

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 2010*, which surveys the state of freedom in 194 countries and 14 select territories. The ratings and accompanying essays are based on events from January 1, 2009, through December 31, 2009. The 17 countries and 3 territories profiled in this report are drawn from the total of 47 countries and 7 territories that are considered to be Not Free, and whose citizens endure systematic and pervasive human rights violations.

Included in this report are nine countries judged to have the worst human rights conditions: **Burma, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Libya, North Korea, Somalia, Sudan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan**. Also included is one territory, **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 eight additional countries near the bottom of Freedom House's ratings scale: **Belarus, Chad, China, Cuba, Guinea, Laos, Saudi Arabia, and Syria**. The two territories of **South Ossetia** and **Western Sahara** are also included in this group. These countries and territories—all of which received ratings of 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.

Despite a net 37-year gain in support for the values of democracy—multiparty elections, the rule of law, freedom of association, freedom of speech, the rights of minorities and other fundamental, universally valid human rights—the last four years have seen a global decline in freedom. The declines represent the longest period of erosion in political rights

Freedom in the World 2010 **WORST OF THE WORST**

Of the 47 countries designated as Not Free, nine have been given the survey's lowest possible rating of 7 for both political rights and civil liberties. These worst-rated countries represent a narrow range of systems and cultures. 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 ruled by a leadership that has elements of both radical Islamism and a traditional military junta. The remaining worst-rated states are Burma, a tightly controlled military dictatorship; Equatorial Guinea, a highly corrupt regime with one of the worst human rights records in Africa; Eritrea, an increasingly repressive police state; and Somalia, a failed state.

The one worst-rated territory in the survey, Tibet, is under Chinese jurisdiction.

An additional 10 countries and territories received scores that were slightly above those of the worst-ranked countries, with ratings of 6,7 or 7,6 for political rights and civil liberties: Belarus, Chad, China, Cuba, Guinea, Laos, Saudi Arabia, South Ossetia, Syria, and Western Sahara.

and civil liberties in the nearly 40-year history of *Freedom in the World*. New threats, including heightened attacks on human rights defenders, increased limits on press freedom and attacks on journalists, and significant restrictions on freedom of association have been seen in nearly every corner of the globe. The countries identified in this report represent some of the worst examples of these threats, and their populations live under regimes that use every means necessary to prevent progress in democratic governance.

By absolute historical standards, the world is still freer than it was thirty years ago. Dozens of states have shed tyranny and embraced democratic rule and respect for basic civil liberties. According to our global survey, *Freedom in the World 2010* (whose findings can be accessed online at www.freedomhouse.org), of the 194 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 58 (30 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. This progress makes the overall global decline, including the current state of this set of countries and territories, all the more disturbing.

There is 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. 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
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May 2010

Worst of the Worst 2010:

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	7 ▼	7	Not Free
Guinea	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

Related and Disputed Territories

Territory	PR	CL	Combined Average Rating	Freedom Status
South Ossetia	7	6	6.5	Not Free
Tibet	7	7	7	Not Free
Western Sahara	7	6	6.5	Not Free

PR and CL stand for political rights and civil liberties, respectively; 1 represents the most free and 7 the least free rating. 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.

Belarus

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

Population: 9,662,000
Capital: Minsk

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

Year Under Review	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Rating	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	7,6,NF

2009 Key Developments: Despite incentives from the European Union to introduce reforms, President Alyaksandr Lukashenka maintained a tight grip over Belarus's political and economic systems in 2009. His government continued to use police violence and other forms of harassment against the political opposition, and blocked independent media from covering demonstrations through systematic intimidation. After releasing all of its political prisoners in 2008, the regime incarcerated more activists in 2009. The country made no substantial progress in reforming its electoral code, and overall hopes for an improvement in the political situation went unrealized.

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. Amendments to the electoral law adopted in 2009 give the parties more opportunities to campaign but still do not provide for a transparent vote count. Corruption is a serious problem and is fed by the state's dominance over the economy and the overall lack of transparency and accountability in government.

Civil Liberties: President Alyaksandr Lukashenka systematically curtails press freedom. Libel is both a civil and criminal offense, and an August 2008 media law gives the state a monopoly over information about political, social, and economic affairs. The law gives the cabinet control over internet media. 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 restricts 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 frequently break them up and arrest participants, a pattern that was repeated in 2009. 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 executive 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: 50,020,000
Capital: Rangoon [Note: Nay Pyi Taw serves as the administrative capital.]

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

Year Under Review	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
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

2009 Key Developments: The military regime forged ahead in 2009 with its “roadmap to democracy,” a plan intended to legitimize its grip on power. The process called for national elections that were expected to be held in 2010, and the junta continued to arrest and imprison political dissidents in 2009, ensuring their marginalization ahead of the voting. Tensions between the military and armed ethnic groups increased in the fall, as the groups refused to incorporate themselves into the military’s Border Guard Force, impeding the government’s goal of national unity by 2010.

Political Rights: Burma is not an electoral democracy. The State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) rules by decree; it controls all executive, legislative, and judicial powers, suppresses nearly all basic rights, and commits human rights abuses with impunity. Military officers occupy almost all cabinet positions, and active or retired officers hold the top posts in all ministries as well as key positions in the private sector. The SPDC does not tolerate dissent and has a long history of imprisoning anyone who is critical of the government. Given the lack of transparency and accountability, corruption and economic mismanagement are rampant at both the national and local levels.

Civil Liberties: The junta drastically restricts press freedom and owns or controls all newspapers and broadcast media. Media crackdowns continued in 2009, with at least 17 journalists in detention at year’s end. The authorities practice surveillance at internet cafes and regularly jail bloggers. The 2008 constitution provides for freedom of religion. It distinguishes Buddhism as the majority religion but also recognizes Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and animism. At times the government interferes with religious assemblies and discriminates against minority religious groups. Buddhist temples and monasteries have been kept under close surveillance since the 2007 protests and crackdown. Academic freedom is severely limited. Teachers are subject to restrictions on freedom of expression and are held accountable for the political activities of their students. Since the 1988 student prodemocracy demonstrations, the junta has sporadically closed universities and relocated many campuses to relatively isolated areas to disperse the student population. 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 areas populated by ethnic minorities, who comprise roughly 35 percent of Burma’s population. In these border regions the military arbitrarily detains, beats, rapes, and kills civilians. Burmese women have traditionally enjoyed high social and economic status, but domestic violence and trafficking are growing concerns, and women remain underrepresented in the government and civil service. The Women’s League of Burma has accused the military of systematically using rape and forced marriage as a weapon against ethnic minorities.

Chad

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

Population: 10,329,000
Capital: N'Djamena

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

Year Under Review	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Rating	6,5,NF	6,5,NF	6,5,NF	6,5,NF	6,5,NF	6,5,NF	6,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF

2009 Key Developments: In May 2009, less than a week after the governments of Chad and Sudan signed an accord on normalizing their relations, a new alliance of Chadian rebel groups launched an offensive from bases in Sudan's Darfur region. Chadian and Sudanese officials met again in October to reaffirm their commitment to peace. A UN peacekeeping mission replaced a European Union force in eastern Chad in March, but as of September the UN force still had less than half of the recommended personnel.

Political Rights: Chad is not an electoral democracy. The country has never experienced a free and fair transfer of power through elections. The president is elected for five-year terms, and a 2005 constitutional amendment abolished term limits. The 2006 presidential election was held shortly after a rebel assault on the capital despite calls for a postponement. Many opposition members boycotted the balloting, which was reportedly marred by irregularities, and voter turnout may have been as low as 10 percent in some areas. The executive branch dominates the judicial and legislative branches, and the president appoints the prime minister. 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 systems, causing resentment among the country's more than 200 other ethnic groups. Corruption is rampant within Deby's inner circle.

Civil Liberties: Freedom of expression is severely restricted, and self-censorship is common. Broadcast media are controlled by the state. Following the 2008 rebel attack on the capital, the government imposed a new press law that increased the maximum penalty for false news and defamation to three years in prison, and the maximum penalty for insulting the president to five years. In October 2009, Cameroonian-born editor Innocent Ebode was expelled for writing a column that criticized a minister's suggestion that President Deby be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. After returning to Chad to contest the suspension of his newspaper, Ebode was abducted from his home in December and reportedly held at the Cameroonian border. 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. At the same time, the authorities have banned Muslim groups that are seen as promoting violence. The government does not restrict academic freedom. Despite the constitutional guarantee of free assembly, the authorities ban demonstrations by groups thought to be critical of the government. Insecurity in the east and south has severely hindered the activities of humanitarian organizations in recent years. The constitution guarantees the rights to strike and unionize, but a 2007 law imposed new limits on public-sector workers' right to strike. The rule of law and the judicial system remain weak, with courts heavily influenced by the political leadership. Former president Hissene Habre was sentenced to death in absentia by a Chadian court in August 2008. Habre, who lives in exile in Senegal, was scheduled to face a trial there for crimes against humanity allegedly committed during his presidency. However, in its first ruling in December 2009, the African Court on Human and People's Rights dismissed the case for lack of jurisdiction. Human rights groups credibly accuse the security forces and rebel groups of killing and torturing with impunity. The army and its paramilitary forces, as well as rebel forces, have recruited child soldiers. Chadian women face widespread discrimination and violence.

China (The People's Republic of China)

Political Rights:	7	Population:	1,331,398,000
Civil Liberties:	6	Capital:	Beijing
Status:	Not Free		

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

Year Under Review	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
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

2009 Key Developments: The Chinese government, aiming to suppress citizen activism and protests during politically sensitive anniversaries in 2009, resorted to lockdowns on major cities, new restrictions on the internet, and a renewed campaign against democracy activists, human rights lawyers, and religious minorities. These measures were intensified in the northwestern region of Xinjiang, especially after ethnic violence erupted there in July. Nevertheless, many citizens defied government hostility and asserted their rights to free expression and association.

Political Rights: China is not an electoral democracy. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) possesses a monopoly on political power; its nine-member Politburo Standing Committee makes most key political decisions and sets government policy. A 3,000-member National People's Congress is, in principle, China's parliament, but it remains subordinate to the party. The only competitive elections are for village committees and urban residency councils, but these are often closely controlled by local party branches, whose role includes vetting candidates. Opposition groups are suppressed, and activists publicly calling for reform of the one-party political system risk arrest and imprisonment. Prominent democracy advocate Liu Xiaobo was sentenced in December 2009 to 11 years in prison for his involvement in drafting and circulating Charter 08, a proposal promoting political reform and democratization in China. Tens of thousands of others are thought to be held in prisons and extrajudicial forms of detention for their political or religious views. Despite thousands of prosecutions launched each year and new regulations on open government, corruption remains endemic, particularly at the local level.

Civil Liberties: Freedom of the press remains extremely restricted, particularly on topics deemed sensitive by the CCP. During the year, the authorities sought to tighten control over journalists and internet portals, while employing more sophisticated techniques to manipulate the content circulated via these media. Journalists who do not adhere to party dictates are harassed, fired or jailed. In 2009, China was home to the largest number of internet users globally. The government maintains an elaborate apparatus for censoring and monitoring internet use, including personal communications, frequently blocking websites it deems politically threatening. Religious freedom is sharply restricted, particularly for members of unauthorized religious groups. Some groups, such as Falun Gong, are formally outlawed, and their members risk harassment, imprisonment, and torture. Freedoms of assembly and association are severely curtailed. Security agencies and hired thugs often use excessive force to put down demonstrations; in several instances during 2009, this drove protesters to violently attack symbols of authority, such as police cars and government buildings. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are required to register and follow strict regulations, including vague prohibitions on advocating non-CCP rule, "damaging national unity," or "upsetting ethnic harmony." The only legal labor union is government controlled. Collective bargaining is legal but does not occur in practice, and independent labor leaders are harassed and jailed. The CCP controls the judiciary and directs verdicts and sentences, particularly in politically sensitive cases. Torture remains widespread, with coerced confessions routinely admitted as evidence. In the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, political indoctrination programs, curbs on Muslim religious practice, and policies marginalizing the use of the Uighur language in education intensified throughout 2009. Serious violations of women's rights continue, including domestic violence, human trafficking, and the use of coercive methods to enforce the one-child policy.

Cuba

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

Population: 11,225,000
Capital: Havana

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

Year Under Review	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
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

2009 Key Developments: In March 2009, President Raul Castro fired several prominent cabinet ministers amid a worsening economic crisis. Former leader Fidel Castro appeared to regain his health during the year and wrote frequent essays in the state press, sparking speculation that his renewed influence could slow Cuba’s reform process. In November, noted blogger Yoani Sanchez reported being intimidated and beaten by suspected government agents. Cuban authorities in December arrested a U.S. contractor for distributing communications equipment to religious groups; he remained in detention without being formally charged.

Political Rights: Cuba is not an electoral democracy. Longtime president Fidel Castro and his brother, current president Raul Castro, dominate the one-party political system. The Communist Party of Cuba (PCC) controls all government entities from the national to the local level. All political organization 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 decreased slightly from 205 to 201 during 2009. Official corruption remains a serious problem.

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 in their homes. In 2009, Cuban blogger Yoani Sanchez was denied a visa to receive a prestigious journalism award in the United States, and in November Sanchez reported that she and another opposition blogger, Orlando Luis Pardo Lazo, were forced into a car, beaten, and denounced as “counterrevolutionaries” by three men they assumed to be government agents. 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 government restricts academic freedom. Teaching materials for subjects including mathematics and literature must contain ideological content. Limited rights of assembly and association are permitted under the constitution. However, as with 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 is punishable with up to three months in prison and a fine. 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.

Equatorial Guinea

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

Population: 676,000
Capital: Malabo

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

Year Under Review	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Rating	7,5,NF	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

2009 Key Developments: Spanish authorities launched an investigation into alleged money laundering by Equatorial Guinea's government in January 2009, and in February unidentified gunmen attacked the presidential palace, prompting the authorities to deny speculation that the incident was a coup attempt. President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, the longest-serving ruler in sub-Saharan Africa, easily won a new term in the November presidential election, which was widely regarded as rigged.

Political Rights: Equatorial Guinea is not an electoral democracy and has never held credible elections. President Obiang dominates the political system. 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. Obiang denies that a 2009 attack on the presidential palace was a coup attempt, although several opposition members were subsequently arrested. 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 country's 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. In June, Rodrigo Angue Nguema, the only foreign correspondent in the country, was jailed for four months after publishing a story about embezzlement by the head of the national airline. The constitution protects religious freedom, although in practice it is sometimes affected by the country's broader political repression, and official preference is given to the Roman Catholic Church and the Reform Church of Equatorial Guinea. 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.

Eritrea

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

Population: 5,073,000
Capital: Asmara

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

Year Under Review	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Rating	7,5,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	7,7,NF

Ratings Change: Eritrea’s civil liberties rating declined from 6 to 7 due to the government’s persistent and intense repression of religious minorities, its dominance over the judiciary, and its harsh system of national service, which ties people to the state for much of their working lives.

2009 Key Developments: The government of Eritrea intensified its suppression of human rights in 2009, using arbitrary arrests and an onerous conscription system to control the population. Religious minorities faced particular pressure from the authorities, who continued to use a pliant judicial system to detain political prisoners indefinitely. Meanwhile, Eritrea defied a UN Security Council resolution instructing it to withdraw its troops from the disputed border with Djibouti following clashes between the two countries’ armies in 2008.

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 away from a democratic system 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 provides 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 broadcast outlets and the repression of independent print publications has 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 or died while incarcerated. There was a fresh wave of arrests in 2009. 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’s 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.

Guinea

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

Population: 10,058,000
Capital: Conakry

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

Year Under Review	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Rating	6,5,NF	6,5,NF	6,5,NF	6,5,NF	6,5,NF	6,5,NF	6,5,NF	6,5,NF	7,5,NF	7,6,NF

Ratings Change: Guinea's civil liberties rating declined from 5 to 6 due to the military junta's repressive measures, including the use of rape as a means of political intimidation and the massacre of more than 150 opposition protesters in September.

2009 Key Developments: Captain Moussa Dadis Camara, the leader of a military junta that took power in December 2008, refused in 2009 to adhere to an initial promise that he would not run in the presidential election set for early 2010. His erratic and repressive rule during the year culminated in the massacre of more than 150 opposition protesters in September. The incident, which also featured brutal rapes and beatings by security forces, triggered an investigation by the United Nations as well as a series of international sanctions. In December, Camara was shot and seriously injured by one of his officers, and the consequences remained uncertain at year's end.

Political Rights: Guinea is not an electoral democracy. Elections under presidents Ahmed Sekou Toure and Lansana Conte were heavily manipulated, and the December 2008 military coup suspended all political activity, civilian government institutions, and the constitution. The resulting junta, the National Council for Democracy and Development (CNDD), promised to hold open presidential and legislative elections in early 2010, but those plans were in doubt after the September 2009 massacre of opposition supporters and the December assassination attempt on junta leader Moussa Dadis Camara. Corruption has been cited as a serious problem by international donors, and many government activities are shrouded in secrecy.

Civil Liberties: Under Conte, restrictive laws allowed media censorship and criminalized defamation, and private radio and print outlets were subject to suspensions and harassment. In 2009, the military junta sought to intimidate independent journalists through arbitrary arrest and other tactics, and several were beaten, threatened, and harassed in the wake of the September massacre. Internet access is limited to urban areas, but has generally not been restricted by the government when available. The constitution, which provides for the protection of religious rights, was suspended after the 2008 coup. Academic freedom has been hampered to some degree by government influence over hiring and curriculum content. The CNDD restricted freedoms of association and assembly, and the authorities clearly demonstrated their contempt for these rights during the brutal suppression of the September 2009 opposition rally. Under Conte, the nominally independent courts were marred by corruption, a lack of resources, nepotism, ethnic bias, and political interference. The legal system was thrown into turmoil by the CNDD's initial suspension of judicial institutions, and in June 2009 court staff went on strike to protest political interference in judicial affairs. Security forces have long engaged in arbitrary arrests, torture of detainees, and extrajudicial execution with impunity. While the law prohibits ethnic discrimination, human rights reports have noted societal discrimination in employment, housing, and marriage patterns. In 2009 the government signed a number of highly questionable and nontransparent contracts with foreign companies for exploitation of Guinea's mineral wealth. Societal discrimination against women is common, and while women have legal access to land, credit, and business, the inheritance laws and the traditional justice system have favored men. Security personnel openly raped dozens of women in the 2007 and 2009 crackdowns. Female genital mutilation is an illegal but nearly ubiquitous practice.

Laos (Lao People's Democratic Republic)

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

Population: 6,320,000
Capital: Vientiane

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

Year Under Review	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
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

2009 Key Developments: The Laotian government continued to encourage large-scale foreign investment and development projects in 2009, often at the expense of small farmers and tribal communities. The United States lifted trade restrictions on the country in June despite objections from human rights activists. Also during the year, Laos reached a deal with Britain to repatriate two British citizens facing life in prison for drug smuggling. However, human rights advocates in December voiced concern over the fate of some 4,000 Hmong migrants to be deported by Thai authorities at the request of the Laotian government.

Political Rights: Laos is not an electoral democracy. The 1991 constitution makes the Lao People's Revolutionary Party (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. 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.

Civil Liberties: 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 and the country's only radio station. Internet access is heavily restricted, and content is censored. Religious freedom is tightly constrained. The government forces Christians to renounce their faith, confiscates their property, and bars them from celebrating Christian holidays. The religious practice of the majority Buddhist population is restricted through the LPRP's control of clergy training and supervision 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. 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." All unions must belong to the official Federation of Lao Trade Unions. The courts are corrupt and controlled by the LPRP. Security forces often illegally detain suspects, and hundreds of political activists have been held for months or years without trial. Poor prison conditions and the use of torture remain serious problems. Discrimination against members of minority tribes is common at many levels. Gender-based discrimination and abuse are widespread. Poverty puts many women at greater risk of exploitation and abuse by the state and society at large, and an estimated 15,000 to 20,000 Laotian women and girls are trafficked each year for prostitution.

Libya (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

Political Rights:	7	Population:	6,283,000
Civil Liberties:	7	Capital:	Tripoli
Status:	Not Free		

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

Year Under Review	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
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

2009 Key Developments: The Libyan government nationalized the country's only quasi-independent media group in 2009, although online censorship and the hacking of dissident websites appeared to decline somewhat. Also during 2009, a prominent dissident died after years of illness in custody, and the authorities sentenced two Swiss businessmen to jail terms on immigration charges, apparently as part of a diplomatic row with Switzerland.

Political Rights: Libya is not an electoral democracy. Power theoretically lies with a system of people's committees and the indirectly elected General People's Congress, but in practice those structures are manipulated to ensure the continued dominance of Mu'ammarr 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, and the government strictly monitors political activity. Organizing or joining anything akin to a political party is punishable by long prison terms and even the death penalty. Many Libyan opposition movements and figures operate outside the country. Corruption is pervasive in both the private sector and the government in Libya.

Civil Liberties: There is no independent press. The regime hardened its monopoly on media outlets in mid-2009 with the nationalization of Al-Ghad media group, which was established in 2007 by al-Qadhafi's son, Saif al-Islam, and encompassed the country's only quasi-independent newspapers and radio stations. 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. The government controls the country's only internet service provider. The OpenNet Initiative found that dissident websites were censored and hacked sporadically in 2009, although less often than in previous years. The government closely monitors mosques for Islamist activity. The few non-Muslims in Libya are permitted to practice their faiths with relative freedom. Academic freedom is tightly restricted. The government also restricts freedom of assembly. Those demonstrations that are allowed to take place are typically meant to support the aims of the regime. The law allows for the establishment of nongovernmental organizations, but those that have been granted authorization to operate are directly or indirectly linked to the government. There are no independent labor unions. The People's Court, infamous for punishing political dissidents, was abolished in 2005, but the judicial authority has since created the State Security Court, which carries out a similar function. The judiciary as a whole remains subservient to the political leadership and regularly penalizes political dissent. Women enjoy many of the same legal protections as men, but certain laws and social norms perpetuate discrimination, particularly in areas such as marriage, divorce, and inheritance.

↓ North Korea (Democratic People's Republic of Korea)

Political Rights:	7	Population:	22,665,000
Civil Liberties:	7	Capital:	Pyongyang
Status:	Not Free		

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

Year Under Review	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
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

Trend Arrow: North Korea received a downward trend arrow due to the government's tightening of control over a burgeoning private market and its repression of citizens' economic freedom.

2009 Key Developments: The North Korean government carried out its second test of a nuclear weapon in May 2009, triggering new international sanctions. However, it indicated its openness to further disarmament negotiations later in the year, after former U.S. president Bill Clinton visited in August to secure the release of two American journalists. The Clinton trip and other official visits also dispelled speculation that North Korean leader Kim Jong-il was near death. In late November, the government announced a major revaluation of its currency and restricted the amount of old notes that individuals could exchange, effectively wiping out many citizens' cash savings. The move, part of a bid to crack down on private trading and bolster state controls on the economy, reportedly led to small protests and other disturbances by year's end.

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 (SPA), is a rubber-stamp institution that meets irregularly for only a few days each year. The latest SPA elections were held in March 2009, and in April the new chamber reelected Kim Jong-il as defense commission chairman. All candidates for office, who run unopposed, are preselected by the ruling Korean Workers' Party and two subordinate minor parties. In March, the SPA revised the constitution to reinforce Kim Jong-il's status as the undisputed "supreme leader," and to stipulate for the first time that the country respects and protects human rights. The move was interpreted as a response to international pressure, although protection of human rights remains nonexistent in practice. Corruption is believed to be endemic at all levels 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. Nevertheless, recent state efforts to crack down on the black market have reportedly sparked scattered protests. 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
Civil Liberties: 6
Status: Not Free

Population: 28,687,000
Capital: Riyadh

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

Year Under Review	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Rating	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF

2009 Key Developments: In January 2009, Saudi Arabia began implementing portions of an ongoing judicial reform agenda, including training programs for judges and the construction of new courts. In February King Abdullah sacked two controversial religious leaders and appointed the first-ever female cabinet member, Deputy Minister for Girls' Education Noura al-Fayez. The government announced in May that the next municipal council elections would be postponed by two years. Sectarian tensions remained a serious concern during the year, particularly after religious police attacked Shiite pilgrims in Medina in February.

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. In May 2009, municipal elections initially scheduled for later that year were postponed by an additional two years. Political parties are forbidden, 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 the content of domestic media and dominates regional print and satellite television coverage. Government officials have banned journalists and editors who publish articles deemed offensive to the ruling authorities or the country's powerful religious establishment. 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. In October 2009, authorities banned the building of Shiite mosques, marking a significant reversal of policies that had offered Shiites some religious freedom in recent years. Academic freedom is restricted, and informers monitor classrooms for compliance with limits on curricula, 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 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. Daughters receive half the inheritance awarded to their brothers, and the testimony of one man is equal to that of two women in Sharia (Islamic law) 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:	9,133,000
Civil Liberties:	7	Capital:	Mogadishu
Status:	Not Free		

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

Year Under Review	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Rating	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	7,7,NF

2009 Key Developments: As Ethiopian forces completed their withdrawal from the country in January 2009, Somalia's transitional parliament was expanded to include opposition factions, and the new body elected moderate Islamist leader Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed as president. He formed a broader government that enjoyed international support and a moderate amount of domestic goodwill, but it struggled to impose its authority over more than a small portion of the country during the year. Meanwhile, its radical Islamist opponents, the Shabaab and Hizbul Islam, fought among themselves and alienated most Somalis with their brutal interpretation of Islamic law. A suicide bombing at a university graduation ceremony in December killed four cabinet ministers and several other officials, raising new doubts about the government's ability to defend itself.

Political Rights: Somalia is not an electoral democracy. The Somali state has in many respects ceased to exist, and there is no governing authority with the ability to protect political rights and civil liberties. Technically, the country is governed by the internationally recognized Transitional Federal Government (TFG), but its actual control is minimal. There are no effective political parties, and the political process is driven largely by clan loyalty. Due to 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 yet sought full independence, declaring only a temporary secession until Somalia is stabilized. However, sentiment in the region seems to be leaning in favor of independence.

Civil Liberties: Although Somalia's Transitional Federal Charter calls for freedom of speech and the press, these rights are quite limited in practice. Journalists continued to face dangerous conditions in 2009, with nine journalists killed in addition to multiple arrests and two abductions. Militants closed down a number of media organizations in 2009 and stopped reporters from going about their duties. Many of the remaining outlets serve as mouthpieces for the factions they support in the fighting. Owing to poverty and low literacy levels, radio remains the primary news medium, although there is no national broadcaster. 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 the 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 2009, with civilians caught up in fighting between the Islamist militias, the TFG, and African Union peacekeepers. There was no effective process in place to investigate allegations of human rights abuses by any of the warring parties. The office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees estimated that there were 1.5 million internally displaced people by year's end, most of them living in appalling conditions. An estimated 500,000 were taking refuge in neighboring countries. Women in Somalia face a great deal of discrimination. Female genital mutilation is still practiced in some form on nearly all Somali girls, and sexual violence is rampant.

↓ South Ossetia

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

Population: 70,000

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

Year Under Review	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Rating	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	7,6,NF	7,6,NF

Trend Arrow: South Ossetia received a downward trend arrow due to Russia's increased control over the economy and political system, and Russian aid that has fueled rampant corruption among local elites.

2009 Key Developments: Russia tightened its grip on South Ossetia in 2009, formalizing the presence of Russian border guards in the territory and constructing a new military base in Tskhinvali. Russian president Dmitri Medvedev pledged additional funds for South Ossetia in July, but reconstruction efforts have been painfully slow and mired in corruption. Meanwhile, a series of incidents in the summer increased the threat of new fighting with Georgia, and the more than 18,500 ethnic Georgians who fled South Ossetia during the 2008 war remained unable to return during the year.

Political Rights: Though South Ossetia conducts elections, they are not monitored or recognized by independent observers. Most ethnic Georgians have either declined to or been unable to participate in such elections. During the May 2009 parliamentary elections, opposition parties reported significant government violations, including sealed ballot boxes, observers being given limited access to polling stations, and residents allegedly being forced to vote for separatist leader Eduard Kokoity. Election laws enacted in 2008 set a 7 percent vote threshold for parties to enter the parliament and required all lawmakers to be elected by proportional representation; the rules helped to substantially decrease opposition representation in 2009. In August 2009 Kokoity appointed a Russian businessman, Vadim Brovtsev, as prime minister. Corruption is believed to be extensive, particularly in the reconstruction effort following the 2008 conflict. The territory has been linked to extensive smuggling and black-market activities, including the counterfeiting of U.S. currency.

Civil Liberties: South Ossetia's electronic and print media are entirely controlled by separatist authorities, and private broadcasts are prohibited. The South Ossetian Orthodox Church, which is unrecognized by both the Georgian and Russian Orthodox Churches, continues to operate 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. All organizations operate under close scrutiny from Tskhinvali. According to UN data cited by Amnesty International, about 30,000 people, most of them ethnic Georgians, remained displaced from their homes in and around South Ossetia as of May 2009, and 18,500 from South Ossetia faced long-term displacement. Russian authorities have barred ethnic Ossetians from entering Georgia, but they can travel freely into Russia.

Sudan

Political Rights:	7	Population:	42,272,000
Civil Liberties:	7	Capital:	Khartoum
Status:	Not Free		

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

Year Under Review	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
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

2009 Key Developments: The International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an arrest warrant for President Omar al-Bashir in March 2009, citing evidence of crimes against humanity and war crimes in Darfur, but the government rejected the move. Fighting in Darfur continued at a lower level, but violence surged in Southern Sudan, where at least 2,500 people were killed in ethnic clashes. North-South tensions continued to undermine the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement between al-Bashir's National Congress Party (NCP) and the main Southern political force, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM). National elections scheduled for mid-2009 were consequently postponed until April 2010. The two sides also haggled over how the 2011 referendum on Southern secession would be organized and who would get to vote. Meanwhile, an international arbitration panel determined the boundaries of the oil-rich territory of Abyei, placing its main oil field in the North.

Political Rights: Sudan is not an electoral democracy. The last national elections, held in 2000, were boycotted by major opposition parties. President Omar al-Bashir and his NCP won easily and remained dominant until the peace agreement with the SPLM was implemented in 2005. Eight of Sudan's 30 cabinet ministries are now headed by members of the SPLM. Although the current members of parliament were appointed, members of both chambers will serve five-year terms after the next elections, currently scheduled for April 2010. Sudan is considered one of the world's most corrupt states.

Civil Liberties: The news media continue to face significant obstacles. A new Press and Publication Act, passed in 2009, drew angry protests from journalists. The measure formalizes the powers of the government-appointed Press Council, which can prevent publication or broadcast of material it deems unsuitable. Throughout 2009, journalists faced arrest for writing articles that offended the NCP. Internet penetration is among the highest in sub-Saharan Africa, but the government monitors e-mail messages. Religious freedom, though guaranteed by the 2005 interim constitution, is not upheld in many parts of the country. The Christian minority in the North continues to face discrimination and harassment. The operating environment for nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) deteriorated in 2009. The government responded to the ICC's decision to approve an arrest warrant for al-Bashir by expelling international humanitarian aid organizations from the country. This had an immediate impact in Darfur, where 1.1 million people depended on food supplies distributed by the expelled organizations. The judiciary is not independent. The police and security forces practice arbitrary arrest, holding people at secret locations without access to lawyers or their relatives. Torture is prevalent. It is widely accepted that the government has directed and assisted the systematic killing of tens or even hundreds of thousands of people in Darfur since 2003, including through its support for militia groups that have terrorized civilians. Human rights groups have documented the widespread use of rape, the organized burning of villages, and the forced displacement of entire communities. Islamic law denies Northern women equitable rights in marriage, inheritance, and divorce. Female genital mutilation is practiced throughout the country. The restrictions faced by women in Sudan were brought to international attention in 2009 by the case of journalist Lubna Hussein, who was arrested along with several other women for wearing trousers in public. They faced up to 40 lashes under the penal code for dressing indecently.

Syria (Syrian Arab Republic)

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

Population: 21,906,000
Capital: Damascus

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

Year Under Review	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
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	7,6,NF

2009 Key Developments: Freedoms of expression, association, and assembly remained tightly restricted throughout 2009, especially with regard to certain groups, such as the Kurdish minority. Syria's opposition in exile split during the year, ending an uneasy alliance between Islamists and secularists. On the international front, Syria and Lebanon exchanged ambassadors, and although the United States announced that it would send an ambassador to Damascus, none had been named by year's end.

Political Rights: Syria is not an electoral democracy. The president is nominated by the ruling Baath Party and approved by popular referendum. In practice, these referendums are orchestrated by the regime, as are elections for the 250-seat, unicameral People's Council, whose members serve four-year terms and hold 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. Corruption is widespread, and bribery is often necessary to navigate the bureaucracy.

Civil Liberties: Freedom of expression is heavily restricted. It is illegal to publish material that harms national unity, tarnishes the image of the state, or threatens the "goals of the revolution." Most broadcast media are state owned, and private print outlets are required to submit all material to government censors. Journalists in Syria are subject to harassment and intimidation in the form of short jail terms, travel bans, and confiscations of their notes. Syrians access the internet only through state-run servers, which block more than 160 sites. However, satellite dishes are common, giving most Syrians access to foreign broadcasts. More than a dozen privately owned newspapers and magazines have sprouted up in recent years, and criticism of government policy is tolerated, provided it is nuanced and does not criticize the president. A dozen cyberdissidents are currently imprisoned. In September 2009, blogger Karim Antoine Arabji, who had written about corruption, was sentenced to three years in prison after already serving nearly two years in pretrial detention. Although the constitution requires that the president be a Muslim, there is no state religion in Syria, and freedom of worship is generally respected. Academic freedom is heavily restricted. Public demonstrations are illegal without official permission, which is typically granted only to progovernment groups. 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. 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 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. The Kurdish minority faces severe restrictions on cultural and linguistic expression. Opposition figures, human rights activists, and relatives of exiled dissidents are prevented from traveling abroad, and many ordinary Kurds lack the requisite documents to leave the country. The government provides women with equal access to education and appoints women to senior positions, but many discriminatory laws remain in force.

Tibet

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

Population: 5,300,000

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

Year Under Review	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
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

2009 Key Developments: Although Tibet was more accessible to tourists and journalists for parts of the year, the high level of repression established in 2008 was generally maintained in 2009, particularly ahead of politically sensitive anniversaries. Though there were few large-scale demonstrations, many Tibetans resorted to passive protest tactics, such as a farming boycott and abstention from Tibetan New Year celebrations. At least 715 political and religious prisoners reportedly remained in custody as of September. In October, three Tibetans were executed, marking the first use of the death penalty in the territory since 2003. Talks between the government and representatives of the Dalai Lama did not resume in 2009. Instead the authorities continued ideological reeducation campaigns and dissemination of official rhetoric vilifying the Dalai Lama.

Political Rights: Under Chinese rule, Tibetans lack the right to determine their political future or freely elect their own leaders. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) rules the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and Tibetan areas in nearby Qinghai, Sichuan, Gansu, and Yunnan provinces through appointed officials, including some Tibetans. The few ethnic Tibetans who occupy senior positions serve mostly as figureheads, often echoing official statements that condemn the Dalai Lama and emphasize Beijing’s role in developing Tibet’s economy. Tibetans suffer the same lack of political freedom as their Han Chinese counterparts, while those seen to be advocating greater autonomy or political independence for the region risk harsh punishment and imprisonment. Corruption is believed to be an extensive problem in Tibet, as in China.

Civil Liberties: Chinese authorities control the flow of information in Tibet, tightly restricting all media. International broadcasts are jammed. Increased internet penetration in urban areas has provided more access to information, but online restrictions and internet café surveillance in place across China are enforced even more stringently in the TAR. Officials repeatedly shut down mobile-telephone networks surrounding politically sensitive dates in March 2009. Authorities continued to restrict access to Tibet for foreign journalists in 2009, though not as consistently as in 2008. The authorities regularly suppress religious activities, particularly those seen as forms of political dissent or advocacy of Tibetan independence. Possession of Dalai Lama–related materials can lead to official harassment and punishment. Since March 2008, the authorities have intensified ideological education campaigns. The campaigns had been extended beyond monasteries to reach Tibet’s general population in 2008, forcing students, civil servants, farmers, and merchants to recognize the CCP claim that China “liberated” Tibet and to denounce the Dalai Lama. University professors cannot lecture on certain topics, and many must attend political indoctrination sessions. Freedoms of assembly and association are severely restricted in practice. Independent trade unions, civic groups, and human rights groups are illegal, and even nonviolent protests are harshly punished. The judicial system in Tibet remains abysmal, with most judges lacking any legal education, minimal access for defendants to legal representation, and trials involving “state security” held in secret. Torture remains common in practice.

Turkmenistan

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

Population: 5,110,000
Capital: Ashgabat

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

Year Under Review	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
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

2009 Key Developments: President Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov appeared more interested in diversifying his country’s natural gas exports in 2009 than in political and economic reforms at home. Progress away from the repressive legacy of former president Saparmurat Niyazov, who died in 2006, remained slow, producing token improvements rather than systemic change.

Political Rights: Turkmenistan is not an electoral democracy. The late Niyazov wielded 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, Berdymukhammedov, a five-year term in office—have been free or fair. The new constitution, approved by the National Assembly in August 2008, gives citizens the right to form political parties, although only one political party, the Democratic Party of Turkmenistan, is officially registered at present. Local council elections held in July 2009 mimicked previous elections amid reports of low turnout. Corruption is widespread, with public officials often forced to bribe their way into their positions.

Civil Liberties: Freedom of speech and the press is severely restricted by the government, which controls all broadcast and print media. A government-run service provider controls access to the internet and reportedly blocks undesirable websites. The government restricts freedom of religion, and independent groups face persecution. Practicing an unregistered religion remains illegal, with violators subject to fines. However, a European representative of the Seventh Day Adventist Church was allowed into the country in October 2009, and a Church spokesperson pointed to limited improvements in religious freedom. The government places significant restrictions on academic freedom, and the *Rukhnama*, a rambling collection of quasi-historical and philosophical musings attributed to Niyazov, is still used in the school system, although its prominence appears to be declining gradually. The restoration of the Academy of Sciences in 2009 was a small but welcome step toward education reform. The constitution guarantees peaceful assembly and association, but these rights are severely restricted in practice. While not technically illegal, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are tightly controlled, and Turkmenistan has no civil society sector to speak of. Doctors Without Borders, the last international humanitarian NGO active in Turkmenistan, withdrew from the country in December 2009 due to a lack of cooperation from the government. 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. Prisons suffer from overcrowding and inadequate nutrition and medical care, and international organizations are not permitted to visit prisoners. Employment and educational opportunities for ethnic minorities are limited by the government’s promotion of Turkmen national identity. Freedom of movement is restricted, with a reported blacklist preventing some individuals from leaving the country. 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.

Uzbekistan

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

Population: 27,562,000
Capital: Tashkent

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

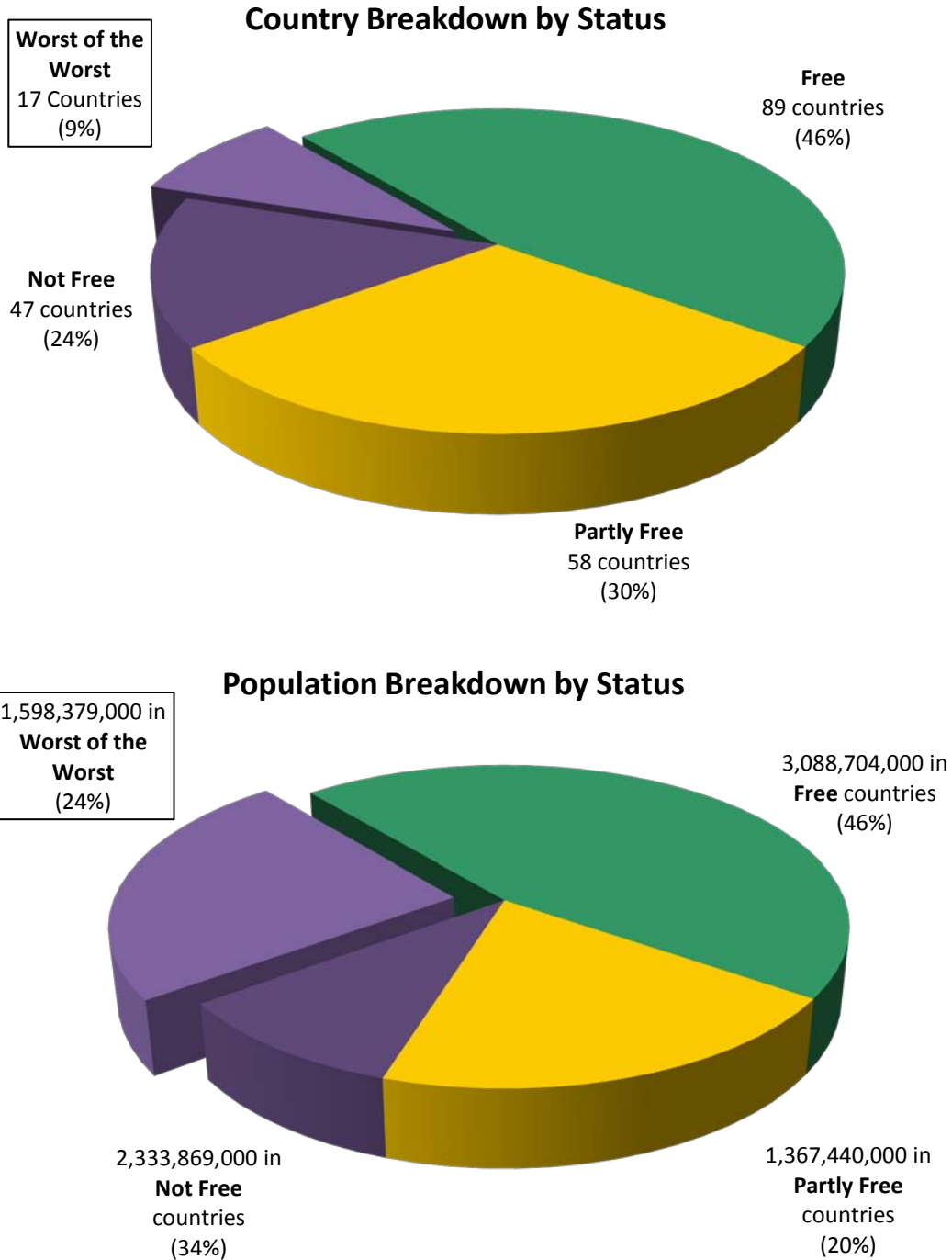
Year Under Review	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Rating	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,6,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF

2009 Key Developments: Uzbekistan continued to rebuild relations with the United States and the European Union in 2009 amid growing cooperation on logistical support for NATO operations in Afghanistan. At the same time, the government of President Islam Karimov maintained repressive state controls at home, denying citizens their basic human rights.

Political Rights: Uzbekistan is not an electoral democracy. President 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 was nevertheless elected to a third term in December 2007. Only four political parties, all progovernment, are registered, and no genuine opposition parties function legally. Members of unregistered opposition groups are subject to discrimination, and many live in exile abroad. Exiled opposition activist Bahodir Choriyev returned to Uzbekistan in 2009, but the authorities limited his movements and harassed activists who tried to meet with him. December 2009 parliamentary elections offered voters no meaningful choice. Corruption is pervasive.

Civil Liberties: Despite constitutional guarantees, freedoms of speech and the press are severely restricted. The state controls major media outlets and related facilities. The government permits the existence of mainstream religions, including approved Muslim, Jewish, and Christian denominations (primarily Protestant), but treats unregistered activities as a criminal offense. The state exercises strict control over Islamic worship, including the content of sermons. Suspected members of banned Muslim organizations and their relatives have been subjected to arrest, interrogation, and torture. The government limits academic freedom. Bribes are commonly required to gain entrance to exclusive universities and 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. Despite constitutional provisions for freedom of assembly, the authorities severely restrict this right in practice. Law enforcement officials broke up a small rally of human rights activists in Tashkent in February 2009. Freedom of association is tightly constrained, and unregistered NGOs face extreme difficulties and harassment. The judiciary is subservient to the president, who appoints all judges and can remove them at any time. Torture is reported to be endemic to the criminal justice system. Prisons suffer from severe overcrowding and shortages of food and medicine. Restrictions on foreign travel include the use of exit visas, which are often issued selectively. Women's educational and professional prospects are limited by cultural and religious norms and by ongoing economic difficulties. The trafficking of women abroad for prostitution remains a serious problem.

Freedom in the World 2010: Global Data



Of the 194 countries evaluated by Freedom House in the *Freedom in the World 2010* survey, 47 are designated as Not Free. Of the 47 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 9 percent of the world's countries and 24 percent of the world's population.

Table of Independent Countries

Country	PR	CL	Freedom Status	Trend Arrow
Afghanistan	6 ▼	6	Not Free	
Albania*	3	3	Partly Free	
Algeria	6	5	Not Free	
Andorra*	1	1	Free	
Angola	6	5	Not Free	
Antigua and Barbuda*	3 ▼	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	6 ▼	5	Not Free ▼	
Bangladesh*	3 ▲	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*	3 ▼	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	↓
Congo (Kinshasa)	6	6	Not Free	↓

Country	PR	CL	Freedom Status	Trend Arrow
Costa Rica*	1	1	Free	
Cote d'Ivoire	6	5	Not Free	
Croatia*	1 ▲	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	7 ▼	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	5 ▼	Not Free ▼	
The Gambia	5	5 ▼	Partly Free	
Georgia	4	4	Partly Free	
Germany*	1	1	Free	
Ghana*	1	2	Free	
Greece*	1	2	Free	
Grenada*	1	2	Free	
Guatemala*	4 ▼	4	Partly Free	
Guinea	7	6 ▼	Not Free	
Guinea-Bissau*	4	4	Partly Free	
Guyana*	2	3	Free	↓
Haiti*	4	5	Partly Free	
Honduras	4 ▼	4 ▼	Partly Free	
Hungary*	1	1	Free	
Iceland*	1	1	Free	
India*	2	3	Free	
Indonesia*	2	3	Free	
Iran	6	6	Not Free	↓
Iraq	5 ▲	6	Not Free	
Ireland*	1	1	Free	
Israel*	1	2	Free	
Italy*	1	2	Free	

Country	PR	CL	Freedom Status	Trend Arrow
Jamaica*	2	3	Free	
Japan*	1	2	Free	
Jordan	6 ▼	5	Not Free ▼	
Kazakhstan	6	5	Not Free	↓
Kenya	4	4 ▼	Partly Free	
Kiribati*	1	1	Free	
Kosovo	5 ▲	4 ▲	Partly Free ▲	
Kuwait	4	4	Partly Free	
Kyrgyzstan	6 ▼	5 ▼	Not Free ▼	
Laos	7	6	Not Free	
Latvia*	2	1	Free	
Lebanon	5	3 ▲	Partly Free	
Lesotho*	3 ▼	3	Partly 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	6 ▼	4 ▼	Partly Free	
Malawi*	3 ▲	4	Partly Free	
Malaysia	4	4	Partly Free	
Maldives*	3 ▲	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*	3 ▲	4	Partly Free	
Monaco*	2	1	Free	
Mongolia*	2	2	Free	↑
Montenegro*	3	2 ▲	Free ▲	
Morocco	5	4	Partly Free	↓
Mozambique	4 ▼	3	Partly Free	
Namibia*	2	2	Free	
Nauru*	1	1	Free	
Nepal	4	4	Partly Free	
Netherlands*	1	1	Free	
New Zealand*	1	1	Free	
Nicaragua*	4	4 ▼	Partly Free	
Niger	5 ▼	4	Partly Free	

Country	PR	CL	Freedom Status	Trend Arrow
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*	2 ▲	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	

Country	PR	CL	Freedom Status	Trend Arrow
Taiwan*	1 ▲	2 ▼	Free	
Tajikistan	6	5	Not Free	
Tanzania	4	3	Partly Free	
Thailand	5	4	Partly Free	
Togo	5	4 ▲	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	5 ▼	4	Partly Free	
Vietnam	7	5	Not Free	↓
Yemen	6 ▼	5	Not Free ▼	
Zambia*	3	4 ▼	Partly Free	
Zimbabwe	6 ▲	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.

NOTE: The ratings reflect global events from January 1, 2009, through December 31, 2009.

Table of Related Territories

Territory	PR	CL	Freedom Status	Trend Arrow
Hong Kong	5	2	Partly Free	
Puerto Rico	1	1	Free	

Table of Disputed Territories

Territory	PR	CL	Freedom Status	Trend Arrow
Abkhazia	5	5	Partly Free	
Indian Kashmir	4 ▲	4	Partly Free	
Israeli-Occupied Territories	6	6	Not Free	
Nagorno-Karabakh	5	5	Partly Free	
Northern Cyprus	2	2	Free	
Pakistani Kashmir	6	5	Not Free	↑
Palestinian Authority– Administered Territories	6 ▼	6	Not Free	
Somaliland	5	5 ▼	Partly Free	
South Ossetia	7	6	Not Free	↓
Tibet	7	7	Not Free	
Transnistria	6	6	Not Free	
Western Sahara	7	6	Not Free	

Freedom in the World Methodology

The reports for *Worst of the Worst: The World's Most Repressive Societies* were excerpted from the forthcoming 2010 edition of *Freedom in the World*, an annual Freedom House survey that monitors the progress and decline of political rights and civil liberties in 194 countries and 14 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 2009*. The methodology for the forthcoming survey edition will be published in *Freedom in the World 2010*.

Freedom in the World 2010 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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