruling Baath Party and approved by popular referendum for seven-year terms. In practice, these referendums are orchestrated by the regime, as are elections for the 250-member, unicameral People's Council, which serves for four-year terms and holds little independent legislative power. Almost all power rests in the executive branch.

The only legal political parties are the Baath Party and its several small coalition partners in the ruling National Progressive Front (NPF). Independent candidates, who are heavily vetted and closely aligned to the regime, are permitted to contest about a third of the People's Council seats, meaning two-thirds are reserved for the NPF. The ruling party pledged to legalize political parties not based on religious or ethnic identity (a condition that would exclude the Muslim Brotherhood and Kurdish opposition groups) at its June 2005 conference, but no legislation implementing this pledge has been forthcoming.

Changes made to the electoral process in 2007 include limits on campaign spending, transparent election boxes, and the monitoring of polling stations by civil servants. Syrian political reformers have criticized these measures as wholly insufficient.

Regime officials and their families monopolize many lucrative import markets and benefit from a range of illicit economic activities. Corruption is widespread, and bribery is often necessary to navigate the bureaucracy. Equality of opportunity has been compromised by rampant graft. Syria was ranked 138 out of 180 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2007 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of expression is heavily restricted. Vaguely worded articles of the penal code, the Emergency Law, and a 2001 Publications Law criminalize the publication of material that harms national unity, tarnishes the image of the state, or threatens the "goals of the revolution." Many journalists, writers, and intellectuals have been arrested under these statutes. Apart from a handful of non-news radio stations, all broadcast media are state-owned. However, satellite dishes are common, giving many Syrians access to foreign broadcasts. While more than a dozen privately owned newspapers and magazines have sprouted up in recent years, only one (owned by the son of Syria's defense minister) is allowed to publish serious criticism of the government. The 2001 press law permits the authorities to arbitrarily deny or revoke publishing licenses and compels private print outlets to submit all material to government censors. It also imposes punishment on reporters who do not reveal their sources in response to government requests. Since the Kurdish protests in 2004, the government has cracked down on journalists calling for the expansion of Kurdish rights.

In July 2007, the authorities issued a stop press order for two months against the Baladuna newspaper—managed by Majd Sulaiman, the son of a former official—after it published a cartoon commenting on the president. Separately, the Western-based Reform Party of Syria hung hundreds of posters of its exiled leader, Farid Ghadry, in the streets of major cities in August 2007. The posters were quickly removed, but the act garnered much attention.

Syrians are permitted to access the internet only through state-run servers, which block access to Kurdish, opposition, foreign-based, and other websites. Previously available networking sites such as Facebook were blocked in 2007. E-mail correspondence is reportedly monitored by the intelligence agencies, which often require internet cafe owners to spy on customers. The Ministry of Telecommunications introduced new measures in 2007 that call for all posters for blogs and websites to publish their names and e-mail addresses. In September 2007, blogger Ali Zine al-Abidine Mejan was convicted of "writings unauthorized by the government that harm ties with a foreign state" and sentenced to two years in prison. Karim Arbaji was detained in June for moderating akhawia.net, a youth internet forum. Another blogger, Tarek Biasi, was arrested by military intelligence that month for insulting the security services online.

Although the constitution requires that the president be a Muslim, there is no state religion in Syria, and freedom of worship is generally respected. However, all nonworship meetings of religious groups require permits, and religious fundraising is closely scrutinized. The Alawite minority dominates the

officer corps of the military and security forces. The government tightly monitors mosques and controls the appointment of Muslim clergy.

Academic freedom is heavily restricted, although progress has been made on privatizing higher education. University professors have been dismissed or imprisoned for expressing dissent. In June 2007, seven students received seven-year prison sentences for attempting to establish a youth discussion group and publishing prodemocracy articles.

Freedom of assembly is heavily circumscribed. Public demonstrations are illegal without official permission, which is typically granted only to progovernment groups. The security services intensified their ban on public and private gatherings in 2006, forbidding any group of five or more people from discussing political and economic topics. This rule has been enforced through surveillance and informant reports.

Freedom of association is severely restricted. All nongovernmental organizations must register with the government, which generally denies registration to reformist or human rights groups. Leaders of unlicensed human rights groups have frequently been jailed for publicizing state abuses. Three prominent human rights activists—Michel Kilo, Mahmoud Issa, and Anwar al-Bunni—were arrested in 2006 for signing the Beirut-Damascus Declaration. Kilo and al-Bunni were sentenced in April 2007 to five years in prison.

Several members of the National Council of the Damascus Declaration for Democratic Change, including Ahmad Tohme, Jabr al-Shoufi, Akram al-Bunni, Fida al-Hurani, and Ali al-Abdullah, were arrested without charge following their first conference in December 2007, at which they elected their president and secretariat.

Professional syndicates are controlled by the Baath Party, and all labor unions must belong to the General Federation of Trade Unions (GFTU), a nominally independent grouping that the government uses to control union activity. Strikes in nonagricultural sectors are legal, but they rarely occur.

While the lower courts operate with some independence and generally safeguard defendants' rights, politically sensitive cases are usually tried by the Supreme State Security Court (SSSC), an exceptional tribunal established under emergency law that denies the right to appeal, limits access to legal counsel, tries many cases behind closed doors, and routinely accepts confessions obtained through torture. The appointment of SSSC judges is in the hands of the executive, and only the president and interior minister may alter verdicts.

The state of emergency in force since 1963 gives the security agencies virtually unlimited authority to arrest suspects and hold them incommunicado for prolonged periods without charge. Many of the estimated 2,500 to 3,000 remaining political prisoners in Syria have never been tried. The security agencies, which operate independently of the judiciary, routinely extract confessions by torturing suspects and detaining their family members. There were scores of credible reports of torture in 2007. After release from prison, political activists are routinely monitored and harassed by security services. The Syrian Human Rights Committee has reported that hundreds of government

informants are rewarded for or coerced into writing reports on relatives, friends, and associates who are suspected of involvement in “antiregime” activities.

The Kurdish minority faces severe restrictions on cultural and linguistic expression. The 2001 press law requires that owners and top editors of publications be Arabs. Some 200,000 Syrian Kurds are deprived of citizenship and unable to obtain passports, identity cards, or birth certificates, which in turn prevents them from owning land, obtaining government employment, and voting. Suspected Kurdish activists are routinely dismissed from schools and public-sector jobs. Mustapha Khalil, a member of the Kurdish intellectual movement, and two other young Kurdish men were arrested in 2007 for engaging in cultural activities. Muhi al-Din Sheikh Aali, secretary of the Kurdish Democratic Unity Party, was released in February after being held incommunicado since December 2006. However, former lawmaker Osman Suleiman bin Haji and Kurdish activist Aisha Afandi Bint Ahmed were arrested in November 2007 for undisclosed reasons. Security services also used force to suppress a peaceful demonstration organized by the Kurdish Democratic Party (PYD) in November 2007 to protest Turkish incursions into northern Iraq. One man was killed, dozens were wounded, and PYD activists were arrested. The government continues to detain dozens of Kurdish Workers’ Party (PKK) members. It has arrested hundreds of other Kurdish activists in recent years and prevented many from traveling to Iraqi Kurdistan.

Opposition figures and relatives of exiled dissidents are routinely prevented from traveling abroad, and stateless Kurds lack the requisite documents to leave the country. In 2006, the government expanded its travel-ban list to include signers of the Beirut-Damascus Declaration, former Damascus Spring detainees, human rights lawyers, and their family members. In May 2007, activist Kamal Labwani, founder of the Democratic Liberal Gathering, was sentenced to 12 years in prison for “contacting a foreign country and encouraging attacks on Syria” after he returned from a visit to the United States. Opposition member Jihadedin al-Musuti was arrested in the Damascus airport in November 2007 as he was leaving for a human rights meeting in Cairo. Aside from travel bans on political dissidents, Syrians are generally allowed freedom of movement, residence, and employment.

The government has promoted gender equality by appointing women to senior positions 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 without proof of the father’s permission. Violence against women is common, particularly in rural areas. An accused rapist can be acquitted if he marries his victim, and the law provides for reduced sentences in cases of “honor crimes” committed by men against female relatives for alleged sexual misconduct. Syrian human rights groups estimate that over 300 women were killed in honor crimes in 2006. Personal status law for Muslim women is governed by Sharia (Islamic law) and is discriminatory in marriage, divorce, and inheritance matters.

Turkmenistan

Population: 5,400,000

Capital: Ashgabat

Political Rights: 7

Civil Liberties: 7

Status: Not Free

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

Year Under Review	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Rating	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF

Overview:

President Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov, who emerged as Saparmurat Niyazov's successor after the latter's death in December 2006, cemented his status in a February 2007 presidential election and with a number of government shakeups. Berdymukhammedov reversed some of his predecessor's most egregious policies, but these steps did little to change the country's profoundly repressive and arbitrary system of government. The new president also pursued a more active foreign policy, traveling internationally, vowing greater openness to foreign investment, and attempting to balance Chinese, Russian, and Western interests in Turkmenistan's natural gas reserves.

Turkmenistan gained formal independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. Saparmurat Niyazov, the former head of the Turkmenistan Communist Party, had been 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. A 1994 referendum extended his term until 2002. In the December 1994 elections to the Mejlis (National Assembly), only Niyazov's Democratic Party of Turkmenistan (DPT), the former Communist Party, was permitted to field candidates.

In the 1999 Mejlis elections, every candidate was selected by the government and virtually all were members of the DPT. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), citing numerous procedural inadequacies, refused to send even a limited assessment mission. The Mejlis unanimously voted in late December to make Niyazov president for life.

In November 2002, Niyazov survived an alleged assassination attempt in Ashgabat. The incident sparked a widespread crackdown on the opposition and perceived critics of the regime, drawing condemnation from foreign

governments and international organizations. Early elections for the Halk Maslahaty (People's Council), a second legislative body, were held in 2003, and Mejlis polls were held in 2004. As in previous elections, candidates for both chambers were preapproved by the administration.

Niyazov's rule was marked by frequent government reshuffles, the gutting of formal institutions, the muzzling of media, and an elaborate personality cult. The Rukhnama, a rambling collection of quasi-historical and philosophical musings attributed to Niyazov, became the core of educational curriculums. Limited information about the true state of affairs in Turkmenistan pointed to crises in health care, education, and agriculture.

Niyazov's death on December 21, 2006, from an apparent heart attack was followed by the rapid and seemingly well-orchestrated ascent of Deputy Prime Minister Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov to the position of acting president. The succession appeared to circumvent constitutional norms, as criminal charges were brought against Mejlis Speaker Ovezgeldy Atayev, who would have become acting president according to the constitution. Berdymukhammedov subsequently cemented his formal status, easily besting five obscure ruling-party candidates in a February 2007 presidential election that was not monitored by any international observers.

Berdymukhammedov used 2007 to consolidate his position, removing Niyazov loyalists from high posts. Although Niyazov's extensive cult of personality appeared to wane after his death, lavish celebrations of Berdymukhammedov's 50th birthday in June raised fears that a new cult was arising.

Also during the year, Berdymukhammedov eased the isolationist foreign policy maintained by Niyazov. He visited Saudi Arabia, China, Iran, the United States, and the European Union, and moved to improve long-strained ties with Azerbaijan. Despite this new "multivector" approach, natural gas sales continue to dominate Turkmenistan's relations with the outside world, with competition between China and Russia emerging as the leitmotif in recent interactions.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Turkmenistan is not an electoral democracy. The late Saparmurat Niyazov enjoyed virtually absolute power, serving as "president for life" until his death in 2006. None of the country's elections—including the February 2007 vote that gave Niyazov's successor, Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov, a five-year term in office—have been free or fair.

The country has two parliamentary bodies, neither of which enjoys independence from the executive: the unicameral Mejlis (National Assembly), composed of 50 members elected by popular vote for five-year terms, and the Halk Maslahaty (People's Council), composed of approximately 2,500 elected and appointed members. The Halk Maslahaty was officially made the country's supreme legislative body in 2003.

Only one political party, the DPT, has been officially registered. Opposition parties have been banned, and those of their leaders who have not fled abroad face harassment and detention.

Corruption is widespread, with public officials often forced to bribe their way into their positions. Turkmenistan was ranked 162 out of 180 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2007 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of speech and the press is severely restricted by the government, which controls all broadcast and print media. Some reports indicate that the media have become slightly more informative after Niyazov's death and that government surveillance of private discussion is less intense. State-owned Turkmen Telekom is the only authorized internet service provider in the country. Berdymukhammedov has promised universal internet access, but when two internet cafes opened in Ashgabat in February 2007, they were prohibitively expensive and reportedly guarded by soldiers. The Turkmen authorities have yet to permit an investigation of the suspicious death of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty correspondent Ogulsapar Muradova, who died in custody in 2006.

The government restricts freedom of religion, and independent groups continue to face persecution. While Niyazov declared in 2004 that practicing an unregistered religion would no longer be a criminal offense, it remains illegal, with violators subject to fines. In August 2007, former chief mufti Nasrullah ibn Ibadullah, who had been serving a 22-year prison sentence for treason, was pardoned. However, the U.S. State Department's 2007 International Religious Freedom Report, released in September, found that "there was no improvement in the status of respect for religious freedom by the Government during the period covered by this report." The government controls access to Islamic education and restricts the number of mosques in the country. The authorities also coerce Christian and Muslim houses of worship to display a copy of Niyazov's Rukhnama.

The government places significant restrictions on academic freedom, and the Rukhnama is still required reading throughout the school system. Some reforms took place in 2007, however. A February decree increased grade-school education from nine to 10 years and university education to five years of study, from two years' study plus two years' practical work. A March decree raised teachers' salaries by 40 percent. These positive steps will require significant follow-up measures, and perhaps outside assistance, to overcome the disastrous effects of Niyazov's extended assault on education.

While the constitution guarantees peaceful assembly and association, these rights are severely restricted in practice. Opposition sources provided scattered, unconfirmed reports of protests after pension reductions in January 2006. In July 2007, the cuts were reversed. While not technically illegal, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are tightly controlled, and Turkmenistan has no civil society sector to speak of.

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

The judicial system is subservient to the president, who appoints and removes judges without legislative review. The authorities frequently deny rights of due process, including public trials and access to defense attorneys. In February 2007, Berdymukhammedov set up a commission to accept complaints against law-enforcement authorities, but it is unclear whether this will give citizens recourse against the arbitrary actions of officials.

Prisons suffer from overcrowding and inadequate nutrition and medical care, and international organizations are not permitted to visit. While Berdymukhammedov announced in September 2007 that imprisoned former foreign ministers Boris Shikhmuradov and Batyr Berdyev were alive, the conditions in which they and other political prisoners are held remain unknown. A number of individuals who had been purged and jailed under Niyazov were released in October 2007, although high-profile prisoners like Shikhmuradov remained behind bars.

Turkmenistan is a smuggling corridor for drugs from neighboring Afghanistan, with numerous reports suggesting the involvement of high-level officials in the narcotics trade as well as a growing problem of drug addiction within Turkmenistan.

Employment and educational opportunities for ethnic minorities are limited by the government's promotion of Turkmen national identity and its discrimination against those who are not ethnic Turkmen. Under Niyazov, many Russian-language institutions, including schools, were closed; recent reports point to a possible restoration of some Russian-language education.

Freedom of movement overseas is restricted, with a reported "black list" preventing some individuals from leaving the country. In July 2007, the government lifted Niyazov-era domestic travel restrictions.

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. In June 2007, Berdymukhammedov ordered the seizure and audit of a secret account, thought to be held in a German bank, into which Niyazov was believed to have siphoned profits from natural gas sales.

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 with little or no compensation.

Traditional social and religious norms and a lack of employment prospects limit professional opportunities for women, and anecdotal reports suggest that domestic violence is common. Niyazov had gained fame for numerous and often bizarre pronouncements that led to infringements of personal social freedom, including campaigns against gold teeth and lip-synching. These appeared to come to an end with Niyazov's death.

Uzbekistan

Population: 26,500,000

Capital: Tashkent

Political Rights: 7

Civil Liberties: 7

Status: Not Free

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

Year Under Review	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Rating	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF

Overview:

The human rights situation in Uzbekistan remained grim in 2007, even as the government inched toward warmer ties with the European Union, apparently motivated by a desire to reduce its dependence on Moscow. President Islam Karimov secured a third term in a December presidential vote, ignoring constitutional rules that appeared to bar his reelection.

Uzbekistan gained independence from the Soviet Union through a December 1991 referendum on the issue. 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 ballots. The only independent candidate, Erk (Freedom) Party leader Mohammed Solih, claimed election fraud. Solih fled the country two years later, and his party was forced underground. Only progovernment parties were allowed to compete in elections to the first post-Soviet legislature in December 1994 and January 1995. A February 1995 referendum to extend Karimov's first five-year term in office until 2000 was allegedly approved by 99 percent of the country's voters.

The government's repression of the political opposition and of Muslims not affiliated with state-sanctioned religious institutions intensified after 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 to overthrow the secular government and establish an Islamic state.

All of the five parties that competed in the December 1999 parliamentary elections, which were strongly criticized by international monitors, supported the president. In the January 2000 presidential poll, Karimov defeated his only opponent, Marxist history professor Abdulhafiz

Jalolov, with 92 percent of the vote. The government refused to register genuine opposition parties or permit their members to stand as candidates. A January 2002 referendum extended presidential terms from five to seven years.

The fragile state of Uzbekistan's political order was highlighted by a series of suicide bomb attacks and related violent clashes in late March and early April 2004, in which some 50 people died. Police appeared to be the main targets, prompting speculation that the bombings were carried out by vengeful relatives of those imprisoned for alleged religious extremism. The authorities blamed radical international Islamist groups—particularly the IMU, which had links to al-Qaeda, and the banned Hizb ut-Tahrir (Party of Liberation)—and denied any connection to the government's repressive political and economic policies.

In July 2004, 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 groups claimed responsibility, most notably a previously unknown group that called itself Islamic Jihad, although the claims could not be independently verified. In December, elections for the lower house of a new bicameral parliament were held, with only the five legal, pro-presidential parties allowed to participate.

The city of Andijon in the Ferghana Valley, an area that has suffered both from the government's repression of Islamic groups and from high poverty and unemployment, was the scene of a popular uprising and violent security crackdown in May 2005. On May 10 and 11, family members and supporters of 23 local businessmen charged with involvement in a banned Islamic group staged a peaceful demonstration in anticipation of the trial verdict. The situation turned violent when armed supporters of the men attacked a police station and army barracks. They stormed the prison, freed the 23 businessmen and other inmates, and captured the local government administration building. Thousands of local residents, among them women and children, subsequently gathered in the city center, where people began to speak out on political and economic issues, often making antigovernment statements.

Security forces responded by opening fire on the demonstrators and storming the occupied building. Although the authorities maintained that the protesters were the first to open fire, eyewitnesses reported that the security forces began shooting indiscriminately. Official figures put the death toll at 187, but unofficial sources estimated the dead at nearly 800, most of them unarmed civilians. The government accused Islamic extremists of orchestrating the demonstrations, though most of the protesters appeared to have been motivated by economic and social grievances.

Karimov repeatedly rejected calls from the United Nations, the European Union (EU), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and the United States for an independent international inquiry into the violence. In July 2005, Uzbekistan gave the United States six months to leave its military base at Karshi-Khanabad, which it had been allowed to use to support operations in Afghanistan since late 2001 as part of a strategic partnership

between the two countries. Russia and China supported the official account of the violence and the U.S. base eviction.

The crackdown unleashed by the Uzbek authorities after the Andijon violence continued in 2006, targeting potential political opposition figures, human rights defenders, and even former officials. The government maintained tight control over all possible sources of dissent throughout 2007.

Karimov's seven-year term ended in January 2007, and the constitution barred him from running for reelection. While opposition parties abroad raised questions about Karimov's legitimacy after January, Uzbek officialdom was silent. In October, the Liberal Democratic Party nominated him as its candidate for a December presidential election, and he won with an official 88 percent of the vote. His three opponents openly supported him.

On the international front, Uzbekistan strove to restore some balance in 2007 after its concerted move toward Russia in the wake of the Andijon incident. A March 2007 visit to Tashkent by the Russian premier featured unusual complaints from Uzbek officials about the pace of Russian investment. An April agreement with China laid the groundwork for a natural gas export pipeline to that country. Meanwhile, in October the EU softened Andijon-related sanctions despite a marked lack of progress on human rights in Uzbekistan. Also that month, Karimov revived long-flagging regional ties with a visit to Turkmenistan.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Uzbekistan is not an electoral democracy. President Islam Karimov and the executive branch dominate the legislature and judiciary, and the government severely represses all political opposition. According to current constitutional rules, the president is limited to two seven-year terms, but Karimov, having served since before independence, was nevertheless reelected in December 2007. A dubious referendum in 2002 replaced the country's single-chamber legislature with a bicameral parliament consisting of a 120-seat lower house (with members elected by popular vote for five-year terms) and a 100-member upper house, or Senate (with 84 members elected by regional councils and 16 appointed by the president).

Parties based on ethnic or religious affiliations and those advocating subversion of the constitutional order are prohibited. Only five parties, all progovernment, are registered, and no genuine opposition groups function legally. A March 2007 law intended to expand the role of registered parties had little effect on the moribund political arena. Members of unregistered secular opposition groups, including Birlík and Erk, are subject to discrimination, and many live in exile abroad. The Sunshine Uzbekistan opposition movement was effectively smashed in 2006 with the conviction of its leader, businessman Sanjar Umarov, on a variety of economic charges.

Corruption is widespread. Uzbekistan was ranked 175 out of 180 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2007 Corruption Perceptions Index.

While the constitution guarantees free speech, the law restricts freedom of speech and the press, particularly with regard to reports on the government and Karimov. The state controls major media outlets as well as newspaper printing and distribution facilities. Although official censorship was abolished in 2002, newspaper editors were warned by the State Press Committee that they would be held personally accountable for what they published. Self-censorship remains widespread. In the aftermath of the violence in Andijon in May 2005, the authorities struck out at independent and foreign media outlets. In December 2005, for instance, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty was forced to close its Tashkent bureau when the Justice Ministry refused to extend its accreditation. The government has also blocked websites with critical materials, most recently after the killing of journalist Alisher Saipov, a critic of the Uzbek regime, in Kyrgyzstan in October 2007.

The government permits the existence of mainstream religions, including approved Muslim, Jewish, and Christian denominations. However, religious activities by unregistered groups is punishable by fines or imprisonment. The state exercises strict control over Islamic worship, including the content of sermons, and suspected members of banned Muslim organizations and their relatives have been subjected to arrest, interrogation, torture, and extortion. Harsh crackdowns followed the outbreaks of violence in 2004 and 2005. In November 2006 the U.S. State Department added Uzbekistan to its list of countries of “particular concern” for violations of religious freedom. Some reports in 2007, however, suggested a slight relaxation in official constraints on the activities of mainstream Muslims.

The government limits academic freedom, according to the U.S. State Department’s 2007 human rights report. While professors generally are required to have their lectures preapproved, enforcement varies. Bribes are commonly required to gain entrance to exclusive universities and to obtain good grades.

Open and free private discussion is limited by the mahalla committees, traditional neighborhood organizations that the government has turned into an official system for public surveillance and control.

Freedom of association is restricted. Unregistered nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), including the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan (HRSU), can face difficulties operating. After the unrest in Andijon, the government intensified its crackdown on human rights activists and NGOs, particularly those that receive funding or other support from the United States and the EU. The regime associates such groups with popular protests that led to the overthrow of the leaders of Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan in recent years. In 2005–06, court decisions led to the temporary or permanent closure of virtually all foreign-funded organizations in Uzbekistan.

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, and participants have been harassed, arrested, and jailed. 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 at any time. Police routinely abuse and torture suspects to extract confessions, which are accepted by judges as evidence and often serve as the basis for convictions. A 2007 report by Human Rights Watch described torture as “endemic” to the criminal justice system. Law enforcement authorities reportedly often plant contraband on suspected Islamic extremists or political opponents to justify their arrest. In 2007, rights activists Gulbahor Turayeva and Umida Niyazova were tried, sentenced, and then released after dubious “confessions” in which they recanted their previous human rights activities.

Prisons suffer from severe overcrowding and shortages of food and medicine. Inmates, particularly those sentenced for their religious beliefs, are often subjected to abuse or torture, and Human Rights Watch has documented a number of torture-related deaths in custody during the last few years.

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

Permission is required to move to a new city, and the authorities rarely grant permission to move to Tashkent. Bribes are commonly paid to obtain the necessary registration documents. Restrictions on foreign travel include the use of exit visas, which are often issued selectively. Nevertheless, millions of Uzbeks, primarily men of working age, work abroad—primarily in Russia and Kazakhstan—which affects the domestic political atmosphere.

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

Women’s educational and professional prospects are limited by cultural and religious norms and by ongoing economic difficulties. Victims of domestic violence are discouraged from pressing charges against perpetrators, who rarely face 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 in unhealthy conditions, often receiving inadequate food and water. This practice can be linked to the absence of adult males in the labor force.

Zimbabwe

Population: 13,300,000

Capital: Harare

Political Rights: 7

Civil Liberties: 6

Status: Not Free

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

Year Under Review	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Rating	5,5,PF	6,5,PF	6,5,PF	6,6,NF	6,6,NF	6,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF

Overview:

The Zimbabwean leadership engaged in a renewed violent crackdown on the political opposition in 2007, including hundreds of arrests and scores of beatings by security forces and progovernment gangs. A series of bans on political gatherings and ad hoc curfews further restricted political and civil liberties during the year, and the authorities continued to repress independent media. Nevertheless, negotiations between the government and the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) led to an apparent consensus on political reforms and plans for presidential and parliamentary elections in 2008, although there was scant evidence that the polls would be either free or fair. Meanwhile, Zimbabwe's economic crisis worsened, with inflation reaching almost 8,000 percent by November. Public health and development was threatened further by a breakdown in basic services.

In 1965, a white-minority regime in what was then Southern Rhodesia unilaterally declared independence from Britain. A guerrilla war led by black nationalist groups, as well as sanctions and diplomatic pressure from Britain and the United States, contributed to the end of white-minority rule in 1979 and the recognition of an independent Zimbabwe in 1980. Robert Mugabe and the Zimbabwe African National Union–Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), first brought to power in relatively democratic elections, have ruled the country since then.

Zimbabwe was relatively stable in its first years of independence, but from 1983 to 1987, the Shona-dominated government violently suppressed opposition among the Ndebele minority, and between 10,000 and 20,000 civilians were killed by government forces. Widespread political unrest in the 1990s led to the creation in 1999 of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), an alliance between trade unions and other civil society groups. In 2000, the MDC helped defeat a referendum on a draft constitution that aimed

to expand executive power. Parliamentary elections in June 2000 were deemed by observers to be fundamentally flawed prior to balloting. Candidates and supporters of the MDC faced violence and intimidation; voter registration, identification procedures, and tabulation of results were highly irregular; and ZANU-PF used substantial state resources, including state-run media, to aid its campaign.

After months of political violence aimed at MDC supporters, Mugabe defeated MDC candidate and trade union leader Morgan Tsvangirai in a deeply flawed presidential election in 2002. Mass protests and strikes called by Tsvangirai in 2003 were crushed by security forces. Parliamentary elections in March 2005 were similarly marked by political violence and fraudulent electoral processes. As in previous elections, ZANU-PF used government food stocks as a political weapon, denying supplies to some MDC supporters and promising it to other citizens in exchange for votes. In addition, only African monitors believed to be sympathetic to ZANU-PF were allowed to observe the elections, which resulted in a sweeping victory for the ruling party. With 78 elected and 30 appointed seats, it gained a two-thirds legislative majority and the ability to amend the constitution. The MDC won only 41 of 120 elected seats.

The government subsequently enacted a far-reaching Constitutional Amendment Bill. Among other provisions, the bill abolished freehold property titles by nationalizing all land, denied landowners any legal recourse regarding expropriated land, brought all schools under state control, and empowered the government to seize the passports and travel documents of people deemed a threat to national interests. Furthermore, the bill reintroduced an upper legislative house, the Senate, elections for which were held in November 2005. ZANU-PF secured 59 out of 66 seats; the MDC, deeply split over whether to participate in the elections, fielded just 26 candidates and won 7 seats. Less than 20 percent of voters turned out for the balloting.

Also in 2005, the government implemented a politically tinged slum-clearance effort known as Operation Murambatsvina (OM), which means “drive out the trash” in the Shona language. Beginning in Harare, the operation soon spread to almost every urban area and rural business center in Zimbabwe, resulting in the destruction of thousands of informal businesses and dwellings as well as thousands of arrests. Initially moved into transit camps near cities, many displaced residents were forced to return to the rural areas designated on their national identity cards. According to the United Nations, approximately 700,000 people were made homeless by the operation, and another 2.4 million were affected directly or indirectly. While the government defended OM as a necessary effort to restore law and order to the country’s cities, many analysts maintain that it was designed to impose control over urban areas that had proven to be MDC strongholds and sources of antigovernment agitation.

Victims of OM have seen little improvement in basic living conditions. The government has actively prevented civic groups and aid agencies—as well as the United Nations—from gaining access to the displaced. Upon initiating the campaign, government officials had announced ambitious plans—dubbed Operation Garikai/Hlalani Kuhle, or Better Life—to build new housing projects

for the urban poor in place of the destroyed dwellings. However, according to numerous human rights organizations, these projects remained mostly incomplete, and failed to benefit people displaced by OM. Amnesty International reported that “almost none of the victims of Operation Murambatsvina have benefited from the rebuilding, with only 3,325 houses constructed—compared to the 92,460 homes destroyed.” The group also noted that most constructed houses were incomplete, and that many houses and plots had been allocated by political affiliation or bribery.

Meanwhile, the government’s seizures of white-owned farmland, which began in 2000, precipitated the collapse of Zimbabwe’s agriculture-based economy. Much of the seized land went to ZANU-PF officials, Mugabe loyalists, and war veterans without a farming background. The country’s gross domestic product has fallen more than 40 percent since the land reform began, and the economy has been plagued by extreme hyperinflation: the inflation rate neared 8,000 percent in November 2007. In recent years, the government has attempted a number of interventions, mostly currency devaluations and price controls, to stave off economic disaster. In 2006, government attempts to enforce a 1,000 percent devaluation led to the detention of over 2,000 people and the seizure of more than Z\$20 billion (US\$200,000) by police officers, soldiers, and members of ZANU-PF’s youth militias. In June 2007, the government ordered firms to cut prices of basic goods by half, resulting in massive shortages, panicked buying, and the arrest of thousands of businesspeople for noncompliance; in August, the policy was suspended. The central bank announced the introduction of a new devalued currency in October. Zimbabwe’s economic crisis is the primary reason behind the emigration of as many as three million Zimbabweans in recent years. Unemployment in 2007 was estimated at 80 percent.

The worsening economic and political conditions led to a spate of antigovernment protests in 2007, most of which were violently dispersed by security forces amid a general crackdown on the political opposition. In February, police used roadblocks, tear gas, and water cannons to disperse an MDC rally in Harare; citing the disorderly conduct of the oppositionists, the government then implemented a three-month ban on political gatherings. The following month, police violently broke up a large prayer meeting organized by the Save Zimbabwe Campaign in Harare. One MDC leader was shot dead, and over 50 people were arrested. Many of the detainees were badly beaten on site or in police custody, including Tsvangirai and Lovemore Madhuku, leader of the National Constitutional Assembly, a reformist umbrella group. After unidentified assailants firebombed several police stations around the country, police raided MDC headquarters, arrested at least 20 people, beat several of them, and charged nine with attempted murder. According to Human Rights Watch, police also attacked residents of alleged opposition strongholds in Harare, Bulawayo, and Mutare. The crackdown continued in May when police violently stopped a demonstration by the Law Society of Zimbabwe, beating several lawyers. Later that month, police arrested some 200 MDC members in

connection with petrol bombings in Harare; all were released without charge, though several were beaten. Authorities extended the ban on political gatherings.

Despite the political violence, negotiations between ZANU-PF and the MDC—brokered by South African president Thabo Mbeki—yielded an agreement in September. The MDC reportedly agreed to vote for a constitutional amendment that moves parliamentary elections to 2008 and allows Mugabe to present a chosen successor for approval by Parliament. In exchange, the amendment removes appointed seats from the legislature, increases the overall number of parliamentary seats, and redraws constituency boundaries. The government also agreed to ensure the independence of the electoral commission, revamp the Public Order and Security Act (POSA), and allow Zimbabweans living abroad to vote. Mugabe, who was planning to run for reelection in 2008, signed the amendment into law in November. In December, Parliament began debating changes to the POSA.

The collapse of Zimbabwe's economy has resulted in large-scale food shortages. In August 2006, the World Food Programme estimated that 3.3 million Zimbabweans would require additional food aid in 2007. Food, humanitarian, and educational aid are often distributed or withheld to serve political ends. Basic utilities such as electricity and water are deteriorating, threatening health as well as economic activity. Health services are also strained by a high HIV prevalence rate; about 20 percent of Zimbabweans are infected with the virus. The continuing political and social crisis in Zimbabwe has highlighted the unwillingness of the African Union and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights to act against even its most abusive members.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Zimbabwe is not an electoral democracy. Recent presidential and legislative elections have been marred by political violence and intimidation, a discriminatory electoral framework, biased media coverage, and the unscrupulous use of state resources. President Robert Mugabe and the ruling ZANU-PF party have dominated the political landscape since independence in 1980, overseeing at least 17 amendments to the constitution that have expanded presidential power. Mugabe has on several occasions invoked the Presidential Powers Act, which enables him to bypass normal governmental review and oversight procedures. Presidential elections are held every six years. Despite his vows to retire, Mugabe has been nominated by ZANU-PF to run in the 2008 presidential election. In November 2007, Mugabe signed into law a constitutional amendment allowing the president to select a successor if he does not complete his term. The measure also moved parliamentary elections to 2008.

Since the reconstitution of the Senate in 2005, Zimbabwe has had a bicameral legislature. The Senate includes 50 directly elected members, 6 presidential appointees, and 10 traditional chiefs. The House of Assembly comprises 120 elected seats and 30 seats filled by various Mugabe appointees; elections are held every five years. ZANU-PF loyalists make up 72 percent of the House of Assembly and over 89 percent of the Senate. The 2007

constitutional amendment removes appointed seats from the legislature, increases the number of seats overall, and redraws constituency boundaries.

Despite splits within the party concerning participation in the 2005 Senate elections, the MDC represents the most significant opposition force in Zimbabwe. Morgan Tsvangirai, leader of the anti-Senate faction, and Arthur Mutambara, head of the pro-Senate group, joined forces to stage antigovernment rallies in 2007. Both factions also agreed to the constitutional accord with ZANU-PF.

Corruption is rampant throughout the country, including at the highest levels of government. Patronage is crucial to ZANU-PF's grip on power: the party owns a wide range of businesses, and party loyalists have been allocated many of the properties seized from white farmers. The collapse in public-service delivery has made corruption a ubiquitous part of dealing with local officials. Anticorruption prosecutions are almost exclusively motivated by political vendettas; the November 2007 arrest of Attorney General Sobusa Gula-Ndebele on corruption-related charges was tied directly to an ongoing power struggle within ZANU-PF. Reports of extensive corruption and nepotism have contributed to the stark decline in public and investor confidence in Zimbabwe's economy. Zimbabwe was ranked 150 out of 180 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2007 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of expression and of the press is severely restricted in Zimbabwe. The country's draconian legal framework includes the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA), the Official Secrets Act, the POSA, and the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act. In general, these laws restrict who may work as a journalist, require journalists to register with the state, greatly restrict what journalists may publish, and mandate harsh penalties—including long prison sentences—for violators. Journalists are routinely subjected to verbal intimidation, physical attacks, arrest and detention, and financial pressure by the police and supporters of the ruling party. Several journalists were arrested and beaten while covering the government's crackdown on the MDC in 2007. In April, a cameraman for state television, Edward Chikomba, was abducted, beaten, and murdered, allegedly for leaking footage of Tsvangirai's beating. Foreign journalists are rarely granted visas, and local correspondents for foreign publications have been refused accreditation or threatened with lawsuits and deportation.

The government dominates the print and broadcast media. Coverage in state-controlled dailies such as the Chronicle and the Herald consists of favorable portrayals of Mugabe and ZANU-PF and attacks on government critics. The Daily News, the country's only independent daily, was shuttered in 2003 for not adhering to the AIPPA. The state-controlled Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) runs all broadcast media, which are seen as mouthpieces of the regime. The cost of satellite services that provide international news programming place them out of reach for most Zimbabweans. In 2005, the government began jamming the shortwave radio signals of stations perceived as hostile, including Voice of the People, the London-based SW Radio Africa, and the Voice of America. In April 2007, the

Iranian government agreed to help fund a new state radio station intended to counter Western broadcasts. Mugabe enacted the Interception of Communications Bill in August, empowering the state to monitor telephonic and electronic communication with sophisticated surveillance technologies acquired from China.

Freedom of religion is generally respected, although church attendance is becoming increasingly politicized. Zimbabwe's economic crisis has propelled a recent boom in attendance, and church groups such as the Solidarity Peace Trust and the Zimbabwe Christian Alliance have been at the forefront of opposition to the Mugabe government. Other church groups, such as the Zimbabwe Council of Churches and the Ecumenical Peace Initiative, are widely perceived as progovernment. In September 2007, vocal government critic Bishop Pius Ncube resigned his post after evidence of an adulterous affair surfaced in the media; Ncube claims the scandal was manufactured by the government.

Academic freedom is limited. All schools are under state control, and education aid is often distributed based on parents' political loyalties. Security forces and ZANU-PF thugs harass dissident university students, who have been arrested or expelled for protesting against government policy. In 2007, several protests by university students resulted in arrests and beatings; police closed the University of Zimbabwe in July. In September, the police defied a High Court ruling to reopen student residences that were kept shut after classes resumed.

The nongovernmental sector is small but active. However, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), particularly those dealing with human rights issues, have faced increasing legal restrictions and extralegal harassment. In 2004, Parliament passed the Non-Governmental Organizations Act, which increased scrutiny of groups that "promote and protect human rights" and explicitly prohibited such groups from receiving foreign funding. Public demonstrations and protests are severely restricted under the 2002 POSA, which requires police permission to hold public meetings and demonstrations. Such meetings are often deemed illegal and broken up, and participants are subject to arbitrary arrest by security forces (including intelligence officers) and attacks by ZANU-PF militias. The POSA also allows police to impose arbitrary curfews and forbids criticism of the president. In addition to the crackdown on political opposition rallies, police forces blocked or broke up several citizen protests in 2007. Hundreds of protesters were arrested during a large march organized by Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) in rural Matabeleland to protest economic conditions.

The right to collective labor 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 in "essential" industries. Because the Zimbabwean Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) has led resistance to Mugabe's rule, it has become a particular target for repression. In April 2007, a nationwide strike called by ZCTU in response to the economic crisis was poorly observed due to workers' precarious economic conditions and intimidation by security forces.

While some courts have struck down or disputed government actions, increasing pressure by the regime has substantially eroded the judiciary's capacity to act independently. The accused are often denied access to counsel and a fair, timely trial. The government has repeatedly refused to enforce court orders and has replaced senior judges or pressured them to resign by stating that it could not guarantee their security; judges have been subject to extensive physical harassment. The judicial system has been burdened by the vacancy of nearly 60 magistrate posts, which has caused a backlog of some 60,000 cases.

In general, security and military forces are accountable to the government but abuse citizens with impunity. Security forces often ignore basic rights regarding detention, searches, and seizures. The government has taken no clear action to halt the rising incidence of torture and mistreatment of suspects held by police or security services. War veterans and ZANU-PF militias—including the youth militia—operate as de facto enforcers of government policies and have committed human rights abuses such as assault, torture, rape, extralegal evictions, and extralegal executions without fear of punishment. Security forces have taken on increased roles in crop collection, food distribution, and enforcement of government monetary policy. In May 2007, the government began a large recruitment drive intended to double the size of the police force before national elections in 2008. The police as well as the military are heavily politicized, as evidenced in a special report released by the International Bar Association in November 2007.

Prison conditions are harsh and life-threatening. Severe overcrowding and a major shortage of funds has contributed to a rise in HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis infections among inmates, food shortages, and the deterioration of already poor health and sanitation facilities. Deaths in prisons are often caused by disease or beatings by guards. Many prisoners rely on family members for food. Pretrial detention is a major problem, with some inmates being held for over 10 years without trial. Women and juveniles are housed separately from men, and pretrial detainees are generally held in separate, common cells.

The minority Ndebele ethnic group continues to suffer political and economic discrimination, and Ndebele areas are often targeted by security forces as opposition strongholds. Restrictive citizenship laws discriminate against Zimbabweans with origins in neighboring African countries.

The state has extensive control over travel and residence. The government has seized the passports of prominent government critics, and foreign critics are routinely expelled or prevented from entering the country. In March 2007, the police banned several MDC activists seeking medical treatment abroad from leaving the country.

Property rights are not respected in Zimbabwe. Operation Murambatsvina featured the eviction of hundreds of thousands of urban dwellers from their homes and the destruction of thousands of residential and commercial structures, many of which had been approved by the government. Fewer than 400 white-owned farms remain out of the 4,500 that existed when land invasions started in 2000. A February deadline for remaining white farmers to leave their land was delayed in 2007. Still, any avenues of legal recourse for expelled

farmers have been closed. In September, Parliament passed a bill mandating that 51 percent of shares in all—including foreign—companies operating in Zimbabwe must be owned by black Zimbabweans.

Women enjoy extensive legal protections, but de facto societal discrimination and domestic violence persist. Women serve as ministers in national and local governments and hold seats in Parliament. Joyce Mujuru is second vice president of Zimbabwe and a possible successor to Mugabe. The World Health Organization has reported that Zimbabwean women's life expectancy of 34 years is the world's shortest. Sexual abuse is widespread, including the use of rape as a political weapon. A recent upsurge in gender-based violence spurred renewed calls for the enactment of the Prevention of Domestic Violence Bill, which has lingered in Parliament for eight years. In July 2007, Amnesty International reported that women oppositionists faced particular brutality by security forces. The prevalence of customary laws in rural areas undermines women's civil rights and access to education. Homosexuality, decried as un-African by Mugabe, is illegal in Zimbabwe.

↓ China

Tibet

Population: 5,300,000 [This figure from China's 2000 census includes 2.4 million Tibetans living in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and 2.9 million Tibetans living in areas of eastern Tibet that, beginning in 1950, were incorporated into four Chinese provinces.]

Political Rights: 7

Civil Liberties: 7

Status: Not Free

Trend Arrow: Tibet received a downward trend arrow due to new regulations that require Chinese government approval for reincarnated Tibetan Buddhist teachers, as well the intensification of forced resettlement of traditionally nomadic Tibetan herders.

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

Year Under Review	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Rating	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF

Overview:

Fearing instability in the run-up to the Beijing Olympics in 2008, the Chinese authorities amplified their repressive policies in 2007. In addition to the intensification of forced resettlement of traditionally nomadic herders, regulations announced or implemented during the year effectively increased the authorities' control over Tibetan Buddhism, escalating tensions and sparking clashes between police and Tibetans across the Tibet Autonomous Region and surrounding provinces.

Communist China formally annexed Tibetan territory in 1951. In an effort to undermine Tibetan claims to statehood, Beijing split up the lands that had traditionally comprised Tibet, incorporating the eastern portion into four different Chinese provinces. The remaining area, which had been under the administration of the Dalai Lama's government, was designated the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) in 1965.

In 1959, Chinese troops suppressed a major uprising in Lhasa in which 87,000 people were reportedly killed. Tibet's spiritual and political leader—the 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso—was forced to flee to India with some 80,000 supporters. During the next six years, China closed 97 percent of the region's monasteries and defrocked more than 100,000 monks and nuns. During the

Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966–76), nearly all of Tibet's 6,200 monasteries were destroyed.

Resistance to Beijing's rule continued and was ruthlessly suppressed. Under reforms introduced in 1980, religious practice was allowed again—with restrictions—and tourism was permitted in certain areas. Beginning in 1987, some 200 mostly peaceful demonstrations were mounted. After antigovernment protests in March 1989, martial law was imposed; it was not lifted until May 1990.

In addition to jailing dissidents, Beijing stepped up efforts to control religious affairs and undermine the exiled Dalai Lama's authority. In 1995, six-year-old Gedhun Choekyi Nyima was detained by the authorities and his selection by the Dalai Lama as the 11th reincarnation of the Panchen Lama was rejected. Beijing then orchestrated the selection of another six-year-old boy as the Panchen Lama. Since one of the roles of the Panchen Lama is to identify the reincarnated Dalai Lama, the move was seen as a bid by Beijing to control the eventual selection of the 15th Dalai Lama.

The Chinese government has made a series of goodwill gestures that may be aimed at influencing international opinion on Tibet. Several political prisoners have been freed shortly before the end of their sentences. China hosted envoys of the Dalai Lama in 2002, the first formal contacts between Beijing and the Dalai Lama since 1993, and the sixth round of the ongoing dialogue was held in June 2007. Since 1988, the Tibetan government-in-exile has sought to negotiate genuine autonomy for Tibet, having dropped earlier demands for independence. While official statements suggest that Beijing is willing to have contacts with the Dalai Lama, the government disputes his view that an autonomous Tibet should include territory that has been incorporated into Chinese provinces and rejects his aspirations for a democratically elected government within the autonomous area. Other Tibetan groups remain firmly in favor of independence.

The Chinese government extols the economic development brought to Tibet by its Western Development Program, particularly the Qinghai–Tibet railway, inaugurated in July 2006; Beijing asserts that it will raise living standards. Tourism revenue is expected to exceed \$700 million by 2010, and the number of visitors is set to jump from 1.8 million in 2005 to 10 million by 2020. The Chinese government is also eager to exploit the region's rich natural resources, inviting international companies to carry out oil and gas exploration. While many Tibetans have benefited from such development, particularly the infrastructural improvements, the changes have disproportionately benefited Han Chinese. Scholars predict that the new railroad will increase Han Chinese migration to the TAR, heightening ethnic tensions and Tibetan fears of cultural assimilation. In a related move, in line with the latest Five-Year Plan (2006–10), Beijing has intensified efforts to forcibly resettle traditionally nomadic Tibetan herders in permanent-housing areas.

Fearing instability in the run-up to the Beijing Olympics in 2008, the authorities amplified their repressive policies in 2007. In October, China lodged a diplomatic protest after the Dalai Lama was awarded the U.S. Congressional

Gold Medal, and the government intensified its anti-Dalai Lama “patriotic education” campaign. Regulations implemented or announced in 2007 effectively increased the authorities’ control over Tibetan Buddhism, escalating tensions and sparking clashes between police and Tibetans. The unrest resulted in arrests and detentions across the TAR and surrounding provinces.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

The Chinese government rules Tibet through administration of the TAR and 10 Tibetan autonomous prefectures in traditional Tibetan areas within nearby Sichuan, Qinghai, Gansu, and Yunnan provinces. Under the Chinese constitution, autonomous regions have the right to formulate their own regulations and implement national legislation in accordance with local conditions. In practice, the TAR mirrors the rest of China and is governed through the local legislature or people’s congress system, with representatives sent annually to attend the National People’s Congress in Beijing. Unlike China’s provinces, which are run by governors, autonomous regional governments have the post of chairman, usually held by a member of the largest ethnic group. Jampa Phuntsog, an ethnic Tibetan, has served as chairman of the TAR government since 2003, but few of the other senior positions are held by Tibetans. No Tibetan has ever held the top post of TAR Communist Party secretary. Zhang Qingli, a Han Chinese, was appointed to the post in May 2006. Basic freedoms guaranteed under the Chinese constitution are strictly limited.

Corruption remains a problem in Tibet. Official reports noted that 74 cases of corruption and dereliction of duty were being dealt with in 2006. There are concerns that criminal organizations are using the Qinghai–Tibet railway to smuggle endangered plant and animal species. Tibet is not ranked separately on Transparency International’s 2007 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Chinese authorities control the flow of information in Tibet, tightly restricting all media and regulating internet use. International broadcasts continue to be jammed. Increased availability of the internet in urban areas has provided more access to information, although identity cards must be shown to use the internet in public facilities. Internet restrictions in place in China are enforced all the more stringently in the TAR. Restrictions on internet content introduced in 2005 prevent distribution of uncensored information through websites or email; this ban includes any information relating to Tibetan independence, the government-in-exile, or human rights abuses. In July 2007, a Tibetan-run website known as the Lamp was reportedly closed, followed in October by tibetti.com, tibetcm.com, and blogwww.tibetcm.com.

According to the U.S. State Department’s 2006 human rights report, issued in March 2007, the government’s record on respect for religious freedom “remained poor.” While some religious practices are tolerated, officials “forcibly suppressed activities they viewed as vehicles for political dissent or advocacy of Tibetan independence.” Possession of Dalai Lama–related materials can still lead to imprisonment; in March 2007, businessman Penpa received a three-year sentence after he was found in possession of Dalai Lama CDs.

Communist Party members and senior officials in Tibet must adhere to atheism and cannot practice a religion. The Religious Affairs Bureaus (RABs) continue to control who can and cannot study religion in the TAR. Officials allow only boys over the age of 18 to become monks, and they are required to sign a declaration rejecting Tibetan independence, expressing loyalty to the Chinese government, and denouncing the Dalai Lama. TAR regulations implemented in January 2007 and national regulations announced in July endow the authorities with unprecedented control over Tibetan Buddhism, notably requiring government approval for the recognition and education of reincarnated teachers and restricting travel for the purpose of practicing religion.

Since 1996, Beijing has strengthened control through a propaganda campaign intended to undermine the Dalai Lama's influence. The government announced the end of this "patriotic education campaign" in 2000, but "work teams" continue to visit monasteries to conduct mandatory sessions. In 2005, 40 out of 50 nuns practicing at the Gyarak Nunnery were expelled for refusing to participate in such sessions. Since Zhang Qingli was appointed party secretary in 2006, the campaign has intensified. Police clashed with Tibetans in Kardze, Sichuan province, in August 2007, and nomad chief Runggyal Adak and several of his family members were detained. The propaganda campaign was then extended to the general populace, and in October 2007 two Tibetans were reportedly arrested for refusing to participate. Beijing protested conferral of the U.S. Congressional Gold Medal on the Dalai Lama in October 2007, and there were reports of numerous clashes between police and monks celebrating the event. In one incident, three monks were reportedly detained at Drepung monastery.

The government manages the daily operations of monasteries through Democratic Management Committees (DMCs) and the RABs. The government approves all committee members so that only "patriotic and devoted" monks and nuns may lead DMCs. Since 1995, laypeople have also been appointed to these committees. According to the U.S. State Department's 2006 human rights report, Beijing claims that Buddhist monasteries are associated with proindependence activism in Tibetan areas. As a result, spiritual leaders have encountered difficulty reestablishing historical monasteries.

In universities, professors cannot lecture on certain topics, and many must attend political indoctrination sessions. The government restricts course materials, prohibiting information deemed "politically sensitive," in order to prevent campus-based political and religious activity.

Chinese law provides for freedom of peaceful assembly; however, it is severely restricted in practice. Independent trade unions, civic groups, and human rights groups are illegal. Some international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) focusing on development and health care operate in Tibet, under highly restrictive agreements. However, cumbersome registration requirements and a clampdown on NGOs since the 2003–05 "color revolutions" in three former Soviet republics make it increasingly difficult for these organizations to operate.

While some progress has been made in establishing the rule of law in other parts of China, the judicial system in Tibet remains abysmal, with most judges lacking any legal education. There is a lack of access to legal representation, and trials are closed if the issue of “state security” is invoked.

Owing to strictly controlled access to the TAR, it is difficult to determine the exact number of political prisoners. According to the 2007 annual report of the U.S. Congressional-Executive Commission on China, there were a total of 100 known political detainees, down from 145 in 2004. Of the 13 political detentions that took place in 2006, 11 detainees were reportedly monks and nuns. The Chinese government allowed the UN Human Rights Commission’s Special Rapporteur on torture, Manfred Nowak, to visit Tibet in December 2005, but political dissidents continue to face particularly severe human rights abuses. Security forces routinely engage in arbitrary arrest, detention, torture, and execution without due process, punishing even nonviolent protests against Chinese rule.

Following the September 2006 videotaping of Chinese soldiers shooting Tibetan civilians as they attempted to seek refuge in Nepal, there has been a crackdown on people trying to flee across the border. Although Beijing issued denials, there were reports in October 2007 that three Tibetans were arrested and nine others were missing after being shot at by police in the same area.

As members of one of China’s 55 officially recognized “minority” groups, Tibetans receive preferential treatment in university admissions. However, the dominant role of the Chinese language in education and in career fields limits opportunities for many Tibetans. Furthermore, the illiteracy rate among Tibetans (over 47 percent) remains five times greater than that of Han Chinese (around 9 percent). In the private sector, employers favor Chinese for many jobs, especially in urban areas. Tibetans find it more difficult than Chinese to obtain permits and loans to open businesses.

In line with the latest Five-Year Plan (2006–10), Beijing has intensified efforts to forcibly resettle traditionally nomadic Tibetan herders in permanent-housing areas. Some 56,000 people were relocated in the first year of the plan, and half of the TAR’s rural population could be forcibly resettled by 2010.

China’s restrictive family-planning policies are more leniently enforced for Tibetans and other ethnic minorities than for Han Chinese. Officials limit urban Tibetans to having two children and encourage—but do not usually require—rural Tibetans to stop at three children.

Morocco

Western Sahara

Population: 500,000

Political Rights: 7

Civil Liberties: 6

Status: Not Free

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

Year Under Review	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Rating	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF

Overview:

The proindependence Polisario Front and the Moroccan government in 2007 held two rounds of direct talks in the United States about Western Sahara's fate. The Moroccan government also proposed a plan for Sahrawi autonomy but remained steadfast in its refusal to entertain the idea of independence. The two U.S. meetings did not produce any concrete results, and additional talks were planned for early 2008. Meanwhile, the situation on the ground for Sahrawis remained largely unchanged.

Western Sahara was ruled by Spain for nearly a century until Spanish troops withdrew in 1976, following a bloody guerrilla conflict with the pro-independence Polisario Front. Mauritania and Morocco both ignored the Polisario's aspirations and claimed the resource-rich region for themselves, agreeing to a partition in which Morocco received the northern two-thirds. However, Polisario proclaimed an independent Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic and continued its guerrilla campaign. Mauritania renounced its claim to the region in 1979, and Morocco filled the vacuum by annexing the entire territory.

Moroccan and Polisario forces engaged in a low-intensity conflict until the United Nations brokered a ceasefire in 1991. The agreement called for the residents of Western Sahara to vote in a referendum on independence the following year, to be supervised by the newly established UN Mission for a Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). However, the vote never took place, with the two sides disagreeing about who was eligible to participate.

Morocco tried to bolster its annexation by offering financial incentives for Moroccans to move to Western Sahara and for Sahrawis to move to Morocco. The Moroccan ruler repeatedly visited the territory and made

declarative speeches about its historical connection to his kingdom. Morocco has also used more coercive measures to assert its control, engaging in forced resettlements of Sahrawis and detaining pro-independence activists. The Moroccan government's conduct in recent years has been less oppressive, but its human rights record with regard to the Western Sahara occupation remains poor.

In 2004, the Polisario accepted the UN Security Council's Baker II plan (named after UN special envoy and former U.S. secretary of state James Baker), which called for up to five years of autonomy followed by a referendum on the territory's status. However, Morocco rejected the plan, and Baker himself has said that Morocco is not interested in implementing any plan that could eventually lead to independence.

Morocco in 2007 offered an autonomy plan as an alternative to the scuttled Baker proposal, apparently attempting to demonstrate its willingness to compromise. However, the Moroccan government continued to rule out independence, even as the Polisario remained committed to an eventual referendum on the question. Because of this impasse, the two sides failed to make substantial progress in two rounds of talks in the United States during the year. Additional negotiations were planned for early 2008.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

As the occupying force in Western Sahara, Morocco controls local elections and works to ensure that independence-minded leaders are excluded from both the local political process and the Moroccan Parliament.

Western Sahara is not listed separately on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, but corruption is believed to be at least as much of a problem as it is in Morocco.

According to the Moroccan constitution, the press is free, but in practice this is not the case. There is little in the way of independent Sahrawi media. Moroccan authorities are sensitive to critical reporting that contradicts the state's position on Western Sahara, and will expel or detain Sahrawi, Moroccan, and foreign reporters who cross the line. Online media and independent satellite broadcasts are largely unavailable to the impoverished population.

Nearly all Sahrawis are Sunni Muslims, as are most Moroccans, and Moroccan authorities generally do not impede their freedom of worship. There are no major universities or institutions of higher learning in Western Sahara.

Sahrawis are not permitted to form independent political organizations, and their freedom of assembly is greatly restricted. Moroccan authorities regularly use force when quelling demonstrations and riots in Sahrawi towns and villages. In 2007, there were fewer cases of violent crackdowns on demonstrators. Sahrawis are technically subject to Moroccan labor laws, but there is little organized labor activity in the poverty-stricken region.

Particularly during the 1961–99 reign of Morocco's King Hassan II, Sahrawis who opposed the regime were summarily detained, killed, tortured, and "disappeared" by the thousands. While the situation has improved since the

1991 ceasefire and the coronation of King Mohamed VI, pro-independence Sahrawis are still are detained, harassed, threatened, and in some cases tortured.

International human rights groups have criticized Morocco's human rights record in Western Sahara for decades. A highly critical September 2006 report by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights—intended to be distributed only to Algeria, Morocco, and the Polisario—was leaked to the press that October. The human rights situation in the territory tends to worsen during periods of increased demonstrations against Moroccan rule, as was the case in 2005. For their part, the Polisario have also been accused of disregarding human rights.

Morocco and the Polisario both restrict free movement in potential conflict areas. Morocco has been accused using force and financial incentives to alter the composition of Western Sahara's population.

Sahrawi women face much of the same cultural and legal discrimination as Moroccan women. Conditions are generally worse for women living in rural areas, where poverty and illiteracy rates are higher.

Russia

Chechnya

Population: 1,200,000 (Source: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in the Russian Federation, 2007, Inter-Agency Transitional Workplan for the North Caucasus. The population of Chechnya according to the 2002 Russian census was approximately 1,100,000.)

Political Rights: 7

Civil Liberties: 7

Status: Not Free

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

Year Under Review	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Rating	6,6,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF

Overview:

Ramzan Kadyrov became president of Chechnya in February 2007, formalizing the power he had previously held informally. Although there were signs that his corruption-tinged reconstruction efforts and brutal suppression of rebel groups were yielding increased economic activity, few outside businesses operated in the republic, and heavy military and law enforcement presences remained in place to ensure security. In contrast to the relative calm in Chechnya, the level of violence continued to increase in neighboring Dagestan and Ingushetia.

Chechnya, a small, partly mountainous North Caucasus republic, has a history of armed resistance to Russian rule dating to the czarist period. In February 1944, the Chechens were deported en masse to Kazakhstan after Soviet leader Joseph Stalin accused them of collaborating with Nazi German forces. Officially rehabilitated in 1957 and allowed to return to their homeland, they remained politically suspect and were excluded from the region's administration.

After winning election as Chechnya's president in October 1991, former Soviet air force general Dzhokhar Dudayev proclaimed the republic's independence. Moscow responded with an economic blockade. In 1994, Russia began assisting Chechens opposed to Dudayev, whose rule was marked by growing corruption and the rise of powerful clans and criminal gangs. Russian president Boris Yeltsin sent 40,000 troops into Chechnya by mid-December of that year and attacked the capital, Grozny. As casualties mounted, Russian

public opposition increased, fueled by criticism from much of the country's then independent media. In April 1996, Dudayev was killed by a Russian missile.

A peace deal signed in August 1996 resulted in the withdrawal of most Russian forces from Chechnya. However, a final settlement on the republic's status was put off until 2001. In May 1997, Russia and Chechnya reached an accord recognizing the newly elected president, Aslan Maskhadov, as Chechnya's legitimate leader. The elections were considered reasonably free and fair by outside observers, but Maskhadov proved to be an ineffective ruler, and the region degenerated into chaos.

Following incursions into neighboring Dagestan by renegade Chechen guerrillas and deadly apartment bombings in Russia that the Kremlin blamed on Chechen militants, Russian prime minister (and later president) Vladimir Putin launched a second military offensive in Chechnya in September 1999. After initial successes, Russian troops' progress slowed as they neared Grozny. During the hostilities, Moscow withdrew its recognition of Maskhadov as president. The renewed campaign enjoyed broad popular support in Russia, driven in part by the media's now one-sided reporting in favor of the government.

Russian forces' indiscriminate bombing of civilian targets caused more than 200,000 people to flee Chechnya, with most heading to the neighboring Russian republic of Ingushetia. After federal troops finally captured Grozny in February 2000, the military focused on rebel strongholds in the mountainous south. Russian security sweeps led to regular atrocities in which civilians were beaten, raped, or killed, while Russian forces were subject to almost daily bombings and sniper attacks by rebels.

As the war persisted and atrocities increased, some Chechen fighters engaged in terrorist acts. A group of rebels stormed a Moscow theater in October 2002, resulting in the death of more than 120 hostages, most from the effects of a sedative gas that Russian troops used to incapacitate the assailants. In September 2004, the rebels attacked a school in Beslan, in the Russian republic of North Ossetia, leading to the deaths of more than 330 people, including numerous children.

A March 2003 referendum on a new Chechen constitution passed with 96 percent of the vote, amid 85 percent turnout, according to official results. However, an independent survey by the Russian human rights group Memorial found that 80 percent of the indigenous population opposed the referendum. Kremlin-backed candidate Akhmad Kadyrov won the Chechen presidency in an October 2003 election, though the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) said the poll had not offered voters a significant choice, and the U.S. government deemed it "seriously flawed." Chechen rebels assassinated Kadyrov in a May 2004 stadium bombing. In a subsequent election in August, Alu Alkhanov, Chechnya's interior minister since 2003, won with a reported 74 percent of the vote. The official voter turnout was 85 percent, but journalists observing the process called that figure wildly inflated.

Despite Alkhanov's election, a great deal of de facto power shifted to Kadyrov's son, Ramzan Kadyrov, who could not become president until he

turned 30 in 2006. Alkhanov resigned in February 2007, allowing Kadyrov, then the prime minister, to become acting president. Putin confirmed him in office the following month. Kadyrov had support from some factions within the Kremlin, but was clearly working to expand his own powerbase as well. He saw himself as a regional leader whose influence could expand beyond Chechnya's borders. He had rebuilt central Grozny and restored some municipal services, drawing on large federal subsidies as well as funds extorted from contractors and government workers. Despite assertions of stability under his rule, serious business activity remained absent, and the republic was still host to Russian troops and a greatly expanded local law enforcement presence.

Ramzan Kadyrov's rise to power had coincided with several successes against the rebels. In March 2005, the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) killed Maskhadov, the separatist leader, and infamous guerrilla commander Shamil Basayev died in a July 2006 explosion for which the Russian government took credit. Basayev, who had claimed responsibility for the terrorist attacks in Moscow and Beslan, was the key link between many of the disparate Islamist, terrorist, and criminal elements in the rebel movement. Meanwhile, Kadyrov and his own force of former rebel troops took over much of the fighting within Chechnya and were able to quash the secessionist guerrillas. There are now reportedly only a few hundred, poorly organized rebels inside Chechnya. The rebel leaders have increasingly moved the battle into the neighboring republics of Kabardino-Balkariya, Dagestan, and Ingushetia. Toward the end of 2007, observers feared that Ingushetia was deteriorating into a "second Chechnya," with militants stepping up assassinations, disappearances, and bombings as the security forces responded with extrajudicial killings and other acts of violence.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

The resumption of war in 1999 led to the total evisceration of Chechens' political rights. President Aslan Maskhadov fled the capital in December 1999, and the parliament elected in 1997 ceased to function. The Russian government's claims to have returned the republic to democratic rule with a March 2003 constitutional referendum lacked credibility. In the October 2003 and August 2004 presidential elections, candidates representing a genuine alternative were not on the ballot, and debate was stifled in an atmosphere of repression and censorship. Under a new system enacted in late 2004, the Russian president recommends a candidate for the Chechen presidency, who then must be approved by the Chechen parliament. Although he effectively serves at the pleasure of the Russian president, the Chechen president was initially appointed for a four-year term under this system. Amendments to the constitution approved in a December 2007 referendum increased the term to five years and lifted a two-term limit. The referendum also replaced the bicameral legislature with a unicameral body of 41 members. All members will serve five-year terms. The current Chechen parliament was elected in November 2005 and is loyal to

Kremlin-backed Chechen president Ramzan Kadyrov, who took office in early 2007.

Kadyrov headed his father's security service and reconstituted it as the Akhmad Kadyrov Special Purpose Regiment in 2004. His men, the so-called Kadyrovtsy, reportedly have been involved in abductions, disappearances, extortion, trading in contraband, and the maintenance of unsanctioned prisons and torture chambers. This group represents the chief political power in the republic and has been able to bring most of the territory under its control. In Russia's December 2007 State Duma elections, Kadyrov helped the pro-Kremlin United Russia party win more than 99 percent of the vote in Chechnya, with more than 99 percent turnout, by running as the top candidate on the list, though he had no intention of leaving his post as president. Other parties claimed that these results were falsified.

Corruption is rampant. Kadyrov's critics claim that his accomplishments in rebuilding parts of Grozny have been accompanied by a system of kickbacks. The restored apartments are not always distributed fairly, and many of the reconstruction workers have not been paid. It is also not clear how much of the revenue from Chechen oil production has been misappropriated. Chechnya is not ranked separately in Transparency International's 2007 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Information in Chechnya is tightly managed. Kadyrov's financial resources allow him to control all local broadcast and most print media, which provide extensive coverage of his activities. There are three licensed television broadcasters, whose content is progovernment. Russian state-run television and radio continue to broadcast in Chechnya, although much of the population lacks electricity. The rebel movement operates a website with reports from its perspective, but internet usage is negligible.

The Russian military imposes severe restrictions on journalists' access to the widening Caucasus conflict area, issuing accreditation primarily to those of proven loyalty to the Russian government. Few foreign reporters are allowed into Chechnya, and when they are granted entry, they must be accompanied at all times by military officials. The October 2006 Moscow murder of Anna Politkovskaya, a correspondent for Moscow-based *Novaya Gazeta*, silenced one of the few remaining journalists brave enough to travel in Chechnya without official escorts and collect evidence of abuses by Russian troops and the pro-Moscow Chechen government. More than one year after her death, the authorities had not conclusively identified her killers.

Most Chechens practice Sufism, a mystical form of Islam. Kadyrov openly advocates giving it a central role in Chechen public life. The strict Wahhabi sect of Sunni Islam, with roots in Saudi Arabia, has been banned by the Russian government.

Since the start of the fighting in 1994, many of the republic's schools have been damaged or destroyed, and education in Chechnya has been sporadic. Most schools have not been renovated and continue to lack basic amenities.

Most international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) working in Chechnya have moved their headquarters outside of the republic because of

security concerns. However, the deteriorating situation in Ingushetia forced the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to close its facilities there in 2007. Currently, international groups are providing humanitarian aid in Chechnya, and Memorial is conducting human rights research there. In addition to pressure from the Chechen government, the groups face increasing demands from the Russian government, which introduced extensive reporting requirements in 2006. Freedom of assembly is not respected, and labor union activity is almost nonexistent due to economic devastation and widespread unemployment.

The rule of law is extremely weak, with Kadyrov often acting as a law unto himself. Extrajudicial killings, disappearances, and other serious crimes are rarely investigated and even more rarely prosecuted. Human rights groups accuse members of the local police of involvement in kidnappings, though Memorial reported in 2007 that the number of abductions was down considerably compared to the previous year. In 2006, 187 people were kidnapped, while the count was only 25 for the first eight months of 2007. There has been some progress in a few high-profile cases against perpetrators. In June 2007, after juries in the Russian city of Rostov refused to convict them in the face of overwhelming evidence, a military tribunal sentenced Captain Eduard Ulman and three other members of a special Russian military intelligence unit to prison terms of nine to 14 years for killing six Chechens in January 2002. However, Ulman and two of the others had disappeared in April, and they were tried in absentia.

The European Court of Human Rights has provided Chechens with an alternative source of justice. In July 2006, the Strasbourg-based court for the first time ruled that Colonel General Aleksandr Baranov, commander of Russian military forces in the North Caucasus, was responsible for the disappearance and presumed death of a prisoner detained in Chechnya in 2000. Memorial estimates that as many as 5,000 people have vanished during the second Chechen war. Subsequently, the court issued several additional rulings holding Russian troops responsible for killings in Chechnya. In October 2007, the court sought to speed up the process by allowing residents of the North Caucasus to file complaints without first exhausting all legal options in Russia. The Russian authorities have sought to prevent such appeals and redirect them to Russian courts.

Widespread corruption and the economic devastation caused by the war severely limit equality of opportunity. Residents who have found work are employed mostly by the local police, the administration, the oil and construction sectors, or small enterprises. Despite numerous problems, the Kadyrov government's rebuilding efforts have improved the overall economic situation, and local business activity is starting to pick up. Most of the ethnic Chechens who fled the republic have now returned home. The number of refugees in Ingushetia is down to 15,000, from 240,000 in 2000, while the number inside Chechnya itself is 30,000, down from 170,000, according to the UNHCR.

With Kadyrov's emphasis on traditional Chechen Islam, women face increased discrimination in this male-dominated culture. In September 2007, Kadyrov ordered female civil servants to wear headscarves. At the same time,

the war has resulted in many women becoming the primary breadwinners for their families. Children accounted for up to 40 percent of casualties during the war, and they continue to suffer from psychological trauma and poor living conditions, including lack of access to education and health care.

Table of Independent Countries: *Freedom in the World 2008*

Trend Arrow	Country	PR	CL	Freedom Rating
↓	Afghanistan	5	5	Partly Free
	Albania*	3	3	Partly Free
	Algeria	6	5	Not Free
	Andorra*	1	1	Free
	Angola	6	5	Not Free
	Antigua and Barbuda*	2	2	Free
	Argentina*	2	2	Free
	Armenia	5	4	Partly Free
	Australia*	1	1	Free
	Austria*	1	1	Free
↓	Azerbaijan	6	5	Not Free
	Bahamas*	1	1	Free
	Bahrain	5	5	Partly Free
	Bangladesh	5▼	4	Partly Free
	Barbados*	1	1	Free
	Belarus	7	6	Not Free
	Belgium*	1	1	Free
	Belize*	1	2	Free
	Benin*	2	2	Free
	Bhutan	6	5	Not Free
	Bolivia*	3	3	Partly Free
	Bosnia-Herzegovina	4▼	3	Partly Free
	Botswana*	2	2	Free
	Brazil*	2	2	Free
	Brunei	6	5	Not Free
	Bulgaria*	1	2	Free
	Burkina Faso	5	3	Partly Free
↓	Burma	7	7	Not Free
	Burundi*	4	5	Partly Free
	Cambodia	6	5	Not Free
↓	Cameroon	6	6	Not Free

	Canada*	1	1	Free
	Cape Verde*	1	1	Free
	Central African Republic*	5	5▼	Partly Free
	Chad	7▼	6	Not Free
	Chile*	1	1	Free
	China	7	6	Not Free
	Colombia*	3	3	Partly Free
	Comoros*	4▼	4	Partly Free
↓	Congo (Brazzaville)	6	5	Not Free
↓	Congo (Kinshasa)	5	6	Not Free
	Costa Rica*	1	1	Free
	Cote d'Ivoire	7	5▲	Not Free
	Croatia*	2	2	Free
	Cuba	7	7	Not Free
	Cyprus*	1	1	Free
	Czech Republic*	1	1	Free
	Denmark*	1	1	Free
	Djibouti	5	5	Partly Free
	Dominica*	1	1	Free
	Dominican Republic*	2	2	Free
	East Timor*	3	4	Partly Free
	Ecuador*	3	3	Partly Free
↓	Egypt	6	5	Not Free
	El Salvador*	2	3	Free
	Equatorial Guinea	7	6	Not Free
	Eritrea	7	6	Not Free
	Estonia*	1	1	Free
	Ethiopia	5	5	Partly Free
	Fiji	6	4	Partly Free
	Finland*	1	1	Free
	France*	1	1	Free
	Gabon	6	4	Partly Free
	The Gambia	5	4	Partly Free
	Georgia*	4▼	4▼	Partly Free
	Germany*	1	1	Free

	Ghana*	1	2	Free
	Greece*	1	2	Free
	Grenada*	1	2	Free
	Guatemala*	3	4	Partly Free
	Guinea	6	5	Not Free
↓	Guinea-Bissau*	4	4	Partly Free
	Guyana*	2	3	Free
↑	Haiti*	4	5	Partly Free
	Honduras*	3	3	Partly Free
	Hungary*	1	1	Free
	Iceland*	1	1	Free
	India*	2	3	Free
	Indonesia*	2	3	Free
	Iran	6	6	Not Free
	Iraq	6	6	Not Free
	Ireland*	1	1	Free
	Israel*	1	2	Free
	Italy*	1	1	Free
	Jamaica*	2	3	Free
	Japan*	1	2	Free
	Jordan	5	4	Partly Free
↓	Kazakhstan	6	5	Not Free
	Kenya	4▼	3	Partly Free
	Kiribati*	1	1	Free
	Kuwait	4	4	Partly Free
↓	Kyrgyzstan	5	4	Partly Free
	Laos	7	6	Not Free
	Latvia*	2▼	1	Free
↓	Lebanon	5	4	Partly Free
↓	Lesotho*	2	3	Free
	Liberia*	3	4	Partly Free
	Libya	7	7	Not Free
	Liechtenstein*	1	1	Free
	Lithuania*	1	1	Free
	Luxembourg*	1	1	Free
	Macedonia*	3	3	Partly Free

↓	Madagascar*	4	3	Partly Free
	Malawi*	4	4▼	Partly Free
↓	Malaysia	4	4	Partly Free
	Maldives	6	5	Not Free
	Mali*	2	3▼	Free
	Malta*	1	1	Free
	Marshall Islands*	1	1	Free
	Mauritania*	4▲	4	Partly Free
	Mauritius*	1	2	Free
	Mexico*	2	3	Free
	Micronesia*	1	1	Free
	Moldova*	3	4	Partly Free
	Monaco*	2	1	Free
	Mongolia*	2	2	Free
	Montenegro*	3	3	Partly Free
	Morocco	5	4	Partly Free
	Mozambique*	3	3▲	Partly Free
	Namibia*	2	2	Free
	Nauru*	1	1	Free
	Nepal	5	4	Partly Free
	Netherlands*	1	1	Free
	New Zealand*	1	1	Free
↓	Nicaragua*	3	3	Partly Free
	Niger*	3	4▼	Partly Free
↓	Nigeria	4	4	Partly Free
	North Korea	7	7	Not Free
	Norway*	1	1	Free
	Oman	6	5	Not Free
↓	Pakistan	6	5	Not Free
	Palau*	1	1	Free
	Panama*	1	2	Free
↓	Papua New Guinea*	3	3	Partly Free
	Paraguay*	3	3	Partly Free
	Peru*	2	3	Free
	Philippines	4▼	3	Partly Free
↑	Poland*	1	1	Free

	Portugal*	1	1	Free
	Qatar	6	5	Not Free
	Romania*	2	2	Free
↓	Russia	6	5	Not Free
↑	Rwanda	6	5	Not Free
	Saint Kitts and Nevis*	1	1	Free
	Saint Lucia*	1	1	Free
	Saint Vincent and Grenadines*	2	1	Free
	Samoa*	2	2	Free
	San Marino*	1	1	Free
	Sao Tome and Principe*	2	2	Free
	Saudi Arabia	7	6	Not Free
	Senegal*	2	3	Free
	Serbia*	3	2	Free
	Seychelles*	3	3	Partly Free
	Sierra Leone*	3▲	3	Partly Free
	Singapore	5	4	Partly Free
	Slovakia*	1	1	Free
	Slovenia*	1	1	Free
↓	Solomon Islands	4	3	Partly Free
↓	Somalia	7	7	Not Free
	South Africa*	2	2	Free
	South Korea*	1	2	Free
	Spain*	1	1	Free
↓	Sri Lanka*	4	4	Partly Free
	Sudan	7	7	Not Free
	Suriname*	2	2	Free
	Swaziland	7	5	Not Free
	Sweden*	1	1	Free
↓	Switzerland*	1	1	Free
↓	Syria	7	6	Not Free
	Taiwan*	2	1	Free
	Tajikistan	6	5	Not Free
	Tanzania	4	3	Partly Free

	Thailand	6 ▲	4	Partly Free
	Togo	5 ▲	5	Partly Free
	Tonga	5	3	Partly Free
	Trinidad and Tobago*	2	2	Free
	Tunisia	7 ▼	5	Not Free
↑	Turkey*	3	3	Partly Free
	Turkmenistan	7	7	Not Free
	Tuvalu*	1	1	Free
	Uganda	5	4	Partly Free
	Ukraine*	3	2	Free
	United Arab Emirates	6	5	Not Free
	United Kingdom*	1	1	Free
	United States*	1	1	Free
	Uruguay*	1	1	Free
	Uzbekistan	7	7	Not Free
	Vanuatu*	2	2	Free
↓	Venezuela*	4	4	Partly Free
	Vietnam	7	5	Not Free
	Yemen	5	5	Partly Free
	Zambia*	3	4	Partly Free
	Zimbabwe	7	6	Not Free

PR and CL stand for Political Rights and Civil Liberties, respectively; 1 represents the most free and 7 the least free rating. The ratings reflect an overall judgment based on survey results.

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

↑ ↓ up or down indicates a trend arrow.

*indicates a country's status as an electoral democracy.

NOTE: The ratings reflect global events from January 1, 2007, through December 31, 2007.

Table of Related Territories: *Freedom in the World 2008*

Trend Arrow	Country and Territory	PR	CL	Freedom Rating
	China Hong Kong	5	2	Partly Free
	United States Puerto Rico	1	1	Free

Table of Disputed Territories: *Freedom in the World 2008*

Trend Arrow	Country and Territory	PR	CL	Freedom Rating
	Armenia/Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh	5	5	Partly Free
↓	China Tibet	7	7	Not Free
	Cyprus Northern (Turkish) Cyprus	2	2	Free
	Georgia Abkhazia	5	5	Partly Free
	India Kashmir	5	4▲	Partly Free
	Israel Israeli-Occupied Territories Palestinian Authority- Administered Territories	6 5▼	6▼ 6	Not Free Not Free
	Moldova Transnistria	6	6	Not Free
	Morocco Western Sahara	7	6	Not Free
	Pakistan Kashmir	7	5	Not Free
	Russia Chechnya	7	7	Not Free
	Serbia Kosovo	6	5	Not Free
	Somalia Somaliland	4	4	Partly Free

Freedom in the World Methodology

The reports from “The Worst of the Worst: The World’s Most Repressive Societies” were excerpted from the forthcoming 2008 edition of *Freedom in the World*, an annual Freedom House survey that monitors the progress and decline of political rights and civil liberties in 193 countries and 15 select related and disputed territories. The survey rates each country and territory on a seven-point scale for both political rights and civil liberties, with 1 representing the most free and 7 the least free, and then assigns each country and territory a broad category status of Free (for countries whose ratings average 1.0 to 2.5), Partly Free (3.0 to 5.0), or Not Free (5.5 to 7.0). The ratings process is based on a checklist of 10 political rights and 15 civil liberties questions (please refer to the checklist immediately following this methodology section). Those countries and territories which received scores of 6 for political rights and 7 for civil liberties, 7 for political rights and 6 for civil liberties, and 7 for both political rights and civil liberties are included in the group of “the worst of the worst.” Within these groups are gradations of freedom that make some more repressive than others.

A change in a country’s or territory’s political rights or civil liberties rating from the previous year is indicated by an arrow next to the rating in question, along with a brief ratings change explanation preceding the country or territory report. Freedom House also assigned upward or downward “trend arrows” to certain countries and territories which saw general positive or negative trends during the year that were not significant enough to warrant a ratings change. Trend arrows are indicated with arrows placed before the name of the country or territory in question, along with a brief trend arrow explanation preceding the report.

The *Freedom in the World* ratings are not merely assessments of the conduct of governments, but are intended to reflect the reality of daily life. Freedom can be affected by state actions as well as by non-state actors. Thus, terrorist movements or armed groups use violent methods which can dramatically restrict essential freedoms within a society. Conversely, the existence of non-state activists or journalists who act courageously and independently despite state restrictions can positively impact the ability of the population to exercise its freedoms.

The survey enables an examination of trends in freedom over time and on a comparative basis across regions with different political and economic systems. The survey, which is produced by a team of in-house regional experts, consultant writers, and academic advisors, derives its information from a wide range of sources. Most valued of these are the many human rights activists, journalists, editors, and political figures around the world who keep us informed of the human rights situation in their countries. *Freedom in the World’s* ratings and narrative reports are used by policy makers, leading scholars, the media, and international organizations in monitoring the ebb and flow of freedom worldwide.

For a more detailed analysis of last year's survey methodology, please consult the methodology chapter from *Freedom in the World 2007*. The methodology for the forthcoming survey edition will be published in *Freedom in the World 2008*.

Freedom in the World 2008 Checklist Questions

POLITICAL RIGHTS CHECKLIST

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS

1. Is the head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections?
2. Are the national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections?
3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair?

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION

1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system open to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings?
2. Is there a significant opposition vote and a realistic possibility for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections?
3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, totalitarian parties, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group?
4. Do cultural, ethnic, religious, or other minority groups have full political rights and electoral opportunities?

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT

1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government?
2. Is the government free from pervasive corruption?
3. Is the government accountable to the electorate between elections, and does it operate with openness and transparency?

ADDITIONAL DISCRETIONARY POLITICAL RIGHTS QUESTIONS

1. For traditional monarchies that have no parties or electoral process, does the system provide for genuine, meaningful consultation with the people, encourage public discussion of policy choices, and allow the right to petition the ruler?
2. Is the government or occupying power deliberately changing the ethnic composition of a country or territory so as to destroy a culture or tip the political balance in favor of another group?

CIVIL LIBERTIES CHECKLIST

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF

1. Are there free and independent media and other forms of cultural expression? (Note: In cases where the media are state-controlled but offer pluralistic points of view, the survey gives the system credit.)
2. Are religious institutions and communities free to practice their faith and express themselves in public and private?
3. Is there academic freedom and is the educational system free of extensive political indoctrination?
4. Is there open and free private discussion?

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS

1. Is there freedom of assembly, demonstration, and open public discussion?
2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations? (Note: This includes civic organizations, interest groups, foundations, etc.)
3. Are there free trade unions and peasant organizations or equivalents, and is there effective collective bargaining? Are there free professional and other private organizations?

F. RULE OF LAW

1. Is there an independent judiciary?
2. Does the rule of law prevail in civil and criminal matters? Are police under direct civilian control?
3. Is there protection from political terror, unjustified imprisonment, exile, or torture, whether by groups that support or oppose the system? Is there freedom from war and insurgencies?
4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population?

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS

1. Does the state control travel or choice of residence, employment, or institution of higher education?
2. Do citizens have the right to own property and establish private businesses? Is private business activity unduly influenced by government officials, the security forces, political parties/organizations, or organized crime?
3. Are there personal social freedoms, including gender equality, choice of marriage partners, and size of family?
4. Is there equality of opportunity and the absence of economic exploitation?



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Freedom House is an independent private organization supporting the expansion of freedom throughout the world.

Freedom is possible only in democratic political systems in which governments are accountable to their own people, the rule of law prevails, and freedoms of expression, association and belief are guaranteed. Working directly with courageous men and women around the world to support nonviolent civic initiatives in societies where freedom is threatened, Freedom House functions as a catalyst for change through its unique mix of analysis, advocacy and action.

- **Analysis.** Freedom House's rigorous research methodology has earned the organization a reputation as the leading source of information on the state of freedom around the globe. Since 1972, Freedom House has published *Freedom in the World*, an annual survey of political rights and civil liberties experienced in every country of the world. The survey is complemented by an annual review of press freedom, an analysis of transitions in the post-communist world, and other publications.
- **Advocacy.** Freedom House seeks to encourage American policymakers, as well as other governments and international institutions, to adopt policies that advance human rights and democracy around the world. Freedom House has been instrumental in the founding of the worldwide Community of Democracies, has actively campaigned for a reformed Human Rights Council at the United Nations, and presses the Millennium Challenge Corporation to adhere to high standards of eligibility for recipient countries.
- **Action.** Through exchanges, grants, and technical assistance, Freedom House provides training and support to human rights defenders, civil society organizations, and members of the media in order to strengthen indigenous reform efforts in countries around the globe.

Founded in 1941 by Eleanor Roosevelt, Wendell Willkie, and other Americans concerned with mounting threats to peace and democracy, Freedom House has long been a vigorous proponent of democratic values and a steadfast opponent of dictatorships of the far left and the far right. The organization's diverse Board of Trustees is composed of a bipartisan mix of business and labor leaders, former senior government officials, scholars, and journalists who agree that the promotion of democracy and human rights abroad is vital to America's interests abroad.