



Worst of the Worst

The World's Most
Repressive Societies

2009

SELECTED DATA FROM *FREEDOM IN THE WORLD*, FREEDOM HOUSE'S ANNUAL GLOBAL SURVEY OF
POLITICAL RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES

BELARUS–BURMA–CHAD–CHINA–CUBA–EQUATORIAL GUINEA–ERITREA–LAOS–LIBYA
NORTH KOREA–SAUDI ARABIA–SOMALIA–SUDAN–SYRIA–TURKMENISTAN–UZBEKISTAN–ZIMBABWE
TIBET (CHINA)–SOUTH OSSETIA (GEORGIA)–WESTERN SAHARA (MOROCCO)–CHECHNYA (RUSSIA)

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Overview

Freedom House has prepared this 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 2009*, which surveys the state of freedom in 193 countries and 16 select territories. The ratings and accompanying essays are based on events from January 1, 2008, through December 31, 2008. The 17 countries and 4 territories profiled in this report are drawn from the total of 42 countries and 9 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 human rights conditions: **Burma, Equatorial Guinea, Libya, North Korea, Somalia, Sudan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan**. Also included are two territories, **Chechnya and Tibet**, whose inhabitants suffer similarly intense repression. These states and territories received the Freedom House survey's lowest ratings: 7 for political rights and 7 for civil liberties (based on a 1 to 7 scale, with 1 representing the most free and 7 the least free). Within these entities, state control over daily life is pervasive, independent organizations and political opposition are banned or suppressed, and fear of retribution for independent thought and action is ubiquitous.

The report also includes nine additional countries near the bottom of Freedom House's ratings scale: **Belarus, Chad, China, Cuba, Eritrea, Laos, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Zimbabwe**. The two territories of **South Ossetia and Western Sahara** are also included in this group. These countries and territories—all of which received ratings 7 for political rights and 6 for civil liberties—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 region of the world. This year's roster of the "worst of the worst" 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 focuses on states and territories that have seen some of the world's most severe repression and most systematic and brutal abuses of human dignity. It 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

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Of the 42 countries designated as Not Free, eight have been given the survey's lowest possible rating of 7 for both political rights and civil liberties. Among the eight worst-rated countries, one, North Korea, is a one-party Marxist-Leninist regime. Two, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, are Central Asian countries ruled by dictators with roots in the Soviet period. Libya is an Arab country under the sway of a secular dictatorship, while Sudan is under a leadership that has elements both of radical Islamism and of a typical military junta. The remaining worst-rated states are Burma, a tightly controlled military dictatorship; Equatorial Guinea, a highly repressive regime with one of the worst human rights records in Africa; and Somalia, a failed state.

There are two worst-rated territories: Tibet, under Chinese jurisdiction, and Chechnya, where a repressive pro-Kremlin regime continues to struggle with rebel groups.

An additional 11 countries and territories received scores that were slightly above the worst-ranked countries, and received ratings of 7,6 for political rights and civil liberties: Belarus, Chad, China, Cuba, Eritrea, Laos, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Zimbabwe, South Ossetia, and Western Sahara.

support around the world for the values of liberal democracy, including multiparty elections, 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 2009* (whose findings can be accessed online at www.freedomhouse.org), of the 193 countries in the world, 89 (46 percent) are Free and can be said to respect a broad array of basic human rights and political freedoms. An additional 62 (32 percent) are 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—live in Free states in which a broad array of political rights are 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 see 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 nongovernmental organizations 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 should enable it 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 2009

Worst of the Worst 2009:

The World's Most Repressive Societies

Independent Countries

Country	PR	CL	Combined Average Rating	Freedom Status
Belarus	7	6	6.5	Not Free
Burma	7	7	7	Not Free
Chad	7	6	6.5	Not Free
China	7	6	6.5	Not Free
Cuba	7	6 ▲	6.5	Not Free
Equatorial Guinea	7	7 ▼	7	Not Free
Eritrea	7	6	6.5	Not Free
Laos	7	6	6.5	Not Free
Libya	7	7	7	Not Free
North Korea	7	7	7	Not Free
Saudi Arabia	7	6	6.5	Not Free
Somalia	7	7	7	Not Free
Sudan	7	7	7	Not Free
Syria	7	6	6.5	Not Free
Turkmenistan	7	7	7	Not Free
Uzbekistan	7	7	7	Not Free
Zimbabwe	7	6	6.5	Not Free

Related and Disputed Territories

Territory (Country)	PR	CL	Combined Average Rating	Freedom Status
Chechnya (Russia)	7	7	7	Not Free
South Ossetia (Georgia)	7	6	6.5	Not Free
Tibet (China)	7	7	7	Not Free
Western Sahara (Morocco)	7	6	6.5	Not Free

Belarus

Political Rights: 7

Civil Liberties: 6

Status: Not Free

Population: 9,700,000

Capital: Minsk

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

Year Under Review	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Rating	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	7,6,NF

2008 Key Developments: Hopes that President Alyaksandr Lukashenka might loosen his grip on Belarus in 2008 proved illusory. After brutal crackdowns and additional arrests, Belarus released all of its political prisoners in August. The regime also agreed to allow international observers to monitor its September parliamentary elections. However, the monitors determined that the elections did not meet democratic standards, and no opposition members won representation, leaving them without a platform to influence political processes. Separately, the regime passed new legislation that tightened control over the media and extended it to the internet. Relations with Russia grew increasingly tense during the year, as Moscow continued to exert pressure to obtain higher prices for its energy exports and to acquire Belarusian companies through privatization. Despite strong European Union interest in improved relations, the absence of democratic reforms in Belarus made any progress extremely difficult.

Political Rights: Belarus is not an electoral democracy. Serious and widespread irregularities have marred all recent elections. 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. Corruption is a serious problem and is fed by the state's dominance of the economy and the overall lack of transparency and accountability in government.

Civil Liberties: The regime of President Lukashenka systematically curtails press freedom. 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. Despite constitutional guarantees that "all religions and faiths shall be equal before the law," government decrees and registration requirements have increasingly restricted religious activity. The Lukashenka government limits freedom of assembly for 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, as happened throughout the year in 2008. Freedom of association is severely restricted, with more than a hundred of the most active nongovernmental organizations forced to close down between 2003 and 2005. 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. 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. 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 trade.

Burma (Myanmar) ↓

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

Population: 49,200,000
Capital: Rangoon

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

Year Under Review	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Rating	7,7,NF									

2008 Key Developments: The military regime in 2008 continued to persecute individuals associated with the popular protests of 2007, and the number of political prisoners rose sharply during the year. In early May, Cyclone Nargis devastated the country's Irrawaddy Delta region, but the government's delay in responding and obstruction of international relief efforts resulted in unnecessary losses. Despite the natural disaster, the junta proceeded with a previously scheduled constitutional referendum on May 10. Officials claimed that the new constitution, which entrenched military rule, was approved by 92.4 percent of voters, setting the stage for elections in 2010. However, reports of intimidation and vote-rigging led human rights groups to denounce the referendum as a sham.

Political Rights: Burma is not an electoral democracy. The ruling State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) governs 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. In a system that lacks both transparency and accountability, official corruption is rampant at both the national and local levels.

Civil Liberties: The military government sharply restricts press freedom and either owns or tightly controls all daily newspapers and broadcast media. Crackdowns on the media continued in 2008, as the number of imprisoned journalists and bloggers rose from 9 at the beginning of the year to 14 at year's end, with sentences as long as 59 years being imposed. The junta stepped up surveillance at internet cafes and sharply raised the fees for satellite dish licenses. The 2008 constitution provides for freedom of religion. It distinguishes Buddhism as the majority religion but also recognizes Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and animism. During the crackdown on the 2007 uprising, authorities raided monasteries and arrested thousands of monks, and those detained were reportedly abused and forcibly defrocked. Monasteries were subsequently kept under close surveillance. Academic freedom is severely limited. Freedoms of association and assembly are restricted, and authorities regularly use force to break up or prevent demonstrations and meetings. The judiciary is not independent. Judges are appointed or approved by the junta and adjudicate cases according to its decrees. Some of the worst human rights abuses take place in the seven states populated mostly by ethnic minorities, who comprise roughly 35 percent of Burma's population. In these border states, the military kills, beats, rapes, and arbitrarily detains civilians. Burmese women have traditionally enjoyed high social and economic status, but domestic violence is a growing concern, and women remain underrepresented in the government.

↓**Trend Arrow:** Burma received a downward trend arrow due to increased crackdowns on political activists.

Cuba ▲

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

Population: 11,200,000
Capital: Havana

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

Year Under Review	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Rating	7,7,NF	7,6,NF								

2008 Key Developments: In 2008, Raul Castro was elevated to the presidency following the announced retirement of his brother Fidel. He quickly passed a series of measures to improve Cubans' access to consumer goods and raise pensions and wages, but the initial movement toward economic reform was halted when the island was struck by two major hurricanes in August and September. While dissidents remained tightly controlled during the year, the government encouraged greater debate about economic reform through formal channels, and sponsored a campaign against homophobia that positioned the island at the forefront of the gay rights movement in Latin America.

Political Rights: Cuba is not an electoral democracy. Longtime president Fidel Castro and, more recently, his brother and successor Raul Castro dominate the political system. The country is a one-party state, with the Communist Party of Cuba (PCC) controlling all government entities from the national to the local level. All political organizing outside the PCC is illegal. Political dissent, whether spoken or written, is a punishable offense, and dissidents frequently receive years of imprisonment for seemingly minor infractions. The absolute number of political prisoners in Cuba dipped slightly, from 234 to 205, during 2008. 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.

Civil Liberties: Freedom of the press is sharply curtailed, and the media are controlled by the state and the PCC. The government considers the independent press to be illegal. Independent journalists are subjected to ongoing repression, including terms of hard labor and assaults by state security agents. Access to the internet remains tightly restricted, and it is difficult for most Cubans to connect to the internet in their homes. 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 censorship by the Office of Religious Affairs. 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. The executive branch controls the judiciary. The Council of State, presided over by Raul Castro, serves as a de facto judiciary and controls both the courts and the judicial process as a whole. 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. Cuba has been ranked well on gender equality; about 40 percent of all women work, and they are well represented in most professions.

▲ Ratings Change: Cuba's civil liberties rating improved from 7 to 6 due to new rules allowing greater access to consumer goods, the implementation of economic reforms, and approval of social freedoms for homosexuals and transsexuals.

Equatorial Guinea ▼

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

Population: 600,000
Capital: Malabo

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

Year Under Review	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Rating	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	7,7,NF

2008 Key Developments: Local and parliamentary elections were held in May 2008 after President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo dissolved the legislature in February. The opposition condemned the balloting, citing voting irregularities and intimidation that allowed the president to maintain his stranglehold on power. The use of torture in prisons continued to be widespread, and foreign journalists were banned from covering the May elections, further restricting the media environment.

Political Rights: Equatorial Guinea is not an electoral democracy and has never held credible elections. President Mbasogo, whose current seven-year term will end in 2009, holds broad powers. The 100 members of the unicameral House of People’s Representatives wield little power, and 99 seats belong to the ruling pro-presidential coalition. The activities of the few opposition parties are closely monitored by the government. Equatorial Guinea is considered one of the most corrupt countries in the world, and Obiang and members of his inner circle continue to amass huge personal profits from the oil windfall.

Civil Liberties: Although the constitution guarantees press freedom, the 1992 press law authorizes government censorship. Libel remains a criminal offense, and all journalists are required to register with the government. The state holds a near-monopoly on broadcast media, and the only internet service provider is state affiliated, with the government reportedly monitoring internet communications. The constitution protects religious freedom, and government respect for freedom of individual religious practice has generally improved. Freedoms of assembly and association are severely restricted, and official authorization for political gatherings is mandatory. 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. The judiciary is not independent, and security forces generally act with impunity. 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. All citizens are required to obtain exit visas to travel abroad, and some members of opposition parties have been denied such visas. Constitutional and legal guarantees of equality for women are largely ignored, and violence against women is reportedly widespread.

▼Ratings Change: Equatorial Guinea’s civil liberties rating declined from 6 to 7 due to an intensification of the environment of fear stemming from the widespread use of torture in prisons, as well as the denial of visas to foreign journalists seeking to cover the May legislative and municipal elections.

Eritrea

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

Population: 5,000,000
Capital: Asmara

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

Year Under Review	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Rating	7,5,NF	7,5,NF	7,6,NF							

2008 Key Developments: The government of Eritrea continued its long-standing suppression of democratic and human rights in 2008, and a group of independent journalists imprisoned in 2001 remained behind bars. The country also maintained its aggressive foreign policy in the region, initiating border-related clashes with Djiboutian forces in June.

Political Rights: Eritrea is not an electoral democracy. The Popular Front for Democracy and Justice maintains complete dominance over the country's political life and 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. The constitution calls for the legislature 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 recent years, corruption appears to have increased somewhat.

Civil Liberties: 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, and journalists arrested in 2001 remain imprisoned. 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. Freedom of assembly does not exist. Independent nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are not allowed, and the legitimate role of human rights defenders is not recognized. International human rights organizations are barred from the country, and the government expelled three remaining development NGOs in 2006. The judiciary has never issued rulings significantly at variance with government positions, and constitutional guarantees are often ignored in cases related to state security. Torture, arbitrary detentions, and political arrests are common. The Kunama people, one of Eritrea's nine ethnic groups, reportedly face severe discrimination. The government has worked to improve the status of women, codifying equal educational opportunity, equal pay for equal work, and penalties for domestic violence. However, traditional societal discrimination against women persists in the largely rural and agricultural country.

North Korea

Political Rights:	7	Population:	23,300,000
Civil Liberties:	7	Capital:	Pyongyang
Status:	Not Free		

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

Year Under Review	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Rating	7,7,NF									

2008 Key Developments: While North Korea's relations with the United States appeared to thaw in 2008, relations with the South worsened after conservative president Lee Myung-bak took office there in February. Pyongyang expelled South Korean managers from the joint Kaesong industrial complex in April, and North Korean forces shot and killed a South Korean tourist in July. In August, North Korean leader Kim Jong-il was reported to have suffered a stroke, and questions about his health lingered at year's end. North Korea made no progress on human rights in 2008, and experienced severe food shortages in the wake of floods in 2007.

Political Rights: North Korea is not an electoral democracy. Kim Jong-il has led the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) since the 1994 death of his father, founding leader Kim Il-sung. North Korea's parliament, the Supreme People's Assembly, is a rubber-stamp institution that 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. Corruption is believed to be endemic at every level of the state and economy.

Civil Liberties: 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. Although freedom of religion is guaranteed by the constitution, it does not exist in practice. 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. Despite these bans, it has been reported that scores of women have banded together to protest government crackdowns on black-market activities—an act that would have been unthinkable just a few years ago. 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 a common practice. Freedom of movement does not exist, and forced internal resettlement is routine. There have been widespread reports of trafficked women and girls among the tens of thousands of North Koreans who have recently crossed into China.

Saudi Arabia

Political Rights:	7	Population:	27,600,000
Civil Liberties:	6	Capital:	Riyadh
Status:	Not Free		

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

Year Under Review	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Rating	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	7,6NF

2008 Key Developments: Saudi Arabia made little progress on political and judicial reform in 2008, and the government continued to crack down on activists who called for expanded human and political rights. The limited electoral component of the political process remained tenuous in 2008, as Saudi authorities were reportedly considering a two-year postponement of the municipal council elections scheduled for 2009.

Political Rights: 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 the 150-member Consultative Council, which serves in an advisory capacity and has limited powers. The Council of Ministers, an executive body appointed by the king, passes legislation that becomes law once ratified by royal decree. The al-Saud dynasty dominates and controls political life in the kingdom. The royal family forbids the formation of political parties, and organized political opposition exists only outside of the country. Corruption is a significant problem, with foreign companies reporting that they often pay bribes to middlemen and government officials to secure business deals.

Civil Liberties: The government tightly controls content in domestic media and dominates regional print and satellite television coverage. 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 blocked access to over 400,000 websites that are considered immoral or politically sensitive. Religious freedom does not exist in Saudi Arabia. All Saudis are required by law to be Muslims, and the government prohibits the public practice of any religions other than Islam. Religious practices of the Shiite and Sufi Muslim minority sects are restricted. Academic freedom is restricted, and informers monitor classrooms for compliance with limits on curriculums, such as a ban on teaching secular philosophy and religions other than Islam. Saudis do not have freedom of association, and the government frequently arrests and detains political activists who stage demonstrations or engage in other civic advocacy. Allegations of torture by police and prison officials are common, and access to prisoners by independent human rights and legal organizations is strictly limited. Freedom of movement is restricted in some cases, with the government punishing activists and critics by limiting their ability to travel outside the country. Women are not treated as equal members of society, and many laws discriminate against them. They were not permitted to vote in the 2005 municipal elections, they may not legally drive cars, their use of public facilities is restricted when men are present, and they cannot travel within or outside of the country without a male relative. According to interpretations of Sharia in Saudi Arabia, daughters receive half the inheritance awarded to their brothers, and the testimony of one man is equal to that of two women in Sharia courts. Education and economic rights for Saudi women have improved, and now more than half of the country's university students are female.

Somalia

Political Rights:	7	Population:	9,100,000
Civil Liberties:	7	Capital:	Mogadishu
Status:	Not Free		

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

Year Under Review	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Rating	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	7,7,NF

2008 Key Developments: The Ethiopian-backed Transitional Federal Government (TFG) continued to battle insurgent groups in 2008, and increased attacks on aid workers curtailed their activities in the country. In August, the TFG reached an agreement with a coalition of opposition groups, the Alliance for the Reliberation of Somalia (ARS), that called for a ceasefire, the eventual withdrawal of Ethiopian forces, and power sharing. The TFG and ARS agreed in November to double the size of the transitional parliament, and the unpopular TFG president, Abdullahi Yusuf, resigned in late December. Nevertheless, hard-line rebel factions boycotted the August agreement and continued fighting for the rest of the year. The Ethiopian government announced in November that it would withdraw its 3,000-strong force from Somalia, but the pullout had not been completed by year's end.

Political Rights: Somalia is not an electoral democracy. The Somali state has in many respects ceased to exist. Technically, the country is governed by the internationally recognized TFG, but its actual control is minimal. There are no effective political parties, and the political process is driven largely by clan loyalty. Because of mounting civil unrest and the breakdown of the state, corruption in Somalia is rampant. Since May 1991, the northwestern region of Somaliland 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 been relatively autonomous since 1998; unlike Somaliland, it has not sought full independence, declaring only a temporary secession until Somalia is stabilized.

Civil Liberties: Although Somalia's Transitional Federal Charter calls for freedoms of speech and the press, these rights are quite limited in practice. Journalists continued to face dangerous conditions in 2008, with three deaths in addition to several arrests and abductions. Owing to poverty and low literacy levels, radio remains the primary news medium, although there is no national broadcaster. A number of independent outlets ceased operations in 2007, and many of those that remain serve largely as mouthpieces for the factions they support in the fighting. Islam is recognized as the official religion and nearly all Somalis are Sunni Muslims, but there is a very small Christian community. Freedom of assembly is not respected amid the ongoing violence, and the largely informal economy is inhospitable to organized labor. The conflict has forced nongovernmental organizations and UN agencies operating in Somalia to either reduce or suspend their activities. 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 human rights situation in Somalia remained grim in 2008, and several international monitoring groups reported abuses by the Ethiopian military, the TFG, and insurgent factions. Women in Somalia face considerable discrimination. Female genital mutilation is still practiced in some form on nearly all Somali girls. Sexual violence is rampant due to lawlessness and impunity for perpetrators, and rape victims are often stigmatized.

Zimbabwe ↓

Political Rights:	7	Population:	13,300,000
Civil Liberties:	6	Capital:	Harare
Status:	Not Free		

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

Year Under Review	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Rating	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	7,7,NF

2008 Key Developments: Parliamentary and presidential elections were held in March 2008 amid a state-directed campaign of violence and intimidation that targeted members and supporters of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). Nevertheless, the MDC denied President Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Union–Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) party a majority in Parliament for the first time, and MDC presidential candidate Morgan Tsvangirai outpolled Mugabe. Violence by ZANU-PF militias intensified ahead of a presidential runoff in late June, leading to Tsvangirai's withdrawal and an uncontested victory for Mugabe. South African–brokered negotiations resulted in a controversial power-sharing agreement in September. However, disputes over the allocation of cabinet seats—as well as the abduction of scores of MDC officials and activists—prevented the formation of a national-unity government by year's end. Zimbabwe's economic collapse continued in 2008, with hyperinflation reaching an astounding 13 billion percent.

Political Rights: Zimbabwe is not an electoral democracy. President Mugabe and the ruling ZANU-PF party have dominated the political landscape since independence in 1980. Presidential and legislative elections in March 2008 were marred by a wide-ranging and brutal campaign of violence and intimidation, flawed voter registration and balloting, biased media coverage, and the use of state resources to bribe and threaten voters. Despite political violence and vote rigging, the two factions of the opposition MDC won a majority of seats in the House of Assembly, while ZANU-PF maintained its majority in the Senate. The September power sharing agreement divided ministries between the two parties and installed Tsvangirai as prime minister, while Mugabe remained president. Corruption is rampant throughout the country, including at the highest levels of government.

Civil Liberties: Freedoms of expression and the press are severely restricted. Journalists are required to register with the state and are routinely subjected to intimidation, physical attacks, arrest and detention, and financial pressure. In 2008, scores of local and foreign journalists were beaten or detained, both before and after the elections. While freedom of religion has generally been respected, church attendance has become increasingly politicized. Nongovernmental organizations have faced increasing legal restrictions and extralegal harassment, and human rights groups are explicitly prohibited from receiving foreign funds. While some courts have struck down or disputed government actions, increasing pressure by the regime has substantially eroded judicial independence. In general, security forces are accountable to the government but abuse citizens with impunity. ZANU-PF militias operate as de facto enforcers of government policies and have committed assault, torture, rape, extralegal evictions, and extralegal executions. Prison conditions are harsh, and deaths in prisons are often caused by disease or beatings by guards. The state has extensive control over travel and residence, and property rights are not respected. Women enjoy legal protections, but societal discrimination and domestic violence persist.

↓**Trend Arrow:** Zimbabwe received a downward trend arrow due to the heavy involvement of security forces and government-aligned militias in a campaign of political violence, as well as the government's crackdown on independent Anglican churches.

South Ossetia (Georgia)

Political Rights:	7	Population: 70,000
Civil Liberties:	6	
Status:	Not Free	

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

Year Under Review	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Rating	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	7,6,NF

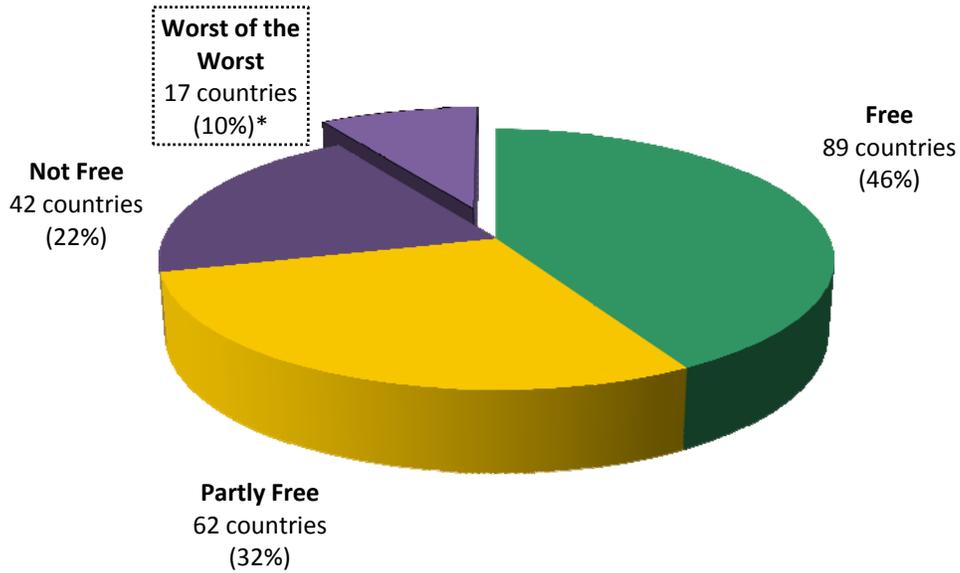
2008 Key Developments: After weeks of skirmishes along the de facto border between separatist South Ossetia and Georgia proper, Georgian forces on August 7, 2008, launched an assault on the South Ossetian capital, Tskhinvali, leading Russia to invade the country. After hundreds of people died on both sides and thousands of ethnic Georgians were displaced from their homes, Moscow on August 26 recognized the independence of South Ossetia despite widespread international criticism. Russia's subsequent political and economic takeover of South Ossetia effectively squelched any chance that the region would be reintegrated into Georgia in the foreseeable future.

Political Rights: Due to an increasing lockdown by the Russian authorities, little information about South Ossetia's internal situation was available by year's end. Though South Ossetia has previously conducted elections, they were not monitored or recognized by independent observers, and the lack of legitimate alternate presidential candidates all but ensured victory for separatist leader Eduard Kokoity in 2006. Most ethnic Georgians either declined to or were unable to participate in such elections, and nearly all were displaced from the territory during the August 2008 conflict. The composition of the government changed rapidly after the war, with Kokoity dismissing his cabinet in October 2008 and replacing most ministers with officials from Russia, allegedly under pressure from Moscow. Corruption in South Ossetia is believed to be extensive.

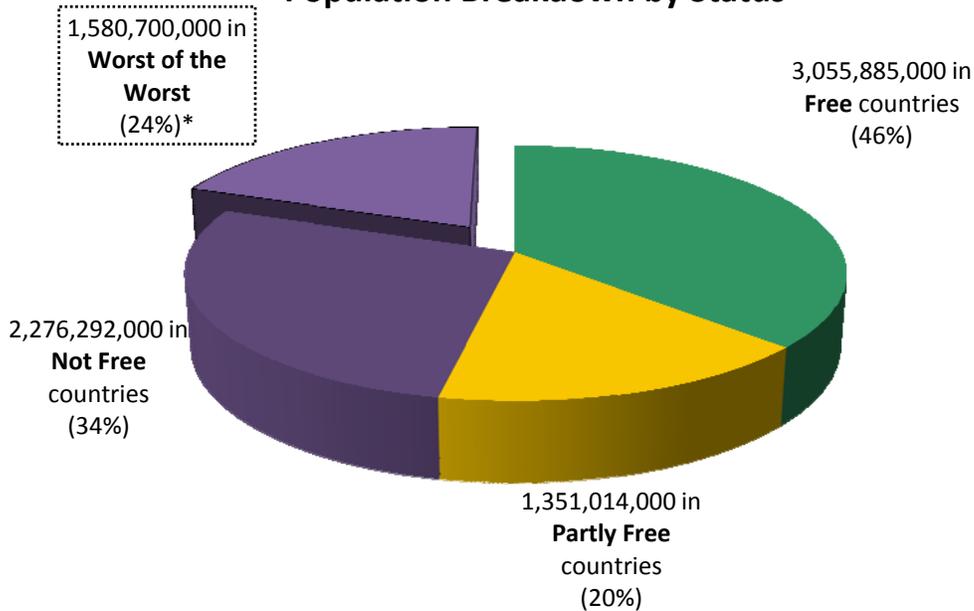
Civil Liberties: There is currently little information about access to media in South Ossetia. It is assumed that television and radio broadcasts from Georgia have been blocked since the war. Electronic media are controlled by the state and reflect government positions. The State Committee on Information and Press maintains an English- and Russian-language website that is updated regularly. The South Ossetian Orthodox Church, which is unrecognized by both the Georgian and Russian Orthodox Churches, continues to practice freely. While there were several nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) working in South Ossetia before the war, at least one South Ossetian NGO that claims to be independent has been linked to the government. The human rights and humanitarian situation in South Ossetia was dire in 2008, with reports of indiscriminate artillery and ground attacks by Georgian forces against South Ossetian civilians and by Russian forces against Georgian civilians. Ossetian forces razed homes and seized property in previously Georgian-controlled villages. An estimated 20,000 Georgians who fled the region during the war remain displaced. Freedom of movement has been restricted since the war, with ethnic Ossetians barred by the Russian authorities from entering Georgia, though they are able to travel freely into Russia.

Freedom in the World 2009: Global Data

Country Breakdown by Status



Population Breakdown by Status



*Of the 193 countries evaluated by Freedom House in the *Freedom in the World 2009* survey, 42 are Not Free. Of the 42 Not Free countries, 17 qualify as the world's most repressive societies, with average combined political rights and civil liberties ratings of 6.5 or 7. They comprise 10 percent of the world's countries and 24 percent of the world's population.

Freedom in the World 2009: Table of Independent Countries

Country	PR	CL	Trend Arrow	Freedom Status
Afghanistan	5	6 ▼		Not Free ▼
Albania*	3	3		Partly Free
Algeria	6	5		Not Free
Andorra*	1	1		Free
Angola	6	5	↑	Not Free
Antigua and Barbuda*	2	2		Free
Argentina*	2	2		Free
Armenia	6 ▼	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*	4 ▲	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	4 ▲	5		Partly 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*	2 ▼	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	4 ▼		Partly Free
Comoros*	3 ▲	4		Partly Free
Congo (Brazzaville)	6	5		Not Free

Country	PR	CL	Trend Arrow	Freedom Status
Congo (Brazzaville)	6	5		Not Free
Congo (Kinshasa)	6 ▼	6		Not Free
Costa Rica*	1	1		Free
Cote d'Ivoire	6 ▲	5		Not Free
Croatia*	2	2		Free
Cuba	7	6 ▲		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	7 ▼		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	7 ▼	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

Country	PR	CL	Trend Arrow	Freedom Status
Ireland*	1	1		Free
Israel*	1	2		Free
Italy*	1	2 ▼		Free
Jamaica*	2	3		Free
Japan*	1	2		Free
Jordan	5	5 ▼		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	4 ▲	4 ▲		Partly Free ▲
Mali*	2	3		Free
Malta*	1	1		Free
Marshall Islands*	1	1		Free
Mauritania	6 ▼	5 ▼		Not Free ▼
Mauritius*	1	2		Free
Mexico*	2	3	↓	Free
Micronesia*	1	1		Free
Moldova*	4 ▼	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	4 ▲	4		Partly Free
Netherlands*	1	1		Free

Country	PR	CL	Trend Arrow	Freedom Status
New Zealand*	1	1		Free
Nicaragua*	4 ▼	3		Partly Free
Niger*	3	4		Partly Free
Nigeria	5 ▼	4		Partly Free
North Korea	7	7		Not Free
Norway*	1	1		Free
Oman	6	5		Not Free
Pakistan	4 ▲	5		Partly Free ▲
Palau*	1	1		Free
Panama*	1	2		Free
Papua New Guinea*	4 ▼	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*	3 ▼	3		Partly 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

Country	PR	CL	Trend Arrow	Freedom Status
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	5▲	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	3▲		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, civil liberties, or status since the last survey.

↑ ↓ up or down indicates a trend of positive or negative changes that took place but that were not sufficient to result in a change in political rights or civil liberties ratings of 1-7.

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

Indicates the country's status as one of the world's most repressive societies with a combined political rights and civil liberties rating of 6.5 or 7.

NOTE: The ratings reflect global events from January 1, 2008, through December 31, 2008.

Table of Related Territories: Comparative Measures of Freedom

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

Table of Disputed Territories: Comparative Measures of Freedom

Country and Territory	PR	CL	Trend Arrow	Freedom Status
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
Georgia South Ossetia	7	6		Not Free
India Kashmir	5	4	↑	Partly Free
Israel Israeli-Occupied Territories	6	6	↓	Not Free
Israel Palestinian Authority– Administered Territories	5	6	↓	Not Free
Moldova Transnistria	6	6		Not Free
Morocco Western Sahara	7	6		Not Free
Pakistan Kashmir	6 ▲	5		Not Free
Russia Chechnya	7	7		Not Free
Serbia Kosovo	6	5		Not Free
Somalia Somaliland	5 ▼	4		Partly Free

Freedom in the World Methodology

The reports for *Worst of the Worst: The World's Most Repressive Societies* were excerpted from the forthcoming 2009 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 16 related and disputed territories. The survey rates each country and territory on a 7-point scale for both political rights and civil liberties, with 1 representing the most free and 7 the least free, and uses the average of those two ratings to assign each country and territory a status of Free (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 below). Countries and territories that received ratings of 6 for political rights and 7 for civil liberties, 7 for political rights and 6 for civil liberties, or 7 for both political rights and civil liberties are included in the *Worst of the Worst*. Within these groups there 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 accompanying 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 placed beside the name of the country or territory in question, and a brief explanatory note accompanies each 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 nonstate actors. Terrorist movements or armed groups use violent methods that can dramatically restrict essential freedoms within a society. Conversely, the existence of nonstate activists or journalists who work courageously and independently despite state restrictions can positively affect 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 advisers, 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 policymakers, leading scholars, the media, and international organizations to monitor 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 2008*. The methodology for the forthcoming survey edition will be published in *Freedom in the World 2009*.

Freedom in the World 2009 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

- A. 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?
- B. 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. Do citizens enjoy freedom of 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 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. Eleanor Roosevelt and Wendell Willkie served as Freedom House's first honorary co-chairpersons. 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.