

THE  
**HUMAN  
RIGHTS**  
ENCYCLOPEDIA



JAMES R. LEWIS AND CARL SKUTSCH

THE  
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RIGHTS**  
ENCYCLOPEDIA

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Volume One

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**Foreword by Aung San Suu Kyi**  
Winner of the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize

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# Foreword

*Aung San Suu Kyi*  
*1991 Nobel Peace Laureate*

A society that lacks human rights is a society that breeds misery. If I am ever asked why I am an advocate of human rights, I would like to answer that I simply do not like seeing so much human misery around me. There are many people today whose lives have been blighted by the sense of insecurity and helplessness common to those who are at the mercy of the whims of unjust, authoritarian rulers. People need to be protected against the misuse of power. The articles of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights are aimed at providing this all-important protection for all the peoples of the world.

In the aftermath of World War II, already-established powers and young nations newly emerged from the colonial chrysalis gathered to lay out a set of principles that would protect future generations from the scourge of violent conflict. Burma was one of the original signatories of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights when it was adopted by the United Nations in December 1948. But sadly, more than fifty years later, the articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights still remain paper promises to many peoples and nations.

Coming as I do from Burma, a country that suffers from the systematic violation of human rights by those in power,

I deeply appreciate the wisdom and vision of those who drew up the articles of the Declaration. There is not one article that we can choose to ignore without imperiling freedom, justice, and peace. If we are to lead free and full lives, all the articles of the Declaration must be respected.

The preamble of the Declaration proclaims that the “advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want” is the “highest aspiration of the common people.” It is also the most basic need for all, regardless of race, religion, or nationality. Our struggle for human rights has brought us very close to all members of the human family who are striving for the recognition of their inherent dignity and their inalienable right to life, liberty, and security of person.

It is my hope that our common aims and sufferings will create a strong sense of solidarity that transcends national borders and cultural differences. We struggle with a sense of purpose and an unshakable faith in the power of compassion, endeavor, and universal brotherhood. As our gratitude goes out to those who have so generously supported us in our times of adversity, we would like to express the hope that one day, our country may also be a source of strength and support for those in need of peace, justice, and freedom.

# Acknowledgments

First, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Evelyn Fazio. Second, many thanks to my partner, Evelyn Dorothy Oliver, who worked intensively on this project in many ways, at many different stages. Third, thanks to my literary agent, Jeff Herman, for his crucial assistance at several junctures.

I would also like to acknowledge Anne Burns for finding and coordinating illustrations, Harrison Brix for his computer advice, and Patrick Fourney and Heber Jentsch for putting me in touch with some of the encyclopedia's contributors. Finally, I would like to thank the contributors themselves, whose deep familiarity with human rights issues have helped make this a truly great reference work.

J.L.

\* \* \*

To begin with, I wish to offer my thanks to the wonderful people at M.E. Sharpe; first, for allowing me to work on this fascinating and vital topic; and second, for providing the support without which the project never would have made it

into print. Evelyn Fazio, my publisher, spent more time with me than many of my friends, and never complained. I believe her name has as much right to be on the title page as mine. Andrew Gyory provided much-needed editing, while Aud Thiessen, the editorial coordinator, kept things from falling between the cracks, and Angela Piliouras flawlessly managed the production end of the project, making sure that none of my entries went astray, despite all of my clumsy efforts to help her.

On a personal note, I thank my lovely wife, Kristin Marting, who supported me through the rough days of final editing when my desk was buried under piles of documents and I was less than fun to be around. Thanks are hardly enough for what she's had to deal with. She is a pearl beyond compare. I would also like to thank the newest member of our family, Griffin Marting Skutsch, for putting up with so little play time.

Finally, I want to offer my heartfelt support to those around the world who are still suffering from human rights abuses. This encyclopedia is not enough—nothing is enough—but I hope it is a tiny step in the right direction.

C.S.

# Introduction

On a bright June morning in Colombia last year, Venecia Barona Mosquera went out to cut sugar cane to help earn a living for her family. When she came home, she found her father and two brothers shot dead and her ten-year-old daughter lying with her skull crushed. Ms. Mosquera's family had done nothing to deserve their deaths. They were simply poor peasant villagers. But their village had given some food to a band of well-armed rebel guerrillas—they were afraid not to—and as a consequence, local right-wing paramilitary troops punished the village by killing more than twenty people, including Ms. Mosquera's family. Ms. Mosquera fled to a refugee camp on the outskirts of Cartagena—a shantytown nicknamed Nelson Mandela—and thereby became one of the more than 2 million Colombians who have been displaced by the brutal guerrilla war that has racked that country for years.

Ms. Mosquera's story is a personal tragedy. It is also a human rights tragedy. In Ms. Mosquera's tragedy, you see the human face of the struggle for human rights.

All too often, we see human rights as abstract ethical concepts or dead words from the past. We read in the American Declaration of Independence that “all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,” and we should recognize that Thomas Jefferson's words are still true today. But sometimes the world ignores them or pretends that they do not matter. To those around the globe who are struggling against fear and oppression, they matter a great deal. Venecia Mosquera's family had their right to life stripped from them; Venecia Mosquera, forced to flee for her life, had her liberty taken from her, and her chances of pursuing happiness seem slim. Perhaps none of this would have happened if government officials in Colombia and their allies in other countries—including the United States—had shown greater respect for the idea of human rights.

Despite tragedies like Ms. Mosquera's, or perhaps partly because of them, there has been a growing consensus over the last decade that human rights must become an international priority. From Haiti to Kosovo, international peacekeeping forces have intervened to prevent human rights catastrophes. In negotiations over trade deals, human rights have become a key element of the debate. Those who have previously been on the fringes of political questions—women, children, the disabled—have begun to move closer to center

stage because of increased worldwide awareness of the importance of human rights.

This increased awareness has led us to create this encyclopedia. We think it is a necessary and long overdue resource in this era of growing human rights concerns and abuses.

But what are human rights? They are a set of ideas and beliefs that all people are endowed with certain privileges and responsibilities. The privileges include everything from the right to speak openly without fear, to the right to decent shelter and healthcare. The responsibility associated with this idea is the shared obligation that we all must defend one another's human rights. Each person has a set of human rights. Yet there are some people who take these rights away. We have an obligation to protect not only our own rights, but those of others. Finally, rights are attached to people. All people have the same rights. Just as there is a moral prohibition against murder, there is also a moral imperative that requires us to defend the human rights of all men, women, and children.

Not all people share this view. But then, not all people obey laws against murder. We believe that more and more good people are learning to view the world through the prism of human rights. The roots of the modern belief in inherent human rights is, after all, relatively young, dating back only to the seventeenth century. It will take time before all people embrace human rights as a world priority.

In this context of growing interest, our purpose is to bring knowledge of human rights issues to a broader audience and to serve as a resource on the subject for students, educators, and general readers. To best accomplish this, we have divided *The Human Rights Encyclopedia* into two main sections: Countries, and Issues and Individuals.

Each country entry gives a brief outline of the country's history, society, and political makeup, and then goes into detail about human rights problems in that country. The various contributors were given the freedom to take their own approach to the country entries—each country has unique characteristics that may suggest differing methods of analysis—but each was sure to supply basic demographic and political data that place human rights issues in context. We also provide sources for our information, which for the most part are respected government and human rights organizations.

The topical entries delve deeply into the details of human rights problems. In entries from abortion to xenophobia, we confront the difficult issues surrounding human rights and

try to bring to life the suffering of those whose rights have been denied. Our contributors are qualified and respected people in the field of human rights. Many of them are also activists in this field, and bring to this set a unique blend of passion and firsthand experience. They make it clear that they are writing about living, suffering people. As with the country entries, each topical entry has a bibliography giving readers a starting point for further research. These entries also provide cross-references to other related topics.

The appendixes provide two sets of resources. First, there is a documentary collection of the most prominent and well-known human rights resolutions of the twentieth century. These documents, which define human rights in the world of international law, include the United Nations Charter of 1945, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights. While these four are the most important human rights documents, we have also included several more that pinpoint other major areas of concern, such as racism, genocide, and children's rights.

In addition to these critical official documents, we also offer a large sampling of some of the more important human rights organizations around the world. Given the tens of thousands of such organizations, a representative sample is all that we can hope to provide.

We believe that our approach to human rights issues will provide a useful tool for researchers and anyone who is interested in understanding the meaning behind events that are splashed across the front page of newspapers every day. If, for example, a student were to read about Venecia Mosquera and her problems and wished to learn more about them, there

would be many pathways available. The reader could first refer to the Colombia entry and read about the long-standing history of the guerrilla war there. Next, the user could turn to topical entries such as War, War Crimes, and Refugees. If the same newspaper mentions that Colombia is about to receive billions of dollars from the United States in order to help stop drug cultivation, the reader could turn to the Drug Trafficking entry to read about how both drug use and the war on drugs can lead to human rights violations, as they have in Colombia. Each of these articles has cross-references that will lead to other human rights issues. Finally, the appendixes will help the researcher to discover which rights were guaranteed Ms. Mosquera by international law and which were violated during her ordeal.

Today, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, when the goodwill of leaders and organizations around the world give us hope that human rights will be more of a priority than they were in the conflict-ridden, horror-filled twentieth century, it seems particularly appropriate to launch this encyclopedia. This reference work cannot hope to answer all human rights questions—there is not enough ink in the world to do that—but we hope that it will serve as a useful starting point, a beginning that readers can use as a base from which to explore the idea of a planet where human rights are fully respected, protected, and enjoyed by all peoples.

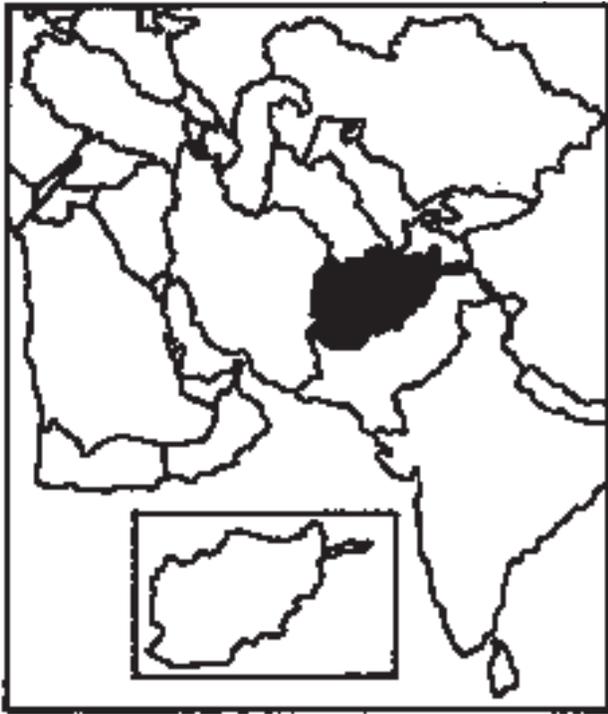
I hope that, just as this project has opened my eyes to some of the horrors and hopes that surround the issue of human rights, this encyclopedia may succeed in opening a few more eyes to the rights struggle. Where human rights are concerned, we all still have a great deal to learn.

Carl Skutsch

# SECTION ONE

## Countries

# Afghanistan



Afghanistan is bounded on the north by Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, on the west by Iran, and on the south and east by Pakistan and China. Its ethnically and linguistically mixed population counts over 25 million. Pashtuns are the dominant ethnic group, and Dari (Afghan Persian) and Pashto are the official languages. Afghanistan is an Islamic country. An estimated 85 percent of the population is Sunni Muslim. The balance of the population is mostly Shi'a Muslim. Islamic codes and traditions dominate every aspect of life.

## BACKGROUND

In 1973, under the leadership of the Marxist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), Afghanistan was declared a Demo-

cratic Republic. Thousands of members of the traditional elite and intellectuals were imprisoned, tortured, and murdered. The Soviet Union took advantage of the precarious situation and invaded the country in December 1979. Following the invasion, a Soviet-supported regime was unable to establish authority outside the capital, Kabul. In 1984, Afghan freedom fighters (*mujahideen*) began receiving substantial military assistance from the United States and other countries. Popular hostility toward the regime (and the Soviet Union) led to its demise in 1986. It was replaced by a government—still backed by the Soviets—led by Mohammed Najibullah, former chief of the Afghan secret police, who remained in power until 1992. Approximately 14,500 Soviets and 2 million Afghans died between 1979 and 1992.

In 1992, the victorious *mujahideen* entered Kabul and assumed control of the central government. With the end of Soviet occupation, a new round of fighting began between the various militias—fighting based on ethnic, clan, religious, and personality differences. By 1998, the Afghan conflict had boiled down to two key combatants: the ultraconservative Islamic movement known as Taliban, led by Mullah Omar, which in 2000 controls 90 percent of the country, including Kabul; and the Northern Alliance forces, led by Ahmad Shah Massoud, which controls 10 percent of the country's northeast. The Taliban and Massoud's forces continued to fight on multiple fronts.

Provincial administrations have limited functions, and civil institutions are mostly

non-existent. There is no effective central government in much of the country, as well as no constitution or independent judiciary. The economy, which is based on cultivation and trade—fruits, gems, and minerals—is minimal due to fighting, the presence of thousands of land mines, and roads blocked by rival militias.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

The ongoing war between the two armed forces effectively prevents the formation of a stable, democratic society. Human rights are continuously abused. There are no institutions protecting citizens from discrimination based on race, sex, religion, physical disability, language, or social status. The presence of competing factions has also seriously limited the freedoms of speech, press, assembly, association, religion, and movement.

Historically, the minority Shi'a Muslims have been among the most economically disadvantaged groups in the country, and have been discriminated against by the majority Sunni. It is estimated that thousands of Shi'as of the Hazara ethnic group have been killed by the Taliban, who are ethnic Pashtuns and Sunni Muslims. Expulsions and mass executions based on ethnicity have been carried out throughout the country by both Taliban and anti-Taliban forces, who have indiscriminately bombarded civilian areas.

In Taliban areas, strict and oppressive order is imposed according to an extreme interpretation of Islamic law, including public executions by stoning and throat slitting for adultery or murder, amputations for theft, and beatings on the spot for other infractions. Homosexuality is severely punished. Officials of the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtues and Suppression of

Vice—the Taliban's religious police—publicly assault people for violations of codes relating to dress, hair length, and facial hair.

Violence against women takes place frequently in the form of rape, murder, forced marriage, beating, and kidnapping. A woman may be beaten on the street for immodest dress (wearing shoes with heels can be considered immodest, as can allowing too much of one's face to show). Women accused of adultery are stoned or lashed publicly. While women do not have equal rights in the areas controlled by the Northern Alliance, conditions there are less oppressive, with more freedom allowed in dress and behavior.

The Taliban also use excessive force against demonstrators. According to some reports, ten unarmed pro-peace demonstrators were killed in Mazar-I-Sharif on March 24, 1998.

Abductions, kidnappings and hostage taking for ransom or for political reasons occur both in Taliban and non-Taliban areas. All Afghan factions use torture against opponents and prisoners of war. Prisoners' conditions are precarious: they are not given food, and visiting relatives can bring them food only once or twice a week.

In the absence of a formal legal system, justice is not administered according to official codes, and people are subjected to arbitrary detentions. Individuals have been imprisoned by both the Taliban and the Northern Alliance because of their ethnic origins and suspected sympathy toward opponents.

The Taliban use Islamic courts to judge criminal cases and resolve disputes. Taliban courts often provide summary trials that last but a few minutes. Prisoners convicted of murder or rape are executed, unless the victims' relatives choose to accept certain other forms of restitution. The

courts' decisions are final. It can generally be said that the administration and implementation of justice depend entirely upon local commanders, who execute, torture, or impose punishments without reference to any other authority.

There is no law addressing freedom of speech or press. The Taliban have banned foreign newspapers. Factions maintain their own communication facilities. Foreign journalists are forbidden to film or take photos of persons or animals; they are not allowed to interview women, and they must at all times be accompanied by an escort.

The Taliban prohibit music, movies, and television on religious grounds. Freedom of religion is also restricted. Non-Muslim residents may practice their faith but cannot proselytize. The Taliban impose their interpretation of Islamic precepts in areas under their control. Prayer is obligatory for everybody. Men are required to have beards of a certain length and wear head cover-

ings. The penalty for shaving can be imprisonment. In public, women must wear a *burqa*, a garment that covers a person completely from head to toe.

Women have been treated harshly under Taliban rule. Girls are not allowed to go to school, although a few girls' schools are still open in rural areas and small towns. Women cannot work outside the house. They cannot leave their homes or receive medical treatment unless escorted by a male relative. They cannot drive cars, though they are allowed to ride on designated buses. Women are forbidden from entering mosques. Because of this, most women pray at home. They are also subjected to limits on the inheritance of property.

The situation of children is very poor. Infant mortality and death from malnutrition are common. UNICEF reports that most children are traumatized; 90 percent suffer from anxiety disorders and 70 percent have witnessed scenes of violence, including

the killing of parents or relatives. Dolls and stuffed animals are prohibited as toys for children because images of living creatures cannot be represented in object form according to the Taliban's interpretation of the Islamic tradition. Children between the ages of six and fourteen often work to help support their families by shining shoes, collecting scrap metal on the streets, and herding animals. Many are exposed to the danger of land mines (as are adult Afghans).

In general, labor rights are not defined and enforced by a central authority, making them somewhat arbitrary. Many workers have been fired because they received their education abroad, because they were involved with previous regimes, or because they violated Taliban regulations.

Afghanistan has one of the world's largest refugee populations, with women and children constituting 75 percent of the refugee population. More than 300,000 Afghans are internally displaced people. Between January and October 1998, 88,000 refugees returned. Although citizens can travel both inside and outside the country, warfare, brigandage, millions of land mines, a precarious road network, and limited and dangerous air traffic seriously impede travel.

International aid agencies often find it difficult to provide humanitarian assistance and to monitor the situation in the country. According to some reports, UN agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been prevented from operating freely by all factions. Commanders of

the Northern Alliance taxed humanitarian supplies, laid new land mines on the road, and blew up a bridge to prevent the delivery of such aid in the northeastern provinces of Badakhshan. In August 1998, an Italian serving with the United Nations Special Mission was killed in Kabul, and most foreign UN and NGO representatives were forced to leave. The Taliban have been accused of looting food supplies, stealing trucks, and occupying the offices of the UN World Food Program.

In April 1999, Karl F. Inderfurth, in his statement as UN assistant secretary for South Asian affairs, reported that the prospects of international efforts to bring both sides of the Afghan conflict to a peaceful discussion and political settlement are still remote. As of October 2000, the fighting continues.

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# Albania



The Republic of Albania, located in south-eastern Europe, is a multiparty parliamentary democracy. The prime minister is the head of the government, while the president's position is largely ceremonial with limited executive power. Tirana is the capital. Albanians are the main ethnic group, with Greek and other minorities constituting 5 percent of the population. Sunni Muslims make up the largest religious group, whereas Albanian Autocephalous Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches are the other two large denominations.

## BACKGROUND

Albania has made tremendous progress in overcoming years of foreign domination, economic ruin, and isolation. Nevertheless,

the country is still affected by political instability, widespread poverty, corruption, unregulated occupations, and poor medical care.

Independence from the Ottoman Empire was achieved in 1912 and lasted until 1939, when Italy invaded the country. In 1943, German troops occupied the country. However, after World War II, Albania became a communist state, allied to the Soviet Union. The affiliation with the Soviet Union ended in 1961, when Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev's government openly denounced Albania's hard-line communist policies.

During the 1960s, China became Albania's ally and primary source of economic and military support. This relationship, however, ended in 1978, as a result of China's rapprochement with the United States. The leader of the Albanian Communist Party, Enver Hoxha, then pursued an independent and isolationist course of political and economic actions, running a harsh dictatorship that helped ruin his country.

During 1990, changes in the communist bloc helped start a series of internal reforms. Restrictions on travel abroad and religious practices were liberalized. In 1991, political prisoners were freed. In 1992 and 1993, under President Sali Berisha, the Albanian government established the rule of law and institutionalized respect for human rights. These reforms aimed to gain closer ties with Western countries and improve the economic condition of the country. Assistance programs provided by Western countries were reviewed after May 1996, when

international monitors found irregularities in Albanian parliamentary elections. The new government, however, lacked the skills necessary to hold the country together.

In 1997, the Socialist Party won the elections after a five-month period characterized by total chaos and anarchy. The Democratic Party—the largest opposition group—boycotted the Parliament from October 1997 to March 1998, and again from June 1998 to the end of the year. There was also a boycott after a national referendum approved a new constitution under the guidance of Socialist Party Chairman Pandeli Majko. The new constitution stated that “Governance is based on a system of elections that are free, equal, general, and periodic.”

#### HUMAN RIGHTS

Albania is a poor country making a transition to a free-market system. Human rights

in the areas of freedom of speech, press, and assembly have improved. The government generally respects these rights and cooperates with the United Nations, as well as with non-governmental and other international organizations on human rights issues. Nevertheless, many problems persist. In many instances, crime, corruption, and vigilantism impede the government’s efforts to maintain civil order.

The judicial system is inefficient and subject to executive pressure and intimidation. The Democratic Party alleges that the government is responsible for the murders of its opponents during 1998, for abusing suspects and prisoners, and for harassment of Democratic Party members for political reasons. In August 1998, six persons who held positions in the previous government were arrested. In September 1998, during a two-day anti-governmental protest, two demonstrators were killed and ten persons wounded.

Police often beat or mistreat prisoners, infringe on civil rights, and conduct searches without a warrant. In February 1999, several journalists were beaten by police officers. Although the penal code forbids the use of torture, there are reports of detainees being abused in police stations. In addition, the Parliament approved an anti-crime law allowing police officers to shoot without warning at armed persons who resist the police. Prisons are overcrowded and juveniles are often incarcerated with adults. The Red Cross and other non-governmental organizations are allowed to inspect prisons, although occasional non-cooperation with human rights monitors is a problem.

Despite the 1995 Penal Procedures Code and a citizens' right to a fair, public, and speedy trial, lengthy pretrial detentions and investigations are often a problem. Since 1997, because of the destruction of many court and police records, prosecutors and police have found it difficult to prepare cases properly. In addition, courts often have inadequate libraries and are not in possession of recently passed legislation.

The law on major constitutional provisions forbids discrimination based on sex, race, ethnicity, disability, language, religion, or social status. Nevertheless, women and minorities continue to be victims of discrimination. In Albania's traditionally male-dominated society, women regularly experience domestic violence, particularly in the north, where old traditions are strong and women are considered chattel. Marital rape and sexual harassment are not considered crimes. Trafficking in women and forced prostitution are a significant phenomenon. Although women have access to higher education and can work in any field, they are not accorded

equal opportunities in their careers; as a consequence women are underrepresented in politics and government.

Child abuse and trafficking are serious problems as well. Children are kidnapped and sold for prostitution or pederasty abroad. Although the government enforces the requirement to remain in school until age sixteen, in rural areas many children leave school earlier to help support their families. In many cities, children are found selling cigarettes or other items on the streets. Forced or compulsory labor is practiced.

All religions are considered equal. However, the government has not yet returned properties and religious objects confiscated during the communist regime. The government has improved the treatment of ethnic minorities. However, ethnic Greeks remain the most neglected minority group in terms of illiteracy, health, and economic conditions.

People with disabilities do not receive adequate health care due to budgetary constraints. The law does not mandate the elimination of architectural barriers for people with disabilities.

Academic freedom is still limited. The law establishes the right to a free education for at least eight years. In some cases, faculty members are fired for political reasons, and students may receive preferential treatment because of political connections.

Workers have had the right to form trade unions since 1990. The law prohibits strikes for political reasons. Actual conditions in the workplace are often very poor. The labor code does not provide specific protection for leaving a workplace due to extremely hazardous conditions.

Citizens are free to move within the country and travel abroad. Foreigners are grant-

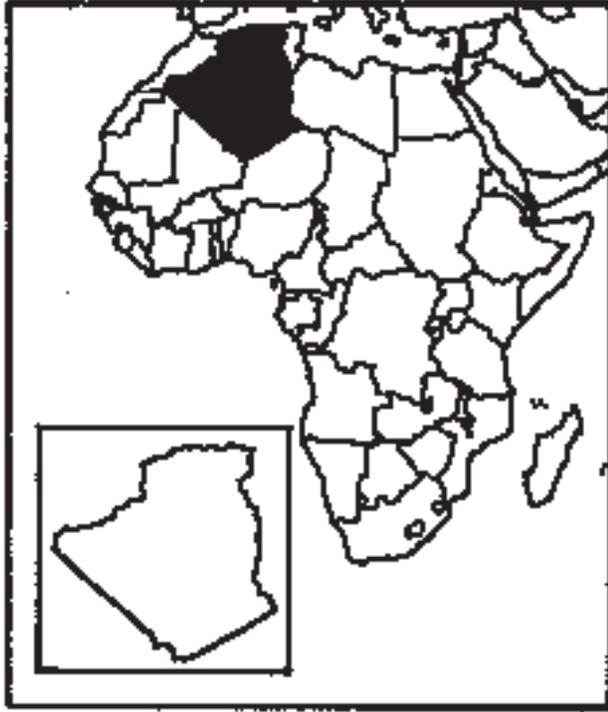
ed refugee and asylum status. In 1998, more than 2,000 Kosovar Albanians were provided refuge and support in cooperation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Despite limited resources, in 1999, the Albanian government made efforts to accommodate the influx of more than 450,000 ethnic Albanians who had been forcibly displaced by Serbian and Yugoslav forces from the neighboring province of Kosovo. Over the past several years, many Albanians have been emigrating to find better living conditions abroad.

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# Algeria



Algeria is located in North Africa by the Mediterranean Sea. It is bordered by Morocco, Mauritania, Mali, Niger, and Tunisia. It has a population of approximately 32 million, most of whom are Arabs or Berbers. Arabic is the official language, but French and Berber dialects are also spoken. Most Algerians are Sunni Muslims. The capital is Algiers.

The Algerian economy is based on energy industries, including oil and gas, as well as light industries and agriculture. Helped by oil revenues, Algeria's annual per capita income is \$4,600.

## BACKGROUND

Algeria was conquered by Muslim Arab invaders in the seventh and eighth centuries

and has been a Muslim state for more than a thousand years. Algeria came under the domination of the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century. In spite of the Ottoman Empire's technical suzerainty, Algeria remained under its own Arab rulers until the nineteenth century. In 1830, France invaded Algeria and began a period of conquest that was complete by 1870. The French army kept Algeria in French hands, and the French government dreamed of turning Algeria into a province of France. French and other European colonists began settling in Algeria, taking the best land and dominating the country's economy.

In the 1950s, an Arab revolution led to a bloody civil war between Arab guerrillas and the French army, with both Arab and French civilians suffering from bombings and assassinations. In 1962, President Charles de Gaulle of France negotiated the withdrawal of all French military forces. Almost all the French colonists left the country that same year. Algeria then came under the rule of the National Liberation Front (FLN), which had led the fight against the French. The FLN became the backbone of the military, which has dominated Algerian politics ever since.

The FLN's first leader was Ahmed Ben Bella. In 1965, a coup put Colonel Houari Boumédiène in power. Boumédiène ruled as dictator of Algeria until his death in 1978. Boumédiène was succeeded by Colonel Chadli Bendjedid. Like Boumédiène before him, Bendjedid was backed by the FLN and the Algerian army.

In 1991, the FLN allowed the country to have its first truly free elections. The first

round of those elections resulted in a victory for the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), a conservative religious movement. Fearing the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, the army cancelled the second round of elections and appointed a new president, Mohammed Boudiaf. Angered, Islamic militants responded by attacking prominent military and political leaders. FIS assassins were allegedly responsible for the killing of President Boudiaf later in 1992 (although there was strong suspicion that army hard-liners may have ordered his death because of his attempts to negotiate with the FIS). Assassins also targeted writers and journalists who were perceived as supporting the military regime—those writers who were perceived as being too “Western” and “un-Islamic” were often the victims of assassination. The military responded with mass arrests and outlawed the FIS. By the end of 1992, Algeria was in the midst of full-scale civil strife.

The military arrested thousands of suspected Islamic terrorists; many of those arrested were never heard from again. They disappeared without formal trials. The Armed Islamic Group (GIA), a radical organization, responded with attacks, targeting military outposts, army convoys, and pro-government journalists. Civilians who were seen as too pro-government were also often attacked. Some terrorist attacks were against women who dressed in Western clothes; the fundamentalist GIA saw these Westernized women as symbols of the anti-Islamist Algerian government.

Although elections were held in 1995 and 1996, they were tightly controlled by the military and were neither free nor fair. Assassination and murder continued throughout the mid- and late 1990s. In 1997 and 1998 there were a number of

large-scale massacres in Algerian villages. Men, women, and children were slaughtered in these attacks. In the town of Benthala, for example, 400 people had their throats slit in a massacre. In August and September 1997, more than 600 civilians were killed in similar attacks. The government blamed the attacks on GIA extremists, but the GIA denied responsibility. Some observers believed that elements within the military had staged the attacks in an attempt to paint the GIA as villainous and thereby discredit them in the eyes of the public. It was surprising to some observers that some of these attacks took place near military bases, yet no army soldiers intervened to stop them. Critics of the government argued that this was a sign that government forces had planned the attacks.

The mass killings, however, outraged many people on both sides of the conflict. In a sign that some Islamist groups were eager for peace, the Islamic Salvation Army (AIS), a group connected to the FIS, agreed to a voluntary cease-fire. The GIA and other extremist groups did not join this cease-fire and fighting continued.

In April 1999, a moderate leader, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, won Algeria's presidential elections and tried to begin healing the rifts between the military-backed government and the Islamist parties. Bouteflika's election was flawed by corruption and accusations of rigging, but it marked a real change in government attitudes. Bouteflika was more open than his predecessors had been about the suffering that Algeria had undergone during its internal war, even going so far as to tacitly admit government involvement in some of the “disappearances.” As a sign of his sincerity, Bouteflika also ordered some Algerians who had been arrested during the conflict released from

*Refugee from the fighting washing clothes, 1992.*

prison. Responding to peace overtures by the AIS, Bouteflika put forward a “Civil Harmony law,” which was ratified by a popular referendum in September 1997. In order to put the past behind Algeria, the law decreed an amnesty for Islamist guerrillas who surrendered within six months and who had not committed murder or rape. Those guilty of murder or rape would be granted reduced sentences.

After the amnesty, the violence in Algeria was reduced but not eliminated. Unlike the more moderate AIS, two extremist groups,

the GIA and the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), refused to accept the amnesty. Attacks on civilians continued and, as of late 2000, about 200 people were still being killed every month. The total death toll in the post-1992 fighting exceeds 100,000. (President Bouteflika was the first Algerian government leader to admit to the catastrophic level of violence in Algeria; previous government statements had acknowledged only 26,000 deaths.)

Despite the continued violence, there was some hope as of late 2000 that Algeria was

moving slowly toward peace and improved human rights. Bouteflika's amnesty and his willingness to accept criticism of the government marked a change from previous administrations. Even with these improvements, however, Algeria remained the most violent country in the Arab world.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

Algeria has a poor human rights record, although recently it has been improving.

The people's ability to choose their own government freely is limited. The 1997 parliamentary elections and the 1999 presidential elections were both deeply flawed. Local and foreign observers accused the military of interfering with the elections. During the presidential election campaign six opposition parties withdrew their presidential candidates and boycotted the election to protest campaigning irregularities. The government claimed a 60 percent turnout for the election, but neutral observers believed that the turnout was far lower. Although President Bouteflika was victorious, it remains unclear whether the majority of Algerians truly wished him to be their president. Nevertheless, despite the military's dominance over the political arena and the government, Algeria is not an absolute dictatorship. Opposition parties are allowed to operate and remain very active. The Parliament seats eleven separate parties, some of which are very critical of the government.

The military rulers of Algeria have been responsible for numerous human rights abuses. The army, police, and security forces all violate the rights of Algerian citizens in their ongoing war against Islamist extremists. Pro-government militias have also been responsible for civilian deaths.

Islamist guerillas are responsible for mass human rights violations, including murder and rape.

Mass killings of civilians continued in 1999 and 2000, but on a smaller scale than in 1997 and 1998. The numbers killed are in the dozens per incident, rather than in the hundreds. Nevertheless, hundreds are believed to be killed every month. Many civilian victims of guerrilla attacks have had their throats cut, and surprisingly, many of the attacks occur during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. In one attack on November 21, 2000, the attackers invaded a house in the village of Haouch Saboun, 30 miles west of Algiers. They killed the ten residents of the house, cutting their throats, shooting them, and then mutilating their bodies. The people killed were related to an Algerian police officer, and it was assumed that the killers were members of the GIA.

Algerian military units are also often targeted. On November 27, 2000, twenty-seven Algerian soldiers were ambushed, allegedly by the GCSP, between Blida and Medea, south of Algiers. An explosive device was triggered as their truck drove along, and then ambushers opened fire. The attackers escaped capture.

The murky nature of the Algerian war makes it sometimes difficult to determine who is responsible for these killings. The government blames Islamist extremist guerrillas, and clearly many attacks are carried out by Islamists, but suspicion remains that government death squads may be carrying out some killings in order to destabilize the country and hurt the reputation of the Islamist parties. The fact the some attacks have taken place very near military installations suggests either military incompetence or collusion.

In November 1999, Abdelkader Hachani, a leader of the FIS, was assassinated while undergoing dental surgery. He had previously claimed that government harassment was placing him in fear for his life. His family suspected the involvement of government security forces. The government claimed that he had been killed by an Islamist militant. It remains unclear who was responsible for Hachani's death.

Since 1992, there have been more than 4,000 "disappearances" of people arrested by government security forces. The government claims that most of these people were Islamist terrorists or former terrorists who have chosen to go into hiding. Many human rights observers believe that army or police units have murdered those who have disappeared. Some of the disappeared are believed to still be in the hands of security forces. Islamic guerrillas are also believed to be responsible for many kidnappings and disappearances.

Bouteflika and the Algerian courts have been criticized for their unwillingness to pursue those guilty of causing disappearances. Responding to these critics, Bouteflika said in July 1999: "We must first try to establish peace and security. . . . If we try to attack all the problems at once we shall lose our way."

Arbitrary arrests are common in Algeria. Suspected terrorists or terrorist sympathizers are reportedly held for days or even weeks. Some members of the opposition have been under house arrest for months. The use of arbitrary arrests appeared to decline in 1999 and 2000. Nevertheless, an official "state of emergency" remained in effect, giving authorities broad powers to arrest suspected terrorists and terrorist sympathizers. Many people have been arrested merely for being associated with alleged terrorist groups.

Torture is forbidden by the Algerian constitution but goes on nevertheless. In October 1999, Mohamed Zouaghi, Hacene Dimane, Abdelouahab Feroui, and Nassima Fodail were allegedly arrested by the police and tortured for ten days—they reported receiving electric shocks—and cigarette burns, and being forced to swallow unpotable water and chemicals. Police beatings of terrorist suspects are commonplace. Islamist guerrillas have also been accused of kidnapping victims and torturing them. Reportedly, young women have been kidnapped by these groups and subjected to multiple rapes over a period of weeks.

Prison conditions are poor, and medical care in prisons is minimal. The government occasionally allows international monitors to visit prisons. There are believed to be thousands of political prisoners in Algeria.

The courts are supposed to be independent, but in practice both civilian and military courts are responsive to government pressures. Accused terrorists have a right to a lawyer, but many lawyers are reluctant to offer their services for fear of government reprisals. The operations of military courts are usually secret and almost certainly do not adhere to international human rights standards.

Amnesty laws passed by President Bouteflika's government have had the result of protecting many alleged murderers from prosecution. International human rights groups have opposed these amnesty policies because they encourage impunity—the idea that politically sponsored murder can take place without fear of punishment. The amnesty laws have also only been partially successful at reducing the levels of violence in Algeria because some of the Islamist groups resisting Boute-

flika's government have refused to accept the amnesty.

The government does not protect the right to privacy of its citizens. Police and army units often invade homes without warrants. Government security forces often listen in on telephone conversations. The government also often monitors the calls of opposition leaders. Correspondence is also sometimes opened by security personnel.

The government does not protect freedom of speech, but Algerians still have access to multiple political points of view. Using the excuse of the ongoing war against Islamist guerrillas, the government restricts the right of people to criticize their policies. Government-controlled newspapers do not criticize the government. There are a number of independent newspapers in Algeria, however, and these papers comment fairly freely on politics and the ongoing civil strife. Although independent journalists can be critical of the government, they practice self-censorship and avoid topics that might lead to harassment from security forces. Senior government and military officials are much less likely than low-ranking officials and officers to be criticized. The government also practices official censorship, restricting the flow of information to both government and independent newspapers. It is believed, for example, that the government covers up some stories about massacres in an attempt to calm public fears of terrorist attacks.

Radio and television stations are controlled by the government. Many middle-class Algerians, however, have satellite dishes and therefore access to European and other non-Algerian television stations.

The Algerian constitution protects the right to assemble and protest, but in prac-

tice, government restrictions greatly limit the right of assembly. Groups that wish to stage protests or political rallies must obtain government permits before meeting. The government often refuses to grant permits to those groups it opposes, particularly those sympathetic to the Islamist movement. Police sometimes use clubs to break up illegal gatherings. The police and security forces often target gatherings by opposition political parties. During the April 1999 elections, many civilians were injured by baton-wielding police, who broke up anti-government rallies.

Mothers and other family members of the "disappeared" often gather and demonstrate in Algeria's major cities. These protesters demand that the government find out what has happened to their sons and daughters. While the protesters are usually allowed to demonstrate, Bouteflika has become increasingly impatient with their protests, arguing that Algerians must "turn the page" and forget the past. Occasionally these protests have been broken up by police, and some women have been hurt.

Freedom of religion is not protected in Algeria. Islam is the official and only legal religion in the country. The government, however, generally allows other religious groups to operate discreetly. There are Catholic churches that accept worshippers every Sunday in spite of government prohibitions. Government security forces have made no effort to close down these churches. Individuals of other faiths often meet in one another's homes. The schools all teach Islam as a fundamental part of the curriculum. Private religious schools are not permitted. Proselytizing is illegal. The Ministry of Religion supervises the activities of

all mosques and attempts to limit the activities of Islamic fundamentalists.

Unlike the government, the extremist Islamist groups are openly hostile to other religions. The GIA has declared that it intends to cleanse Algeria of Christians, Jews, and other non-Muslims. Muslim terrorists often target groups and individuals that they view as insufficiently religious or traditional.

The government allows freedom of movement but occasionally restricts this freedom for reasons of security. Leaders of the FIS are forbidden to travel abroad. Women under the age of nineteen may not travel abroad without the permission of their father or husband. The armed conflict in Algeria often interferes with freedom of movement. There have been numerous cases of men in government uniforms setting up roadblocks and checkpoints and then robbing or killing the people whom they stop. It is unclear whether these killers are Islamist guerrillas who have stolen military uniforms or military men acting on their own or under orders.

The government allows workers to organize and unionize. Most industrial workers belong to trade unions. The government can restrict the right to strike in the name of national security, but strikes often do occur and sometimes result in concessions being granted by the government. Forced labor and slave labor are forbidden, and the government generally enforces this policy.

Discrimination against women is illegal, but remains common. Spousal abuse is also allegedly common. There are no laws against spousal rape. Traditional attitudes prevent most women from seeking help after being battered or raped. There are no adequate shelters for women who have

been abused by their husbands. There are some centers that help women who have been raped. Along with the post-1992 fighting there has been an increase in the number of rapes suffered by women. Islamic extremists are alleged to target young girls for kidnapping and rape.

Although the law permits women to enter the workforce, customary attitudes greatly limit their chances of advancement. Only 8 percent of the workforce is female. Discrimination in the workplace is common. Algerian law also favors men in divorce disputes. After a divorce, men usually gain possession of the home. Women also receive less than men under inheritance laws.

In theory, the government is dedicated to protecting the rights of children, but in practice, child abuse remains a serious problem. The ongoing civil strife has helped to break up families and has left children more vulnerable to abuse. Sexual abuse against children is also an ongoing problem.

The government is not sympathetic to the rights of ethnic minorities. The government's policy of "Arabization" is devoted to making Arabic the only language in Algeria, displacing the Berber languages used by some ethnic minorities. The Amazigh ethnic minority has been particularly resistant to the government's attempts to Arabize them.

The government allows local and foreign human rights groups to operate. Local human rights groups suffer from occasional harassment and surveillance. President Bouteflika has invited visits by Amnesty International.

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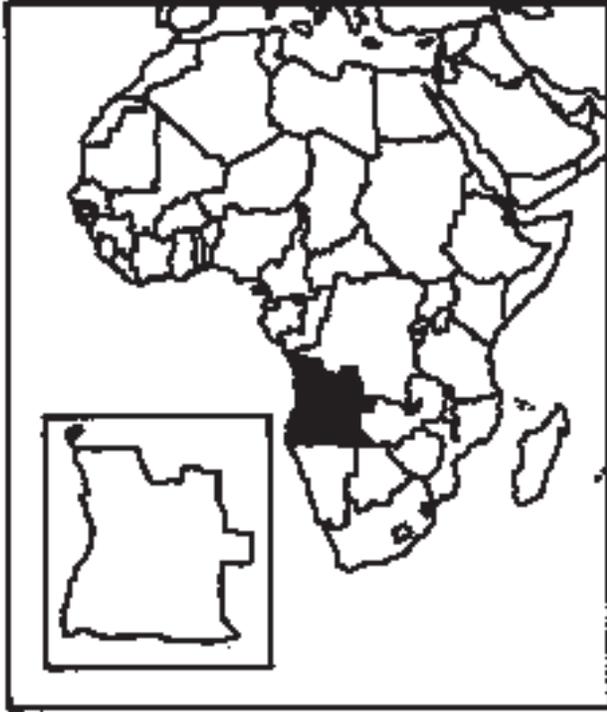
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# Angola



The Republic of Angola is located in south-western Africa. It is bounded on the west by the Atlantic Ocean; on the north and the northeast by Democratic Republic of the Congo; on the east by Zambia; and on the south by Namibia. Thirty-seven percent of its population is composed of ethnic Ovimbundu, whereas Kimbundu and Bakongo constitute 25 percent and 13 percent, respectively. Mixed European and native Africans represent 2 percent of the population. The remainder is constituted by Europeans (1 percent) and other ethnic groups (22 percent). Portuguese is the official language, although Bantu dialects and other African languages are spoken throughout the country. The major professed religions are indigenous traditions (47 percent), Roman Catholicism (38 percent), and

Protestantism (15 percent). Luanda is the capital.

## BACKGROUND

In 1951, Angola became an overseas province of Portugal. Independence was achieved in 1975. Angola was proclaimed a single-party government, ruled by the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola. Civil war between competing independence movements has been the norm since. The wars became particularly fierce and destructive in the 1970s and 1980s.

In May 1991, the Bicesse Accords were signed between the government and the insurgent National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). One-party rule ended and internationally monitored elections were called. However, the cease-fire lasted only until October 1992, when UNITA refused to accept electoral defeat and resumed civil war.

In November 1994, the two sides signed another peace accord, the Lusaka Protocol, which included the integration of UNITA into the Angolan armed forces and the government. UNITA, however, failed to comply with its obligations under the protocol, and military tensions and banditry continued. In April 1997, a Government of National Unity and Reconciliation was established in an effort to achieve military integration with and rule over UNITA-occupied areas. However, the resolutions were not considered satisfactory by UNITA and negotiations were interrupted.

At the end of 1998, there was renewed fighting between UNITA and the govern-

tence agriculture provides the main resource for 85 percent of the population. However, because of land mines, farmers are fearful to work in their fields and as a result much of Angola's food must still be imported. Civilians who live in UNITA-controlled areas are subject to a form of economic feudalism.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

Both the government and UNITA are committing numerous human rights abuses. Conflicts between the government and UNITA forces have resulted in hundreds of deaths and the displacement of thousands of civilians. According to some reports, extrajudicial executions and tortures have been committed by government security forces against UNITA members and sympathizers, criminal suspects, and people who disobeyed police orders. Government opponents have disappeared and hundreds of people have been arrested and detained for political reasons. Many were beaten at the time of the arrest. Amnesty International alleges that in November 1999, four youths died from asphyxiation in police custody in Luanda after being severely beaten.

Prison conditions are very poor; food, medications, and sanitation are not provided. Prisoners often die in custody. In addition, prisoners are subjected to brutal forms of interrogation. Young prisoners are often abused by guards or inmates. The judicial system is not independent from the government. The right to public trials as well as the right to a defense attorney or to an appeal are not enforced. Instead, long detentions without trial are the norm.

Army and police personnel, who are usually unpaid, are reportedly supporting themselves by extorting civilians and rob-

*A young boy in army training. Many troops in Africa use underage soldiers.*

ment. By the summer of the following year, the civil war was once again in full swing throughout Angola. UNITA managed to take new territory, and stepped up its attacks in areas still held by the government.

More than twenty years of continuous warfare has inhibited the establishment of an economy based on market principles (or anything else). Despite the country's abundance of natural resources, such as gold, diamonds, oil, extensive forests, and arable land, the annual per capita income is one of the lowest in the world. The country's wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few government officers; corruption and mismanagement are widespread both in the public and in the private sectors. Subsis-

bing them of their personal property and food. They have ravaged entire areas and robbed displaced persons occupying UNITA sites. On the other hand, UNITA forces are also responsible for killings, tortures, disappearances and other abuses in their effort to eliminate real or potential opposition. UNITA troops have kidnapped hundreds of civilians, including children, and have raped women. Suspected governmental supporters and traditional leaders have been victims of brutal attacks.

It is reported that UNITA employs cruel measures to punish dissent and prevent further disloyalty. Forced recruitment—including minors and women—is practiced. UNITA is also believed to detain persons for war-related reasons. It has established a military and civilian court system with a strict martial law code.

Both the government and UNITA limit freedom of speech, press and assembly. The majority of the media are run and controlled by the state. Journalists are forced to censor information regarding military incidents, internal security or other sensitive matters. Activities of the foreign media are not restricted but, in some cases, are very limited. UNITA allows media organizations to function only under surveillance of party officials.

There is academic freedom, although within the constraints of the civil war. The constitution grants freedom of religion, and protects the separation of church and state. Nevertheless, the clergy is very cautious in criticizing either governmental or UNITA policies.

Citizens cannot freely travel, or easily exit or enter the country. Government checkpoints limit citizens' movements within the country and serve as extortion locations. In addition, UNITA prevents civilians from going to areas under governmental control. The greatest impediments to internal movement are land mines which dot the roads. As far as refugee and asylum status are

concerned, the government complies with the law and with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

No racial or ethnically based acts of discrimination have been reported in recent years. Instead, women have been suffering from discrimination in wages, job positions, inheritance, and participation in commercial activities. Violence, sexual abuse and homicide are perpetrated against women throughout the country. There are reports of women forced to work as porters for UNITA forces and kept in servitude. Prostitution, including child prostitution, is a problem as well.

Children's rights are given only marginal attention, despite children's suffering from the ongoing conflict and the poor economic conditions of the country. A law against forced or bonded child labor is not enforced. Many young children work on family farms as domestic servants; others, who are orphans or abandoned, find employment in urban areas.

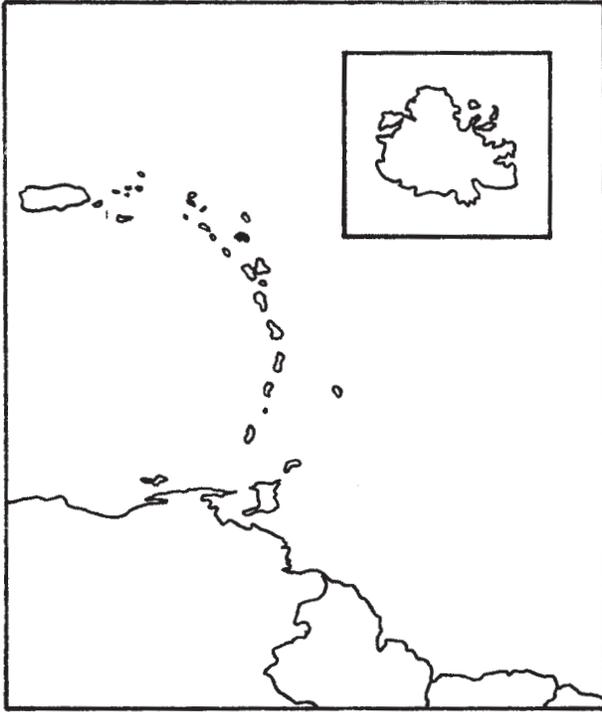
Disabled people are not provided with the means to improve their physical, financial or social conditions. The government and UNITA do not completely cooperate with investigations on human rights conditions by international organizations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International.

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# Antigua and Barbuda



Antigua and Barbuda are located in the eastern Caribbean; its neighbors are Saint Kitts and Nevis to the west, and Guadeloupe to the South. St. John's is the capital. The constitutional monarchy of Antigua and Barbuda is a multiparty, parliamentary democracy and a member of the Commonwealth of Nations. Queen Elizabeth II, the British monarch and chief of state, appoints a governor general who represents the head of the state with largely ceremonial powers. The cabinet and the prime minister (the leader of the majority party) hold the executive power and are responsible to the Parliament.

The country's population of more than 64,000 is almost entirely of African origin.

Other ethnic groups are British, Portuguese, and Levantine Arabs. Anglicanism is the official religion, with other Protestant groups and Roman Catholicism as minor denominations.

Tourism is the principal source of income, along with agriculture based primarily on fruit and vegetable production. Cotton, rum, and lobsters are exported. The United States provides an important source of assistance in the development of counternarcotics and humanitarian civic construction projects.

The British colonized the eastern Caribbean islands in 1632. Antigua and Barbuda became an important destination for African slaves working on sugar plantations. After emancipation in 1834, poor labor conditions persisted until the Antigua Trades and Labor Union was formed in 1939. Its president, Vere Cornwall Bird, established the first majority party, the Antigua Labor Party, during the 1946 elections and began a long history of electoral victories which have lasted until the present.

Antigua and Barbuda achieved independence from Britain in November 1981. Since 1994, power has passed on to Lester Bird, Vere Bird's son. Baldwin Spencer of the United Progressive Party is the official opposition representative.

The government generally enforces and respects political and civil rights. Antigua and Barbuda have an independent judiciary. The judicial system is historically tied to the United Kingdom. In case of death sentences, the Privy Council of London is designated as the final court of appeal.

Freedom of speech, press, and communication are respected, although the government has been accused of controlling the media and restricting opposition access. In 1996, a non-governmental radio station sued the state, claiming that its constitutional right to broadcast had been violated. In November 1998, a few attacks were perpetrated against opposition newspaper and party headquarters.

No discrimination based on race, sex, language, disability, or social status has been reported, although the government does not visibly enforce antidiscrimination provisions. Women are limited in terms of career advancement and job opportunities. Violence against women constitutes a serious social problem. Legislation regarding domestic violence has not been enacted. Child abuse is not firmly addressed by the government, although forced or bonded child labor is illegal. There are no laws

mandating disabled accessibility. Legislation regarding safety, health, and welfare of workers has yet to be implemented.

Freedom of education, religion, assembly, travel, emigration and repatriation are respected. As of 1999, there were no requests for investigation by individuals or international human rights organizations regarding civil rights abuses or government injustice.

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# Argentina



The Argentine Republic is the second-largest country in South America. It is bounded on the west and south by Chile; on the north by Bolivia; and on the east by Paraguay, Brazil, Uruguay, and the Atlantic Ocean. Buenos Aires is the capital. Its population of more than 36 million is composed mostly of Europeans of Spanish and Italian descent. The indigenous population of approximately 700,000 is concentrated in the northern, northwestern, and southern provinces. Argentina has the largest community of Jews in Latin America. Spanish is the official language. Roman Catholicism is the dominant religious denomination.

The economy underwent substantial growth in the 1990s after decades of decline and chronic inflation. Agriculture, industry, manufacturing, mineral resources,

construction, and energy (oil, gas, and hydroelectric power) comprise the basis of the capital sectors following a reconstruction period based on trade liberalization, privatization, and public administrative reforms. Unemployment, tax evasion, and a financial crisis represent the major current challenges that Argentina must solve in the years to come.

## HISTORY

Now a fully federal constitutional democracy, Argentina experienced years of political instability. Argentina achieved independence from Spain in 1816. National unity and a constitution were established in 1853. Immigration from Europe and foreign investment helped Argentina become a modern nation. A coup d'état gave Argentina a military government in 1943. One of the military coup's leaders, Juan Domingo Peron, became president in 1946. He pursued economic and political policies aimed at benefiting the working class. He was strongly supported by his wife, Eva Duarte de Peron, known as Evita, whose efforts resulted in women's right to vote in 1947. In 1955, Peron was forced into exile by the military. During the 1960s and early 1970s, the military government was unable to cope with economic decline and increasing terrorism. The crisis led to the return and reelection of Peron in October 1973.

However, terrorism from both the right and the left kept escalating, and Peron was forced to issue many emergency decrees. People began to be detained in prison without charges. His third wife, Maria Estela Is-

abel Martinez de Peron, took over Juan Peron's presidency after his death in July 1974. A military coup deposed her in March 1976. The following years were marked by a harsh military rule, which orchestrated what is known as the "Dirty War." Basic human rights were violated in the effort to restore public order and fight terrorism. It is estimated that between 10,000 and 15,000 people disappeared—murdered by government forces—between 1976 and 1983.

A difficult internal situation, characterized by a serious economic crisis, corruption, public unrest, and Argentina's defeat in the Falklands War, forced new democratic elections in October 1983. Raul Alfonsin, the new president, tried to solve the most urgent problems by diminishing the power of the military and consolidating democratic institutions. In 1989, Carlos Saul

Menem became president. He was reelected in 1995. Menem dramatically changed the economic situation by encouraging a free market and a pro-U.S. foreign policy. In October 1999, Fernando de la Rúa was elected president in what were regarded as free elections. He took office on December 10.

The human rights abuses of the former military government continue to be the focus of national attention and debate. In 1999, for example, leaders of the 1976–1983 junta were arrested on charges of taking babies born to dissidents in detention and offering them to supporters for adoption.

The newly revised constitution of 1994 established a separation of powers at the national and provincial level. Argentina has a bicameral system, in which the president is directly elected, but cannot succeed himself more than once. During the duration

of his mandate, the president holds considerable powers. The president is the commander-in-chief of the armed forces as prescribed by the constitution and supervised by the minister of defense. The administration of law and order is overseen by several agencies: the Argentine Federal Police, the Border Police, and the Coast Guard. All are monitored by the minister of the interior. Provincial police are under the control of local governors.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

At present, Argentina does a reasonably good job of respecting the rights of its citizens. However, allegations of human rights abuses are still reported. Police officers, in particular, are accused of committing extrajudicial executions, killings, torture, violation of privacy, and the detaining or arresting people without charges. In some cases, the officers involved have been brought to justice, but many complaints have not been filed for fear of reprisal. According to Service for Peace and Justice, a non-governmental organization for human rights, in 1998, street children and minors were arbitrarily detained and beaten by the police in Buenos Aires. The Association Against Police and Institutional Repression has recorded more than eighty cases of arbitrary killings by police 1989.

Prison conditions are very poor in terms of infrastructure, sanitary status, and food supply. They are also overcrowded. The law allows pretrial detention of up to two years. It is reported that in federal prisons, 75 percent of the prisoners are being held in pretrial detention. The judiciary is often inefficient, corrupt, and subject to political influence.

Human rights organizations have urged the judiciary to conclude the investigations

of the illegal adoptions of hundreds of children born in secret detention centers during the Dirty War. Argentine authorities are not fully cooperating with Spanish court proceedings investigating past human rights violations. The Spanish court, among the charges against 110 current or former military or police officers, prosecuted the case of former naval officer Adolfo Scilingo, who participated in throwing naked dissidents into the ocean from airplanes during the Dirty War.

The Inter-American Court of Human Rights has urged Argentina to try those found responsible and anyone who participated in the disappearances. In March 1998, the National Congress abolished the Full Stop and Due Obedience Laws that granted immunity to members of the army involved in human rights abuses during the period of military rule between 1976 and 1983. However, the repeal of these laws was not interpreted as being retroactive.

The constitution grants freedom of speech, press, and other forms of communication. However, there are reports of journalists receiving anonymous threats of violence and of being victims of harassment or violence. In January 1998, former navy officer Alfredo Astiz was arrested after a Buenos Aires magazine published his statement regarding his participation in activities at the Navy Mechanics School (ESMA) during the military rule. The ESMA was responsible for the detention, murder, and disappearance of people considered enemies of the military government.

The government respects the right to peaceful assembly and association, although on some occasions police have reportedly broken up demonstrations in several provinces. The law prohibits and punishes discrimination based on sex, race, religion, ideology, political opinion, lan-

guage, disability, or social status. However, women in Argentina do not have the same status and power as men and are sometimes subject to violence, rape, and harassment. In 1992, the National Council for Women was created to implement programs to cope with the problem in cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Women are often not aware of their rights. Although recognized by the law, marital rape is difficult to prove. The National Council for Women also promotes equal opportunity for women in education, employment and politics. Women are paid less than men for equal jobs and occupy a large proportion of positions in the illegal labor market.

Non-governmental and church sources report that child abuse and prostitution constitute an increasing social problem. Although compulsory up to the age of fifteen, education is inadequate in most rural areas. UNICEF estimates that over 200,000 children under age fifteen are working. Acceptable work conditions are not always enforced by the law, especially in the informal sector.

Episodes of anti-Semitism have been reported. According to press reports, police officers were responsible for attacks on two

Jewish cemeteries in 1997. The 1992 bombing of the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires, and the 1994 bombing of the city's Jewish community center are still under investigation.

Domestic and international human rights organizations are free to operate in the country and report their findings. However, Amnesty International reports that as recently as 1999 human rights defenders were attacked or threatened with death. Particularly targeted were organizations such as Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo and Mothers Association of Plaza de Mayo, both of which dealt with the issue of "disappeared" children.

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# Armenia



The Republic of Armenia is located in West Asia. It is bounded on the east by Azerbaijan; on the north by Georgia; on the west by Turkey; and on the south by Iran. Yerevan is the capital. Its population of approximately 3.7 million is composed of Armenians (96 percent), Kurds (2 percent), and Russian, Greek, and other ethnic groups (2 percent). The Armenian Apostolic Church (Armenian Orthodox) represents the major religious denomination, with more than 90 percent of the population being nominally affiliated. The official language is Armenian.

## BACKGROUND

Armenia has a long history of foreign domination by Persians, Byzantines, Arabs, Mongols, and Turks. For most of its modern

history it was a province in the Russian Empire. After the Russian Revolution, it became part of the Soviet Union. In 1922, Armenia became part of the Trans-Caucasian Soviet Socialist Republic, and in 1936, the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic was formed.

In September 1991, in the wake of the fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the cold war, Armenia achieved its independence as a republic. Levon Ter-Petrossian was elected as president. Ever since, the Armenian National Movement has dominated the government and made efforts to establish a Western-style democracy. The new constitution was approved in 1995, providing for the direct election of the president, a unicameral Parliament and the separation of the executive, the legislature, and the judiciary. The prime minister—the head of the cabinet—is appointed by the president, but can be removed by the Parliament. Both the government and the Parliament can propose legislation. The current president, Robert Kocharian, was elected in March 1998, after Ter-Petrossian was forced to resign following the revelation of irregularities connected with his reelection in 1996. There were also electoral irregularities associated with local elections. Because the judiciary is not fully independent of the executive, it does not enforce constitutional provisions.

On October 27, 1999, five terrorists entered the National Assembly and opened fire, killing seven members of Parliament, including the speaker and the prime minister. The prosecutor in charge of the case has been accused of using physical abuse and other forms of coercion to extract con-

fessions and evidence. Concern for the rights of individuals questioned and detained in connection with this case has been expressed.

Armenia's economy is still struggling to make the transition from a centralized model to a free-market approach. In 1988, the country was devastated by a strong earthquake that killed 25,000 people and left 500,000 without homes. The effects of this catastrophe are still being felt. Additionally, the escalating conflict with Azerbaijan—which began over the disputed territory of Nagorno-Kabarakh in 1988—has led to an economic embargo by Azerbaijan and Turkey, especially in the area of energy supplies from which Armenians are still trying to recover. Since the cease-fire of 1994, however, Armenia has been able to

implement several economic programs aimed at developing privatization, full price liberalization, and a free market. Most of the state lands have been redistributed and privatized. Agriculture represents the strongest economic sector; industry's recovery, however, has been slow. Unemployment and underemployment affect about half of the population.

International assistance currently plays a major role in the development of the country's economy and politics. Armenia is a member of the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, NATO's Partnership for Peace, the North Atlantic Cooperation Council, the International Monetary Fund, and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

Although human rights are broadly protected by the constitution, certain abuses continue to be reported. The Human Rights Committee under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights urged the establishment of a special body to investigate allegations of torture, ill-treatment, and arbitrary arrests and detentions, as well as searches without warrants. In some cases, abuses have resulted in prisoners' deaths due to poor prison conditions and inadequate medical treatment. The military is also responsible for serious mistreatment of conscripts. In February 1998, Private Mkrtych Ohanian committed suicide after killing six comrades; his actions were alleged to have been in response to continuous abuse and violence that he had suffered.

The 1999 new criminal code abolished the death penalty and no executions were performed that year, although by the end of 1999 thirty-one men were still on death row. The new code became effective in January 1999. Amnesty International reports that in 1999 at least six prisoners of conscience were detained for refusing to perform compulsory military service. Conscientious objectors are often conscripted by the armed forces, and there have been reprisals against their families. In September 1998, Jehovah's Witness Karen Voskanian was sentenced to three years in prison after having refused to perform military service for religious reasons. Other Jehovah's Witnesses are in prison for the same reason.

The constitution grants freedom of speech and press, although some limits are applied. The government controls a few television channels, and newspapers are not completely free from political pressure. Academic freedom is limited by the gov-

ernment, and the Ministry of Education controls the choice of textbooks and course materials.

The government generally respects the right of peaceful assembly and association, but with troublesome registration requirements. All parties and associations are subject to registration requirements. Human rights and non-governmental groups have been denied registration by the minister of justice.

The constitution prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, sex, disability, religion, language, or social status. However, discrimination against ethnic minorities continues. After the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, ethnic minorities on both sides suffered from discrimination and harassment aimed at expelling them from their respective countries.

Amnesty International has called for the decriminalization of consensual homosexual relations between adult males, and the release of the prisoners still serving time for this reason. Laws addressing domestic violence, rape, and spousal abuse do not specifically protect women. In general, women are not given the same opportunities as men in career-related jobs, and are significantly underrepresented in public affairs. The disabled are overly subject to societal discrimination, and health care facilities do not meet international criteria.

The law places some limits on religious freedom. The Armenian Apostolic Church is granted special status, whereas all other religions are prohibited from proselytizing and must register with the State Council on Religious Affairs. Jehovah's Witnesses are denied registration, and by law cannot publish newspapers or operate television or radio programs, rent meeting places, or

sponsor visas for visitors.

The government also partially restricts freedom of movement by denying passports to citizens possessing state secrets, having financial claims, or having military duties. There are no specific laws regarding refugees and asylum seekers.

Non-governmental and human rights organizations are free to operate and publish their findings about human rights violations in the country. In April 1998, President Kocharian appointed a former prisoner of conscience as head of a new human rights commission. As a result, all members of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation convicted for political reasons during

the trials in 1996 and 1997 were released. Human rights abuses continue in Armenia, but observers from Amnesty International believe that conditions are improving.

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# Australia



Australia is located to the southeast of Asia, between the Indian and Pacific Oceans. It is both the smallest continent and the sixth largest country in the world, with a total land area slightly smaller than that of the United States. The climate is mostly arid to semiarid; temperate in the south and east; tropical in the north. The land is generally low plateau with deserts. There is a fertile plain in the southeast. Its population of almost 19 million is concentrated along the eastern and southeastern coasts.

Originally a British colony, Australia became a British commonwealth nation in 1901. It is a parliamentary democracy with a federal system of government. There is also a well-developed and independent sys-

tem of federal and state courts. The country has a highly developed economy. Racially, Australia is 92 percent Caucasian, 7 percent Asian, and 1 percent Aboriginal and other. Religiously, the country is 26 percent Anglican, 26 percent Roman Catholic, 24 percent other Christian, and 11 percent non-Christian. Australia's constitution forbids the adoption of an official state religion. English is the official language.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

Although there is no bill of rights as such, the Australian High Court has ruled that freedom of political discourse is implied in the constitution. Australians enjoy all of the rights normally associated with a functioning democratic system. The government respects human rights in most areas. One problem area has been in the treatment of indigenous people, who have charged that harassment is pervasive and that racism is rampant among police and prison officials. Amnesty International has reported a number of incidents involving such abuses. Prisons meet minimum international standards and visits by human rights monitors are permitted, though treatment of prisoners has been an area of concern in recent years. Another area of concern has been the treatment of immigrants.

A wide variety of human rights groups operate without government restriction (and in some instances with government funding), investigating and publishing their

findings on human rights cases. The law prohibits discrimination based on race, sex, religion, disability, language, or social status, and the government and an independent judiciary generally enforce these prohibitions.

Some observers have estimated that domestic violence is widespread. Spousal abuse is particularly prevalent in some Aboriginal communities. Government statisticians assert that, because of under reporting and other factors, it is not possible to develop an accurate picture of domestic violence. Nevertheless, the Australian government recognizes that domestic violence and discrimination based on sex are serious national problems.

Women are equal under the law, and the law mandates equal pay for equal work. Compliance with these laws are monitored by private and public women's rights organizations at all levels of government. A federal-level Office of the Status of Women monitors women's rights. The federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner receives complaints and attempts to resolve those judged valid. A 1994 UN report estimated that women are paid 90 percent of the wages men receive for similar work (which is a better percentage than for women in the United States).

Australia's commitment to the rights and welfare of children is reflected in its well-funded systems of public education, day care, and medical care. The government strictly prohibits trade in child pornography and prosecutes pedophiles. The country's six states and two territories are responsible for protecting children from abuse and for investigating child neglect and abuse.

Although there are no laws formally prohibiting it, forced labor, including forced

and bonded labor by children, is not practiced. While there is no federally mandated minimum age of employment, compulsory educational requirements, monitored and enforced by state educational authorities, effectively prevent most children from joining the workforce until they are at least fifteen or sixteen years of age. Federal and state governments monitor and enforce a network of laws, which vary from state to state, governing minimum school-leaving age, minimum age to claim unemployment benefits, and minimum age to engage in specified occupations.

Approximately 32 percent of the workforce is unionized. Unions carry out their functions free from government or political control. The Workplace Relations Act, which went into effect in 1997, restricts the right to strike to the period when a new wages and working conditions contract is being negotiated. Legislation that went into force in 1994 for the first time legalized what had always been a de facto right to strike. Retribution against strikers and labor leaders is illegal.

Although a formal minimum wage exists, it has not been relevant in wage agreements since the 1960s. Instead, 80 percent of workers are covered by differing minimum wage rates for individual trades and professions, all of which are sufficient to provide a decent standard of living for a worker and family. Most workers are employees of incorporated organizations. For them, a complex body of government regulations, and decisions of applicable federal or state industrial relations commissions, prescribe a forty-hour or shorter workweek, paid vacations, sick leave, and other benefits, including at least one twenty-four-hour rest period per week. Federal or state safety laws apply to every workplace.

Discrimination against the disabled in employment, education, or other state services is unlawful. A Disability Discrimination Commissioner exists for the purpose of monitoring compliance with the law, for enforcing state laws requiring equal access, and for otherwise protecting the rights of the disabled. On the other hand, no federal legislation exists requiring accessibility for disabled people. Furthermore, it is legal to deny employment to those with disabilities if it can be demonstrated that there are reasonable grounds for believing that the disabled would be unable to carry out their assigned work.

#### ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

Australia's 1975 Racial Discrimination Act forbids discrimination on grounds of race, color, descent, or national or ethnic origin. The Ministry for Aboriginal Affairs, in association with the Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander Commission (ATSIC), is the principal agency responsible for initiating and monitoring government efforts to improve the quality of life for indigenous people. The federal government spent approximately \$1.13 billion in 1997 on health, welfare, education, and development programs for indigenous people.

Despite these efforts, indigenous people experience inferior access to medical and educational institutions, have a measurably shorter life expectancy, and have significantly higher rates of unemployment. Many more Aboriginals than other Australians are arrested and imprisoned. The rate of imprisonment among indigenous people is twenty-one times that of non-indigenous people. More than 45 percent of Aboriginal males between the ages of twenty-one and thirty have been arrested at some time in their lives.

Indigenous groups assert that the Australian government's non-responsiveness to a series of recommendations by the 1991 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody has contributed to these disturbing statistics. Human rights observers point out that poverty and lack of socioeconomic opportunities create the conditions (e.g., homelessness, unemployment, and boredom) that promote crime among indigenous peoples. Indigenous groups also charge that police harassment of indigenous people, including juveniles, is pervasive. A disturbing pattern of mistreatment and arbitrary arrests takes place against a backdrop of systematic discrimination.

Official statistics have confirmed the common perception among indigenous people that police systematically mistreat them. The average life expectancy of Aboriginals is twenty years shorter than that of other Australians, and the infant mortality rate of indigenous children is three times greater. Also, the maternal mortality rate for indigenous women is five times that of non-indigenous. The incidence of such diseases as tuberculosis, leprosy, and hepatitis is ten times greater among Aboriginal people than among non-Aboriginal people. Statistics in other areas, such as education and employment, are similarly disproportionate.

Government programs, including a \$750 million indigenous land fund and a "Federal Social Justice Package," have attempted to address this situation. In July 1998, after a compromise with its opponents, the government was able to pass amendments to the 1993 Native Title Act. Aboriginal leaders were pleased by the removal of the time limit for lodging native title claims but expressed concern about the weakening of Aboriginal rights to nego-

tiate with non-Aboriginal leaseholders over the development of rural property. Aboriginal groups have continued to express concern that the amended act limits the future ability of Aboriginal people to fully protect their property rights. As of 1988–1989, 15 percent of Australian land is owned or controlled by Aboriginal people.

The current administration has opposed issuing an apology to the “Stolen Generation” of Aboriginal children, who were taken from their parents by the government between 1910 and the early 1970s to be raised by foster parents and orphanages. The prime minister has asserted that the present generation is not responsible and therefore not obligated to apologize for the wrongs of an earlier generation.

#### IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

Public opinion surveys indicate growing prejudice against Asian immigrants. Leaders in the ethnic and immigrant communities have recently expressed concern that the nativist One Nation Party had contributed to the increasing sense of isolation and atmosphere of vilification of immigrants and minorities. However, according to the federally funded but independent Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, during the fiscal year ending June 30, 1998, the number of racial discrimination complaints fell 37 percent from the previous year.

Australia has cooperated with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other humanitarian organizations in assisting refugees. In the case of undocumented migrants and asylum seekers, the government either grants a protection visa with full residence and employment rights, or refuses it, with no intermediate mea-

asures. The government forcibly repatriates individuals who it has determined do not have a valid claim to refugee status in accordance with relevant United Nations convention definitions. Human rights and refugee advocacy groups maintain that the government’s refugee and asylum adjudication process is applied inconsistently.

Under the Migration Reform Act of 1994, asylum seekers who arrive at the border without prior authorization to enter the country are automatically detained, but may be released from detention if they meet certain criteria—including age, ill health, and experiences of torture or other trauma. The majority of asylum seekers are detained for the duration of the often-prolonged asylum process. The detention policy has led to extensive litigation initiated by human rights and refugee advocacy groups, which charge that the sometimes lengthy detentions violate the human rights of the asylum seekers. The United Nations Human Rights Commission (UNHRC) stated in April 1997 that Australia had violated the rights of a boat person by detaining him for more than four years while his applications to remain in the country were being considered. The UNHRC stated that his detention was arbitrary and in violation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. In an April report to Parliament, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission also condemned the government’s treatment of asylum seekers as breaching international treaty obligations.

In 1997–1998, Australia accepted 67,100 immigrants, with 12,020 admitted under a humanitarian program, which accepts refugees and those in refugee-like situations in urgent need of resettlement. This figure included 1,553 persons already in the country who were granted refugee sta-

tus. Human rights advocates continued to criticize Australia for holding thousands of asylum seekers in detention (many of them from Kosovo and East Timor), without resolving their cases quickly. Many of those held in detention were young children.

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# Austria



The Republic of Austria, located in central Europe, is a constitutional democracy with a bicameral federal parliament and an independent judiciary. Vienna is the capital. Its homogeneous population of more than 8 million inhabitants consists primarily of native German speakers. Ethnic minorities include Croats and Slovenes. The major religious denomination is Roman Catholicism.

Once the center of the Hapsburg Empire, Austria's present boundaries were established by the Treaty of Saint-Germain in 1919. In 1938, Austria was incorporated into Hitler's German Reich; it was liberated by the Allies in 1945. In 1955, under the Austrian State Treaty, Austria became a free and independent state. Since the end

of World War II, Austrian politics have been characterized by stability. The constitution grants citizens the right to change the government peacefully through universal suffrage. Austria has been a member of the European Union since January 1995. A well-developed market characterizes its economy and the standard of living is high.

Human rights are generally respected. However, hundreds of complaints are filed each year against police officials for violations of citizens' rights in the form of intimidation, use of excessive physical force, and mistreatment. Occasionally, the perpetrators are racially motivated. In 1998, four police officials were prosecuted for committing such abuses. Freedom of speech is granted by the constitution, although a number of allegations regarding brutal police conduct have been reported.

Freedom of assembly and association may be denied organizations such as neo-Nazis or religious sects considered potentially harmful to the society. Otherwise, the government respects the freedom of religion under the 1874 "Law of Recognition." Since January 1998, a new law provides registration policies for unrecognized religious groups to establish their official status as confessional communities. It also provides additional criteria for recognition. Religious law experts have questioned the constitutionality of this law.

Austria cooperates with the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, but its subscription to the "safe country" concept has been criticized. This policy requires asylum seekers to depart

the country if they have entered illegally. A few improvements to the rule were made since 1997. Since 1991, thousands of Bosnian refugees were granted temporary protected status and a large number were integrated in the Austrian labor market. In 1998, applications for asylum increased dramatically following the Kosovo conflict. The Interior Ministry proposed a change in European asylum policy that was highly criticized as an attempt to deny the legal right to asylum. Austrians counter with arguments pointing out that Austria has taken in many more asylum seekers than most other European countries.

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on race, sex, religion, disability, language, or social status, and the government enforces these provisions. Violence against women is a serious social problem, though the great majority of such abuses are not being officially reported. In 1997, new legislation was approved and implemented to better protect women against domestic violence. In addition, trafficking in women from Eastern Europe for the purpose of

prostitution is a problem that the police find difficult to control.

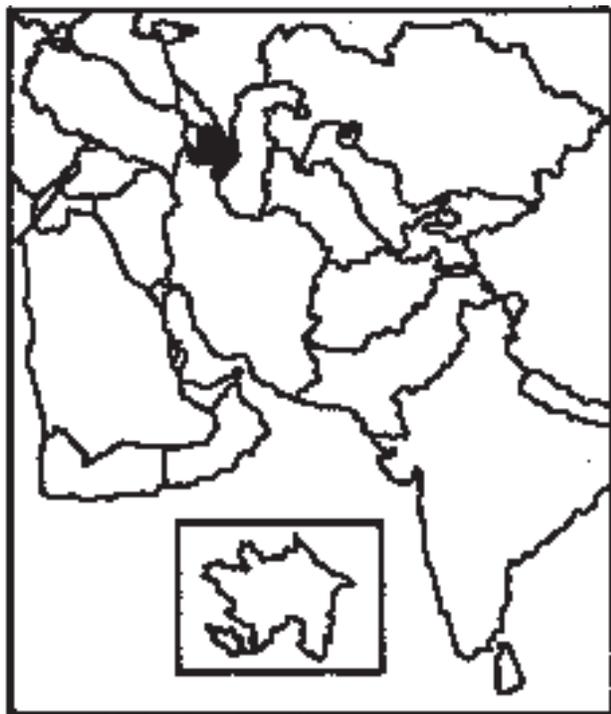
Women are underrepresented in civil service. By law, women are not allowed to work at night. Since April 1998, women have been allowed to serve in the military. The law does not grant guaranteed access to buildings to the disabled. Mentally retarded women can be sterilized without their consent. Another social problem is anti-Semitic and other anti-foreign incidents committed by right-wing extremists. In 1997, 280 incidents of this kind were reported.

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# Azerbaijan



The Republic of Azerbaijan is located in southwestern Asia. It is bounded on the south by Iran, on the east by the Caspian Sea, on the west by Armenia and Georgia, and on the north by Russia. The Azeri represent the majority of the population, which is over 7.8 million. Dagestanis, Russians, and Armenians are the other ethnic minorities. Islam is the official religion.

The current constitution was approved by a referendum in 1995. The government consists of a multiparty parliament and features the separation of powers between the executive, the legislature, and the judiciary. The president is elected by popular vote and appoints the prime ministers and the members of the cabinet, who are confirmed by the unicameral National Assembly.

## BACKGROUND

Azerbaijan was under the Soviet rule from 1922 to 1991, when it achieved independence and joined the Commonwealth of Independent States. In 1992, it became a member of the United Nations.

Since 1988, Azerbaijan and Armenia have been fighting over the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh. Despite a cease-fire in 1994, violations by both sides continue and negotiations are still in progress. Armenian forces occupy 20 percent of Azerbaijan's territory. Thousands of people are refugees or internally displaced due to the conflict. Ongoing military operations along the border have caused injuries and deaths to members of the armed forces and to civilians.

Azerbaijan's economy embodies all of the characteristics of a former Soviet republic making the transition from a centralized to a free-market economy. The major economic products are oil, cotton, and gas. Privatization of industry is progressing slowly, and most large enterprises are still under governmental control. Commercial agriculture is weak. It is estimated that 60 percent of the population is poor. Government work is the only source of economic opportunity for the average citizen.

In October 1998, irregularities and violations of the election law characterized the reelection of former President Heydar Aliyev. As a consequence, opposition parties are underrepresented in the Parliament. The executive exerts influence on both the legislative and the judicial powers. Most governmental bureaucracies are laced with corruption.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights in Azerbaijan are constantly being violated. Police arbitrarily arrest or detain people, beat persons in custody, and conduct searches without warrants. In a handful of cases, the government has taken action against perpetrators. Prison conditions are very poor and medical treatment is often denied to prisoners. Visits by family members are subject to strict limitations. The judiciary is inefficient, trials are lengthy, and prisoners' rights are not protected.

The government arrests and detains members of opposing parties for political reasons. Non-governmental sources allege that in 1998, authorities were holding seventy-five political prisoners. Freedom of speech and press are not fully respected. Although Azerbaijan officially abolished censorship in August 1998, journalists often exercise self-censorship due to political pressure. The government has a monopoly on publishing facilities. It controls official radio and television stations as well. Registration and licenses for independent newspapers and broadcasts are often denied or are kept pending for long periods. There are reports of journalists being attacked by police or other government officials.

Although granted by the constitution, freedom of assembly and association are restricted due to governmental interests. The government prevents opposition parties from conducting indoor or outdoor meetings. In September and November 1998, more than 100 persons were briefly detained for peacefully participating in opposition demonstrations. The parliament passed a law giving authorities power to regulate and ban demonstrations when necessary. In addition, political parties and other private organizations are required to

register and are often denied the ability to freely operate. There have been reports of individuals being fired from their jobs because of their political beliefs.

The constitution forbids discrimination based on race, sex, religion, disability, language, political opinion, and social status. However, violations committed against certain ethnic minorities are a major social problem. In particular, following the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Armenians have complained of discrimination in employment, school, and governmental affairs. Amnesty International reports that Armenian civilians were detained solely for ethnic reasons. There are no laws protecting women from spousal rape or abuse, and restrictions are applied toward women in economic life.

Children's education and health care is limited by the difficult economic situation of the country. There are a large number of children who live in refugee camps under precarious conditions. Children are often found begging on the streets of the capital, Baku, and other towns. The law does not specifically prohibit forced labor by children. The government also does not fulfill its provisions regarding the rights for the disabled. Accessibility to buildings for the disabled is not guaranteed by the law.

The constitution grants freedom of religion. However, the Ministry of Justice requires that religious congregations register. Muslims are subject to the Spiritual Directorate of Caucasus Muslims. Armenian churches were closed following the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Citizens can travel freely both within and outside the country, although the government applies some limitations to members of opposition parties. In some cases, Armenians have been harassed for trying to emigrate or to obtain passports. The gov-

ernment has not provided assistance to hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijanis who were expelled from Armenian-occupied territories. They are not allowed to return to their homes, and they are forced to rely on foreign humanitarian aid organizations for their survival.

Azerbaijan tolerates investigations on human rights issues by domestic and international organizations, although it is reluctant to discuss abuses of those rights. The chairman of the Azerbaijan Human Rights Center was threatened with criminal prosecution for reporting about political prisoners. Local non-governmental organizations are denied registration to operate legally.

Since February 1998, the death penalty has been abolished. In addition, President Aliyev has issued a proposal to the Parlia-

ment to promote and defend human rights according to the protocols of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Amnesty International reported that as of 1999 no decision had been made to ratify the proposal.

*James R. Lewis*

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# Bahamas



The Commonwealth of the Bahamas is a group of Caribbean islands, 50 miles east of the coast of southern Florida. The capital, Nassau, is located on New Providence Island, where the majority of the population resides. The ancestry of the inhabitants is African (85 percent), European (12 percent), Asian and Hispanic (3 percent). The population is approximately 284,000.

As a constitutional parliamentary democracy and an independent member of the Commonwealth of Nations, its political and legal policies are traditionally linked to the United Kingdom. Queen Elizabeth II, nominal head of the state, appoints a governor general as representative of the British monarch. The prime minister is the head of the cabinet. The bicameral legislature

performs its functions under the 1973 constitution. The judiciary is independent; the Privy Council of the United Kingdom is used as the highest Court of Appeal.

When Christopher Columbus “discovered” the Western Hemisphere in 1492, his first landfall was in the Bahamas. The islands became a British colony in 1717, and, in the early nineteenth century, served as a staging area for the slave trade. During World War II, the Allies used the islands as a base for military training and operations. In 1964, self-government was achieved, with full independence within the Commonwealth following in 1973.

The economy is dependent on tourism and financial services. There are few domestic resources and little industry; nearly all food and manufactured goods are imported. Underemployment and poverty are major problems.

The government generally respects human rights. Human rights organizations are free to operate in the country. Concerns have been expressed regarding police abuses. There have been reports of beatings of criminal suspects by police officials. In 1998, one person died in police custody. Of the many complaints filed, only a few are properly addressed by the Police Complaints and Discipline Unit. In addition, incidents of police misconduct often go unreported. Conditions at Fox Hill, the nation’s only prison, are harsh. Cells are overcrowded, poorly ventilated, and ill-equipped. Many prisoners do not have beds and sleep on the floor. Sanitation conditions are extremely poor.

*An antidrug march.*

There are also complaints of arbitrary arrests and lengthy pretrial detentions. The government does not provide legal representation except for suspects charged with capital crimes. Illegal immigrants are detained until they can leave the country or receive legal status.

No legislation exists to process applications by asylum seekers. Human rights organizations such as Amnesty International have urged the government to ensure that all asylum seekers be treated according to international standards. In 1998, almost 400 illegal Cubans were repatriated. Many with a legitimate fear of prosecution and seeking asylum did not have access to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Domestic violence and abuse against women are widespread problems. A num-

ber of sources claim that child sexual abuse is also increasing. Also, according to recent reports, the authorities are not enforcing regulations regarding equal opportunities and accessibility for the disabled.

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# Bahrain



Bahrain is an archipelago of thirty-three islands located roughly in the mid-south of the Persian Gulf, off the east coasts of Saudi Arabia and Qatar. A causeway (opened in 1986) links Bahrain to Saudi Arabia. Bahrain is the smallest country among its immediate neighbors with a total area of about 270 square miles. Bahrain's population is a little over 634,000. Foreigners are mainly from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and the Philippines, and make up almost 39 percent of the population. Foreign workers, mainly underpaid and unskilled, hold approximately 130,000 jobs in Bahrain out of a total workforce of 239,000. Bahrain is a monarchy.

## BACKGROUND

Like most of the Gulf states, Bahrain was a British protectorate between 1861 and

1971. This period witnessed the consolidation of the tribal rule of the Al-Khalifa dynasty that invaded Bahrain from the mainland in 1783. A feudal regime ruled Bahrain until 1923. In 1926, Britain appointed Sir Charles Belegrove to create a modern administration for Bahrain. Modern education had already begun in 1919, and in 1926, Bahrain witnessed the first election for the municipality of the capital city. In 1932, oil was discovered.

In 1954, a major uprising calling for a Parliament and civil rights took place. The movement was crushed with the help of the British army in December 1956, and three of the nationalist leaders were exiled to the British island of St. Helena. National demands for a Parliament and constitution were met in 1971, following the declaration of independence earlier that year. In 1973, a thirty-member National Assembly was elected. In addition to the elected members, fourteen ministers became ex-officio members. More than half the cabinet were members of the Al-Khalifa family.

In 1974, the government proposed a bill for "state security" empowering the interior minister to detain political activists for three years without charges or trial. The debate over the illegality of the law continued until the August 25, 1975, when the amir (head of state) decided to dissolve the Parliament and suspend key articles of the constitution. A pro-democracy movement emerged calling for the reinstatement of Parliament and restoration of the suspended articles of the constitution. The government responded by beginning a process aimed at concentrating power in the hands of a few persons from the ruling family. To

achieve this, the Interior Ministry was given a free hand to persecute the opposition.

The 1980s witnessed an escalation of repression and sectarianism. Following the liberation of Kuwait in 1991, a Gulf-wide pro-democracy movement resurfaced, calling for the opening of traditional monarchies and greater popular participation in public life. In 1992, a broad-based committee sponsored a petition calling on the amir to restore Parliament and reinstate the rule of constitutional law. The petition was signed by more than 300 professionals from all sectors of Bahraini society. In 1994, yet another petition was sponsored by a broad-based group, the Committee for Popular Petition (CPP), which managed to gather some 25,000 signatures from the public in support of the return of parliamentary and constitutional life to Bahrain. The amir refused to receive the petition. In December 1994, security forces began a crackdown campaign to silence the popular call for democracy. This led to the proliferation of protests and many people were detained. Some forty people died in detention or during demonstrations, and the country was plunged into the most serious disturbances it had faced for many decades.

The political situation in Bahrain continued to deteriorate after 1994, and many human rights and international groups voiced their concern. In February 1995, the European Parliament condemned the State Security Law and the British chief of Bahrain security, Ian Henderson. The resolution stated that Parliament was "shocked that the Bahrain government has resorted to the ruthless use of force by the security forces resulting in several deaths, many injuries, the detention of hundreds of persons, and the deportation of prominent personalities," and "that the security forces in Bahrain are to a large extent directed by a British officer, Ian Henderson."

## HUMAN RIGHTS

In September 1995, Amnesty International issued a major fifty-page report entitled "Human Rights Crisis in Bahrain" that called on authorities to end torture, arbitrary detention, unfair trials, and various other abuses. In March 1996, the UK Parliamentary Human Rights Group issued a fourteen-page report detailing further abuses in Bahrain, and called on Bahraini authorities to heed calls for reforms and cease human rights violations. In July 1997, the U.S.-based Human Rights Watch issued a major 107-page report on Bahrain titled "Routine Abuse, Routine Denial: Civil Rights and the Political Crisis in Bahrain."

The Interior Ministry is the largest organization in the country. It has approximately 10,000 paramilitary personnel (which is roughly equal to the army of Bahrain), as well as a complex structure of many thousands of officers, staff, and networks of informers. Political detentions are handled by several departments, depending on the seriousness of issue. The General Directorate for State Security Investigations (the intelligence department) handles the top cases.

The security agencies are given a free hand to deploy any methods they choose for extracting confessions from detainees. Detainees are given the option of signing confessions (often fabricated by the security officers themselves). Otherwise, they remain in detention for three years without trial or charge under the provisions of the State Security Law. Many are detained without charges for more than three years because the three-year period is renewed.

After a person signs a confession, he or she is taken before an "investigating judge" to restate the confession and to re-sign it. If a detainee refuses, he or she is taken

back for another round of ill-treatment. Following this stage, the detainee is taken before the State Security Court. The political environment directly influences the outcome of every trial conducted by the State Security Court.

The citizens of Bahrain are suffering from the violation of their right to due process under the law. The number of people affected by this violation is on the increase. The State Security Law of 1974, the State Security Court Decree of 1976, and the subsequent expansion and enlargement of the jurisdiction of these measures in 1996, combine to give state security agencies and the biased legal system a free hand to conduct dawn raids on a daily basis, detain citizens for prolonged periods, and to then summarily sentence them without a proper defense or the right of appeal.

Amnesty International stated on April 16, 1998, that the “procedures followed by Bahrain’s Supreme Civil Court of Appeal, in its capacity as a State Security Court, have resulted in manifestly unfair trials. This special court routinely violates provisions of Article 14 of the ICCPR, as well as provisions of Bahrain’s Constitution.” Amnesty International went on to say, “When facing trial before the State Security Court, detainees are denied access to legal counsel from the moment of arrest until they are brought to court. This means that although defendants may appoint lawyers of their own choosing, the first contact can only happen on the first day of trial, just moments before the opening session. This violates Principles 15 and 18 of the UN Body of Principles. Clearly, inadequate time is given for the preparation of the defense. Moreover, defense lawyers are not granted access to court documents before trial, so they cannot familiarize themselves with the facts of the case before meeting their clients for the first time in

court. Even after the first session, defense lawyers have only limited access to their clients.”

Amnesty International confirmed that “during trial, the State Security Court is not required to summon witnesses to give evidence or for cross-examination. Such evidence may be submitted in writing. Defendants can be convicted solely on the basis of uncorroborated confessions given to police or security officials, even in cases involving the death penalty, and even when there appears to be evidence that such ‘confessions’ were extracted under torture. To date, it appears that no thorough and independent investigations into allegations of torture, which have been both frequent and consistent, brought by defendants has ever been carried out. Under Bahraini law, there is no right to appeal to a higher tribunal against conviction and sentencing by the State Security Court.”

Arbitrary detention has become a feature of life in Bahrain. Citizens expect to be detained without warrants, mostly in the middle of the night or during dawn raids. Raids follow reports from informers that the targeted citizens have “meddled in politics.” Meddling in politics could mean anything from reading a newspaper and cynically commenting on a government statement, to publicly calling for change. The person is then subjected to intense sessions of ill-treatment intended to force confessions. Those who are released are made to sign a declaration that they will never meddle in politics again, and if they do so they deserve to be interned and dealt with “properly.”

Children from the age of seven are included in arbitrary detention. Many women have been arrested, subjected to torture, and threatened with sexual assault. Some have been molested by officers who continually touch sensitive parts of the body

as part of the threat of sexual assault.

Bahrain is unique in forcibly deporting members of the indigenous population, while at the same time importing people from the Syrian desert and granting them full citizenship. Amnesty International issued a special report in 1993 explaining the graveness of this violation, with lists of names of people who had been forcibly exiled.

The practice of forced exile continues. In the period between April 1999 and July 1999, no fewer than thirty-two persons were forcibly deported to the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Iran, and elsewhere.

Discrimination among the citizenry is common in Bahrain. Some 20 percent of the top 420 executive positions in the country—strategic positions such as defense, security, foreign affairs, industry—are monopolized by members of the ruling family. The balance of the positions are distributed on a discriminatory basis, taking into consideration the ethnic and religious background of each person.

It was hoped that the death of the late amir, on March 6, 1999, and the accession of his eldest son, Sheikh Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa, would be an opportunity for a new page in Bahrain's troubled history. After of-

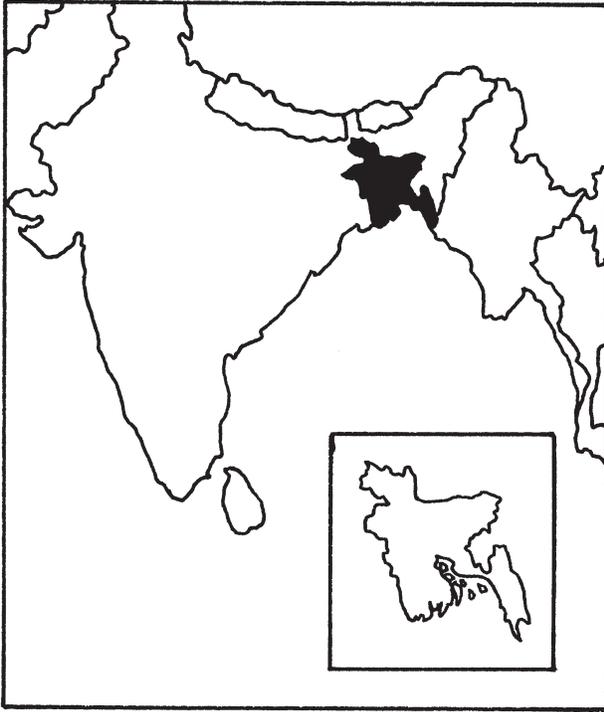
ficially acceding to the throne in June 1999, the new amir made several changes. He ordered the release of hundreds of political detainees and prisoners and allowed representatives of both Amnesty International and the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention to visit the country. In October, he issued a decree commanding the Shura (Consultative) Council to establish a human rights committee to "study all human rights legislation and regulations that apply in Bahrain" and to "raise awareness of human rights, take part in seminars, and conduct studies and research in the field." The new amir also announced forthcoming elections. These reforms signaled that Bahrain's human rights record might well improve in the coming years.

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# Bangladesh



The People's Republic of Bangladesh is located in South Asia, bounded on the north, west and east by India; on the southeast by Myanmar (formerly Burma); and on the south by the Bay of Bengal. Of its population of approximately 125 million, most are ethnic Bengali. Non-Bengalis of Indian origin and various tribal groups comprise the remainder. English is spoken in urban areas among educated people. Most of the population is Muslim (about 88 percent); Hindus constitute the second-largest religious group (11 percent), while Buddhists, Christians, and others are smaller minorities.

## BACKGROUND

Bangladesh has a rich historical and cultural tradition. Part of the Indian subcon-

continent, it became independent from Great Britain after World War II as part of Pakistan. Bangladesh achieved independence from Pakistan in 1971, and became a parliamentary democracy. It has been a member of the United Nations since 1974. The recent history of Bangladesh has been characterized by successive military coups, martial law, and antagonism between opposing political forces. Years of ineffective government, pervasive corruption, and economic mismanagement have all contributed to the current sad state of the Bangladeshi economy.

Bangladesh is one of the world's poorest, most densely populated, and least developed nations. Its economy is largely agricultural, and the chief crop is rice. Natural disasters such as cyclones and floods have long plagued Bangladesh. The worst flood of the twentieth century took place in 1998 and covered two-thirds of the country. Other factors include the inefficiency of state-owned enterprises, a rapidly growing labor force that cannot be absorbed by the agricultural sector, delays in exploiting natural gas resources, inadequate power supplies, and slow implementation of economic reforms.

Frequent strikes crippled the economy between 1995 and early 1996. When Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wajed, leader of the Awami League, came to power in mid-1996, there was a return to normal economic activity. The current government has made some improvements in the areas of providing a basis for foreign investments and liberalizing capital markets. Opposition from the bureaucracy, public sector unions, and

The prime minister is appointed by the president and must be a member of Parliament (MP), with the confidence of the majority of other MPs. The prime minister selects, and the president appoints, the ministers of the cabinet. The legislature is unicameral and elected by universal suffrage every five years. The judicial system is a civil court system based on the British model. The Home Affairs Ministry controls the police and the paramilitary forces.

#### HUMAN RIGHTS

The government restricts or denies many fundamental human rights to its citizens. Bangladeshi politics has always been characterized by pervasive violence. Irregularities and intimidation of voters often mar elections. Although international observers found that the 1996 elections were free and fair, the major opposition party to the Awami League, the Bangladesh National Party (BNP), boycotted the Parliament.

Supporters of the ruling and opposition parties clashed violently during strikes and demonstrations, resulting in deaths. Activists of the ruling party's student wing mutilated at least three opposition student leaders by chopping off their hands. In November 1998, three persons were killed and more than 100 injured in Dhaka after the opposition party called a general strike.

The Awami League government has frequently been accused of abusing its powers. Section 54 of the Criminal Code, which provides for the detention of suspected criminals, has been used to harass or intimidate political opponents and their families. The BNP has alleged that dozens of its members in Parliament, and thousands of its supporters and party workers, have been falsely accused in criminal cases. Additionally, the Special Powers Act (SPA) is em-

*A victim of a 1991 cyclone lays in the open street with an intravenous tube in her arm.*

other vested interest groups has prevented progress on the economic reforms.

When new constitutional amendments were enacted in 1991, Bangladesh passed from a presidential system to a Parliamentary system, in which the central political leader is the prime minister. The president's duties are now mainly ceremonial, while the prime minister is head of the government. The lack of democracy that has characterized Bangladesh since 1991 has allowed the exercise of extraordinary powers by the prime minister, who determines major governmental policies with little or no involvement by the Parliament. In 1998, however, committees composed of members of Parliament were formed to monitor the government's work.

ployed to arbitrarily detain citizens without formal charges for an indefinite period. It is believed that in 1998 the authorities detained 2,949 persons under the SPA for political reasons. Serial detentions have been used to prevent the release of political activists.

Police commit extrajudicial killings, torture, arbitrary arrests, and detentions. In addition, they conduct searches without a warrant. Violence takes place in police custody in the form of beatings during arrests and interrogations. Occasionally, electric shock is used. Official reports showed that six persons died in police custody during 1998. In July 1998, a student was beaten to death in police custody. The autopsy showed that brain hemorrhage was the cause of death. Twelve police officers and a local Awami League leader were charged with his death. However, police abuses were rarely punished in many cases. Additionally, the police have raped female detainees in custody, along with many other women who were not in custody. There have been no arrests of the police officers involved in these incidents.

Demonstrators often clash with police during rallies, and the police use lethal force in response. In July 1998, the security force fired on demonstrators, killing one woman and wounding many others. No judicial action was taken against the perpetrators. Vigilante violence by private citizens is also a serious problem. In particular, women living in rural areas are reportedly victims of vigilantism for perceived moral transgressions. They have been subjected to humiliating and painful punishments, such as whippings or having their heads shaved.

Security organizations, such as the Special Branch, the National Security Intelligence, and the Directorate General Forces, conduct surveillance of citizens to detect opposition sympathizers.

Prison conditions are reported to be very poor and a contributing cause to deaths of prisoners. Prisons are overcrowded, do not have medical facilities, and lack hygienically processed food. The government denies prison visits to human rights monitors.

Trials and pretrial detentions are lengthy. In November 1998, government reports estimated that almost 600,000 cases were pending in criminal and civil courts, while 37,000 people were still awaiting trial or under trial. Although the constitution provides for an independent judiciary, in practice the lower courts are corrupt, fall under the influence of the executive, and are reluctant to challenge the government in politically controversial cases. These conditions prevent many persons from obtaining justice and a fair trial.

The government does not enforce the constitutional provisions regarding freedom of speech and press. Newspapers are not directly restricted. However, journalists apply self-censorship for fear of harassment, retaliation, and physical harm from both the government and the opposition. There have been attacks and death threats against journalists and editors by government officials and political party activists. The government controls radio and television, which offer little coverage of opposition party news. There are no restrictions on access to foreign radio or on the installation of satellite dishes.

A government film censor board reviews local and foreign films for purposes of censorship. Foreign publications are subject to review as well. Censorship may be applied on the grounds of state security, law and order, religion, obscenity, and foreign relations. The government provides for academic freedom, but rival student political groups have undermined most university academic activities. Bangladesh limits free-

dom of assembly and association. Individuals can be charged with conducting unauthorized demonstrations. A magistrate must approve public meetings.

The International Labor Organization has requested Bangladesh to reform the provision regarding the current restrictions on the right of workers to organize unions. There have been complaints filed with the Registrar of Trade Unions regarding anti-union discrimination and harassment by employers. The private sector discourages union activities and workers have been fired for such activities. In general, the government does not enforce workers' rights.

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on race, sex, religion, disability, language, and social status. However, these provisions are not enforced. Women's basic freedoms are not protected. They do not have equal opportunities in academic, economic, and social life. Domestic violence, rape, and incidents of vigilantism against women are widespread. Women are often unaware of their rights and accept the social stigma imposed on them.

The trafficking of Bangladeshi women and children for prostitution within Bangladesh or in other Asian countries is ignored by the police, who often accept bribes to ignore such activities. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) reported that there were an estimated 10,000 child prostitutes in Bangladesh. Because of extreme poverty, children are also exposed to abandonment, mistreatment, and forced and bonded labor at a very young age. The law prohibits child labor; however, it is a serious problem, and some children work in conditions that resemble slavery. Although education is compulsory until the age of ten, the government does not enforce the law because of a lack of resources. Consequently, a high percentage

of children between the ages of five and ten are not enrolled in school.

The constitution grants religious freedom. However, religious minorities experience discrimination from the Muslim majority. Ethnic minorities have complained of loss of land to Bengali Muslims. A 1997 peace accord ended a twenty-five year conflict in the area known as Chittagong Hill Tracts. Since 1970, thousands of tribal families have been displaced from their land and replaced with Bengali inhabitants. Violence between indigenous tribes, settlers, and governmental forces resulted in repeated violations of human rights. In February 1998, the repatriation of 60,000 tribal refugees was completed.

The constitution does not provide for refugee or asylum status, but Bangladesh generally grants assistance to refugees or asylum seekers in cooperation with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). However, in July 1997, 400 Burmese refugees were forced to repa-

*Poor women waiting to receive medicine at an American clinic in Bangladesh.*

triate despite their fear of persecution in Myanmar (Burma).

Bangladesh generally cooperates with human rights organizations and monitors. Registration was, however, denied to the Bangladesh section of Amnesty International in order to prevent it from receiving foreign funds. In addition, human rights organizations and activists have been harassed or received threats from government intelligence agencies. The government has been sensitive to international opinion on human rights issues, and in October 1998, it expressed approval of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights and the Convention Against

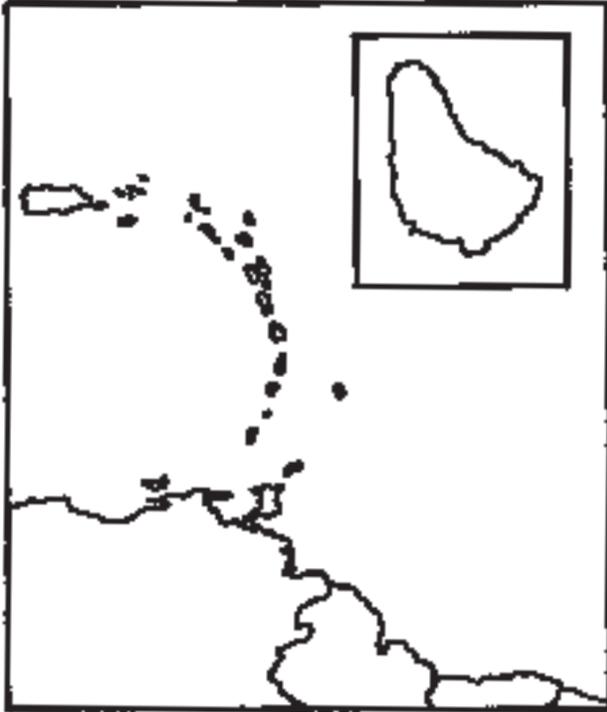
Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

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# Barbados



Barbados is an island in the eastern Caribbean and an independent sovereign state within the British Commonwealth. Bridgetown is the capital. Approximately 260,000 inhabitants reside on the island and about 80 percent are of African descent. The remainder are European (4 percent) or mixed (16 percent). About 70 percent of Barbadians are Anglican, while the rest are Roman Catholic, Methodist, Baptist, and Moravian.

A British colony since 1627, Barbados achieved full independence in 1966. Barbados is a parliamentary democracy with its own constitution. The British monarch, Queen Elizabeth II, is nominally the head of state and represented by a governor general. The prime minister is the head of the cabinet that controls the government. The bicameral Parliament is composed of the

House of Assembly and the Senate, whose members are elected by universal suffrage. The judiciary is independent.

Barbados has been a member of the United Nations since 1966 and of the Organization of American States since 1967. In 1973, Barbados signed the treaty to found the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM).

Tourism, manufacturing, sugar production, and financial services comprise the main parts of the economy. After a deep economic recession in 1990, Barbados has been recovering in recent years. In 1996, approximately 14 percent of the population were unemployed, and the public sector remains the largest single employer.

Human rights provisions are widely respected and enforced by the government. However, some violations have been reported. There have been many allegations of police misconduct and abuse of detainees while in custody. Police officers beat prisoners and use force to extract confessions. In December 1998, the police detained two foreign citizens for interrogation concerning a bank robbery. Both men received physical injuries while in custody. The only prison is overcrowded and conditions are poor. Alternatives to imprisonment are planned to alleviate the problem of overcrowding.

Although women are active members of society and well represented in all sectors of national life, abuse of women is a serious problem. Additionally, violence against children has increased dramatically in the past several years. The Child Care Board reported more than 1,100 cases of child abuse in 1997–1998.

The law does not provide against discrimination based on disability in employment, education, or state services, although the majority of new buildings are accessible to the disabled. Overall, the government respects worker's rights, although health and safety provisions are not always enforced.

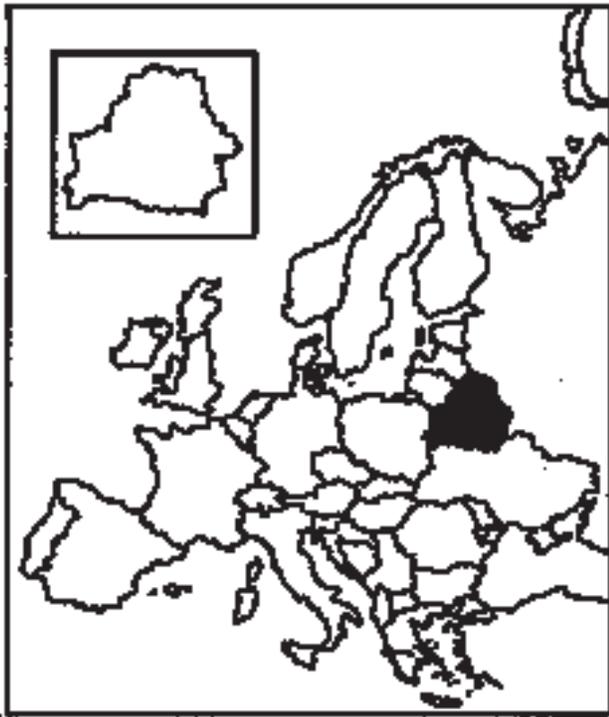
Human rights organizations are free to operate in the country. The Caribbean Human Rights Network has its headquarters in Barbados and serves the Caribbean-wide region in investigating human rights abuses.

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# Belarus



The Republic of Belarus is a country in east-central Europe. It is bounded on the south by Ukraine; on the east by Russia; on the west by Poland; and on the north by Latvia and Lithuania. Minsk is the capital city. The population of approximately 10 million comprises Belarussians (78 percent), Russians (13 percent), Poles (4 percent), and Ukrainians (3 percent). The official language is Belarussian (White Russian). Most of the population belongs to the Russian Orthodox Church.

The Republic of Belarus was proclaimed at the end of World War I from the ashes of the Russian Empire. In 1918, however, the country was occupied by the Red Army. In 1991, following the break-up of the Soviet Union, Belarus achieved independence.

Belarus is a constitutional democracy. The constitution was ratified in 1994.

However, in 1996, following a flawed national referendum, the president, Aleksandr Lukashenko, amended the constitution and expanded his powers by ignoring the ruling of the constitutional court. Moreover, he created a new Parliament after dismissing the previous one. The constitution now restricts the Parliament to meeting twice a year for no more than 170 days. The president has the power to rule by decree when the Parliament is not in session. Although the constitution provides for an independent judiciary, in practice it remains under the control of the executive. The international community has not recognized the legitimacy of the new constitution.

Belarus has a centrally planned economy. Economic conditions have significantly deteriorated in recent years. In 1998, monthly wages dropped 170 percent, from \$88 to \$33. The majority of the workforce is employed in state industries and agriculture.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

The human rights record of Belarus has worsened since the president solidified his power. Decision making and real political power rests in the hands of a few leaders, particularly the president. It is the president who initiates legislation.

The security forces, which are controlled by the president, routinely commit human rights abuses in the form of torture, beating of detainees and political opponents, and arbitrary arrest and detention. Additionally, in many cases, police officers fail to inform suspects of their legal right to counsel before an interrogation. Moreover,

there have been many politically motivated arrests with approximately 11,000 detainees awaiting trial for political reasons.

Prison conditions are poor and do not meet minimum international standards. Severe overcrowding, inadequate nutrition, lack of sanitation and medical care, and the spread of diseases, including tuberculosis and syphilis, have been reported as the most serious problems. It is estimated that approximately 64,000 inmates are detained in facilities built to accommodate only 41,000. Occasionally, human rights monitors have received permission to visit prisons; however, requests for meeting with individual inmates are often denied.

The right to a fair trial is hampered by the influence that the executive exerts on the judiciary. Prolonged pretrial detentions are common. In addition, many lawyers have been disbarred for arguing cases concerning political prisoners.

Authorities routinely infringe on the citizens' right to privacy by monitoring telephones and reading personal mail for alleged security reasons. Moreover, politicians, human rights monitors, and other members of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) believe that the security forces routinely monitor their conversations and correspondence.

Freedom of speech and of the press is restricted. A decree prohibits citizens from expressing opinions critical of the government. The government maintains a monopoly on the media and the press, and it often denies accreditation of journalists opposing the regime. A few independent radio and television stations operate at the local level in some areas of the country. Academic freedom is also restricted.

Belarus severely limits the right to peaceful assembly and association. In 1998,

many peaceful demonstrations were held in the city of Minsk, but they were kept under strict governmental control and were not covered by the media. Additionally, there were reports of harassment of demonstrators by security forces.

The authorities usually deny permission to opposition groups to meet in public buildings. The government does not respect the freedom of workers to associate and bargain, and opposes the formation of independent trade unions.

While the constitution provides for freedom of religion, in practice this right is restricted. Foreign missionaries are limited in their activities, and have often been arrested or expelled from the country.

Belarus does not protect women against discrimination in employment, salary, and career opportunities. They remain underrepresented in the political life of the country as well. Moreover, violence against women, including spousal abuse, is a problem. The government is committed to children's welfare. In particular, since the Chernobyl nuclear plant incident in 1983, several programs have been implemented to address health care for children. There is no societal pattern of child abuse.

The right of citizens to move within the country is restricted. One must register for residency in one city, and may not change residency without permission. In general, citizens can travel abroad. However, visas have occasionally been denied to members of opposition groups. Additionally, many political opponents cannot emigrate and their passports have been confiscated.

The constitution grants asylum and refugee status. Belarus has generally cooperated with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other non-governmental organizations in assisting refugees.

Several human rights organizations operate in the country and Belarus usually allows international human rights monitors to visit the country. Local human rights groups, however, find government officials far less cooperative. Authorities often restrict their activities through tax audits and denial of registration. In a few instances, human rights monitors have been arrested while observing a public demonstration.

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# Belgium



The Kingdom of Belgium, situated in northern Europe, is bounded on the north by the Netherlands; on the east by Germany and Luxembourg; on the south by France; and on the northwest by the Northern Sea. It has a population of approximately 10 million. The official languages are French and Flemish (a Dutch dialect). Roman Catholicism is the official religion.

Belgium is a constitutional monarchy. King Albert II is the chief of state. Formally, he represents the source of all executive authority, but in practice, the Council of Ministers (the cabinet) makes all decisions concerning the administration of the government. The Parliament is composed of the Senate and the House of Congress. Elections are held every four years for both par-

liamentary bodies. The prime minister, who is the chief of the cabinet, holds his office for as long as he holds the trust of the House of Congress. Belgium is a federal state, encompassing Flanders, Wallonia, and Brussels as its regions, each of which has local administrative power. Belgium's economy is highly industrialized, and provides citizens with a high standard of living.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

In general, the government respects its citizens' human rights. Recently, Belgium passed a series of laws criminalizing domestic violence against women. There are no reports of violations of human rights by the police or by the government. Prisons meet international standards. Each citizen is granted a fair trial by the constitution, and both the government and the judiciary respect this right. Pretrial detention can be lengthy. It is estimated that 40 percent of the prison population are in pretrial detention. In recent years, there have been several efforts by the judicial system to ensure more effective trials and investigations.

The law expressly enforces the rights of citizens' privacy in family, home, and correspondence. The law also grants freedom of speech and press. The government owns several radio and TV stations, but it does not control the content of their programs. Although the constitution grants the right of assembly and association, the Antiracism Law expressly forbids membership in groups advocating discrimination.

A racist poster by the anti-immigrant party Vlaamse Blok, which reads "For self-defense."

The constitution grants the right of asylum to those asking for it, although asylum seekers arriving illegally can be detained up to five months and forcibly repatriated if asylum is denied. In September 1998, Semira Adamu, a Nigerian woman, was denied the right of asylum because her claim was ruled unfounded. She tried to resist the police and died after being abused. The autopsy determined that she had died of asphyxia, and three policemen were tried for manslaughter.

Following the mass murder/suicides of Solar Temple members in Switzerland and later in France, much of Europe was swept up in antisect reaction. Belgium was no exception. In 1998, Parliament adopted rec-

ommendations from a 1997 commission report on minority religions. Some of these groups were labeled "harmful," which was defined as any group posing a threat to society or to individuals. In October 1999, a government-sponsored Center for Information and Advice on Harmful Sectarian Organizations opened. Thus far, the center's staff and activities have been limited. Actions recommended by the commission, such as the establishment of a specialized police unit devoted to minority religions, have not been implemented.

The commission report as well as the actions taken by Parliament have been criticized as undermining religious freedom, and have generated international contro-

versy. In March 1999, the French-speaking community of Belgium launched a conversion-prevention campaign called "Gurus, Beware!" In April 1999, the Anthroposophical Society, one of the groups discussed in a brochure issued in connection with this campaign, filed suit to halt its distribution until all defamatory language referring to the society was removed.

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# Belize



Belize, formerly British Honduras, is located in Central America. It is bounded on the north by Mexico, on the west and south by Guatemala, and on the east by the Caribbean Sea. Belmopan is the capital. Creoles, Garifunas, Mestizos, and Mayans compose the population of approximately 235,000 people. English is the official language, but Spanish as well as Creole dialects are also widely spoken. Roman Catholicism, Anglicanism, Methodism, other Protestantism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism are the major religious denominations.

The country's economy is based on agriculture and tourism. The high cost of labor and a small domestic market have limited industrial growth. However, the U.S. Embassy has reported that there are 185

American companies operating in Belize, including Texaco, Esso, Archer Daniels Midland, and Dominion Resources. Belize has made tourism its second most important sector of economic growth after agriculture.

Belize became a British colony in 1862. The constitution adopted in 1954 provided for limited self-government. In 1981, Belize achieved full independence. Belize is a parliamentary democracy and a member of the British Commonwealth. The British monarch is the head of state and is represented by a governor general. The prime minister and the cabinet hold the executive power. Members of the cabinet represent the majority political party in the National Assembly. The judiciary is independent.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

There have been a number of reports of human rights violations by the police. For instance, in February 1998, a police officer, who had previously been reported as engaging in violent conduct, fired on and killed a man. In September 1999, a man arrested for fighting in public died in police custody. Although the police claimed that he had passed out and drowned in his own vomit, an autopsy found that he had a ruptured liver, a fractured skull, and water in his lungs. Investigations into these and other charges of police abuse have been conducted by the Police Complaints Board

Prison conditions are harsh at Hattieville Department of Corrections, the only state prison in the country. The prison hosts over 1,000 inmates, although it was designed to

hold only 500. Prisoners do not have showers, toilets, or adequate medical facilities. Women are housed in the same facility, although separated from men. However, male guards and male prisoners are often allowed to roam in the women's area. There is no separate facility for mentally ill prisoners. In 1998, there were reports of physical brutality by prison guards. Additionally, gang and drug-related problems are becoming serious problems inside the prison. The government has tried to address the problem of juvenile delinquency by promoting the Youth Enhancement Agency, which houses several thousand youths who participate in rehabilitation and job-training programs.

In 1998, the police arrested thirty people during a robbery investigation. Those arrested were detained for more than the seventy-two hour limit before being given access to legal assistance. They were detained for the maximum time allowed, and then released. None of those arrested had charges pressed against them. One of the detainees accused the police of abuse and torture. In 1998, this was the only case of abusive arrest by the police. Detainees are usually notified within 48 hours regarding the reasons for their arrest and within 72 hours must have access to legal assistance. Bail is granted in most cases. Trials are usually fair, but lengthy. There have, however, been allegations that the judiciary is subject to political influence.

Belize respects the right of free speech and press. Some limits are established to protect defense, public safety, public order, public morality, and public health. In one case, the minister of broadcasting threatened to discontinue the program of one radio network, asserting that it was violating public morality. In November 1990, the government closed the BCB (Broadcasting Corporation

of Belize) and its two radio stations. The government sold the frequencies to private networks. The Belize Broadcasting Authority regulates broadcasting within the country. Nevertheless, it rarely uses this authority.

There has been little racial tension in the country, despite the recent arrival of Central American and Asian immigrants. Belize cooperates with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other humanitarian organizations. Asylum is usually granted to those who file for it. In 1998, Belize rejected only thirty requests for asylum. Refugees are eligible to apply for residency after five years of living in the country.

Women are subject to discrimination in Belize, and usually have more difficulties obtaining agricultural and business financing than do men. Women also receive lower wages, though the law mandates equal wages. The number of women in politics is quite limited, for both traditional and socioeconomic reasons. Abuse of women is a chronic problem. There are several shelters for battered women. In addition, several hotlines and counseling services are available. The Belize Organization for Women and Development helps women understand their rights and provides counseling. There were reports of women being forced into prostitution. Women are recruited from border countries with promises of attractive job opportunities, and then are forced to become prostitutes once in Belize. No arrests have been made so far, despite lengthy investigations.

Education is available to everyone, but most students drop out after primary school as a result of the high cost of books and other school materials.

The law does not provide assistance for people with disabilities. However, the government's Disability Services Unit and

other private organizations provide services to the disabled. Children with disabilities have access to special governmental facilities. The right of free association for workers is generally respected. There are eleven independent unions in Belize; they represent 11 percent of the labor force. The government recognizes unions after they file with the registrar's office. The law also grants workers the right to strike.

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# Benin



Benin, formerly Dahomey, is a small country in western Africa, between Nigeria and Togo, on the coast of the Atlantic Ocean. Its official capital is Porto-Novo, although Cotonou serves as the seat of government. It gained its independence from France in 1960. From 1972 to 1989, Benin was ruled by a Marxist-Leninist dictatorship, which was replaced by the present multiparty democracy. Benin has a largely agricultural economy, and although its gross national product has increased appreciably in the latter half of the decade, Benin's population growth has made this less obvious. Benin's record on human rights is generally good, although there were some instances of extrajudicial killings by police in 1998. Additionally, Benin's government has not been able to contain acts of vigilantism

or mob violence, improve the conditions in its prisons, or provide its citizens with speedy trials.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

There have been no confirmed reports of extrajudicial killings during the last few years, although according to Amnesty International, one man died at the main police precinct in 1998 after being beaten by a guard. Police have had difficulty in curbing cases of mob justice, particularly against thieves who have been caught in the act. Reportedly, one rural agitator incited the lynching of more than 100 suspected criminals in southwestern Benin in 1999. The authorities instructed the demagogue to turn suspected criminals over to the police after capture, but individual and sporadic lynchings continue.

There have been no reports of politically motivated disappearances or abductions. There have been credible reports that guards sometimes beat prisoners. The government is currently making payments to those who were victims of torture and beatings under the military regime that ruled Benin from 1972 to 1989. Prison conditions are brutal due to overcrowding and lack of proper sanitation or medical care. Prisoners are malnourished and disease is rampant. Prisoners are allowed to meet with their families and to consult lawyers.

There have been no documented cases of arbitrary detention and most citizens are given a fair public trial. There is no evidence of political prisoners. Police are required to obtain a warrant before entering a private

home and this requirement is usually observed. There have been no reports of interference with electronic or written communications. The rights to free speech and to a free press are also respected in practice. There is a large free press in the major cities that freely and frequently criticizes the government, although their readership is limited because most citizens outside of urban areas are illiterate and receive their news via radio.

The government also respects freedom of religion. Those who wish to form a religious group must register with the Ministry of the Interior and the registration requirements are the same for all religions. There have been no indications that any religious group has been refused registration. Religious groups are also tax exempt.

Although the authorities of Benin generally respect citizens' rights to travel within the country, travelers are often forced to pay bribes to local police for passage. Benin does not restrict the right to travel internationally and those who have been abroad may return without hindrance.

Citizens have the right to change their government and they have done so, freely and peacefully in 1991, in 1995, and in 1996. Women participate actively in politics although they are underrepresented in government positions.

There have been instances of domestic abuse. The authorities are reluctant to intervene in cases of domestic violence, considering such disputes to be family matters. There is appreciable societal discrimination against women in all spheres. Although

considered equal by the law, custom still dictates the subordination of women in financial and social matters.

The government has attempted to increase the enrollment of children in primary school, which is now only at 66 percent. In some areas, girls are given no education whatsoever. Child abuse and trafficking in Beninese children remain problems.

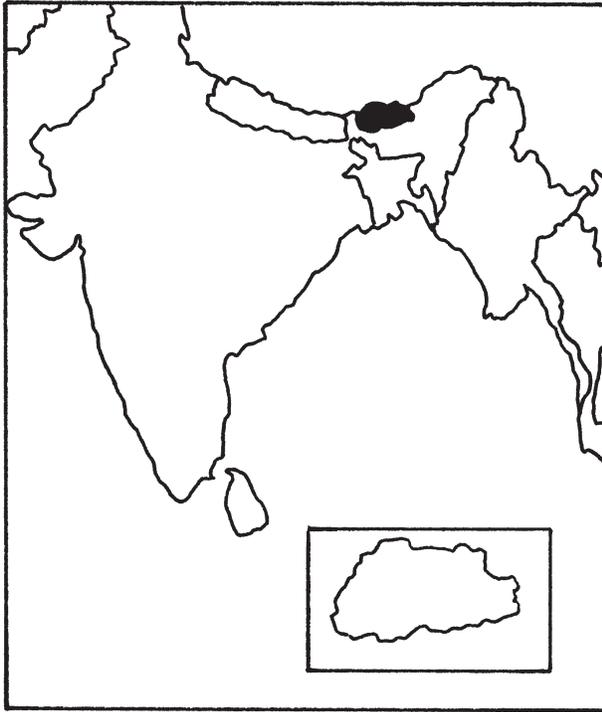
Although Benin is extremely poor (1995 estimates are 33 percent living in poverty), Benin's record on human rights remains strong. It has traditionally cooperated with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and provided a relatively safe haven for its citizens amid regional turmoil. As it continues to develop economically, it is hoped that Benin can maintain its respect for the human rights of its citizens.

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# Bhutan



The Kingdom of Bhutan is a country in south Asia, bounded on the north and west by China, and on the south and east by India. Thimphu is the capital city. The government reports that the population is approximately 600,000, while other, non-official estimates place the number at 1.9 million. Ethnic and linguistic groups include the Bhote (59 percent), divided between the Ngalongs of western Bhutan and the Sharchops of eastern Bhutan; the Nepalese (35 percent); and indigenous or migrant tribes (15 percent). Dzongkha is the official language; English is the language of instruction in all schools.

## BACKGROUND

Always an independent state, Bhutan was occupied by the British from 1910 to 1949,

when India assumed control of its foreign affairs and an Indo-Bhutan Treaty of Friendship was signed. Bhutan became a member of the United Nations in 1971. The Wangchuk Dynasty has ruled the country since 1907, and King Jigme Singhye Wangchuk has been on the throne since 1972.

Two-thirds of the population is Buddhist, while the remainder is Hindu. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, Bhutan experienced a period of political protests and ethnic repression directed against the growing Nepalese population living in the south. The Buddhist majority feared its culture would eventually be supplanted, and the government responded by stepping up measures against illegal immigration and tightening citizenship requirements. Thousands of Nepalese were forcibly expelled from the country. During those years, government officials were responsible for serious human rights abuses, including torture, rape, and other physical violence against ethnic Nepalese. There is no indication that the perpetrators were ever prosecuted.

Bhutan has no constitution or bill of rights. The king is a hereditary monarch, and is both the chief of state and the head of government. He nominates the candidates for the Council of Ministers. The legislative branch is the unicameral National Assembly with 150 members, of whom 105 are elected by the people, ten are selected by the Buddhist clergy, and thirty-five are appointed by the king. All major ethnic groups are represented. The Assembly nominally has the power to ask the king to abdicate, to elect and remove ministers, and to overturn any decision made by the

king or by government officials. However, the king ultimately makes the most important political decisions, and approves or opposes legislation.

The judiciary is not independent of the king, who represents the Supreme Court of Appeal and appoints the judges of the High Court and district courts. Village headmen follow religious precepts to adjudicate questions of family law, such as marriage, divorce, and adoption.

Per capita gross national product is estimated to be \$470. The economy is based primarily on subsistence agriculture and forestry, which account for about half of the gross domestic product. Cardamom, citrus fruit, spices, cement, and electricity are among the most important exports. Tourism is hindered by a poor infrastructure and lack of accessible roads. The industrial sector is underdeveloped. India has always played a major role in supporting trade and monetary links. In recent years, Bhutan has pursued economic and social reforms to protect the country's environment and cultural tradition by improving education, health, sanitation, and communications.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights and freedoms are significantly restricted. There are no political parties. Although there has been a progressive increase in the power of the National Assembly to make decisions, the selection and election of candidates still do not meet democratic international standards. Individuals do not have the right to vote. Suffrage for electing members of the National Assembly is one vote per family in a village.

Although modernized somewhat in the 1960s, the basic legal code dates back to the seventeenth century and does not contain a

criminal procedure code. Approximately seventy-five persons are serving sentences for political reasons. Bhutan has only recently begun reviewing the current legal system, establishing a body of written laws, and promoting legal education.

There have been allegations of excessive use of force and abuse of authority by government officials. Arbitrary arrests and detentions constitute an ongoing problem. Citizens are not legally protected against arbitrary interference with their privacy, family, home, and correspondence. Security forces can arbitrarily conduct searches for suspected dissidents or criminals. All citizens are required to wear traditional Buddhist dress in schools, government offices, Buddhist religious buildings, and when attending official functions or public ceremonies.

Freedom of speech and press are restricted. The government owns and controls all media. Foreign newspapers are available. Until recently, all private televisions were banned; in June 1999, the government launched the first Bhutanese television service. Citizens do not have freedom of peaceful assembly and association unless authorized by the government. Political parties, such as those organized by Nepalese exiles outside the country to seek repatriation and promote democracy, are regarded as terrorist and antinational.

Ethnic discrimination has been a severe problem. Bhutan claims that ethnic Nepalese are well represented in employment, in proportion with the total population. However, human rights groups active outside the country allege that the government underreports the percentage of ethnic Nepalese within the total population. Since 1989, discriminatory measures have been carried out as part of an effort to affirm a stronger national identity based on

Young children attending open-air school in 1993.

the customs of the Buddhist Ngalong ethnic group. Nepali as a second language was eliminated in school settings. Bhutan has canceled the contracts of thousands of Nepalese guest workers. The implementation of a new citizenship law resulted in the denaturalization of many Nepalese. In September 1990, this climate of repression prompted ethnic Nepalese to organize a series of public, often violent, protests and demonstrations. Tens of thousands left the country voluntarily or were forced to emigrate.

Despite tensions centered around the Nepalese presence and the heavy influence of the Buddhist religious establishment on the government, citizens enjoy a reasonable degree of religious freedom. Missionaries

are, however, prohibited, and conversion is illegal.

Bhutan is not a signatory of the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. Approximately 91,000 ethnic Nepalese from Bhutan were still refugees in Nepal at the end of 1997. Additionally, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that an additional 15,000 reside outside the camps in India and Nepal. There were reports that several ethnic Nepalese refugees attempting to return were captured by Bhutan security forces, tortured, and sent back across the border.

The government has not cooperated with Nepal, the UNHCR, and non-governmental

human rights organizations in negotiating the return of refugees to Bhutan. It has claimed that many have no right to return because they were never citizens of Bhutan to begin with. In 1997, the National Assembly adopted a resolution stipulating that legal resident family members of ethnic Nepalese refugees were prohibited from holding government jobs. Additionally, the government resettled Buddhist Bhutanese on the lands vacated by Nepalese refugees in the southern provinces. Schools that were closed in 1990 remain closed, preventing ethnic Nepalese from acquiring a primary education.

Gender discrimination is a problem as well. Although women have become an increasingly presence in the social and economic life of the country, they remain underrepresented in government and poli-

tics. The government regards human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as illegal. Ethnic Nepalese exiles founded the Human Rights Organizations—Bhutan, the People’s Forum for Human Rights in Bhutan, and the Association of Human Rights Activists, but they cannot operate within the country. Amnesty International has sent a few delegations to monitor human rights abuses.

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# Bolivia



The Republic of Bolivia is located in tropical South America. Its landlocked territory is bounded by Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Peru. Its population of approximately 7.8 million is composed of Quechuas (30 percent), Aymaras (25 percent), mestizos (30 percent), and Euro-Americans (15 percent). Roman Catholicism is the dominant religion. Other religions include Evangelical Methodism and the Bahai faith. Spanish is the official language, and other languages commonly used include Quechua and Aymara. La Paz, the capital city, at 11,800 feet above sea level, is at the highest elevation of all the world's capital cities.

Despite numerous natural resources—minerals, hydrocarbons, and petroleum—Bolivia is still one of the poorest and least-developed countries in South Ameri-

ca. About two-thirds of the population, mostly subsistence farmers, live in poverty. The economy has traditionally been characterized by semifeudal systems and bouts of hyperinflation. Since the Paz Estenssoro administration of the late 1980s, however, the country has experienced an improvement in its economic conditions through a series of reforms that have helped reduce inflation, create conditions for sustained growth, and alleviate poverty. Among the most significant economic reforms are the capitalization of numerous public sector enterprises and the strengthening of the financial system. Further, the current government has encouraged foreign investment as a means of boosting economic growth and reducing poverty.

## BACKGROUND

The cultural and historical development of Bolivia can be divided into three distinct periods: pre-Columbian, colonial, and republican. The Quechua-speaking Incas controlled the territory from 1450 until the Spanish conquest in 1525. During the Spanish colonial period, this territory was under the authority of the Viceroy of Lima. Spanish royal authority weakened during the Napoleonic wars, and independence from Spain was achieved on August 6, 1825, when the republic was established and named after Simon Bolivar. Independence, however, did not bring stability to the country. Coups, revolutions, and short-lived constitutions dominated the country's politics during the following decades. Moreover, the living conditions of the surviving

Amerindian population—forced to work under primitive conditions in the mines and on large estates—remained marginal. The years before the 1952 revolution were characterized by an increasing political awareness among the indigenous people, as well as by the emergence of contending ideologies and political parties, including the National Revolutionary Movement (MNR), which led the 1952 revolution.

The MNR introduced universal adult suffrage, carried out sweeping land reforms, promoted rural education, and nationalized the country's largest tin mines. Despite these accomplishments, however, it also committed serious human rights violations. Twelve years of MNR rule were followed by a series of coups, countercoups, and weak governments, including the government of General Luis Garcia Meza, which was notorious for human rights abuses, narcotics trafficking, and economic mismanagement. After years of social unrest, chronic strikes, and inflation, the Paz Estenssoro administration of 1985–1989 achieved economic and social stability. The neoliberal economic reforms begun by Jaime Paz Estenssoro were continued by both Jaime Paz Zamora and Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada—who undertook a capitalization program. Under this program, investors acquired 50 percent ownership and management control of public enterprises, such as the state oil corporation, telecommunications system, and electric utilities. In 1997, General Hugo Banzer Suarez won the elections and Congress selected him as president of the republic. Suarez's government committed itself to shutting down illegal coca cultivation and narcotics trafficking.

The constitution, which dates back to 1967, was revised in 1994. It provides for balanced executive, legislative, and judicial powers. The traditionally strong executive

consists of the president and the cabinet, the legislative branch is a bicameral congress, and the judiciary includes the Supreme Court and lower courts. Since 1994, a series of laws and revisions have been implemented to reform the judicial system, which has long been characterized by corruption and inefficiency. The National Police have primary responsibility for internal security, although military forces play a significant role in critical areas such as antinarcotics enforcement.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

Legal and institutional deficiencies constitute the primary obstacle to the full protection of human rights in Bolivia. According to civilian authorities who maintain control over security forces, some members of the police and the military forces are guilty of human rights abuses. Some of the violations—which include use of excessive force, petty theft, extortion, and improper arrests—reportedly have taken place against protesting coca growers and peasants, such as in the Chapare coca-growing region, where, in 1998, a number of armed groups opposed the eradication of illegal coca. Further, despite the constitutional prohibition against torture, a number of significant incidences of torture have taken place.

Prisons are generally overcrowded, sometimes forcing inmates to sleep sitting up. Prison conditions are quite harsh, and in some cases life-threatening for prisoners without money. The ability to pay can determine cell size and living conditions, visiting privileges, day-pass eligibility, and place and length of confinement. The standard prison diet is very poor, and no adequate health care is offered within the prisons.

Arbitrary arrests are common, and denial of justice through prolonged detention represents a serious human rights problem. Persons are often incarcerated for long periods of time before trial because of a series of problems with the judicial system, including judicial corruption and intimidation, a shortage of public defenders, inadequate case-tracking mechanisms, and complex criminal justice procedures. Despite the 1994 constitutional reforms addressing the problem of delayed justice, most prisoners experience prolonged waiting periods either for trial or sentencing.

The constitution provides for the sanctity of the home and the privacy of citizens, as well as the fundamental right to express ideas and opinions freely. However, abuses take place, including illegal searches and theft of property from homes, as well as government attempts to intimidate the news media. Citizens have the right to free assembly and association, and the government generally respects this right. There are no restrictions on travel, and refugees are generally accepted for resettlement.

The constitution guarantees freedom of religion, although it also stipulates that Catholicism is the official religion. Non-Catholic religious organizations are required to register with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship. Minority religions that have encountered problems are the Unification Church and the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON; the Hare Krishnas). On the pretext that ISKCON had registered as an educational organization rather than a religious organization, Bolivia sought to expel Hare Krishna in the mid-1980s. The Supreme Court, however, declared this move illegal and ISKCON reapplied as a religious organization. Although legally registered, in 1999, the Unification Church

complained of ongoing harassment by the government, citing the government's 1998 revocation of civil registrations for three church-affiliated organizations.

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on race, sex, language, religion, political persuasion, origin, economic state, or social condition. Nevertheless, there is significant discrimination against women, indigenous people, and the small black minority. Violence against women as well as against children is very common, and the Penal Code does not define sexual harassment as a crime. In 1995, Bolivia promulgated the Law on Domestic and Family Violence, which makes rape a public crime and broadens the definition of family member abuse. Trafficking of women for purposes of prostitution is also very common. Employment agencies often attract indigenous women to cities with various promises of employment, and then force them to become prostitutes.

Although the law requires all children to complete at least five years of primary school, this requirement is poorly enforced, particularly in rural areas, and child labor is common. Despite 1997 regulations designed to implement the 1995 Law on Disabilities, there are no special services or infrastructures to accommodate people with disabilities.

Discrimination against indigenous people is a major problem. Indigenous people—who are at the bottom end of the socioeconomic scale—face severe disadvantages in health, life expectancy, education, income, literacy, and employment. They are generally exploited in the workplace, and some indigenous people are kept in a state of virtual slavery, especially in rural areas.

Workers are allowed to form and join organizations of their choosing, as well as to organize and bargain collectively. Workers in the private sector often exercise the right

to strike. Although forced and compulsory labor are prohibited, the practices of child apprenticeship and agricultural servitude by indigenous workers are very common. The minimum wage of workers is very low and does not provide a decent standard of living. The standards for the protection of workers' health and safety are poorly enforced, and working conditions are generally bad, especially in the mining sector.

There are a number of human rights monitoring groups in Bolivia. They usually operate without government restriction, and publish their findings on human rights cases. The Human Rights Commission of the Bolivian congress is particularly active and often publicly criticizes the government.

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Migrant worker carrying a heavy load of cotton on an estate near Santa Cruz.

# Bosnia and Herzegovina



Bosnia and Herzegovina is a state in south-eastern Europe, bordering the Adriatic Sea, Croatia, Serbia, and Montenegro. Sarajevo is the capital city. The country's population of approximately 3.5 million includes Serbs (31 percent), Muslims (44 percent) and Croats (17 percent). An emergent parliamentary democracy, the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina has two constituent entities: the Muslim/Croat Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Bosnian Serb-led Republika Srpska (RS), each representing roughly one-half of the territory. At present, the Federation and the RS are effectively two separate nations.

## BACKGROUND

The former Yugoslavia, of which Bosnia and Herzegovina was a constituent republic, fell

prey to divisive forces within its own borders set in motion following the death of Marshal Tito, who had led Yugoslavia from the end of World War II until his death in 1980. Tito had, with dictatorial authority, been able to unite the nation's diverse ethnicities into a modern state. Upon Tito's death, however, the country began to slowly unravel as a consequence of ethnic politics.

The three dominant groups within Bosnia are Serbs (40 percent), who are Eastern Orthodox; Croats (22 percent), who are Catholic; and Muslims (38 percent). All three are South Slav and all three speak Serbo-Croatian. The principal distinction between them is religion. Although these differences strike outsiders as unimportant, many ex-Yugoslavians perceive them as critically defining. With Tito gone, differences turned to suspicion, and suspicion to open warfare.

Until declaring independence, Bosnia and Herzegovina was a republic in the former Yugoslavia. In 1986, the rise of Slobodan Milosevic to power—a rise fueled by his Serbian nationalist agenda—led to ethnic tensions. Slovenia and Croatia, both dominated by non-Serbian majorities, broke away from Yugoslavia and declared independence in 1991. Bosnia and Herzegovina, the most ethnically diverse of the Yugoslavian republics, soon followed. Its independence was recognized by most European countries, as well as by the United States. In May 1992, Bosnia and Herzegovina was admitted to the United Nations.

However, not all Bosnians supported independence. In particular, the large Serbian minority wanted to keep strong ties to Yugoslavia, which now had a Serbian ma-

A Sarajevo cemetery filled with the dead from Bosnia's civil war.

majority. The Serbian minority in Bosnia declared independence, and, supported by neighboring Yugoslavia, responded with armed resistance to the Bosnian government aimed at partitioning the republic along ethnic lines and uniting the Serbian portion of Bosnia and Herzegovina with "greater Serbia" under Milosevic's leadership. Yugoslavia supplied Bosnian Serbs with weaponry, and they proceeded to drive all non-Serbs out of eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina. Many atrocities were carried out in the name of "ethnic cleansing," a process that used a terrorist campaign against all non-Serbs as a tool to chase them out of as much of Bosnia and Herzegovina as possible. The eventual goal was to create an ethnically pure region consisting entirely of Serbians.

In March 1994, Muslims and Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina signed an agreement establishing the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Together, with some help from NATO, and after much bloodshed, they were able to halt the Bosnian Serb advances. The conflict continued through most of 1995, ending with the Dayton Peace Agreement signed in Paris on December 14, 1995, by Bosnian president Alija Izetbegovic, Croatian president Franjo Tudjman, and Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic. This agreement left Bosnia and Herzegovina's exterior border intact and created a joint multiethnic, democratic government. In practice, Muslims, Croats, and Serbs each dominated their own section of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Since 1995, a NATO-led international peacekeeping force has been

in Bosnia and Herzegovina to implement and monitor the military aspects of the agreement. NATO has also facilitated civil reconstruction, the return of refugees and displaced persons, elections, and the freedom of movement of the civilian population.

The Dayton Accords created a constitution that calls for a central government composed of a two-chamber legislature, a three-person presidency (which includes a Bosnian, a Serb, and a Croat), a council of ministers, a constitutional court, and a central bank. The national government is based on proportional representation and conducts foreign, economic, and fiscal policy. The government of each entity comprising Bosnia and Herzegovina makes autonomous administrative divisions and is responsible for law enforcement in accord with internationally-recognized standards. The judiciary is formally independent, although it is still subject to the influence of political parties and the executive branch.

The country remains heavily dependent on international assistance. Bosnia and Herzegovina has always been poor, and interethnic warfare has further aggravated the country's economy and multiplied human misery. However, in the past few years, there have been some signs of revival, as reflected in increased exports.

#### HUMAN RIGHTS

The human rights' situation is still quite poor. Many perpetrators of genocide and brutality during the war remain unpunished. More than 20,000 persons are still missing and presumed dead. The International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP) supports the exhumation process and pushes Bosnian authorities to supply information on missing persons. There continue to be killings due to bombings and booby traps directed at ethnic minorities trying to resettle in many areas.

Police regularly commit human rights abuses in the form of torture or physical abuse of detainees and the excessive use of force against civilians. There are cases of arbitrary arrest and detention in both the Federation and the Republika Srpska (the area of Bosnia and Herzegovina dominated by the Serbians). Authorities in both entities have infringed on citizens' rights to privacy. The judicial institutions in both entities are influenced by the dominant political parties. Even when independent decisions are made, authorities often refuse to carry them out. Prison conditions are poor.

The authorities and leading political parties in their respective areas control the media, limiting freedom of speech and the press. Foreign journalists have occasionally been victims of harassment by local police or security officials for their alleged association with opposition parties or ethnic minority groups. However, opposition and independent broadcasts are gradually expanding. International administrators oversee the two television networks, Federation State Television in the Federation and the Serb Radio Television in the RS.

Academic freedom is also restricted with all institutions suffering from lack of resources and staff. Indirect political pressure limits freedom of assembly and association. It is generally believed that membership in a leading political party ensures housing and high-level jobs in the state-owned sector of the economy.

Although the constitution as established by the Dayton Accords prohibits discrimination based on sex, race, language, religion, and national or social origin, discrimination is a very long way from being eliminated. Women remain underrepresented in government and occupy few positions of economic power. Moreover, violence

against women, including domestic violence and rape, is a problem. Social pressure and shame often prevent victims of such abuses from complaining to the authorities. Trafficking of women from the former Soviet Union for purposes of prostitution is a serious problem.

Bosnian Serb and Croatian political leaders often encourage displaced persons of their respective ethnic group to move or to stay in areas where they would be in the majority. Incidents of religious-ethnic discrimination are common, especially in areas dominated by one ethnic group. These include desecration of graves, damage to houses of worship, bombing of residential areas, dismissal from work, threats, assaults, and killings. Moreover, children of various ethnic minorities suffer from discrimination in schools, where the education is centered on the values, history, and religious tradition of the local majority. Children suffer the social stresses associated with the postwar era. However, there has been a major improvement in the human rights situation of children since the war.

Freedom of movement within the country has greatly improved since the end of the conflict. Additionally, new Bosnia and Herzegovina passports have been issued to enable international travel. Statistics on refugee return are difficult to obtain. However, it was estimated at the end of 1998 that more than 1.4 million Bosnian citizens were still internally displaced or were refugees abroad. Several factors prevent a large number of returnees, including the continued influence of ethnic separatists, the level of control over allocation of communally owned property, and lack of employment opportunities for returnees.

Bosnia and Herzegovina grants asylum and refugee status in accordance with in-

ternational standards, and generally cooperates with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). However, the war in Kosovo resulted in approximately 10,000 Kosovo refugees staying in the country and Federation authorities often obstructed the UNHCR's efforts to assist them.

International and local human rights organizations operate and travel without restriction throughout the country. International community representatives have access to detention facilities and prisoners in both the Federation and in the Republika Srpska. The Dayton Accords created the Human Rights Chamber and the Office of Human Rights Ombudsperson, whose caseload has greatly expanded in recent years. There has been some harassment and intimidation of members of human rights groups. Additionally, authorities in all regions have rarely been responsive to

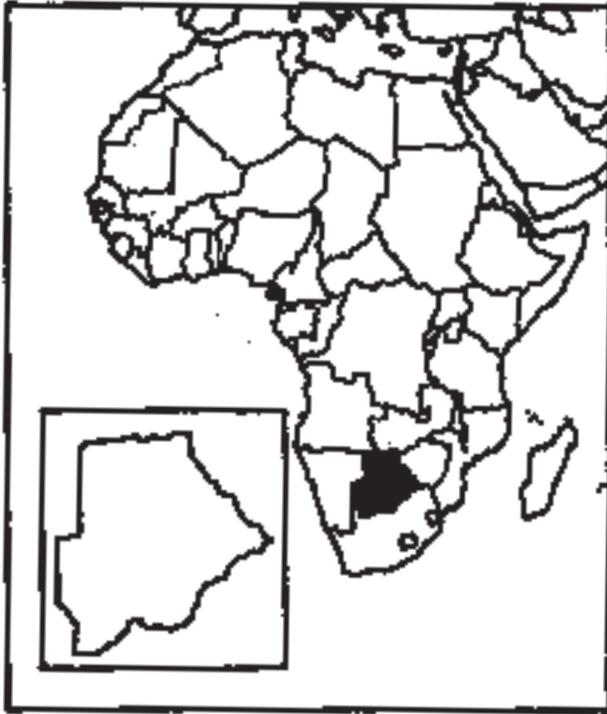
recommendations made by human rights monitors.

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# Botswana



The Republic of Botswana is situated in central southern Africa; it is bounded on the south and southeast by South Africa, on the west and north by Namibia, and on the northeast by Zimbabwe. It has a population of approximately 1.5 million. The term “Batswana” denotes all citizens and at the same time refers to the country’s major ethnic group (95 percent), descendants of the Tswana in South Africa who immigrated to the area during the Zulu wars of the early 1880s. A small community of descendants of European immigrants (1 percent) and other minorities (4 percent) reside in the country. About 50 percent of the population is Christian; the other half practice indigenous religions. English is the official language. Gaborone is the capital city. A British protectorate since

1886, Botswana achieved full independence in 1966 and is a member of both the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity.

## BACKGROUND

Botswana is a multiparty constitutional democracy. Its citizens change the government through periodic elections based on universal adult suffrage. The president is the chief of state and the head of the government. He is elected by the National Assembly every five years. The president appoints members of the cabinet. The popularly elected National Assembly holds legislative power. The House of Chiefs, representing the eight principal subgroups of the Batswana tribe, holds no legislative power but it may offer its views to both the president and the National Assembly on Legislation. The Botswana Democratic Party holds the majority of seats in the Parliament. The judiciary is independent. Chiefs and other traditional leaders handle minor offenses in customary courts throughout the country. Decisions may be appealed through the civil court system.

Botswana’s economy is primarily subsistence farming and cattle raising. This sector is, however, plagued by poor soil and erratic rainfalls, and accounts for only 4 percent of the GDP. The unemployment rate is estimated at 40 percent. Tourism and diamond mining constitute significant sectors of the economy. Because of its deep ties to the Southern African Custom Union (SACU), the national currency occasionally suffers from fluctuations in value. With

the admission of South Africa to the World Trade Organization, however, many of those limitations have declined and Western products have gained more circulation.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights problem areas include the occasional use of intimidation techniques by the police to obtain confessions from detainees. Corporal punishment is still inflicted on villagers found guilty of infractions by customary courts. Prisons are overcrowded. The judiciary is inefficient because of a serious backlog of cases.

Citizens generally enjoy freedom of expression; the independent press is often critical of the government. However, the government has a monopoly on the broad-

cast media and complaints have been made about limited access to the radio and censorship of press releases by opposition politicians.

All religious groups are required to register by submitting their constitutions to the Ministry of Home Affairs. Unregistered religious organizations can be fined and members jailed. The Unification Church is the only religious group to ever be denied registration on grounds of public order provisions in the constitution. Although it has petitioned this decision, the church has not challenged the ministry in the courts.

Discrimination is common against women, mostly in rural areas. Traditional practices restrict civil and economic opportunities for women. Customary law allows men to "chastise" their wives. In some

cases, girls do not have access to education because of traditional prejudices. They are also greatly underrepresented in politics. Violence, especially in the form of domestic abuse and rape, is widespread. The government has issued new legislation to address the problem by reviewing non-existent sentencing requirements and increasing penalties for all forms of sexual assaults.

Child abuse is a serious issue. Local human rights groups have reported an increasing number of cases of incest, whose victims are mostly young girls. Education is not compulsory, but the government provides free primary education. Although illegal, child labor is practiced in some remote areas of the country.

In general, Botswana's indigenous and non-indigenous minorities, such as the white and Asian communities, are not subject to discrimination. The exception is the nomadic Basarwa (Bushmen), who lived in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve and who were recently forced to settle outside the reserve. Conditions in the new settlements are precarious. The Basarwa are not represent-

ed by any local or national government, and they live in complete isolation. As a result, their rights are not protected.

Botswana generally respects workers' rights, although safety legislation and minimum wage regulations are not always enforced. Some limitations in forming associations apply to government employees. The right to strike is severely restricted by the law. The government does not restrict the activities of domestic or international human rights groups.

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# Brazil



Located on the eastern coast of South America, Brazil is a federal republic. The largest country in South America, Brazil is divided into twenty-six states and one federal district. Its capital is Brasilia. It received its independence from Portugal on September 7, 1822. Its population is estimated at 171 million as of July 1998.

## BACKGROUND

A president heads the executive branch as chief of state and head of government. The legislative branch consists of the bicameral *Congresso Nacional* (National Congress), divided into the *Senado Federal* (Federal Senate) and the *Camara dos Deputados* (Chamber of Deputies). The judicial branch consists of the Supreme Federal Tribunal.

The president chooses its eleven judges, who are then confirmed by the Senate for a life appointment. Major political parties and their leaders include the Brazilian Democratic Movement Party, the Liberal Front Party, and the Worker's Party.

Brazil's per capita GDP is estimated at \$6,150 as of 1999. Poverty is a major problem, with 40.9 percent of Brazil's 171 million inhabitants living below the poverty line and the richest 10 percent controlling more than half the nation's wealth. High levels of poverty, combined with an unemployment rate of 7.5 percent, contribute to a widespread system of forced labor. In Brazil, a country whose economy is one of ten largest in the world, it is estimated that tens of thousands forced laborers were used in charcoal camps, lumber mills, on sugar plantations, and in the gold mines. By 1998, the number had dropped to around 600.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

Numerous human rights violations are associated with the Brazilian plantation system. The owners (*empreiteiros*) of these plantations, ranches and camps hire recruiters (*gatos*) to first recruit and then to oversee workers. In the charcoal camps, the *gatos* are ordinarily paid with a percentage of the total profit and given minimum quotas for charcoal production. The *empreiteiros* also expect the *gatos* to pay the workers out of their own share of the profits. This creates a system in which the *gatos* have a strong financial motivation to cheat or enslave workers.

Young children scavenging for food in a Rio de Janeiro garbage dump.

Gatos arrive at poor villages announcing well-paying jobs working at rural plantations, ranches, and camps. The recruiters tell the men that they will earn steady wages, that their living expenses will be paid, and that the ranch owner will pay for regular trips home to see their families. Before they leave their villages, gatos give the men's families money, and on the trip they are told they can eat whatever they want. New workers travel in trucks to the ranches or camps, which are often in remote areas. Upon arrival, the gatos take the workers' identification and labor cards. The gatos then tell the men that they are in debt because of the cost of the trip, the food they ate, and the money that was given to their families.

In the charcoal camps, the forced laborers work from dawn to dusk clearing the rain forest, in addition to stacking euca-

lyptus logs into ovens to produce charcoal. Working conditions are often unsafe, with intense heat and smoke burning workers' noses, eyes, and throats. Some workers must climb inside the ovens to empty charcoal. These workers perform this job almost naked because of the heat, exposing their skin to burns. Heatstroke and dehydration are common afflictions, while many workers suffer from infected burns.

The only lodging many of these laborers are provided is a tent consisting of four poles covered by a black plastic sheet. Many camps have no electricity, latrines, or stores in which to buy provisions, so that workers are dependent on the gatos for food and medical supplies. The prices of these are inflated and added to the workers' debt.

Because many ranches are so isolated, most workers do not attempt to escape.

Gatos also occasionally pay workers, although usually late and below the agreed rate, in an effort to woo other workers into believing that they, too, will be paid someday. These two factors help keep laborers in the camps.

Although some debts last over generations, most men remain in the camps for three years or less. After the trees are cut down, the workers' labor is no longer needed. Workers also become ill and exhausted after a few months' work, particularly in the charcoal ovens, so that it is more cost-effective for the gatos to discharge them, rather than to keep workers who can no longer work at full strength. When the men are dismissed from the camps, they are left in a remote area without money or the identification and labor cards necessary for them to get jobs elsewhere.

In 1995, the Brazilian government enacted significant reforms within the charcoal camps surrounding the state of Mato Grosso do Sul. Women and children were expelled from over 200 *baterias* (areas surrounding the camps), and were no longer allowed to work in the camps. In addition, the federal government of Brazil introduced a system of education grants that pays fifty reais a month to children of charcoal laborers, as long as the child stays in school. A model camp was also set up with electricity, plumbing, a school, a dining hall, and playing fields and toys for the children. Charcoal laborers, however, continue to work in unsafe conditions for below subsistence wages. Problems with forced labor also continue in other parts of the country.

Brazil also has problems with human rights violations by its state police forces. These police forces commit many extrajudicial killings, torture suspects under interrogation and conduct illegal searches. Off-duty police have been implicated in

killings for hire, kidnapping for ransom, and other violations. The number of citizens killed in conflicts with the police in Sao Paulo state rose 17 percent from 1997 to 1998. Police there claimed that 80 percent of the victims were resisting arrest, despite the fact that 60 percent had no prior police records. Off-duty police officers committed 31 percent of the homicides that occurred during this period. In 1997, the human rights division of the Belo Horizonte public prosecutor's office reported that in the previous seven years, it had received nearly 100 complaints of "disappearances" of people from Belo Horizonte in which police were allegedly involved.

Off-duty police are also implicated in "social cleansing," or the killings of persons considered undesirable, such as criminals, street children, and homosexuals. In 1997, 207 children were killed in the city of Salvador, an increase of 39 percent since 1996. Homicide has become the leading cause of death for fifteen- to seventeen-year-olds, with this rate more than tripling since 1980. Many of these killings are attributed to police death squads.

Prison conditions in Brazil are also an area in which human rights violations frequently occur. Severe overcrowding is common. The Ministry of Justice reported that in 1997, prisons nationwide held 101,482 prisoners, although the prison system was designed to hold 74,592. Because of this overcrowding, penal authorities are unable to separate minor offenders from violent criminals. Prison authorities in the Santa Cruz neighborhood of Rio de Janeiro also stated that temperatures in jail cells reached 115 degrees, and water shortages were common. According to the Catholic Church's prison ministry, guards beat the twenty-four prisoners housed in the "dungeon" section of Sao Paulo's Carandiru prison.

Brazilian women also face human rights abuses. Female murder victims in Brazil are thirty times more likely to be killed by a current or former lover or spouse than by any other person. Rapes reported to the police in the state of Rio de Janeiro increased 34 percent between 1994 and 1997; however, both state authorities and women's rights activists agree that many rapes are not reported. The Sao Paulo Center for Assistance to Female Victims of Sexual Violence stated that 400 women sought the center's help after receiving no police assistance. Many cities and towns do, however, have special police offices for dealing with domestic and sexual violence against women; these offices total over 200.

Brazil's approximately 330,000 indigenous people also experience violations of their rights in connection with their traditional lands. Though they are constitutionally guaranteed the right to their own lands, many indigenous rights groups claim that the government does not allow them sufficient participation in decisions affecting their lands. They also criticize the lack of resources offered to them to provide health care and other services, as well as to prevent illegal mining, logging, and ranching on Indian lands.

Media pressures have had a significant influence on Brazilian officials confronting

human rights abuses. A BBC documentary about charcoal making in Brazil, and a front-page article in the *New York Times* on the use of slave labor in Mato Grosso played a key role in the government's decision to end child labor in the charcoal camps. Publicity for indigenous tribes such as the Yanomami has also played a major role in advancing in human rights for those tribes. So far, the international community has not reacted strongly enough to end human rights abuses in Brazil, though officials there are making slow progress in improving conditions there.

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# Brunei



Brunei is an island country in the South China Sea on the north coast of Borneo. A constitutional sultanate, it has been ruled by the same family for six hundred years. It has a single legislative body, although its members are not popularly elected—they are appointed by the sultan. A constitution drafted in 1959 gave the legislature some political power, but in 1962, the sultan invoked an article of the constitution that allowed him to assume emergency powers for two years. This article has been regularly renewed since that time. The state of emergency clause places few limits on the powers of the sultan. The sultan serves as prime minister, minister of defense, minister of finance, chancellor of the national university and superintendent of the national police force, and leader of the Islam-

ic faith. Brunei has large oil and gas reserves, which, when coupled with its small population, give it a very high per capita gross national product.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights in Brunei remain poorly protected. Citizens do not vote, nor do they have the right to change their government. Most citizens of Brunei avoid political activity. In Brunei, there is no freedom of press, expression, assembly, or association. Religious freedom is severely curtailed and widespread discrimination against women continues.

There are no laws restricting freedom of speech or freedom of the press. However, the sultanate has used its emergency authority to restrict these freedoms in practice. Editions of foreign newspapers or magazines whose content is critical of either the sultanate or the government are not allowed into the country. Christian literature is heavily censored. The national paper, the *Borneo Bulletin*, appears to practice self-censorship in regard to these subjects, although it has printed some anonymous letters to the editor that were critical of the government. In 1997, an English-language newspaper began publishing these letters, which, observers state, indicates a relaxation of restrictions on the press. The only local television station is government owned, although a fourteen-channel cable network makes programming from the Cable News Network and the British Broadcasting Corporation easily available.

It is difficult to accurately measure the extent to which freedom of assembly is restricted, or the resolve of the government to prevent it, because organized opposition to the government is rare and citizens almost never criticize it. In the past, however, the Brunei authorities have quickly arrested those who have attempted to promulgate dissident political views.

Political parties, which were banned in Brunei until 1967, are still limited to pursuing activities that do not “endanger people.” Membership in political parties is open to all citizens who do not work for the government in any capacity—although 60 percent of all employed citizens are civil servants or security force personnel. The largest political party held a government-sanctioned assembly in 1995, in which only fifty people participated. Subsequently, the government attacked the leader of the group for an interview he gave to a regional news magazine. International philanthropic organizations such as Rotary and Kiwanis have a presence in Brunei, although they are not allowed to accept Muslims as members.

The constitution of Brunei asserts the essential Muslim character of the government, but allows freedom of religion for all its citizens as long as they practice in “peace and harmony” with the rest of society. Nevertheless, the government’s stance on religion has been decidedly fearful of outsiders as it routinely restricts the practice of non-Muslim religions. Brunei citizens deemed to be religiously in error are subjected to study seminars led by Islamic religious leaders in which they are shown the error of their ways. The government’s concern with radical forms of Islam is also noteworthy. Observers have stated that the authorities seem more concerned about Islamic “opportunists” than they are with purveyors of unwelcome political views. The

authorities often investigate and arrest adherents of radical Muslim beliefs.

In 1991, the government introduced an initiative called Malayhu Islam Beraja (MIB), or “Malay Muslim monarchy.” It is a reassertion of traditional Muslim values as a national ideology. Under this program, the government can and does prohibit proselytizing of other religions, denies entry to foreign clergy, and bans the importation of religious paraphernalia such as teaching materials or scriptures. In July 1998, authorities began a series of raids on clubs and restaurants frequented by foreign residents and workers in order to seize alcohol and foods that had not been prepared in accordance with *halal* requirements (Islamic requirements for the slaughter of animals; it also prohibits the consumption of pork). Brunei’s schools are not allowed to teach the history of any religion other than Islam.

In accordance with the precepts of the Koran, women are denied equal status with men in matters of divorce, inheritance, and custody. Citizenship is transmitted through males exclusively. The children of female citizens and male foreigners are not considered citizens, even if they are born in Brunei. For this reason there is a substantial population of “stateless” children, estimated at more than 5,000. Within the government, women do not receive payment or benefits on parity with men. They tend to get less vacation, make less money, and their jobs are not as secure.

The number of cases of spousal abuse is not documented, although only ten women and their families stayed at a women’s shelter run by the Social Affairs Service in 1999. Men who are guilty of rape or spousal abuse can expect terms of one to three years in jail, along with three to six strokes of the cane. Female domestic servants are the most at-risk group for abuse. They are often

beaten or refused the right to leave the house on their days off. Many domestics are foreign workers who are unable or unwilling to voice their complaints. However, when such complaints are brought, the government is usually quick to investigate.

There are no statistics regarding children's welfare; however, traditional commitment to the family and the high standard of living provide most children with a healthy environment. Education is free, compulsory, and universal for nine years. Poverty is almost non-existent, and there were only eighteen cases of child abuse reported in the first half of 1995.

In the area of human rights, Brunei is an exceptional case. Although there has been some criticism of the government in recent years, most citizens have not shown their

dissatisfaction with the authorities. The majority of the Brunei authorities' human rights violations have occurred under the pretext of public safety, and most citizens seem to accept the governmental restrictions placed upon them despite their affluence.

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# Bulgaria



The Republic of Bulgaria is located in south-eastern Europe. It is bounded on the north by Romania; on the west by the former Yugoslavia; on the south by Greece; on the southeast by Turkey; and on the east by the Black Sea. It has a population of approximately 8 million. The official language is Bulgarian. Other languages include Turkish and Roma. The official religion is Orthodox Christianity. Muslims and Catholics constitute the largest religious minorities.

## BACKGROUND

After gaining independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1887, Bulgaria became a constitutional monarchy. During World Wars I and II, Bulgaria was allied with Germany. In 1944, the USSR invaded Bulgar-

ia. A referendum in 1946 ended the monarchy, and Bulgaria was declared a people's republic. In 1947, the Fatherland Front won 70 percent of votes, and Communist Party leader Georgi Dimitrov became prime minister. In 1947, the government declared the country a communist state. Nevertheless, Bulgaria, although a member of the Warsaw Pact, never hosted Russian military units inside its territory.

In 1989, Todor Zhivkov was deposed and the Communist Party was renamed the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP). A new constitution took effect on July 13, 1991. In November 1991, Bulgaria ran its first fully democratic elections, which were won by the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) and the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF). When the coalition collapsed in 1992, the civil service became the de facto government and administered the Republic of Bulgaria for the following two years. In 1994, the BSP won the elections and formed a government that held office until 1997. That year, the population demanded new elections due to increasing corruption in the BSP. In April 1997, the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) won the election, winning 123 of 240 seats in Parliament. Its electoral coalition partner, the People's Union, won fourteen seats.

Bulgaria has been a parliamentary democracy since 1990. The president of the republic is the head of state and commander-in-chief of the armed forces. A president is elected every five years. The Parliament is composed of the National Assembly, which counts 240 members who are elected every four years. Political parties

must garner a minimum of 4 percent of the national vote to enter Parliament. The Parliament is responsible for enacting laws, approving the budget, scheduling presidential elections, selecting and dismissing the prime minister and other ministers, declaring war and deploying troops outside of Bulgaria, and ratifying international treaties and agreements. The majority party in Parliament nominates the prime minister and the council of ministers. The cabinet must resign after receiving a vote of no confidence in the Parliament. Bulgaria's judicial system is independent and is managed by the Supreme Judicial Council.

Since 1990, the bulk of Bulgarian trade has shifted from former COMECON countries to the European Union, although Russian oil exports to Bulgaria make Russia Bulgaria's largest single trading partner. Bulgaria joined the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1996. Bulgaria's slow pace of privatization, a number of contradictory tax and investment policies, and a financial crisis have kept its foreign investment among the lowest in Central and East European countries. Total direct foreign investment from 1991 through 1998 was \$2.02 billion.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights observers have reported excessive use of force by the police. Several cases of deaths in custody in 1997 remain unsolved. Most of the unsolved cases have involved members of the Roma ("Gypsy") minority and political dissidents. The case of the murder of former Prime Minister Andrei Lukanov in 1996 is still unsolved. In October 1998, the government closed the case of the unresolved "umbrella" murder of dissident Georgi Markov, which took place in London in 1978, by the injection of a poi-

son pellet from the tip of an umbrella. Markov's family believes that former communist dictator Todor Zhivkov ordered the killing. There has also been no progress in the trial concerning the notorious death camps set up by the communists after they took power in 1944.

The constitution expressly prohibits torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment. Despite this prohibition, police regularly beat criminal suspects and members of minorities. In particular, security forces physically abuse Romani street children. There have also been allegations that police beat nonviolent protesters. On July 10, 1998, approximately eighty policemen raided the village of Mechka, beat more than thirty Roma with truncheons, broke down doors, and smashed windows and furniture in Romani houses. The police beat men, women, and children indiscriminately, while insulting the villagers with ethnic slurs. Those beaten reported that the police showed no warrants and gave no explanation for their actions.

According to reports, criminal suspects in police custody run a significant risk of being mistreated. Human rights observers fear that conditions in detention facilities may be exceptionally poor; they have been unable to obtain access to them to conduct inspections. Conditions in some prisons are harsh and are characterized by severe overcrowding, inadequate lavatory facilities, and insufficient heating and ventilation. Prison guards treat inmates brutally. In some cases, prisoners who complained were placed in solitary confinement. The Bulgarian Helsinki Committee (BHC) reports that tuberculosis is a growing problem in prisons, especially in those that do not have their own in-house enterprises or agricultural production, and hence lack the additional resources to purchase more food. The

Women's dormitory in a mental hospital, 1991.

process by which prisoners may complain about substandard conditions or about mistreatment does not function effectively.

The constitution provides for protection against arbitrary arrest and detention. Nevertheless, police often arbitrarily detain and arrest street children, particularly Roma. Pretrial detention is supposed to last no more than two months, but extensions up to six months can be granted by the authorities. However, some citizens have been detained for up to two years. There are legal provisions for bail, but it is not often granted or requested. The constitution stipulates fair trials for all citizens and the judiciary is independent. However, the judiciary has many problems resulting from corruption, low salaries, and understaffing. The judi-

ciary is slow and inefficient in pursuing abuses against minorities.

Despite certain legal uncertainties, the broadcast media operates reasonably freely. Nevertheless, there have been accusations of political censorship, especially after a February 1998 episode of the satirical television program "Hushove" (Bulgarian for exiles or outcasts) was canceled following a critical and unflattering portrayal of the government. A variety of newspapers are published freely by political parties and other organizations, and represent the full spectrum of political opinion. Many reflect the views of their ownership. According to the non-governmental organization Human Rights Watch, at least eleven violent attacks have been carried out against media repre-

sentatives in recent years, including physical assaults and bombings of newspaper offices. Attempts to intimidate journalists investigating corruption were thought to be the motivation for the attacks.

Discrimination against and harassment of nontraditional religious minorities (including the great majority of Protestant religious groups) is a major problem. Intolerance of non-Bulgarian Orthodox Christian religions, often couched in terms of Bulgarian patriotism, fuels public pressure on public officials to contain "foreign" sects. Groups as diverse as the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Church of God, and the Emmanuel Bible Center have been adversely affected by such attitudes. Numerous articles in a broad range of newspapers and television documentaries have presented lurid and inaccurate pictures of such groups, attributing the breakup of families and drug abuse by youths to the practices of these groups. There have also been allegations of evangelicals drugging young children.

Thus, despite a constitutional provision mandating freedom of religion, the government in fact restricts this right for some non-Orthodox religious groups. The requirement that groups whose activities have a religious element register with the Council of Ministers remained an obstacle to the activity of some religious groups, such as the Church of the Nazarene and the Unification Church, prior to or in the absence of this registration. A number of municipal governments have also set up local registration requirements for religions, and have used non-registration as a pretext for harassing or otherwise interfering with the activities of certain minority religions. The lack of registration was an obstacle to the activities of Jehovah's Witnesses prior to the group's registration in November 1998.

Human Rights Watch reports that police have arrested children and adult members of Jehovah's Witnesses for distributing religious tracts, and have detained other members of Jehovah's Witnesses for proselytizing. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) also reported several incidents of harassment by police and by local authorities, with police interrupting services to demand passports and registration documents for the Church and its members.

At the Department of Theology of Sofia University, all students are required to present a certificate of baptism from the Orthodox Church, and married couples must present a marriage certificate from the Church in order to enroll in the department's classes. In 1996, two non-Orthodox applicants were denied admission to the department when they were unable to present such certificates. The applicants then appealed to the local court, which decided in favor of both applicants. Following the court decision, however, the university changed its requirements, effectively excluding both students on other grounds.

There has also been a disturbing tendency for some municipalities to enact arbitrary regulations that have no purpose other than to harass minority religious groups. For instance, a regulation passed by the Sofia municipality in February 1999, forbids references to miracles and healing during religious services, a provision that can easily be used as a pretext to ban or interrupt services by charismatic and evangelical groups. This regulation cites a 1949 law, which is technically still in effect, that forbids foreigners from proselytizing and administering religious services in the country.

Citizens enjoy freedom of movement within and outside the country. Moreover,

the government generally grants asylum or refugee status in accordance with the standards of the United Nations. There have, however, been cases in which bona fide refugees were turned away at the border and forced to return to countries in which they feared persecution.

Although the constitution forbids discrimination on the basis of sex, race, and religion, discrimination still exists. Violence against women, especially domestic violence, is a serious problem. There are no public or private shelters for battered women, and the judiciary tends to ignore such cases. Women suffer discrimination in employment and income compared with men.

Despite a law against trafficking in women that was enacted in 1997, and despite the creation of two new antitrafficking police units, trafficking in women and girls continues to be a serious problem. La Strada, a Netherlands-based human rights organization, reports that as many as 10,000 Bulgarian women are victims of forced prostitution, one of the largest such groups in Europe. This is a highly profitable trade, and in some areas local Bulgarian officials and police are involved. Judges and prose-

cutors are hindered in their efforts to address the problem because of fear of reprisals from organized crime groups. The large number of victims is at least partially attributable to the high unemployment rate for young women in Bulgaria.

Bulgaria is committed to children's rights, but because of a lack of funding, children's programs are not implemented efficiently. The government is also committed to helping people with disabilities. However, most of the buildings and public transportation vehicles do not meet with the needs of the disabled. In many areas of the country, a lack of funds is a great obstacle to providing services to the disabled.

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# Burkina Faso



Burkina Faso is located in western Africa, north of Ghana. Formerly known as Upper Volta, Burkina Faso gained its independence from France in 1960. Its current president is Blaise Compaore, and the government is dominated by the Congress for Democracy and Progress Party, or CDP. Most of the population engages in subsistence agriculture. Frequent droughts, combined with a weak infrastructure and a 77 percent illiteracy rate, often compound Burkina Faso's economic difficulties. Since 1991, the government has been implementing a plan to open its economy to outside market forces and regain control of its large national debt. In the 1990s, Burkina Faso has noticeably improved life expectancy, literacy, and school attendance, although it

has not been able to substantially increase its per capita gross national product.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

There are serious problems with Burkina Faso's human rights record. The dominance of the president and the ruling party make it difficult for citizens to exercise their right to change their government. Moreover, its security forces—including the armed forces, the Presidential Guard, the *gendarmerie*, and the police—have committed a number of human rights abuses.

One of the most politically divisive incidents was the murder of the internationally respected journalist and editor, Norbert Zongo, in December 1998. Public outrage at his death resulted in widespread social unrest, including demonstrations (some violent) and strikes throughout the country in early part of 1999. Opposition political parties, working with students, journalists, and human rights organizations, formed a coalition in response to Zongo's assassination, calling for the capture of his killers and an end to the impunity of law enforcement officials.

The government commission assigned to investigate Zongo's death produced a final report in May 1999. The report did not name any suspects, although it did name six members of the Presidential Guard, who gave suspicious testimony concerning their whereabouts on the day of the murder. The report also noted that documents, which may have clarified the contradictory testimony of the suspected guards, were prob-

ably destroyed immediately following the murder. Due to public outcry over the findings of the commission, President Compaore announced a plan to continue the investigation. He pardoned every citizen who had been arrested during demonstrations on Zongo's behalf, and said he would call for new parliamentary elections if necessary. Despite all these actions, Zongo's killers have still not been found.

There were reports of extrajudicial killings by security forces in 1999. One case involved a national power company employee who was beaten to death after trying to resolve a traffic dispute between his friend and a gendarmerie commandant. In response to his death, power company employees shut off power and water throughout much of the country. On the same day, the government announced that the gendarme commandant had been arrested. In June 1999, workers again shut off power and water to demand the transfer of the gendarmes implicated in the killing to the main civilian prison—where most prisoners are held—from the military prison where they had been held previously. The government acquiesced and moved the gendarmes.

There have been no reports of politically motivated disappearances, although prison guards have abused inmates. There were no investigations into these incidents, which further demonstrated to human rights organizations and the public that the government's failure to prosecute abusers within the security forces has created a climate of impunity for members of law enforcement groups.

Prison conditions are harsh and in some cases life-threatening. Prisons are extremely overcrowded, and the diet is so poor that inmates must rely on supplemental food delivered by friends and relatives. Human rights organizations have complained that

prison visits are only granted at the discretion of prison authorities, and there have been problems in obtaining this permission.

Members of government security forces continue to arrest citizens arbitrarily and without due process. The average time of detention without charge is one week; the law allows for an unlimited number of six-month detention periods. Police have arrested and detained protesters and journalists.

The Zongo killing focused national attention on the problems of the judicial system, which include excessive executive influence over judges, obsolete legal codes, and a lack of physical and human resources. The right to a fair trial is also hampered by Burkina Faso's low literacy rate.

The government generally respects its citizens' right to privacy. The rights to freedom of speech and freedom of the press, however, are still circumscribed by the government. Although the press has become more independent in recent years, it still experiences some harassment. The government arrested two journalists and six leaders of an opposition party, including its president, in response to a communiqué that they had addressed to the armed forces, asking the military to guarantee the safety of the demonstrators. The eight were charged with "attempts against the army's morale" and sentenced up to five years in prison. Their indictments were dropped when a judge ruled that they had not received a fair trial.

However, the government has permitted many marches and protests, even though some operated without the officially required notice. Taken as a whole, the government's handling of demonstrations generally has been moderate.

The government respects the right to freedom of religion in practice.

There are no specific laws to protect women from pervasive legal or social dis-

crimination. Women are generally subordinate to men in the workplace and in the family. Although they represent 45 percent of the workforce, they are rarely promoted to management positions and receive lower pay for the same work. Violence against women occurs, but it is rarely discussed, although the government has been trying to change the national attitude toward women's issues through education.

The government has demonstrated its commitment to improving the lives of children. It has improved the access of many children to primary school and raised the literacy rate to 22 percent. Female genital mutilation, which is condemned by health experts as both physically and mentally damaging, is still widely practiced. International health organizations estimate that the percentage of females who have undergone this barbaric ritual procedure may be

as high as 70 percent. The government has formed a committee to combat this practice through education.

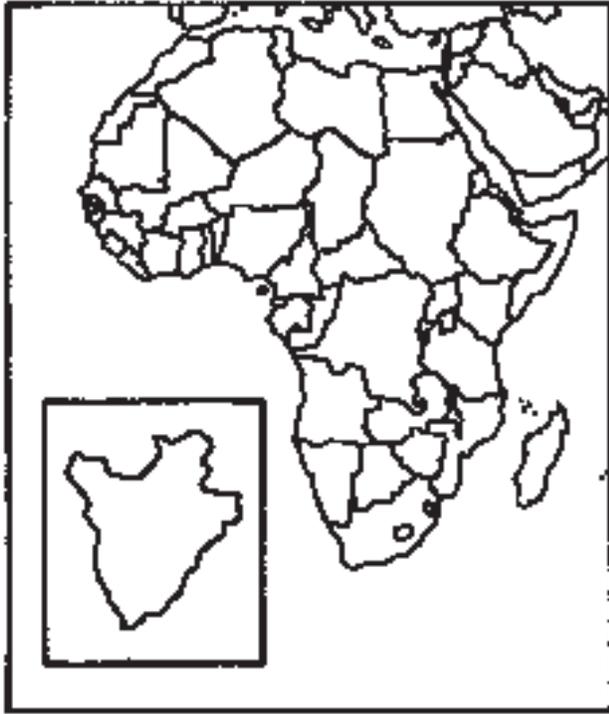
The government has accepted the activities of some human rights monitors. It has, however, restricted some local human rights groups, claiming that their activities are politically motivated. In some cases, the government has failed to respond to requests for information by organizations such as Amnesty International.

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# Burundi



Burundi is a small, poor country in Africa, sharing borders with Tanzania, the Republic of the Congo, and Rwanda. It gained its independence from Belgium in 1962. Its capital is Bujumbura and it is considered to be a republic, although it is ruled by President Pierre Buyoya, who overthrew former president Sylvestre Ntibantunganya in a Tutsi-engineered coup on July 25, 1996. Burundi is presently in the throes of ethnic violence and civil war. Ethnic uprisings, coups, and factional violence have marked the independent history of Burundi. The two main ethnic groups in Burundi and the surrounding region are the Hutus and the Tutsis. In Burundi, Hutus make up 85 percent of the population and the Tutsis 15 percent. One of the better documented waves of violence between these two groups, during

which hundreds of thousands died, started in Burundi in October 1993 and subsequently spilled into Rwanda, the Republic of the Congo, and Tanzania.

Although they are outnumbered, it is Tutsis who dominate Burundi. The Burundian government and security forces are Tutsi-controlled and consist of the army and police under the Ministry of Defense, the judicial police under the Ministry of Justice, and the intelligence service, under the presidency. The rebels consist mainly of Hutus. In 1999, negotiations between parties to the civil war in Burundi spurred hopes that the conflict would end. However, by November, the peace talks between the rebels and the Burundian army were foundering, and by the year's close, military action in and around Bujumbura and in the southeast of the country became more intense than at any time previously during the conflict.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

By any measure, Burundi has been and continues to be a human rights catastrophe. Although the civil war is nominally a struggle between the government and armed opposition groups, the unarmed civilian population seems to bear the brunt of the violence. Both the rebels and the authorities massacred civilians in 1999, increasing the death toll among Burundian civilians to over 100,000. In an effort to deprive rebels of local support, the Burundian government has ordered more than 300,000 civilians into concentration camps, where they have suffered from attacks,

starvation, dehydration, and lack of adequate medical attention.

Hundreds of unarmed civilians were killed by either members of the armed forces or rebels, mainly in the areas around Bujumbura and in the southeast, where the fighting is the heaviest. Most killings by government soldiers of Hutu civilians seemed to take place as a reprisal for cooperating with rebel forces or as a response to the killings of Tutsi civilians by Hutu-dominated opposition groups. Civilians are killed on the pretext that they are armed combatants or that they have protected and aided armed rebels. Almost none of these killings have been investigated. For example, on August 11, 1999, government soldiers executed approximately fifty civilians in Kanyosha province. The next day, troops used grenades and machine guns to kill an unknown number of civilians in an outlying area of Bujumbura, according to observers.

Armed opposition groups are responsible for killing hundreds of civilians as well. These killings are similar to those perpetrated by the Burundian government in that they are retaliatory in nature, usually against alleged government collaborators or informants. In one instance, in January 1999, rebels killed 178 civilians in the Makamba province, according to the state-run media. It is unclear whether these civilians were killed by rebels, or whether they were caught in crossfire between the rebels and the army. Additionally, on October 12, unidentified attackers killed two UN foreign staff workers and seven others during a UN humanitarian assessment mission to Rutana province. Although the civil war is ethnically fueled, the government has killed Tutsis and the rebels have killed Hutus. Opposition groups frequently attack regroupment camps where civilians are often held and controlled, deliberately and arbi-

trarily killing those civilians. Because such acts on both sides necessitate a response, this conflict seems to follow a pattern of fearful acceleration, beyond the control of even the combatants themselves.

Human rights groups such as Amnesty International have reported that abductions have occurred throughout the duration of the conflict, although there are no credible figures for the number of disappearances. Abductions may lead to detainment and torture by security agencies. In one such case, Amnesty International reported that members of security forces were alleged to have withheld food from detainees and beaten them. At the end of 1999, it appeared that the Burundi government favored transferring some of the responsibility of policing of the capital and surrounding countryside to groups of armed civilians. Human rights groups were horrified by this proposal, arguing that these militias would become the equivalent of roaming death squads.

Although the interim constitution of Burundi provides for its citizens' protection against interference with privacy, family, home and correspondence, an estimated 330,000 mainly Hutu civilians have been forcibly moved to "regroupment areas" where they are more easily controlled by security forces. The government's stated reasoning for these massive relocations was to protect these civilians from rebel attacks.

Burundians are routinely denied the right to a fair trial. Theoretically, all Burundians have a right to counsel, a right to defend themselves, and are considered innocent until proven guilty. In practice, this is rarely the case. Few defendants have legal representation, and the judiciary is not well trained or adequately funded. In light of such human rights abuses as mass genocide, most Burundian citizens have little confidence that the judicial system can

offer them even the most basic protection.

The government of Burundi restricts freedom of assembly. The present government has allowed no demonstrations. The government also restricts freedom of association—it has arrested many members of organizations and political parties. Freedom of movement is restricted.

Violence against women has occurred but is undocumented. Police rarely intervene in domestic disputes and the media rarely report incidents of violence against women. Women in Burundi endure inequality both in society and in law. Through discriminatory inheritance laws and credit practices, women are denied economic parity with men. Women also have fewer opportunities for education.

In conclusion, the present government of Burundi actively violates many of its citizens' human rights. Even if it didn't, however, it cannot satisfy its citizens' most

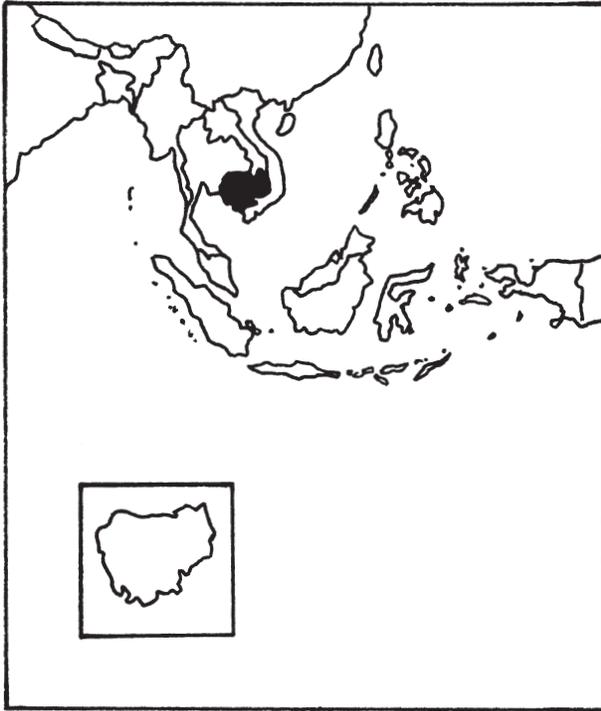
basic needs. Much of the government's resources are used to continue the civil war, in which its own citizens are the primary victims. Under the present regime, there is little hope of guaranteeing even the most basic rights to Burundian citizens.

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# Cambodia



Cambodia is a country in southeastern Asia that is bounded on the north and northwest by Thailand; on the northeast by Laos; on the east and the southeast by Vietnam; and on southwest by the Gulf of Thailand. Phnom Penh is the capital city. Cambodia has a population of approximately 11.6 million. About 90 percent of Cambodians are ethnically Khmer, while the remainder include Vietnamese (5 percent), Chinese (1 percent) and others (4 percent). Khmer is the official language, but French is widely spoken. Theravada Buddhism is the state religion and professed by about 95 percent of the population. The remainder are mostly Cham Muslims who are generally well integrated into society. Cambodia has been a multiparty democracy under a constitutional monarchy since 1993.

## BACKGROUND

Cambodia's economy is based primarily on subsistence farming. Rice is the principal crop. Decades of war have left the country in extreme poverty, particularly in the countryside, where human resources are low and there is a total lack of basic infrastructure. Annual per capita gross domestic product is about \$300. Recurring political instability hinders foreign investments, tourism, and business. Economic aid from major foreign donors, including the UN Development Program, Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Italy, Japan, Sweden, Thailand, the United Kingdom, and the United States, comprise a significant portion of the national income.

A French colony since 1884, Cambodia achieved full independence in 1953 and became a monarchy under Prince Norodom Sihanouk, king from 1941 to 1955 and head of state from 1960. In the 1960s, eastern Cambodian provinces were used—without Cambodia's permission—as bases for communist North Vietnamese Army and Vietcong guerilla forces fighting against South Vietnam. In 1969, as these bases became more active, the United States military mounted air raids to destroy them. In 1970, U.S.-backed General Lon Nol overthrew Prince Sihanouk and assumed power; the country was renamed the Khmer Republic. Sihanouk formed a government in exile in Beijing.

Lon Nol was very unpopular, and the communist opposition, the Party of Democratic Kampuchea, also known as the Khmer Rouge (Red Khmer), succeeded in

overthrowing his government (with some help from communist North Vietnam). The Khmer Rouge, with great brutality, ruled the country from 1975 to 1979. They established a communist People's Republic under the leadership of Pol Pot, Ieng Sary, Nuon Chea, and Son Sen. The stated goal of Pol Pot was to return the country to the "Year Zero," and build a new Cambodia (re-named Kampuchea) from the ground up.

To achieve its ends, the new regime sought control over every aspect of life and forcibly imposed compliance through terror. Hundreds of thousands of people were evacuated from the cities into the countryside and forced to work the land. Cambodians who had been civil servants or who had served in the military of the former government, as well as anyone who opposed the Khmer Rouge, were all executed. Simply wearing glasses—a sign of middle class status to the Khmer Rouge—might be enough to trigger execution. The record of human right abuses carried out under the Khmer Rouge was one of the worst of the twentieth century, during which massive numbers of people were brutally murdered in public executions and in torture centers, or died of starvation and disease. An estimated 1 to 3 million people—out of a population of roughly 7.3 million—were killed from 1975 to 1979.

Although communist, the leadership was strongly anti-Vietnamese and opposed Vietnam's attempt to create an Indochina Federation. In 1978, Vietnamese troops invaded Cambodia, supported by its puppet Cambodian allies, the Kampuchean United Front for National Salvation. While many world leaders condemned this invasion, it did have the beneficial effect of pushing the Khmer Rouge out of power and ending their attempts to kill millions of their own people.

In 1979, Heng Samrin was installed as the head of state in the new People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK). Heng Samrin's regime was kept in power by Vietnamese troops. From 1979 to September 1989, Vietnamese forces controlled all major urban centers and the countryside, with their presence intruding on all aspects of Cambodian life. Anti-Vietnamese sentiment was widespread. Khmer Rouge forces continued to operate in remote regions. In 1979, a non-communist resistance force, the Khmer People's National Liberation Armed Forces, was formed to fight for independence under the leadership of former Prime Minister Son Sann. In 1981, another military organization, the National United Front for a Neutral, Peaceful, Cooperative, and Independent Cambodia (FUNCINPEC), was formed under the initiative of Prince Sihanouk. Both organizations provided a political alternative to the Vietnamese-supported government, which most Cambodians hated, and the Khmer Rouge guerrillas, whom most Cambodians feared.

In 1986, Vietnam began withdrawing its military forces, and complete withdrawal was achieved by September 1989. In 1991, a peace proposal was signed in Paris, providing for a UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) to administer the country in a transitional period and to prepare for free and fair elections. These elections took place in May 1993. The FUNCINPEC Party won the majority of votes in the national assembly and formed a coalition with other parties participating in the elections. A new constitution was promulgated in September, incorporating a wide range of internationally recognized human rights, and creating a democratic monarchical government under the symbolic leadership of Sihanouk, now elevated to king.

Two seventeen-year old-mine victims. Mines have maimed over 100,000 Cambodians.

In 1997, political tensions progressively developed between Cambodia's two prime ministers, Prince Norodom Ranariddh (King Sihanouk's son) of the FUNCINPEC Party, and Hun Sen of the Cambodia People's Party (CPP), leading to violent fighting. Eventually a coup was organized by the forces loyal to Hun Sen, putting him in control of the country. Human rights violations were committed during and after the coup. Thousands of people left the country to find temporary refuge in Thailand. Cambodia's planned entry into the Association of South East Asian Nations and the United Nations was momentarily suspended. A cease-fire was declared in February 1998.

National elections were held in July 1998, resulting in a victory for the Cambodian People's Party, with the FUNCINPEC as the second major party. Smaller parties alleged that the elections were marred by irregularities and fraud in registration procedures and vote casting. The government denied political rights to opposition parties. There were reports of illegal arrests, harassment, intimidation, and physical abuse before, during, and after the elections. Mass demonstrations were organized in the capital in August and September. Security forces intervened violently to disperse demonstrators. Additionally, government officials affiliated with the CPP coerced members of opposition parties into fleeing from their villages. Some opposition politicians were forced to leave the country temporarily. Citizens were denied their right to vote in areas still controlled by the Khmer Rouge.

King Sihanouk has remained the head of state. CPP leader Hun Sen is currently the prime minister and Prince Ranariddh of FUNCINPEC is the president of the unicameral National Assembly. Most of the power lies in the executive, with the legislature playing a subordinate role. In practice, Prime Minister Hun Sen rules the country with little effective opposition. The judiciary is not independent, and is subject to widespread corruption.

Until recently, Khmer Rouge guerrillas still controlled some areas of the country; in 1998, there were reports of civilians being killed during clashes between Khmer Rouge and government forces. By the end of 1998, most of the Khmer Rouge had defected to the government armed forces, despite their past involvement in human rights abuses. By early 1999, the Khmer Rouge insurgency was effectively over. Membership in the Khmer Rouge is illegal.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

In November 1998, the United Nations Special Representative on the situation of human rights in Cambodia reported to the UN General Assembly that the government continues to infringe on basic human rights. Great concern was expressed about the immunity given to human rights violators, especially leaders of the Khmer Rouge.

Civilian police were responsible for several extrajudicial killings, while members of the security forces regularly tortured, beat, and killed detainees under custody. There were politically motivated killings and disappearances, including the murder of Buddhist monks, both during and following the July 1998 elections, and before and after opposition demonstrations in August and September. It is estimated that hundreds of people were arbitrarily arrested and detained for expressing their political views.

Crime is rampant in Cambodia. With the large numbers of weapons brought into the country during more than twenty years of warfare, criminals have easy access to guns. Even the United States ambassador was robbed during a casual stroll through Phnom Penh. Domestic violence is also common, with disputes over television watching sometimes turning lethal. The police are fairly ineffective at preventing this ongoing crime wave. This sometimes leads private citizens to attempt to carry out vigilante justice.

Prison conditions are very poor, with overcrowding, malnutrition, and poor security being the main problems. Pretrial detention is common. Although entitled to legal representation by the law, in practice criminal suspects do not have access to such representation. Cambodia does not respect the constitutional provision for an independent judiciary and due process.

Ministries often refuse to respond to the courts' requests for prosecution; as a result, the crimes committed by government officials usually remain unpunished. The civil court system is corrupt and inefficient due to a serious shortage of attorneys and a lack of resources.

Cambodia infringes on the right to privacy by conducting searches without warrants and by monitoring private electronic communications. Government officials also used intimidation to force citizens to vote for the CPP in the July 1998 elections.

Cambodia partially limits freedom of speech and the press. The constitution itself requires that speech should not affect public security. The press law implicitly prohibits publications that potentially endanger political stability or national security. Journalists practice self-censorship for fear of persecution. However, all major political parties have free access to print media, and there are a large number of independent newspapers that remain critical of the government. Foreign language newspapers publish regularly. The government, military forces, and political parties control the broadcast media. However, during the most recent election, opposition party views were excluded.

Although the constitution prohibits discrimination based on sex, ethnicity, language, religion, disability, or social status, Cambodia does not enforce these provisions in practice. The condition of women is affected by cultural traditions that limit their opportunities for economic advancement. Women tend to work in low-paying sectors of the economy. They also remain significantly underrepresented in politics. Violence against and domestic abuse of women constitute serious problems. Cambodia has been unable to enforce the law against prostitution and trafficking in women, and prostitution flourishes in urban areas.

Children's welfare is not protected. The United Nations estimates that 20 percent of children under five years of age suffer from severe malnutrition, and that 12 percent under age five die from diseases. The educational system is inadequate due to lack of resources and well-trained teachers. Child abuse, child prostitution, and trafficking in children are common. Child labor is not effectively monitored by the authorities, especially in rural areas.

People with disabilities do not have access to buildings or governmental services. Years of war have left behind thousands of amputees, who are victims of land mines. These people are often victims of societal discrimination. The constitution does not explicitly protect ethnic minorities. Vietnamese residents and citizens are subject to discrimination by Khmer citizens. The Khmer Rouge killed dozens of Vietnamese in 1998.

Cambodia does not enforce the legal provision against forced labor, including forced labor by children. Additionally, worker's rights are not fully respected. Safe work standards, minimum wage requirements, and workers' health provisions are not enforced. Antiunion discrimination is common. Cambodia generally respects freedom of movement within the country, foreign travel, and repatriation. In September 1998, however, opposition politicians were restricted from traveling abroad following the inauguration of the National Assembly.

Cambodia cooperates with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in assisting in the repatriation of refugees, particularly from Thailand. Additionally, displaced persons were granted

permission to resettle in other areas of the country. However, a coherent government policy on the issues of refugees, asylum seekers, or first asylum has not yet been clearly formulated.

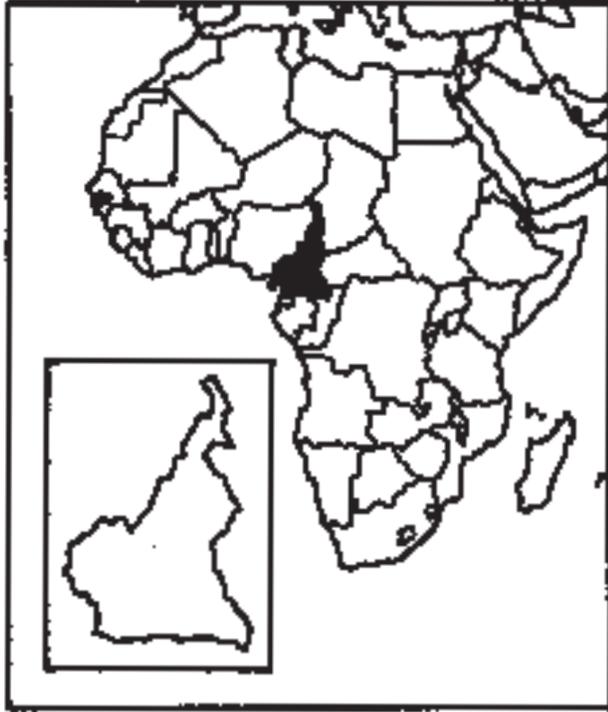
In January 1998, Cambodia and the UNHCHR agreed to an extended presence in Cambodia of the Office of the UNHCR until March 2002. Domestic and international human rights organizations have been active since the UNTAC period. There are also approximately forty non-governmental organizations involved in human rights activities. Cambodia generally cooperates with human rights groups in their investigations. However, Amnesty International reports that human rights workers have been harassed by government officials and some have been subjected to death threats.

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# Cameroon



The Republic of Cameroon in western Africa, is bounded on the northwest by Nigeria; on the northeast by Chad; on the east by the Central African Republic; on the south by the Republic of the Congo, Gabon, and Equatorial Guinea; and on the west by Biafra. Although Yaounde is the capital city. Douala is the largest city and the main industrial and commercial center. Cameroon has a population of approximately 15 million. It has been estimated that in Cameroon there are 270 ethnic groups concentrated in five major areas and speaking twenty-four African languages. In addition to local dialects, people from the southwest and northwest provinces speak English as their official language, while people concentrated in the northern provinces speak French. Non-Africans comprise less than 1 percent

of the total population. About 51 percent of the population profess indigenous beliefs, while the remainder are Christian (33 percent) and Muslim (16 percent).

## BACKGROUND

A German colony since the late 1880s, Cameroon was partitioned between Britain and France after World War I. In 1955, a rebellion began in French Cameroon, and by 1960 the region had achieved independence under the new name of the Republic of Cameroon. In 1961, the northern half of British Cameroon joined Nigeria, while the southern half agreed to form the Federal Republic of Cameroon by joining the Republic of Cameroon. Ahmadou Ahidjo was chosen as the president of the federation. In 1972, the federation was replaced by a unitary state with a new constitution.

The 1972 constitution gives strong power to the executive. The president appoints and dismisses all ministers, including the prime minister, the governors, the senior divisional officers of the provinces, the judges, the generals and the heads of Cameroon's state corporations. New legislation is subject to approval or veto by the president. Although the constitution states that the president is the guarantor of the legal system's independence, the judiciary remains subordinate to the political influence of the executive branch. The court system is influenced by the French legal system, although the Anglo-Saxon tradition partially applies in the Anglophone provinces. Military tribunals exercise jurisdiction over civilians during martial law

or when it is necessary to control armed violence. In rural areas, traditional courts still serve to settle domestic and property disputes.

Since independence, the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) has controlled the government despite the legalization of opposition parties in 1990. Ahidjo was succeeded by Paul Biya, leader of the CPDM, who was reelected president in both 1992 and 1997. The 1992 and 1997 presidential elections, as well as the 1997 legislative elections, controlled by the government's Ministry of Territorial Administration, were marred by irregularities and considered fraudulent by international and domestic observers. Attempts to reform the present electoral system have failed after the government rejected the demand made by the main opposition party, the Social Democratic Front (SDF), to provide for an independent electoral commission to oversee future elections.

Despite its oil resources and favorable agricultural conditions, Cameroon remains an underdeveloped country in need of international financial assistance. Heavy civil service interference, impediments to business enterprise, an inefficient state sector, and large internal security expenditures, constitute the main obstacles to Cameroon's economic growth. Additionally, the government's mismanagement and widespread corruption aggravate the picture. Per capita gross national product is about \$590. Agriculture accounts for 25 percent of the GNP. Timber, coffee, cocoa, cotton, bananas, and rubber are the main sources of export income. The general slow pace of political and economic liberalization, together with concerns over human rights abuses, have prevented Cameroon from establishing stronger relations with the international community. Cameroon is,

however, a member of the United Nations and cooperates with other multilateral organizations.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

The human rights situation is poor. Citizens are not granted the basic right to change their government peacefully through fair and free elections. The 1997 presidential elections were characterized by pre-election manipulations and fraudulent vote castings, as well as by a boycott organized by the opposition parties.

Members of the security forces commit human rights abuses, generally with impunity. Arbitrary arrests and prolonged detentions are a serious problem. Journalists and members of the opposition political parties have been arrested without formal charges. There are no official estimates of the number of detained political prisoners. Torture and ill treatment of detainees in custody is common. On several occasions, prisoners died following physical abuse inflicted by police officers. Nonviolent political activists were reportedly beaten during brief detentions following antigovernment demonstrations. There are reports that government officials committed several extrajudicial killings and summary executions directed against suspected criminals. In a very few cases, Cameroon prosecuted the perpetrators. There are reports that police harassed citizens, conducted searches without warrants, and used roadblocks to extract bribes. In June 1998, during a UNICEF-sponsored "African Day of the Child," gendarmes beat children to maintain order.

Prison conditions are life threatening because of overcrowding, and a lack of sanitation, medical care, and adequate nutrition. Juveniles and nonviolent prisoners are often

incarcerated with violent adults. Corruption among prison personnel is a common problem. Detainees are often denied access to legal counseling and family member visits. The court system is inefficient and corrupt, with long delays. People are often denied a fair trial. Amnesty International reports that some prisoners arrested in 1997 following attacks by armed groups in the Northwest Province were detained for years without charge or trial.

Cameroon limits press freedom using the justification of criminal libel laws, by which a suit can be initiated in cases of alleged libel against the president or other high government officials. Since 1996, several members of the press have been arrested, prosecuted, or convicted on criminal libel charges. Additionally, private journalists practice self-censorship and are often victims of harassment and death threats from government officials. The government controls almost all radio and television broadcasts, despite a 1990 law designed to end its monopoly on domestic broadcast media. The broadcast media gives little or no attention to opposition parties. Additionally, the reception of international cable and satellite television broadcasts is restricted.

Academic freedom is not legally restricted. However, the presence of state security informants limits free political discussions on university campuses. Freedom of assembly is occasionally abridged. Public meetings, demonstrations, and processions must have governmental approval beforehand.

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on sex; however, this provision is not enforced. Women do not enjoy the same rights and privileges as men, and traditional customs govern domestic disputes and civil matters. Violence against women is common, and the law does not effectively protect women against sexual assaults

or domestic violence. Female genital mutilation is still practiced in some areas.

Although primary education is technically compulsory through the age of fourteen, this provision is not enforced due primarily to a lack of funds and resources. Forced or bonded labor by children is not explicitly prohibited by law. Rural children begin working on family farms or as domestic helpers at an early age.

The constitution does not explicitly prohibit discrimination based on race, language, social status, or disability. Discrimination against ethnic minorities is widespread. In addition, indigenous Pygmies, Nigerian immigrants, and white foreigners experience discrimination. Despite constitutional provisions granting basic rights to persons with disabilities, including public assistance and access to buildings, these provisions are not respected in practice. Churches and non-governmental organizations are responsible for providing assistance to the disabled.

Workers' rights are generally respected. However, de facto slavery continues to be practiced in some regions. Additionally, regulations regarding minimum wages and work hours, together with health and safety standards, are not effectively enforced.

Although citizens are legally free to travel, government officials restrict domestic travel in practice. There are roadblocks throughout the country at which police commonly carry out security and immigration control measures. Checkpoints are often used to extract bribes from citizens. The government has used its power against political opponents by withdrawing their passports. Authorities have also prevented persons from traveling abroad because they were carrying local independent newspapers.

Cameroon generally cooperates with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), with a few exceptions.

At the end of 1998, there are approximately 47,000 refugees in Cameroon, primarily from Chad, but also from Rwanda, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Sudan, Equatorial Guinea, and Ethiopia. Since September 1997, twelve refugees from Equatorial Guinea have been detained, and both the UNHCR and Amnesty International have been trying to prevent them from being returned forcibly to their country.

Domestic and international human rights organizations have freedom to conduct their investigations and publish their findings. However, their activities are restricted due to a lack of financial resources and trained personnel. On some occasions, the government prevented human rights monitors from investigating allegations of abuses by limiting access to prisoners, re-

fusing to share information, or refusing to accord official recognition to non-governmental organizations.

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# Canada



Canada is situated in North America, and is bounded on the south and northwest by the United States; on the north by the Arctic Ocean; on the east by the Atlantic Ocean; and on the west by the Pacific Ocean. Ottawa is the capital city. Canada has a population of approximately 31 million. Ethnic groups include British (40 percent), French (27 percent), other European (20 percent), indigenous Indian and Inuit (1.5 percent), and others, mostly Asian (11.5 percent). English and French are the official languages. Roman Catholicism (45 percent), United Church (12 percent), and Anglican (8 percent), are the dominant religions.

## BACKGROUND

Formerly a French dominion, Canada was ceded to England after the Seven Years' War (1756–1763). In 1840, the Canadian colonies gained the right to internal self-governance. In 1867, the union of Upper and Lower Canada, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick created the dominion of Canada. In 1869, Canada purchased the middle west territories from the Hudson Bay Company, from which the provinces of Manitoba, Alberta, and Saskatchewan were later formed.

Canada is a confederation with a parliamentary democracy. The English monarch, Queen Elizabeth II is the head of state and represented by a Canadian general-governor. The prime minister, as leader of the dominant political party, is head of the cabinet. The bicameral Parliament is formed by the House of Commons and by the Senate. The Supreme Court represents the judicial branch of the national government.

Canada has one of the largest market-based industrialized economies. The GDP is \$21,700 per capita. Canada has substantial natural resources, large industrial and agricultural bases, and a skilled labor force. Major exports include motor vehicles, wood pulp, timber, crude petroleum, machinery, natural gas, aluminum, and telecommunications equipment. Major trading partners are the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, Japan, South Korea, France, Mexico, and Taiwan.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

Canada generally respects the human rights of its citizens, and an independent judiciary deals effectively with violations or instances of abuse. Prison conditions meet international standards. The government permits visits by human rights monitors. Additionally, in the past few years, improvements have been made to detention facilities, especially in the territory of Ontario. The law provides for freedom of speech and press. However, journalists have complained that on a few occasions they could not report detailed information

regarding court trials.

While Canadian law protects freedom of expression, the Canadian Supreme Court has ruled that this freedom may be restricted for the purposes of guaranteeing social harmony, combating discrimination, and promoting equality of the sexes. The court stated that the benefits derived from promoting gender equality and restricting hate speech outweighed the benefits of unlimited free speech.

Women are very active in Canada's political life. Fifty-nine of the 301 members of the House of Commons and thirty-two of the 104 senators are women. Moreover, a number of women serve as members of the

cabinet. Women hold the same rights as men in marriage and as property holders. Although the law prohibits violence against women, they are frequently victims of sexual harassment and spousal abuse. Women serving in the armed forces have been victims of rape and other abuses by their male colleagues. These human rights violations, however, are no more common in Canada than in other industrialized countries, and much less common than in many other countries.

Canada has demonstrated a strong commitment to children's rights and welfare by funding several programs for public education and medical care. The law protects children from abuse, overwork, and discrimination. There is no pattern of child abuse. The law provides for the rights of the disabled by mandating accessibility to buildings and public services, and the government enforces this provision in practice. However, the authorities continue to receive complaints of discrimination against the disabled in employment.

Indigenous people (Native Americans) are a serious challenge to Canadian government policies. There are many ongoing disputes over land claims, self-government, treaty rights, taxation, fishing and hunting rights, duty-free imports, and harassment by the police. Indigenous peoples are underrepresented in the workforce, and overrepresented among the unemployed and the prison population. French Canadians, mostly in Quebec, have also challenged Canada's government, claiming that their

rights are not fully respected. The separatist Parti Québécois has claimed that Quebec is sovereign, but the Supreme Court has already ruled that a unilateral declaration of independence would be illegal according to Canadian and international laws.

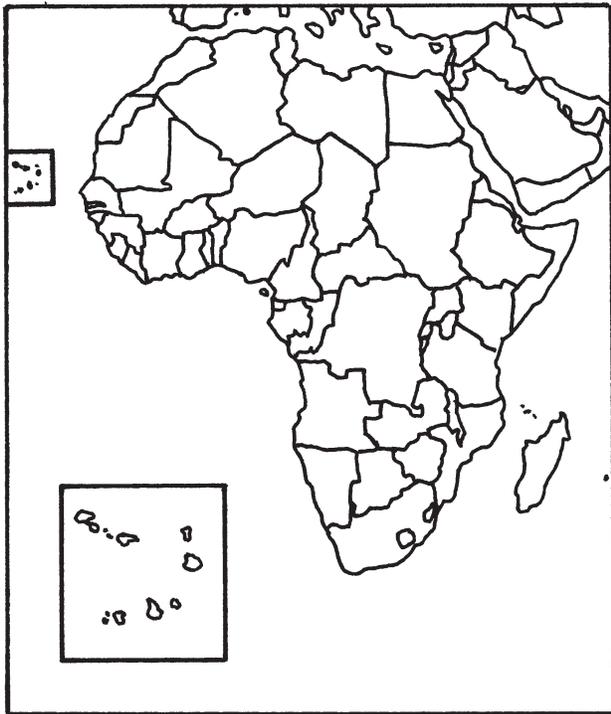
Canadian law provides for asylum and refugee status according to the United Nations' standards. The government cooperates with the United Nations Commissioner for Refugees and other humanitarian organizations in assisting refugees. In 1999, Canada granted 40,600 individuals refugee status out of more than 41,800 claims. Many human rights organizations operate in the country without restriction, investigating and publishing their findings on human rights violations. Government officials are generally cooperative and responsive to their advice.

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# Cape Verde



The Republic of Cape Verde is an archipelago in the Atlantic Ocean, 385 miles off the west coast of Africa. Praia is the capital city. Its population of approximately 405,000 is of mixed African and European origins. About 50 percent of the population resides on the island of Santiago. Although Portuguese is the official language, a Creole dialect is widely spoken.

A Portuguese settlement since the fifteenth century, Cape Verde achieved full independence in 1975. Cape Verde is a multiparty parliamentary democracy. The African Party for the Independence of Cape Verde (PAICV) ruled the country until 1990, when opposition groups formed the Movement for Democracy (MpD) and called for the first multiparty elections, which took place in January 1991. The MpD presently holds the majority of the

seats in the National Assembly. The constitution provides for the separation of powers. The president is the head of state and is elected by popular vote every five years.

The prime minister is the head of the government and proposes other ministers and the secretary of state. He is nominated by the National Assembly and appointed by the president. Members of the National Assembly hold the legislative power and are elected by popular vote every five years. The judiciary is independent. Cape Verde is a member of the United Nations and other international organizations; it also actively cooperates in foreign affairs in Africa.

Cape Verde has few natural resources and its land is arid. About 90 percent of the food supply must be imported. The economy has been based primarily on market policies promoting commerce, privatization, public services, foreign investments, tourism, manufacturing industries, and fisheries. Poverty is widespread.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

Cape Verdeans enjoy a variety of human rights and freedoms, although in recent years the government has failed to implement and enforce new policies designed to address Cape Verde's human rights problems. Police officers regularly mistreat suspected criminals who are in custody. Prisons are overcrowded and do not meet minimum international standards. The judiciary is inefficient as a result of a backlog of cases. In addition, the courts have been accused of delaying or accelerating trials for political reasons.

In July 1999, a prosecutor dismissed a case against four citizens associated with the main opposition party who had been arrested for church desecration in 1996. In 1998, a judge ordered their release from detention because of lack of evidence. The prosecutor's decision in July should have ended the state's efforts to prosecute the case permanently. However, the attorney general did not confirm the prosecutor's decision and declared that the case should await better proof.

Cape Verde generally respects freedom of press and expression. However, journalists practice self-censorship within the state-owned press, the national television, and state-owned radio stations. In addition, opposition newspaper journalists and editors have been arrested and convicted under the criminal libel laws for publishing articles critical of the government.

Also, during the revision of the constitution in July 1999, the provision on freedom of expression was amended so that this freedom could not be used as a defense in cases involving defamation or offense to personal honor. This wording was strongly criticized by political opponents of the current administration and by some journalists on the ground that it could be used to limit freedom of expression.

Although the constitution contains provisions against sex discrimination and mandates equal opportunities for women,

women are nevertheless subject to discrimination in employment, wages, inheritance, and custody matters. Domestic violence against women is widespread, but rarely reported to the authorities. Child abuse, especially in the form of sexual violence and mistreatment, and juvenile prostitution are significant problems. Although illegal, child labor is common in the informal labor sector. Additionally, the government is unable to enforce provisions regarding labor practices, such as minimum age requirements and safe working conditions.

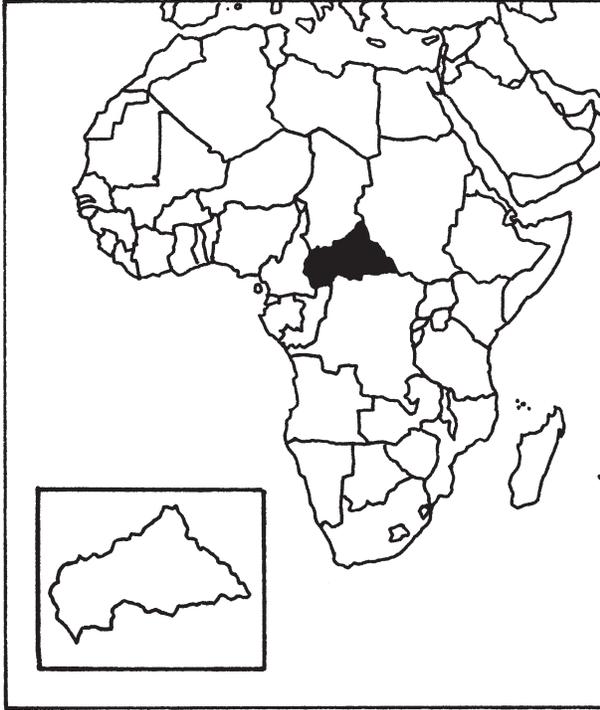
Two private human rights groups are active in Cape Verde: the National Commission of the Rights of Man and the Ze Moniz Association. Additionally, women's organizations and the Cape Verdean Institute for Children promote human rights legislation and defend legal rights.

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# Central African Republic



The Central African Republic is situated in Central Africa. It is bounded on the north and east by Sudan, on the south by the Congo, on the west by Cameroon, and on the north-west by Chad. Bangui is the national capital. The Central African Republic has a population of approximately 3.5 million, encompassing about ninety ethnic groups. French is the official language and Sangho the national language, but many groups speak distinct primary languages. The largest ethnic groups are the Baya (34 percent), the Banda (27 percent), the Mandjia (21 percent), and the Sara (10 percent). There are approximately 6,500 Europeans living in the country. There is no state religion. Most of the population is Christian; however, traditional, tribal beliefs strongly influence the Christian majority. There is also a large Muslim community.

## BACKGROUND

A former French colony, the Central African Republic achieved independence in 1960 and became a one-party state in 1962. In 1965, Colonel Jean-Bedel Bokassa led a military coup that rescinded the constitution and dissolved the National Assembly. In 1972, Bokassa declared himself president for life and, in December 1976, made himself emperor of the Central African Empire. His rule was marred by violent repressive measures and human rights abuses. In 1979, he was deposed and forced into exile. However, in 1981, General André Kolingba established another military dictatorship. In 1985, promises were made regarding the promulgation of a new constitution and the reinstatement of civilian government. Demands for a return to democracy led the government to hold a national conference, and in 1993, Ange-Félix Patassé, the candidate of the Movement for the Liberation of the Central African People (MLPC), was elected president in free and fair elections.

In 1994, a national referendum approved a new constitution and established a unicameral national assembly with a multi-party legislature. The following years were characterized by military unrest during the transition to democracy. In 1996, dissident members of the armed forces organized three mutinies to demand political and military reform. Violence continued throughout 1997 between the government and rebel military groups. In March 1998, the Conference of National Reconciliation was held with the participation of African heads

of state and representatives of international organizations. Representatives of the ruling party, opposition parties, religious groups, and other organizations important to Central African society agreed to a national reconciliation pact. Despite these efforts, elections are still neither open nor fair. The Central African Republic has yet to achieve democratic norms.

The state remains highly centralized. Although the constitution provides for a separation of powers, the president dominates the government. He can veto legislation and rule by decree under certain conditions. The judiciary is also vulnerable to manipulation by the executive. However, there are signs of growing independence.

The economy of the Central African Republic is based primarily on subsistence agriculture, which provides for half of the gross domestic product. The annual per capita GDP is about \$330. The country exports timber, diamonds, coffee, cotton, and tobacco. However, constraints on economic growth, including a poor transportation system, mismanagement, and an unskilled labor force, together with recent military unrest, have resulted in a devaluation of the national currency and a high unemployment rate.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

Although improved from the past, the human rights situation remains poor. Security forces commit human right abuses. There have been extrajudicial killings in the form of executions without trial of suspected bandits. Additionally, police officers beat and torture prisoners under custody. Some detainees have died after being tortured.

Prison conditions are life threatening. Prisons lack adequate sanitation, medical care, and necessities such as adequate food

and clothing. Minors are commonly imprisoned with adult inmates, and are often victims of physical abuse. In some prisons, women are housed with men. Arbitrary arrests and long pretrial detentions are also common. The judiciary is inefficient due to shortages of trained personnel and a lack of material resources.

Citizens can be searched without a warrant. Telephones can be tapped without judicial authorization (opposition politicians are often the target of phone taps). The situation with respect to freedom of the press and free speech has improved in recent years. In May 1998, the National Assembly approved the new Press Code of Rights and Responsibilities that abolished the government's authority to censor the press. Private newspapers criticize the president, the government, and official corruption. However, in a few cases, editors and journalists have been harassed or arrested by the authorities because of their open criticism. On the other hand, foreign journalists can work freely. The central government still maintains its monopoly on domestic radio and television broadcasts. There are no restrictions imposed on satellite or cable television, but very few citizens can afford this luxury.

Although the constitution provides for freedom of assembly and association, the Central African Republic puts certain legal restraints on these rights. Demonstrations and public meetings require authorization by the Interior and Security Ministry. Associations and political parties need to register in order to have legal status. In 1998, one political party was suspended for a period of three months.

There is widespread discrimination based on sex, race, religion, disability, and social status. In particular, there is social, political, and economic discrimination against the indigenous forest-dwelling Pygmies,

who comprise about 2 percent of the total population. While societal discrimination against the disabled is negligible, there are no legal provisions granting them full access to services and buildings.

Women are treated as inferior to men in all aspects of social and economic life. They do not enjoy equal access to education and employment. Women are not equally represented in government. The situation is worse in rural areas. Additionally, the incidence of domestic abuse against women is very high, although rarely reported. Approximately 45 to 50 percent of adult females have undergone female genital mutilation.

The welfare of children has been neglected. Although compulsory beyond the age of five, the right to education is not effectively enforced because of a limited budget and a shortage of teachers. This failure has resulted in an increase in the number of street children who survive by begging and stealing. Although prohibited by law, child labor and child prostitution are problems as well.

The constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, it prohibits religious fundamentalism. This provision is particularly aimed at Muslims. Muslims have experienced harassment and extortion by the authorities. This harassment is largely accepted by the general population because of popular resentment of the significant role in the economy played by Muslim merchants and businessmen.

Theoretically, workers enjoy a variety of rights, including the right to form unions and to strike. However, the Ministry of Labor and Civil Service does not effectively

enforce constitutional provisions regarding health and safety standards for workers.

Citizens are restricted in their right to travel within their own country and abroad. There are checkpoints along major roads where police officers often ask for bribes. Travelers move in convoy with military escorts to avoid attacks by bandits. On some occasions, the immigration authorities have not allowed citizens to leave the country for unspecified reasons.

The Central African Republic generally cooperates with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in assisting refugees from Chad, Sudan, Rwanda, and the Congo. There have been no forced returns of refugees to their country when they feared persecution.

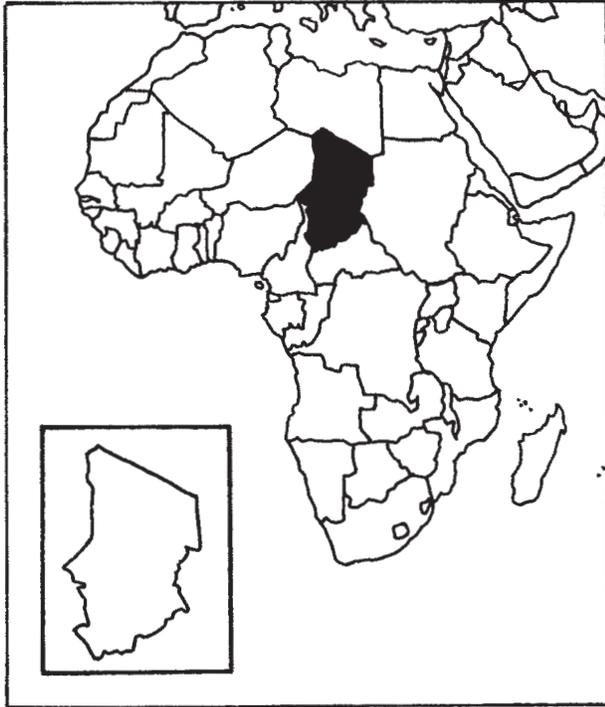
Several non-governmental organizations operate in the Central African Republic for the purpose of monitoring human rights violations. In particular, the Central African Human Rights League (LCDH) brings human rights cases before the courts.

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# Chad



The Republic of Chad is situated in Central Africa. It is bounded on the north by Libya; on the east by Sudan; on the south by Central African Republic; and in the west by Cameroon, Nigeria, and Niger. N'Djamena is the capital city. Chad's population of approximately 7.5 million includes about 200 ethnic groups. Although French and Arabic are the official languages, there are more than 200 different languages and dialects spoken in Chad. About half the population is Muslim and concentrated in the north, while most southerners practice Christianity (25 percent) or a traditional religion (25 million).

## BACKGROUND

A French colony since 1920, Chad achieved independence in 1960. In 1965, a tax re-

volt degenerated into a long civil war that set the Muslim north and east against the southern-led government. In 1979, after a series of international conferences led by the Organization of African Unity, the Lagos accord was signed in Nigeria. It established a provisional government to bring the Chadian factions together. However, the coalition proved fragile and the fighting resumed. The northerners sought and obtained Libyan intervention, while the southerners acquired military support from Nigeria, Senegal, Zaire, and the United States. In 1983, France also intervened to assist in defending the southern-based provisional government.

In 1990, after decades of civil war, Idriss Deby, former northern guerrilla leader, seized control of the government. His transitional government came to terms with most political-military groups in the country. The territorial dispute with Libya was settled on conditions favorable to Chad. A popular referendum ratified a democratic constitution in March 1996, and the first multiparty national presidential elections were held in June and July 1996. Deby was elected president with 67 percent of the vote. In January and February 1997, multiparty elections for the national assembly confirmed Deby's party, the Patriotic Salvation Movement (MPS), as the ruling party. Both the 1996 presidential elections and the 1997 legislative elections were compromised by reported irregularities committed by election officers, government officials, members of the ruling party, and other parties. Tensions continue between government supporters from the politically dominant

northern region and rebels from the subordinate southern region.

Although the constitution provides for the separation of powers, the government remains highly centralized with a strong presidency. All government officials are appointed by the central government. The prime minister, as the head of the government, is nominated by the president and confirmed by the unicameral national assembly. The legal system is based on the French civil law system and Chadian customary law. The judiciary is subject to external influence, especially from the executive.

Chad participates in many international organizations, including the United Nations, and maintains close relationships with France and other members of the Western community. It receives economic assistance from the European Union and the United States. Chad is also an active supporter of regional cooperation through the Central African Economic and Customs Union and other African commissions.

Because of its poor geographic location, the prevalence of drought, and the political situation, Chad's economic development has not reached its full potential. Annual per capita GDP is estimated at \$225. About 85 percent of the population depend on subsistence agriculture, herding, and fishing. There is little industry. Widespread corruption and inefficient state-owned monopolies further aggravate the situation. Although Chad has substantial oil reserves, the government does not exploit these resources and relies heavily on international aid programs.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

The human rights situation is poor. The security forces commit serious human rights abuses, including torture, beatings, and

rape of civilians. Members of the security forces have also committed extrajudicial killings. Most of the victims were unarmed persons believed to support rebel groups, including the armed forces for the Federal Republic/Victims of Aggression (FARF/VA) in the southern region. Amnesty International reported that in March 1998, 100 people were summarily executed during a counterinsurgency campaign in the south. No government action was taken to prosecute the perpetrators, and authorities have failed to provide satisfactory responses to inquiries made by human rights organizations regarding persons who disappeared while in custody. Additionally, security forces use arbitrary arrests and detention.

Prison conditions are poor. Overcrowding, inadequate food, and poor sanitation are among the most serious problems. Additionally, juvenile, adult female, and male prisoners are often incarcerated together. The judiciary is ineffective due to a backlog of cases and a lack of funds. Judicial officials have low salaries and are easily subject to corruption and interference from the executive branch. Officials and other influential persons often have immunity from judicial sanctions. In 1998, an opposition leader was denied legal counsel during a criminal trial.

Authorities infringe on citizens' rights to privacy by conducting arbitrary searches, monitoring private mail, and wiretapping without judicial approval. Chad does not respect constitutional provisions regarding freedom of speech and freedom of the press. It imposes official and informal censorship on the press and on broadcast media. The official media emphasizes government and ruling party events and gives little attention to opposition political parties. Several journalists writing for private newspapers have been harassed or convicted on crimi-

nal libel charges for their open criticism of the government.

Radio remains the most popular medium of communication and information, because of widespread illiteracy and the high cost of television and newspapers. There is only one domestic non-government radio station, which is owned by the Catholic Church. Governmental policies and high licensing fees prevent the establishment of other privately owned commercial radio stations. The state maintains its monopoly over the domestic television broadcasts and the international telecommunication system.

Although the constitution provides for freedom of assembly and association, Chad restricts these rights in practice. On some occasions, the authorities banned legal demonstrations. In 1998, eight human rights organizations were suspended after calling on citizens to protest human rights abuses committed by government security officers.

Cultural traditions support societal discrimination against women. Women do not have equal educational or job opportunities. They are underrepresented in government and politics. Additionally, domestic violence, including female genital mutilation, is widespread.

Chad has shown minimal commitment to child welfare. Compulsory education is not enforced. Girls as young as eleven years old are often illegally forced into marriages by their families for the financial gain of a dowry. Although prohibited, the law against forced or bonded labor by children is not effectively enforced. People with disabilities do not benefit from constitutional provisions mandating accessibility to public buildings.

The constitution also prohibits discrimination based on ethnicity or religion. However, interethnic marriages are rare and

patterns of segregation in urban neighborhoods are common, as are armed conflicts among ethnic and religious groups. Members of the president's ethnic minority control the public sector and hold key positions in institutions of state power. The FARF/VA rebellion results in deaths and human rights abuses by both rebels and government forces.

Workers' rights are not effectively enforced by Chad. The government does not enforce laws concerning minimum wages, maximum work hours, and safety standards. There have been instances of forced labor in some areas. Additionally, the constitution does not specifically prohibit antiunion discrimination. In principle, Chadians enjoy the right to travel within the country and abroad. In practice, roadblocks controlled by security forces, guerrillas, and bandits impede free movement throughout the country. Travelers are often extorted, assaulted, robbed, and killed. The government has not taken effective measures to address these problems.

Chad generally cooperates with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and provides first asylum to refugees. It has granted refugee and asylum status, allowing people to remain in Chad for resettlement. Refugees have not been forcibly returned to their countries of origin. Chadian refugees are free to repatriate; however, several thousand have chosen to remain in the Central African Republic, Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon, Libya, and Sudan.

The government occasionally restricts human rights organizations in their activities. Domestic non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and human rights groups need prior authorization to visit civilian prisons. Access is denied to military prisons. Authorities are often unresponsive to

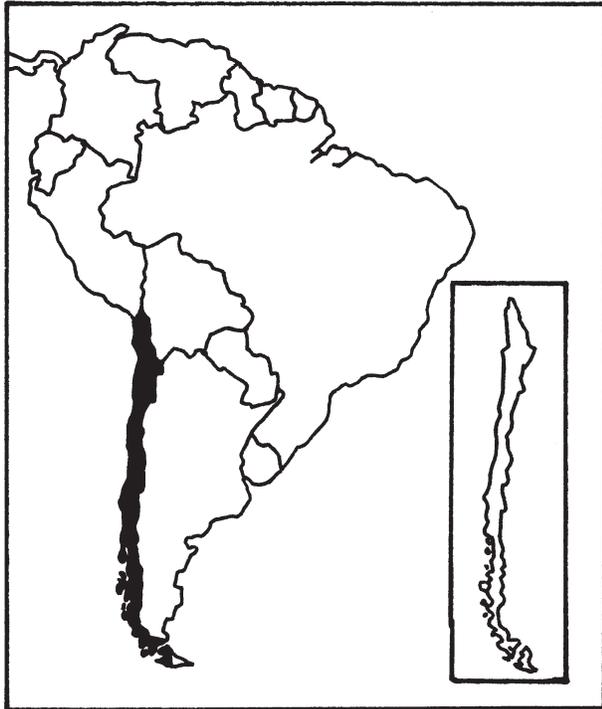
allegations of human rights abuses. However, human rights groups and non-governmental organizations have played, and continue to exercise, a major role in negotiating peace accords between the government and rebel groups.

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# Chile



The Republic of Chile is a country in South America. It is bounded on the north by Peru and Bolivia, on the east by Argentina, and on the south and west by the Pacific Ocean. Santiago is the capital city. Chile's population of approximately 14.9 million includes Spanish Native Americans (mestizo), Europeans, and Native Americans. Spanish is the official language. About 89 percent of the population is Roman Catholic, the remainder is largely Protestant.

## BACKGROUND

A Spanish colony, Chile achieved independence in 1810 and a parliamentary-style democracy was established by the end of the nineteenth century. However, political

and economic instability resulted in the quasi-dictatorial rule of General Carlos Ibanez between 1924 and 1932. After the restoration of constitutional rule, Marxist groups started to emerge and attempted to support the people's interests against those of the dominant oligarchy.

In 1970, Dr. Salvador Allende, a Marxist and member of Chile's Socialist Party, won the presidential election by a narrow margin. His program included the nationalization of private industries and banks, and the collectivization of farming lands. The general deterioration of the economy in the aftermath of his election resulted in mass demonstrations, recurring strikes, and violence by both government supporters and opponents, including widespread rural unrest. Chile's society split in half. In 1973, a military coup overthrew Allende, who committed suicide. Following the coup, Chile was ruled by a military regime headed by General Augusto Pinochet until 1990. The first decade of the regime was marred by serious human rights abuses, murders, and "disappearances." However, despite his authoritarian political rule, Pinochet allowed a largely free-market economy.

In 1988, a national plebiscite denied Pinochet a second term as president. In 1989, Patricio Aylwin, candidate of a multi-party center-left coalition, was elected president. In 1994, Eduardo Frei replaced him in office. President Frei was replaced in 2000 by Ricardo Lagos. In October 1998, retired General Pinochet was detained in the United Kingdom, pending resolution of a Spanish extradition request on charges

of torture, kidnapping, genocide, and murder. The British authorities eventually released Pinochet, but the Chilean supreme court then rescinded his immunity from prosecution. It seems quite possible that Pinochet may yet receive some punishment for the human rights violations committed while he was in power.

Chile is a multiparty democracy with a strong executive and a bicameral legislature. The constitution, last amended in 1989, establishes institutional limits on popular rule. However, the government has called for modifications of those constitutional provisions that were designed to protect the interests of the military and the conservative political opposition. The judiciary is formally independent.

Since its return to democracy, Chile has been an active member of the United Nations and some UN specialized agencies. It is also a member of the Rio Group and of the Non-Aligned Movement, and it was one of the most supportive countries of the 1994 Summit of Americas.

Chile's economy is largely based on international trade. It maintains its association agreements with the European Union, Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay in the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR), and it is a number of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum.

Chile's most important exports include copper, salmon, forestry products, fresh fruit, fishmeal, and manufactured goods. The economy experienced a setback after years of expansion, as a result of the global economic slowdown in the 1990s. Since 1981, the establishment of a private sector pension system has been increasing domestic savings and the amount of investment capital, which is substantially supplemented by for-

eign investment. The unemployment rate is about 9 percent nationwide. The annual per capita gross domestic product is estimated at approximately \$4,500. About 22 percent of the population still lives below the poverty line.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

The government generally respects the human rights of its citizens. Most human rights concerns are related to the abuses committed during the previous military regime, and the judicial system continues to investigate, prosecute, or close pending human rights cases. Of the 1,286 individuals who disappeared under the military regime, more than 1,000 have not yet been found. Under the amnesty law, the courts should not close a case involving a disappearance unless either the body is found or credible evidence is provided of the individual's death. However, application of the law remains uneven within the courts. Several denials of justice in cases involving disappearances or executions have been filed with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) as well as with the United Nations Commission for Human Rights (UNCHR).

Problems persist in other areas as well. The security forces, in particular the police, continue to commit human rights abuses in the form of extrajudicial killings, torture, use of excessive force, and physical abuse of detainees in prisons. The authorities generally investigate allegations of abuse involving public officials and convict the perpetrators. However, they continue to be reluctant to offer their full cooperation in the investigation of those who were killed or who disappeared during and after the 1973–1978 period. Military courts, in par-

Graves probably belonging to some of the victims of Augusto Pinochet's repressive regime.

ticular, are prone to close cases involving members of the armed services.

The security forces occasionally use arbitrary arrest and detention. In addition, constitutional provisions regarding detainees' rights are not always respected. The authorities neither advise detainees of their charges at the time of arrest nor ensure them a prompt hearing before a judge. Detention facilities are overcrowded and antiquated. Prisoners often complain of beatings and other physical abuses by guards.

The government generally respects freedom of speech and the press. The press is

independent and covers a broad variety of political views and sensitive issues. The electronic media are also independent of governmental control. However, investigative journalism is still rare. In addition, the defamation of state institutions and symbols remains an offense punishable under the State Security Law of 1958.

The government respects freedom of assembly and freedom of association, including the right of workers to form and join unions. Occasionally, incidents were reported as a result of confrontations between the police and demonstrators. In May 1999, a student was killed during a demonstration protesting the amount of the government's budget allocation for higher education.

Various forms of discrimination still exist. For instance, women continue to face discrimination in salary and legal matters, including divorce and property issues. In addition, violence against women, particularly sexual and domestic violence, is a serious problem.

Child abuse is a problem as well. UNICEF reports that some form of corporal punishment is used by either parent in at least 62 percent of households. In addition, child labor is widespread, with an estimated 50,000 children under age fifteen being in the workforce and 10,000 involved in prostitution.

People with disabilities still suffer some forms of discrimination in employment and access to public services or buildings. Moreover, members of ethnic minorities experience some societal intolerance and indigenous populations remain marginalized.

The government grants refugee and asylum status in accordance with the provisions of the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of

Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. It also cooperates with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in assisting refugees.

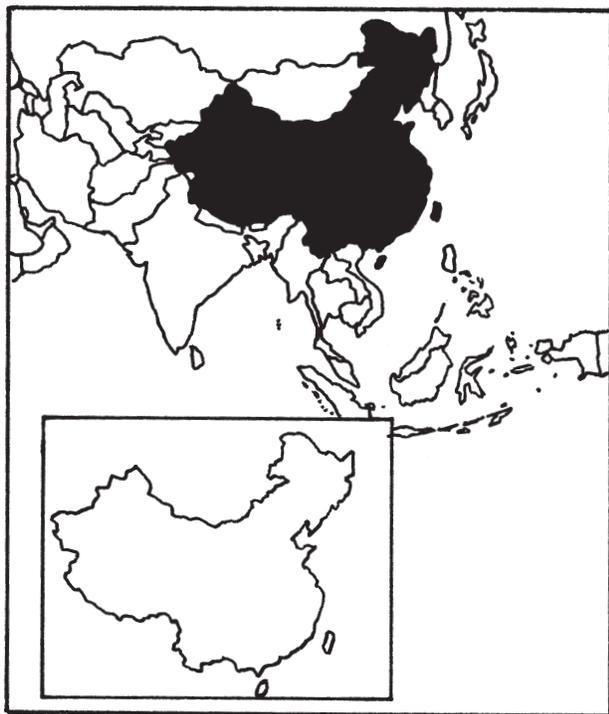
There are several non-governmental human rights organizations (NGOs) operating in the country without government restriction. Many international NGOs investigate human rights issues very closely. Occasionally, threats to human rights activists have been reported, although none of these threats has been carried out recently.

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# China



China is a large country in eastern Asia bordered by Russia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar (Burmar), Laos, Vietnam, North Korea, and Mongolia. Its population is approximately 1.4 billion, making it the most populous country in the world. Most of its people are Han Chinese (92 percent), with the rest being a mix of minorities, including Tibetans, Mongols, Koreans, and Manchus. The capital is Beijing. Officially the country is atheist, but in practice a number of Chinese follow Buddhist, Taoist, and Confucian traditions (sometimes a mix of all three). There are also Christian minorities, as well as small religious sects, the largest of which is the Falun Gong. The government is authoritarian and is completely under the control of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

## BACKGROUND

China is the home of one of the world's oldest civilizations. The first Chinese state existed more than 2,500 years ago. Since then, the area where China is located was occupied almost continuously by a series of empires, with only brief periods of political disunity. At first concentrated in the north and east, these empires gradually expanded the areas under their control to include all of present-day China. In this process, they absorbed the local peoples and imposed upon them their own culture and language. Although modern China still contains some ethnic minorities who have maintained their cultural traditions (Muslims, Tibetans), most peoples have been effectively absorbed and assimilated.

In the nineteenth century, European armies forced the Chinese Empire to allow them to establish bases all along the Chinese coast. From these bases—the most important of which was the British-controlled city of Hong Kong—the Europeans spread their economic and political influence into the heart of China. The Chinese state, unable to withstand modern European weapons, began to fall apart.

In the twentieth century, China has gone through a long period of turmoil. The fall of the last Chinese Empire, that of the Manchu, or Qing, Dynasty in 1911, left China without any strong government. A period of chaos ensued, out of which rose two competing political movements: the Kuomintang (KMT, or Nationalist Party) and the CCP. A final civil war between the two

(1945–1949) forced the Nationalist government to flee to the island of Taiwan, and left the CCP in control of mainland China.

China's new communist leader, Mao Zedong, gave China twenty-seven years of harsh and arbitrary government. The state took complete control of the economy and cruelly punished any resistance. Poor economic policies by Mao's government, combined with political upheavals, led to the death of millions of innocent Chinese.

Mao's death in 1976 allowed China to begin a slow shift toward a somewhat freer society. Mao's successor, Deng Xiaoping, initiated economic reforms that allowed Chinese citizens to own property and invest in their own businesses. These policies, combined with foreign investment, led to a Chinese economic revival. China's economy grew, and continues to grow,

rapidly.

While Deng's government allowed economic reform, it did not want to allow its people any political freedom. The CCP remained in charge. In 1989, tens of thousands of students demonstrated in Beijing's Tiananmen Square, demanding more freedom and some degree of democratization. The government responded by sending in tanks and crushing the demonstrations. Hundreds of Chinese students died, and many others fled abroad.

Deng died in 1997, but the new leaders of the CCP remained firmly wedded to his policy of continuing economic reforms without allowing any political freedoms.

As a result of Deng's and his successor's policies, China has a growing middle and upper-middle class who are starting to enjoy the pleasures of a consumer society,

Soldiers in the middle of rubble left after the Tiananmen Square protests were crushed, 1989.

including cell phones, DVD players, Internet access, and Japanese cars. However, most of the population, particularly in rural areas, remains mired in poverty. China's economic reforms have yet to benefit everyone equally.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

China has a very poor human rights record. Most centrally, China remains a dictatorship under the control of the CCP. The Chinese people have no way of freely choosing their own government. Although the CCP no longer is very loyal to the socialist ideals of Karl Marx, it remains determined to maintain a one-party state.

The Chinese government continues to repress all political activity. The recent attempt by a few Chinese activists to form an

independent political party, the China Democracy Party (CDP), has been almost completely crushed. Most CDP leaders have been put in jail, and the small party seems unlikely to recover.

The Chinese judicial system does not give its people the right to a fair trial. The courts are dominated by the CCP, and those arrested for political reasons are almost always convicted. Trials are often held in secret, and many of those on trial have no access to a defense attorney (or they are given an attorney who is an employee of the government, and who cooperates with the prosecuting attorney in convicting the accused).

The police and judiciary are also tainted by corruption. Police and judges take bribes, and it is much more likely that a poor defendant will be convicted than a rich one. Sometimes the police and courts will

target someone who has made the mistake of competing with the wrong businessmen. Entrepreneurs with government connections or enough money can make it difficult or impossible for the competition to oppose them. Poorly connected businessmen can even find themselves in jail without having committed any crime. However, the government seems to make periodic and sincere attempts to stamp out corruption. In the rare event that they are caught and convicted, corrupt judges and police can suffer severe punishment, including the death penalty. On May 12, 1999, seven important Communist Party officials were sentenced to death for corruption; six of the officials were later executed.

There have also been some attempts to improve the judicial system in China. It is now possible for Chinese citizens to sue government officials or agencies, and thousands of these lawsuits are filed every year. Accused criminals have also been given more rights during a trial, and it is now more likely that an accused prisoner can escape conviction. These reforms, however, are limited in scope and effectiveness, and tend not to apply in political cases.

The Chinese prisons do not meet international standards. Prisoners are treated harshly, particularly political prisoners. Guards commonly beat prisoners they consider troublemakers. In addition to regular prisons, the Chinese government also operates a number of labor camps where prisoners are forced to perform hard labor as a form of "re-education." Medical care in prisons is poor and many prisoners leave prison in ill health, sometimes on the verge of death. Information on conditions in prisons is limited because the government refuses to allow human rights observers to visit any part of its prison system.

Many prisoners are serving sentences for

political crimes. These prisoners can serve very long sentences for relatively trivial crimes. One group of men remains in prison for the crime of throwing paint on a picture of Mao Zedong. A number of pro-democracy activists remain in prison who were arrested during the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests.

The Chinese judicial system makes extensive use of the death penalty. The death penalty can be imposed for a variety of crimes, including simply opposing the government and contributing to instability. It is not known how many people are executed each year, but the best estimates are in the thousands. There are reports that against their wishes, executed prisoners have had their organs used for medical transplants.

The Chinese constitution forbids the use of torture, but in practice this has little effect. The police in China use torture and intimidation against citizens who resist the state. Methods of torture include solitary confinement, beatings, use of electric prods, and even being burned with cigarettes. The police and security forces have targeted Tibetan monks and nuns for particularly harsh treatment. A number of those tortured die, either while in police custody or not long afterward.

The Chinese government also denies its citizens the right to privacy. Police and security forces listen in on phone conversations, open mail, and break into homes without warrants. The police also monitor Internet access, but this is difficult and some Chinese dissidents have been able to use the Internet to spread their ideas and keep in touch with their fellow activists. Prominent dissidents are often put under police surveillance. Government harassment makes it difficult for these people to lead normal lives. Some are driven nearly insane by the constant government intru-

sion into their lives.

Free speech and a free press are also not allowed in China. Either directly or indirectly, the government controls most newspapers and radio stations. Journalists who work for theoretically independent publications practice self-censorship to avoid government prosecution and intimidation.

Chinese workers do not have the right to form independent unions or go on strike, and Chinese citizens do not have the rights to freely assemble or to freely move about or to leave their country. However, the government is more careful about preventing unwanted immigrants than stopping illegal emigrants. There is an extensive network of people smugglers who, sometimes with the cooperation of government officials, transport poor Chinese out of the country and send them to places in need of cheap labor. These Chinese economic emigrants are treated extremely harshly, sometimes being forced to work in conditions that are the equivalent of slavery.

China allows only limited religious freedom. Religious organizations are allowed to exist, but they must register with the government. Those that do not register, or that do not meet the government's approval, can be closed down. In practice, religious minorities can function, but suffer intermittent harassment. The degree of harassment often seems to depend on the attitude of local CCP officials. In some regions officials are fairly relaxed, in other areas religious leaders are arrested on the slimmest of pretexts. The government recognizes and gives limited tolerance to five religions: Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism, Islam, and Taoism.

The spiritual movement called Falun Gong has come under particularly harsh attack in the last few years. To outside observers, the Falun Gong adherents appear

to be a harmless, if somewhat eccentric, collection of individuals who believe in the power of meditation to achieve physical, financial, and spiritual well being (their leader, for example, has claimed that his meditation techniques allow him to fly). The Chinese government, however, has treated the Falun Gong as a threat to internal security and has continued to crack down on their activities. Many Falun Gong leaders have been arrested, while many followers have been put into psychiatric hospitals. The police and army have been called on to brutally break up Falun Gong demonstrations.

Perhaps China's most famous human rights attacks on religious freedom have occurred in Tibet. Situated in the far western part of China, Tibet was once an independent state. Chinese troops took over the country in 1950, forcing its spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, to flee to India. Since then the Chinese government has carried out a policy of repressing all signs of loyalty to the Dalai Lama, as well as all movement toward reestablishing an independent Tibet. Occasional demonstrations by Tibetans almost always trigger immediate and violent response by the government. Thousands of protesters have been killed by Chinese security forces. The government also arrests those it suspects of disloyalty; many of those arrested are tortured. Despite these harsh policies, many Tibetans remain loyal to the Dalai Lama and continue to pray for his return. The cause of Tibetan independence has attracted a moderate degree of international attention—including that of some U.S. celebrities. Nevertheless, the Chinese government shows no sign of being willing to end its control of Tibet.

Chinese citizens also do not share in the universal right to have a free family life. In an

Tibetan Buddhist monks demonstrating in favor of independence for Tibet, 1998.

effort to control its burgeoning population, the government puts heavy financial and social pressure on couples to have no more than one child. This is particularly true in the cities. In rural areas, controls are more relaxed, and couples with two or three children are more common than those with just one. As part of these population control policies, the government also pressures people with two or more children to voluntarily submit to medical sterilization. Although the government is not supposed to use force to

prevent births, local officials—under pressure to meet government birth limit quotas—have been known to use both forced sterilizations and forced abortions.

Because of the cultural preference for boys over girls, female babies, whose gender can be determined by sonogram, are often aborted. This has resulted in 117 boys being born for every 100 girls. Many human rights advocates consider this anti-girl policy to be a threat to women's rights. In addition, these boys will have a difficult time finding

Chinese wives when they become adults.

In general, women are especially victimized in China. Wife beating is common and is probably underreported. Most Chinese, particularly in rural areas, seem to accept that spousal abuse is normal. In recent years, the government seems to have made sincere, if limited, attempts to reduce spousal abuse. These efforts have been largely confined to China's cities, with their richer and better educated population. Women's poor status has led to an unusually high female suicide rate in China. About 500 women commit suicide every day. The suicide rate in China is three times the world average.

Women do not receive equal pay for equal work and have limited access to the better jobs in business and government. Women have become a larger presence in Chinese universities but still make up only about one third of the student population.

Women are also victimized by the sex trade. A large number of poor Chinese women end up working as prostitutes. Government attempts to crack down on prostitution have been compromised by some local officials' complicity in the trade—officials who are supposed to prevent prostitution often take bribes from prostitutes or their managers to allow the practice to continue.

The rights of children are not fully protected in China. Although the law requires all children to get nine years of schooling, in practice children in poor regions may get substantially less; some spend almost no time at all going to school. In rural areas, children are used as farm and factory laborers. Conditions for children are improving, however. In particular, the child death rate has been steadily declining for the past two decades. But some children remain at greater risk. Every year, almost two million children are abandoned by their parents.

These children are taken care of in state orphanages, where conditions vary from moderately spartan to life-threatening.

Beyond the oppressive abuses caused by CCP rule, the government's domination by one political party also has had social consequences. While it is true that economic reforms have given more Chinese a chance to succeed in business, a disproportionate share of those who have benefited from the government's economic reforms are members of the Communist Party, particularly relatives of those high up in the hierarchy of power. China, despite its communist rhetoric, is not an egalitarian society. The sons and daughters of party leaders have a much easier time getting access to funding and business contracts and making use of the political favors that make their business success much more likely. While China is getting richer, not everyone is getting richer at the same rate. Chinese economists have estimated that urban city dwellers, those most likely to have party connections, have twelve times the disposable income of rural Chinese.

The foreign reaction to China's human rights abuses has been muted. Western leaders, including U.S. presidents, have criticized China's treatment of its own citizens and have called on the Chinese government to allow more freedom and political rights. However, while they criticize, they also continue to trade with China. The United States, for example, has continued to renew China's most-favored-nation trading status, meaning that China can buy and sell to the United States without restrictions.

This ambivalent approach—vocally criticizing China while quietly profiting from trade deals—is prompted by two parallel motivations. First, no country is eager to offend China, thereby allowing its economic competitors to capture a greater share of

the Chinese market. A China that is getting richer every year is a China that most companies are eager to do business with. Second, some advocates of open trade with China argue that the best way of making China more democratic is to expose it to Western ideas and values and that trade is the best way to do this. Critics claim that both these reasons are self-serving rationalizations and that it is immoral to ignore the suffering of many Chinese at the hands of their government. While these critics include most reputable human rights groups, it is those who wish to continue to trade with China who are currently controlling government policies around the world. In the near future, it seems unlikely that any economic pressure will be brought to bear on China to change its policies toward the

human rights of its citizens.

China does not grant any local human rights groups the legal right to operate freely. Nevertheless, human rights advocates in China are able to informally collect information on human rights and disseminate it to the outside world.

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# Colombia



The Republic of Colombia is located in tropical South America, on the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea. Its territory is bounded by Brazil, Ecuador, Panama, Peru, and Venezuela. The capital city is Santa Fe de Bogota. With 39 million inhabitants, Colombia is the third most populous country in Latin America, after Brazil and Mexico. Colombia's ethnic diversity has its origins in the intermingling of indigenous Indians, Spanish colonists, and African slaves. Unlike other Latin American countries, Colombia has few foreign immigrants. Roman Catholicism constitutes the major religious denomination (95 percent), and Spanish is the official language.

## BACKGROUND

Before the first permanent Spanish settlement of 1525, Colombia was inhabited by indigenous Indians who were mainly primitive hunters or nomadic farmers. In 1549, the area officially became a Spanish colony and Santa Fe de Bogota became its capital. The colonial period lasted until July 20, 1810, when the citizens of Bogota created the first representative council to defy Spanish authority and achieved independence. In 1819, the Republic of Greater Colombia was established, including all the territory of the former viceroyalty of New Granada—consisting of Colombia and what is now Venezuela, Ecuador, and Panama—and Simon Bolivar and Francisco de Paula Santander were elected its first president and vice president, respectively.

Since then, Colombian politics have been dominated by the Conservative and the Liberal parties, which grew out of the conflicts between the followers of Bolivar and Santander, and which, in the course of the past two centuries, have held the presidency for roughly equal periods of time. Despite its tradition of civilian government and regular, free elections, Colombia's history has been characterized by a number of military coups—in 1830, 1854, and in 1953–1957—as well as by periods of widespread violent conflict. The two civil wars known as the War of a Thousand Days (1899–1902) and “La Violencia” (late 1940s–1950s) stemmed from rivalry between the Conservative and Liberal parties. A provisional government—

the National Front—under which the Liberal and Conservative parties would govern jointly, was installed in 1957 and ended “La Violencia.”

The National Front is known for its accomplishments in terms of social and economic reforms. With major financial backing by the United States, the National Front focused on resolving problems of inflation, unemployment, and inequitable income distribution. After the end of the National Front in 1978, the government made considerable efforts to end the Cuban-backed insurgency that was trying to undermine Colombia’s traditional democratic system. In addition to the guerrillas, the government also had to contend with narcotics traffickers, who were responsible for a number of indiscriminate acts of violence. Andres Pastrana—the current president of Colombia since 1998—has expressed his commitment to ending Colombia’s long-standing civil conflict as well as to combating illegal drug trafficking.

The national government has separate executive, legislative, and judicial branches. The president is the chief of state and head of government, the legislature is represented by the bicameral Congress, and the judiciary consists of the Supreme Court, the Constitutional Court, and the Council of State. The president is elected for a four-year term and cannot be reelected. Colombia has traditionally played an active role in the United Nations, in the Organization of American States, and in their subsidiary agencies.

Very rich in natural resources—most notably minerals and energy resources—Colombia is considered the most industrially diverse member of the five-nation Andean Community. Its industries include textiles and clothing, leather products, processed foods and beverages, paper and paper prod-

ucts, chemicals and petrochemicals, cement, construction, iron and steel products, and metalworking. The diverse climate and topography of its territory permit the cultivation of a wide variety of crops. In 1997, agriculture accounted for 18 percent of Colombia’s gross domestic product (GDP). Colombia is also one of the world’s leading suppliers of refined cocaine and a growing supplier of heroin, both of which are channeled to drug markets in the United States. The Colombian drug cartels are among the most sophisticated criminal organizations in the world.

The economic reform program which went into effect during the Gaviria administration (1990–1994) featured major efforts toward economic liberalization and international trade and investment. The resulting economic growth however, has slowed significantly after 1996, under President Ernesto Samper’s administration. As of 1998, Colombia’s GDP growth rate (2 percent) ranked among the lowest in Latin America. Further, the unemployment rate was at its highest level, and the export sector was in jeopardy as a result of increasing guerrilla violence.

The 1886 Colombian constitution was replaced in 1991. The new constitution has strengthened the administration of justice with the new provision for introducing an accusatorial system (in the Anglo-American style) which is planned to replace the existing Napoleonic Code system. The constitution expanded citizens’ basic rights, including that of *tutela*, in which individuals can request an immediate court action if they feel that their constitutional rights are being violated and there is no other legal recourse.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

Although there have been some improvements over the years, the respect for

human rights is still very poor in Colombia. Internal armed guerrilla conflicts and narcotics trafficking represent the major causes of human rights violations. Government forces continue to commit serious abuses, including political assassinations and other extrajudicial killings. Further, since 1977, an estimated 3,000 cases of forced “disappearances” have been reported to the authorities and very few have been resolved. Although the constitution and criminal law explicitly prohibit torture and degrading treatment and punishment, many incidents of police and military torture and mistreatment of detainees continue to be reported. Security forces often collaborate with paramilitary groups which, throughout the country, commit abuses against civilians suspected of sympathizing with guerrillas.

Prison conditions are generally very harsh. Prisons are usually very overcrowded, and more favorable treatment is usually obtained by means of bribes or intimidation.

Arbitrary arrest and detention, as well as prolonged pretrial detention, represent serious problems due to the inefficiency of the civilian judiciary, which is severely overburdened by a large case backlog, and undermined by intimidation and the prevailing climate of impunity. Less than 3 percent of all crimes committed nationwide are prosecuted successfully. Judges have long been subject to threats and intimidation, particularly when dealing with cases involving members of the armed forces or the paramilitary, narcotics and guerrilla organizations. In order to deal with the impunity problem, the prosecutor general in October 1995 created a special Human Rights Unit as part of the regional courts system. This unit has achieved limited but real results, issuing arrest warrants against members of the public security forces, the paramili-

tary, and drug trafficking and guerrilla organizations who are alleged to be involved in massacres, extrajudicial killings, kidnappings, and terrorism.

The authorities sometimes infringe on citizens’ privacy rights and, although the constitution provides for freedom of the press, journalists regularly practice self-censorship and refrain from publishing stories counter to the interests of paramilitary groups, guerrillas, or narcotics traffickers because of fear caused by threats and intimidation.

The constitution provides for complete religious freedom, and the government usually respects this right in practice. By contrast, extensive societal discrimination against women, minorities, and the indigenous peoples still continue. Rape and other acts of violence against women and children constitute a serious problem, as is child prostitution. Vigilante and paramilitary groups often engage in “social cleansing”—the killing of street children, prostitutes, homosexuals, and others deemed socially undesirable.

Despite significant constitutional and legislative commitments to assist and protect children, to foster their development, and to assure the full exercise of these rights, children’s rights are implemented only to a minimal degree. The use of child soldiers by guerrillas and drug gangs is common. Further, both women and children have faced an increased threat of torture and sexual assault because of the endemic violence between drug lords, guerrillas, and government forces.

Despite the special recognition given by the constitution to the fundamental rights of indigenous peoples, many members of indigenous communities continue to be victims of Colombia’s internal conflict. Moreover, people of African descent also continue to suffer from discrimination.

The constitution provides citizens with the right to travel freely, both domestically and abroad. However, outsiders who wish to enter Indian tribal reserves must be invited, and safe-conduct passes are required in order to enter areas under the control of either paramilitary forces or guerrillas.

The Colombian constitution provides for freedoms of assembly and of association, and the government respects this right in practice. Workers are usually allowed to organize unions and to strike. However, workers' bargaining power is often limited due to high unemployment, traditional anti-union attitudes, and weak union organization and leadership. In general, inadequate attention from the unions, as well as a lack of public safety awareness and lax enforcement by the Labor Ministry, result in a high level of industrial accidents and unhealthy working conditions.

Slavery and any form of forced or compulsory labor are forbidden by law. However, although the constitution bans child labor, this prohibition is largely ignored in practice, especially in the informal labor sector and in rural areas.

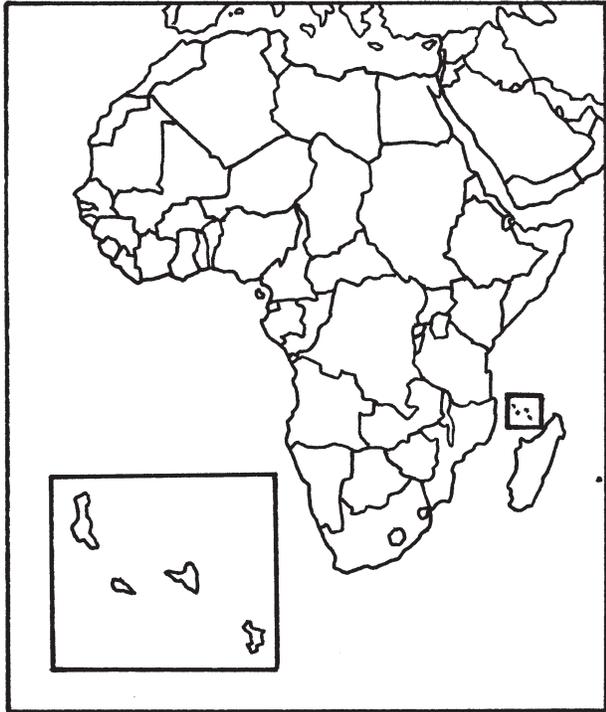
Many non-governmental human rights groups are active in Colombia and the government generally does not interfere directly with their work. However, such groups often work under constant fear of attack from paramilitary or guerrilla forces. Human rights monitors are often subject to surveillance, harassing phone calls, graffiti campaigns, and threats by the military, police, paramilitary, and guerrilla forces.

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# Comoros



The Federal Islamic Republic of the Comoros is a group of islands in the Indian Ocean between Madagascar and the east coast of Africa. Three of them, Grand Comore, Anjouan, and Moheli, form the Republic of Comoros, while the fourth, Mayotte, is governed by France. Moroni is the capital city. Approximately 80 percent of the population is of African Arab origin and lives on Grand Comore, Anjouan, and Moheli. Islam is the dominant religion. A large minority of the citizens living on Mayotte are Catholic and are strongly influenced by the French culture. The Comorians speak Shikomoro, a Swahili dialect. French and Arabic are also spoken.

## BACKGROUND

The islands became an overseas territory of France after World War II. In 1961, Co-

moros was granted political autonomy, and in 1975, independence was achieved. However, France continued to maintain its rule over the island of Mayotte. Since then, a succession of coups and political insurrections has characterized Comoros' history. Democracy is still weak and, in practice, the Comorians have not been able to change their government through peaceful and fair elections.

Since 1997, the inhabitants of Anjouan have had a three-way split in opinion among those who want to return to French colonial administration, those who support independence, and those who favor a looser federation with the islands of Grand Comore and Moheli.

The Comorian constitution provides for the sovereignty of the people and the separation of powers of their elected representatives. The president holds the executive power, while the Federal Assembly holds the legislative power. The judiciary is nominally independent, but in practice the executive and other elites exert a significant influence. The constitution stipulates that all political parties have to win at least two seats per island during the legislative elections in order to be represented in the Federal Assembly.

Local politics is in the hands of traditional village chiefs and Muslim religious leaders, whose social and religious opinions greatly affect Comorian society and economy. Comoros is extremely poor and is one of the least developed countries in the world. Per capita income was approximately \$450 per year in 1997. The country relies primarily on foreign assistance from Arab countries, France, and the European Union.

Agriculture dominates its economy, with the export of vanilla, essence of ylang-ylang, and cloves as the main revenue source.

Comoros has been a member of the United Nations since 1975. It is also a member, among others, of the Organization for African Unity, the European Development Fund, and the International Monetary Fund.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

The human rights situation in Comoros continues to be precarious. The security forces occasionally use violent means to suppress protest groups. In May 1998, one person was killed and five were seriously wounded during the protests following the government's closure of the opposition party's Radio Tropique. Members of the security forces set a fire at the home of the radio station's owner.

Prison conditions remain poor. Prisons are overcrowded, prisoners lack medical care, and food rations are inadequate. The law does not specify any time limit for pretrial detentions. Detainees often cannot obtain legal representation and they have to rely on paralegal lawyers; in addition, the constitution does not provide for free legal counsel.

The constitution does not grant freedom of the press. Radio Comoros, the national radio station, is controlled by the government. However, independent journals and regional radio stations operate without interference. Foreign newspapers and books are available as well. There are some limitations to academic freedom; there is no university, and public schools are of poor quality.

The constitution does not provide for freedom of assembly and association, but citizens usually enjoy this right in practice. However, following the recent crisis in Anjouan, the government banned all antigovernment demonstrations. The government generally respects the constitutional provisions against discriminations based on sex,

race, disability, religion, language, and social status.

However, some problems persist. Comorian society is male dominated, and women are not equally represented in politics or business. Particularly in rural areas, women's traditional roles are tied to child rearing and farming which preclude their opportunities for education and careers. The government does not protect children's rights and welfare. Extreme poverty often forces parents to place their children with other families. Most of these children end up working as domestic servants. There is no legislation mandating accessibility to public buildings or services by the disabled.

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on religion; however, in practice, the government favors the principles of Islam, which affects all aspects of the country's political and cultural life. Since 1996, there has been a ban on immodest dress and alcohol; the latter can be imported and sold only under governmental control.

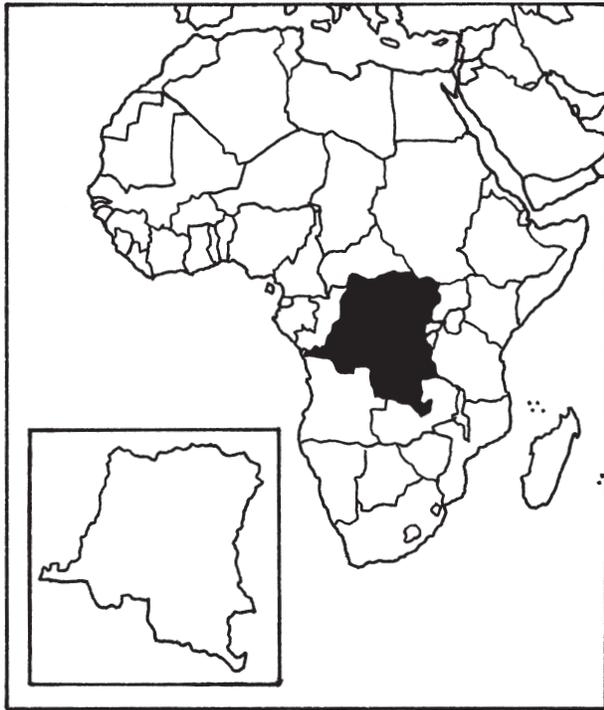
The government generally cooperates with human rights groups, including international organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross. However, members of the Comoros Human Rights Association do not criticize the government for fear of losing their jobs.

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# Congo, Democratic Republic



The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DROC) is located in central Africa, north-east of Angola. Commonly known as Congo, as well as Congo-Kinshasa, it should not be confused with Republic of the Congo, commonly called Congo Republic. It gained its independence from Belgium in 1960. It shares borders with the Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, Sudan, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania, Zambia, and Angola. It has a population of approximately 50 million, divided between more than 200 separate ethnic groups. Its capital is Kinshasa. The DROC is ruled autocratically by President Laurent Desire Kabila, whose Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire overthrew the authoritarian regime of Mobutu Sese Seko in 1997. The nation,

which Mobutu had renamed Zaire, then returned to its original name of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

## BACKGROUND

Since 1994, the DROC has been engulfed in an ethnically fueled civil war that was sparked by a massive inflow of refugees from the fighting in neighboring Rwanda and Burundi. In 1997, Kabila allied with the Rwandan military to force Mobutu from power.

After ousting Mobutu, Kabila tried to expel the Rwandan forces that had assisted him. However, Rwanda desired to maintain a strong military presence in Congolese territory because the Congo had served as a base for Hutu-led insurgency groups, which constituted a threat to the Tutsi-led governments of Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda. In order to maintain a military presence in the DROC, and to contain the threat of the Hutu guerrilla groups, the governments of Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda created and militarily supported two separate anti-government organizations: the Congolese Rally for Democracy, and the Movement for the Liberation of the Congo. By the end of 1999, Kabila's government in Kinshasa had lost control of half of the country to these organizations.

The DROC security forces consist of a national police force under the Ministry of the Interior, a National Security Council, the National Intelligence Agency, and the Congolese Armed Forces, which has a security suborganization, the Office for the Military Detection of Subversive Activities.

Because of the war, most sectors of the economy continue to decline. Both the private and public sectors are insolvent, and little or no aid has been granted. Rebel-held areas are increasingly being integrated financially and administratively into the economies of Rwanda and Uganda.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

The Kabila government has a poor human rights record. Security forces commit numerous extrajudicial killings. In 1998, the government embarked on a campaign of genocide to eliminate all Tutsis and suspected Tutsis from territories under its control. By the beginning of 1999, these killings had tapered off. Most Tutsis in areas under government control had either fled or gone into hiding. In addition, the Kabila government supported Hutu armed groups and other militias, which also engaged in genocide against Tutsis living in areas held by rebel forces.

Government security forces have also killed many non-combatants. In Kinshasa, on the night of January 6, 1999, members of the Presidential Guard stole a student's personal belongings and then beat him to death, later accusing him of being a member of the rebellion. In February, also in Kinshasa, a soldier shot and killed a civilian who bumped into his table at a bar. On April 17, unidentified soldiers hailed a bus and ordered the driver to take them to Kinshasa's international airport. When the driver explained that he was taking a woman in labor to the hospital, the soldiers shot and killed him, leaving the pregnant women alone in the bus. In November, soldiers broke into a house party and accused those present of making too much noise. One student was whipped to death when he refused an order to go outside and sit on the

ground. No disciplinary action was taken in any of these instances. There have been hundreds of substantiated reports of similar events.

There were also many reported cases of disappearances, although in most instances, these were war-related. The bodies of many persons kidnapped and killed extrajudicially in the war were burned, dumped in rivers, or buried in mass graves. The government keeps no record of the identities of the people killed in this manner.

The government often holds suspects without charges. Human rights and religious groups point out that the number of security agencies and detention centers have increased along with the number of arbitrary detentions. Prison conditions are harsh and life-threatening. In many cases, there is no way to survive without the help of family or friends. Guards often steal food brought to prisoners. Many inmates have no access whatsoever to sanitation, potable water, or medical care. There were reports of guards forcing an estimated sixty prisoners into a small cell with barely enough room to stand. Reportedly, these inmates were not given food or water and were forced to urinate and defecate on the floor. Diseases such as tuberculosis are pervasive. Prison guards often rape female inmates.

Citizens are denied the right to a fair trial. The judiciary is ineffective, ill trained, and subject to manipulation by the executive branch. There is no right to appeal, and many defendants lack counsel. Between the months of January and August in 1999, at least 183 people were tried and convicted by military tribunals. Of these, approximately 100 were sentenced to death. Between the months of August and November 1999, that rate sharply increased, as the tribunals sentenced 278 people to death.

By late November 1999, over 142 of these people had already been executed. Many of the alleged offenses were non-violent in nature, including mismanagement of public funds and the private distribution of government-owned commodities such as gasoline. Others were put to death on charges of robbery, inciting mutiny, and looting. The government has occasionally staged public mass executions in stadiums.

Security forces repeatedly raid private homes and businesses, seizing documents and other property and arresting employees. When breaking into private residences, if the suspect was not available, authorities often arrested or beat family members in order to determine the location of the original suspect. In July 1999, soldiers entered the home of a civilian without a warrant, seeking to arrest him for unknown reasons. Upon finding that he was not home, the soldiers stole money and arrested his pregnant wife and sister, who were held hostage until he appeared. There have been reports that soldiers have raped women during similar raids.

The government is believed to monitor telephone communications.

Freedom of speech and freedom of the press are increasingly curtailed under Kabila's administration. Journalists and reporters are routinely harassed and intimidated; over eighty were arrested during 1999. Because of widespread illiteracy and the rising cost of newspapers, radio remains the primary source of news for citizens. There are six radio stations in Kinshasa. Under Mobutu, all the radio stations were government owned. Upon coming to power, Kabila lifted this restriction, although two radio stations are still under government control. Opposition parties are prevented from gaining access to radio stations, and private radio is demonstrably

less critical of the government than are private newspapers.

There are two domestic Internet service providers, but because of high costs and low availability, the Internet is not widely used. The government restricts academic freedom. Fearful of reprisal, professors at universities practice self-censorship in their lectures. Some professors have been arrested and tortured.

There is no right to freedom of assembly. In September, students at Kinshasa University planned a demonstration in support of striking faculty but were stopped by the police. Kabila threatened to shut down the university indefinitely and expel its 28,000 students, but the unrest subsided and the crisis was averted. There is no legal protection for the right of freedom of association. Although political parties themselves are legal, political activities are banned and participants are subject to arrest.

Freedom of religion is legally recognized and generally respected in practice. Although the government promulgated a decree that forces all non-governmental organizations, including religious organizations, to meet certain requirements, this decree was not enforced and most foreign missionaries have been allowed to evangelize with minimum intervention. There have been no reports of the government banning or dissolving any religious group.

Freedom of movement is severely restricted. Travel is dangerous due to roving bands of soldiers and thieves. Roadblocks are often used to extort money from travelers. In Kinshasa, a nighttime curfew is enforced. In rebel-controlled territories there is substantially more freedom of movement, but it is almost impossible to cross from one zone to the other.

Domestic violence against women, including rape, is common. Although rape is

considered a crime, it is rarely punished by criminal proceedings and it is not considered a significant offense by either the authorities or the media. Women are relegated to second-class citizenship. They serve as field laborers and domestics, and bear sole responsibility for child rearing. They receive less education and are required to seek their husbands' permission before entering into legally binding contracts. Women are able to inherit their husbands' property and receive a settlement in divorce. However, in practice, they are often denied these rights. Female genital mutilation is still practiced in isolated areas in the north. The government has not addressed this issue.

There is almost no government spending on children. Primary school education is not compulsory, free, or in some cases, even available. Parents are expected to pay schoolteachers' salaries, with the result that education only exists where parents have formed a local cooperative. As the country's economic prospects darken, fewer parents have the money to educate their children. Some children as young as age ten serve in the armed forces.

During 1999, Kabila's administration grew increasingly hostile to human rights groups and non-governmental organizations seeking to operate within the country. There are numerous active domestic human rights organizations, although they are frequently harassed and detained. The government has not conducted any investigations into the greatest recent human rights violation of all in the Congo: the mass killing of Tutsis within DROC borders. United Nations' requests to release political prisoners and end capital punishment have gone unheeded.

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# Congo, Republic of the



The Republic of the Congo, also called Congo-Brazzaville, is a country in West Africa. It should not be confused with the Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly Zaire), now commonly called Congo or Congo-Kinshasa. The Republic of the Congo borders the Atlantic Ocean, and is located between Angola and Gabon. Brazzaville is the capital city. The population of approximately 3 million includes four major ethnic groups speaking different primary languages. The largest ethnic group is the Kongo, who represent almost half of the country's population. Before the civil war in 1997, approximately 8,500 Europeans, mostly French, were residing in the country. After the destruction of foreign businesses during the war, many fled the country. About 50 percent of the popula-

tion is Christian. The remainder practice traditional indigenous religions or Islam.

## BACKGROUND

Originally a French colony, Congo achieved independence in 1960. In 1964, it became a one-party state and, in 1967, following a military coup it became a Marxist state. One-party rule lasted until 1992, when President Pascal Lissouba was elected. In 1997, a civil war broke out between President Lissouba's forces and forces supporting Denis Sassou-Nguesso, a northerner belonging to the minority Mbochi ethnic group who served as a president during the period of one-party rule. In October 1997, Sassou-Nguesso prevailed. He established a transitional government, replacing the 1992 constitution with a new Fundamental Act. It is estimated that at least 8,500 Congolese, primarily from the southern regions, fled the country to the Democratic Republic of the Congo between October and December 1998.

The government is led by a strong president who is vested with regulatory powers and the power to appoint all military, executive, and judicial officials. Legislative authority resides in the national transitional council, which replaced the bicameral Parliament after the civil war and is dominated by allies of the government.

Since 1997, civil unrest has been widespread, resulting in thousands of displaced persons and deaths. The economy has also been seriously affected by the civil war. The oil industry remains the primary export and source of revenue. In addition, the country

receives financial assistance from international organizations. Widespread corruption and the high priority given to defense and security investment has created extreme poverty among the population and impedes further economic growth.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

The Republic of the Congo's human rights record is poor. Citizens do not have the right to change their government until a new constitution is approved. A lack of fair representation by various political parties in the legislative body further compromises the exercise of political rights by citizens. The security forces, including former members of progovernment militias and armed forces from Angola, Chad, and other neighboring countries supporting the government, have committed serious human rights abuses. There have been reports of extrajudicial killings, summary executions, disappearances, rape, and other violent acts against rebels and civilians.

Security forces also use arbitrary arrest, detention, torture, and other degrading treatment against prisoners. There are fewer than 100 political prisoners held in detention centers. Prison conditions are harsh, often life threatening. Overcrowding, lack of sanitation, lack of medical care, and inadequate nutrition are major problems.

The judiciary is subject to corruption and executive pressure. In addition, a backlog of cases, untrained personnel, and a lack of resources effectively deny citizens the right to fair and timely trials. Traditional courts handle local disputes. In recent years, the phenomenon of mob violence by vigilantes who render justice against presumed criminals, has been increasing.

Security forces reportedly infringe on the citizens' right to privacy by illegally enter-

ing, searching, and looting private homes. It is also generally believed that authorities monitor mail and telephone conversations. The Fundamental Act provides for freedom of speech and the press. However, the central government maintains a monopoly on the broadcast media and no political views are aired except those supporting governmental policies. There is no state-owned newspaper, and private newspapers occasionally are critical of the government. However, print media are limited in their circulation. The provisional government generally respects freedom of assembly and association. Political parties, workers' unions, and other groups are free to form, provided they respect and cooperate with authorities.

The Fundamental Act condemns discrimination based on race, sex, religion, language, or social status. However, traditional practices still discriminate against women in employment and education, particularly in rural areas. Women continue to be underrepresented in government and politics. Illiteracy among women is higher than among the male population. Violence against women, particularly domestic violence, is widespread, although it often goes unreported.

The welfare of children is generally not respected. There are a conspicuous number of street children in the capital. Laws regarding child labor and compulsory education are not effectively enforced. Although the law protects against discrimination based on disability in education and employment, in reality the government is unable to enforce those provisions due to financial constraints. The law does not mandate accessibility to public buildings for the disabled.

Ethnic discrimination is practiced widely by all ethnic groups. Tensions are especial-

ly evident between the ethnic groups of the more prosperous southern region and those ethnic groups living in the less-developed north. Additionally, discrimination is reported against the indigenous Pygmies, who number in the tens of thousands and live primarily in the northern forest regions. They are considered socially inferior and are therefore denied equal treatment in employment, education, or health care within the predominantly Bantu society.

Workers' rights are not enforced. The observance of safety and health regulations by employers is often lax. The law forbids forced or compulsory labor, including child labor, but such practices are known to occur. Citizens are restricted in their movement within the country by military checkpoints, especially at night and in areas of insecurity. Security forces reportedly extort bribes from travelers.

The Republic of the Congo has shown its commitment to abide by international laws regarding the right to asylum and refugee status. The government has sought the cooperation of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in assisting Rwandans, Angolans, and other ethnic groups who flee from their countries.

There are several domestic human rights organizations operating in the country with minimal restrictions. They publish reports denouncing serious violations of human rights. Occasionally, members of human rights groups have been threatened by the authorities. International human rights organizations, including Amnesty International and the International Federation of Human Rights Leagues, are free to visit the country and collaborate with local human rights and other non-governmental organizations.

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# Costa Rica



The Republic of Costa Rica is situated in Central America. It is bounded on the north by Nicaragua, on the southeast by Panama, on the east by the Caribbean Sea, and on the west by the Pacific Ocean. San Jose is the capital city. Costa Rica has a population of approximately 3.3 million. Costa Ricans are mostly of European descent, particularly from Spain, and are Spanish speaking, with indigenous peoples comprising 1 percent of the population. In addition, descendants of nineteenth-century Jamaican immigrants constitute an English-speaking minority. Most of the population (95 percent) is Roman Catholic; much of the remainder is Evangelical Protestant.

## BACKGROUND

A Spanish colony since 1522, Costa Rica achieved independence in 1821 in a joint effort with other Central American provinces. In 1838, after withdrawing from the Central American Federation, Costa Rica became a sovereign state. The first democratic elections were held in 1899. Federico Tinoco established a dictatorship in 1917 that lasted until 1919. Democracy was restored until 1948, when Jose Figueres organized a military rebellion during a disputed presidential election. A new constitution was adopted, providing for universal suffrage and the abolition of the army. Since then, political stability and peaceful democracy have characterized Costa Rica.

The constitution provides for the division of powers. The president, as the head of government and chief of state, two vice-presidents, and the cabinet make up the executive branch. A unicameral assembly elected every four years comprises the legislature. The Supreme Court of Justice comprises the independent judiciary and is elected by the legislative assembly. The Ministry of Public Security includes the Border Guard, the Rural Guard, and the Civil Guard.

Costa Rica remains an active member of the international community. It has been a strong proponent of human rights and peaceful negotiations to support democracy in Central America countries, such as in Nicaragua and El Salvador, as well as elsewhere in the world. Costa Rica broke rela-

tions with Cuba in 1961 to protest Cuban support of leftist subversion in Central America; since then Costa Rica has not had a diplomatic relationship with Cuba. In 1995, Costa Rica established a migration office in Cuba.

Costa Rica has supported the United States' efforts to implement United Nations Security Council Resolution 940, which was issued in 1994, supporting reestablishment of a democratically elected government in Haiti.

Costa Rica's economy is based primarily on agriculture, commerce, and tourism. Industry activity is growing, thanks mainly to financial assistance from the United States, and as of 1998 reached 22 percent of GDP. Foreign trade takes place mainly with the United States (42 percent), and

Europe (32 percent). Per capita income reached \$2,900 in 1997.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

Costa Rica was the first country to recognize the UN High Commission for Human Rights and the Inter-American Human Rights Court. Costa Rica proclaimed its neutrality in 1995, but remains one the most active members in the international community. Various human rights groups operate without government restriction, investigating and publishing their findings on human rights cases. Government officials are cooperative and responsive to their views. The Costa Rican Commission for Human Rights, the Commission for the Defense of Human Rights in Central America, and the Family

and Friends of Political Prisoners of Costa Rica monitor and report on human rights, as does an ombudsman's office.

Several international organizations concerned with human rights are located in San Jose, including the Inter-American Institute for Human Rights and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

The Costa Rican constitution grants human rights and freedom to its citizens. As a result, the government generally respects the human rights of its citizens, and the law and judiciary have the means of dealing with any abuse in this area. However, lengthy pretrial detention and delays by the judiciary remain a problem in Costa Rica. Although the police respect the rights of the citizens, there were some cases of abuses in the past. In August 1999, there were six reports of police misconduct and the ombudsman's office is still investigating those complaints.

Prisoners receive humane treatment. However, prison overcrowding is a problem in Costa Rica, with the prison population at 67 percent above planned capacity. The government permits prison visits by independent human rights monitors.

The constitution provides for the right to a fair trial, and an independent judiciary vigorously enforces this right. However, persons accused of serious offenses, who are held without bail, sometimes remain in pretrial custody for long periods of time. Lengthy legal procedures, numerous appeals, and large numbers of detainees cause delays and case backlogs. There were 802 accused persons jailed awaiting trial as of March 31, 1998, representing 17 percent of the total prison population.

There are nine major privately owned newspapers, several weekly and monthly periodicals, twenty privately owned television stations, and more than seventy pri-

vately owned radio stations, all of which pursue independent editorial policies. While the media in general freely criticize the government, there were unconfirmed allegations that the government withheld advertising from some publications in order to influence or limit reporting. In 1996, the legislative assembly passed a "right of response" law that provides persons criticized in the media with an opportunity to reply with equal attention and at equal length.

The constitution establishes Roman Catholicism as the state religion, but people of all denominations freely practice their religion without government interference. Religious education teachers, including those in public schools, must be certified by the Roman Catholic Episcopal Conference.

Costa Rica is famous for granting asylum, especially to citizens of other South American countries. In 1998, only one application was refused. The government cooperates with the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other humanitarian organizations in assisting refugees. The constitution specifically prohibits repatriation of anyone subject to potential persecution, and there were no reports of forced expulsion of persons to a country where they feared persecution.

Abuse of women and children is a serious problem in Costa Rica. However, the government has dedicated itself to solving this problem. A law against domestic violence that classified certain acts as criminal was passed. However, reports of the abuse of women and children have increased in recent years. While women are active in all areas of life, including business and government, they often receive smaller salaries than their male counterparts. The government is committed to children's rights and welfare through well-funded systems of public education and medical care.

The Equal Opportunity for Persons with Disabilities Law prohibits discrimination, provides for health care services, and mandates access to buildings for persons with disabilities. This law is not widely enforced, however, and many buildings remain inaccessible to persons with disabilities.

The law specifies the right of workers to join unions of their choosing without prior authorization, although barriers exist in practice. About 15 percent of the workforce is unionized, almost entirely in the public sector. Unions are independent of government control.

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# Cote d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast)



Côte d'Ivoire is situated in West Africa. It is bounded on the north by Mali and Burkina Faso; on the east by Ghana; on the south by the Gulf of Guinea; and on the west by Liberia and Guinea. Although Yamoussoukro is the capital city, Abidjan remains the administrative center and the location of most embassies. Côte d'Ivoire has an ethnically mixed population of approximately 15.8 million. The main groups are Baoule (23 percent), Senoufou (15 percent), Malinke (11 percent), Africans from other countries (20 percent) and non-Africans (2 percent, mainly French and Lebanese). About 60 percent of the population is Muslim. The remainder are Christian (22 percent) or practice indigenous beliefs (18 percent). French is the official language, but numerous native dialects are widely spoken as well.

## BACKGROUND

Côte d'Ivoire is a republic with a strong presidency. A former French colony, Côte d'Ivoire achieved independence in August 1960, when a multiparty presidential regime was established. However, the Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI) has dominated the political scene since independence.

President Henri Konan Bedie has been the chief of state since December 1993, following the death of former president Félix Houphouët-Boigny, who had served since November 1960. He was reelected in 1995, with 96 percent of the vote. Both the presidential and the legislative elections held in 1995 were marred by serious irregularities.

The economy depends largely on agriculture and related activities, engaging 68 percent of the population. Coffee, cocoa, and palm oil are the main exports. Widespread corruption and mismanagement contribute to the uneven distribution of wealth and to the lack of health services and education. The government relies heavily on support from international financial institutions.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

The country's human rights record is poor in several areas. The right of citizens' to change their government is limited in practice. Almost half of the population do not have identification cards, which are necessary to vote. Although opposition parties have been legal since 1990, in reality the ruling PDCI has always controlled both the presidency and the National Assembly. In

A polling station during Côte d'Ivoire's October 1990 elections.

1998, the latter enacted amendments to the constitution to further increase the power of the presidency. The major opposition parties protested against these amendments and large street demonstrations were organized throughout the country. The opposition parties also have repeatedly called for the establishment of an independent electoral commission to supervise elections.

The security forces, including the Special Anticrime Police Brigade (SAVAC), have been responsible for serious human rights abuses. There have been numerous reports of the excessive use of force by the police, including extrajudicial killings. Police often use violence against demonstrators and the government

has rarely pursued the perpetrators.

Neither the constitution nor the penal code protects prisoners in custody against torture or other degrading treatment. Police often beat and torture prisoners or detainees, either during interrogation or as punishment. There are no known reports of governmental officials being tried for these abuses.

Prison conditions are extremely poor. Prisoners die while in custody from many causes, including malnutrition; overcrowding; infectious diseases; lack of sanitation and medical care; and physical abuse. Women give birth in prison without medical attention and often engage in sex-

ual relations with prison guards in exchange for food or other privileges. Although prohibited by law, access to some prisoners is restricted. However, humanitarian non-governmental organizations, including the International Committee for the Red Cross, have had increasing access to prisons in the past few years, and provide basic necessities to prisoners.

Government authorities arbitrarily arrest and detain citizens, and there is no right to a judicial determination of the legality of a defendant's detention. Judges serve at the pleasure of the government and thus are subject to political pressure. The right to a public trial is sometimes denied. No free legal counsel is available.

The government infringes on citizens' right to privacy, including the monitoring of private correspondence and telephone conversations. Police often conduct searches without warrants. There are restrictions on freedom of speech and the press. The private press often criticizes the government, while the government-owned press rarely offers opinions contrary to the government policies. Journalists also practice self-censorship. The government prosecutes under criminal libel law anyone who attacks the honor of the country's highest officials. The government maintains a monopoly over television and radio broadcasts.

Freedom of assembly and association are generally respected. However, occasionally the police violently intervene to break up or suppress public demonstrations organized to protest government policies.

Women are discriminated against in education and employment, and, in general, occupy a subordinate role in society. They are underrepresented in government, in politics and in the management of business. Violence against women, including

domestic abuse, is widespread. Women's advocacy groups have protested the indifference shown by the authorities toward female victims of violence. Although it is considered a crime, female genital mutilation continues to be widely practiced, especially in rural areas.

The welfare of children is often neglected. Most children leave school earlier than prescribed by law. There have been credible reports showing that a substantial percentage of females drop out of primary and secondary school because of pregnancy. Some children go to work on family farms or are employed as domestic help in urban areas. Many end up in the city streets as vendors, shoe shiners, or car window washers. The number of street children in the cities has become an increasing focus of government attention. Children are reportedly harassed and sexually abused by pedophiles. Child labor, including forced or bonded labor, is prohibited by law. However, children are sometimes employed in informal sectors of the economy. There also have been reports that hundreds of Malian children were sold into forced labor on Ivoirian plantations.

Societal discrimination based on ethnicity is widespread. Members of the Baoule group dominate the government and hold the majority of positions in the public sector. African non-citizens are reportedly victims of harassment and violence by the police. Worker's rights are generally given legal protection; in reality, however, health and safety regulations are often not enforced.

The constitution does not officially provide for freedom of movement within the country or abroad, but the government does not restrict these rights in practice. However, police and security forces erect checkpoints on major routes and occa-

sionally extort money from travelers.

The government generally cooperates with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in assisting refugee and asylum seekers. It also cooperates with domestic and international human rights organizations in inquiries regarding human rights violations.

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# Croatia



The Republic of Croatia is a country in southeastern Europe, bordering the Adriatic Sea between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Slovenia. Zagreb is the capital city. The country's population of approximately 4.6 million includes Croats (78 percent), Serbs (12 percent), Muslims (0.9 percent), Hungarians (0.5 percent), Slovenians (0.5 percent), and others. Croatian is the official language. Most of the population is Catholic (77 percent), with most of the remainder being Orthodox Christian (11 percent) or Muslim (1 percent).

## BACKGROUND

Croatia was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, until the collapse of Austria-Hungary in 1918. In October 1918, Croatia pro-

claimed its independence and joined Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia to form the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. With the end of World War II, Croatia became part of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, a newly reestablished communist nation headed by Marshal Tito. With the death of Tito in 1980, the already difficult political and economic situation steadily worsened. In June 1990, the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), supporting nationalism, anticommunism, and privatization, won the first postwar elections. In June 1991, the Croatian Parliament passed a declaration of independence from Yugoslavia. A six-month war against local Serb militias backed by the Serb-dominated Yugoslavian army followed.

A UN cease-fire was arranged in January 1992, and peacekeeping forces were sent to monitor the cease-fire and protect the minority Serbs in Croatia. In a 1993 referendum, the Serb-occupied portion of Croatia (Krajina) voted for integration with Serbs in Bosnia and Serbia. Although the Zagreb government and representatives of Krajina signed a cease-fire in March 1994, further negotiations broke down when Croatia fought to regain lost territory. In August 1995, the central Croatian region of Krajina was recaptured and thousands of Serbs fled the region.

Croatia is formally a constitutional parliamentary democracy. However, President Franjo Tudjman and the Croatian Democratic Party dominated the political scene since independence, establishing an authoritarian rule. The government controlled all media and the judiciary, and limited op-

position parties in the political process. The government restricted freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and freedom of assembly and association by manipulating the laws and by using harassment as a means of intimidation against government opponents. In December 1999, Tudjman died, and in January 2000, the HDZ lost the parliamentary elections to an opposition coalition. The president of Croatia is the head of state and commander-in-chief of the armed forces. The presidency is strong, with an extensive veto power; it may issue decrees with the force of law. The Croatian legislature is a bicameral body. The judiciary is nominally independent.

The country is still proceeding slowly toward a market-based economy. Industry and media enterprises are still largely controlled by the State. The unemployment rate has increased and the standard of living of most of the population has worsened as a result of the protracted war.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

The government's human rights record has improved in some areas, but remains poor in others. The government's ability to impartially prosecute crimes committed by both sides during the 1991–1995 conflict remains questionable. It has been reluctant to cooperate with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) for war crimes associated with the Croatian army operations. There are still thousands of missing persons and there has been progress on the exhumation of bodies at a number of sites. However, efforts to identify the bodies of ethnic Serbs continue to be hampered by political and bureaucratic obstacles.

The police continue to commit human rights abuses, particularly the harassment,

mistreatment, and beating of minorities. In addition, police investigations are not always conducted thoroughly when the victim of a crime is an ethnic Serb. The authorities do not always respect constitutional provisions regarding arrest and detention. Persons who are held under investigation may be denied the right to an attorney. Moreover, there have been reports of numerous cases of pre-trial detentions, particularly of ethnic Serbs who are being held for acts related to the 1991–1995 conflict.

The government does not ensure citizens the right to a fair trial. The judiciary suffers from political influence and the court system has a backlog of over 1 million cases. In addition, judicial decisions often favor ethnic Croats in issues related to property claims made by returning refugees or displaced persons. Prisons are crowded, although they meet minimum international standards.

The government has controlled and censored much of the print and electronic media. The independent press has been the victim of several attacks by the government in the past several years, including lawsuits against and arrests of journalists and editors on libel charges. However, both public and private radio and television stations exist. Foreign newspapers and journals are also available.

A 1997 Law on Associations gives the government the power to prevent an association from forming or to monitor all aspects of an association once it is founded. However, there were no reports of the authorities abusing this law against associations.

Although the constitution prohibits discrimination based on gender, women continue to face discrimination in employment and salary. They generally hold lower-paying positions and are not guaranteed long-term work contracts. In addition, they

remain underrepresented in government and politics. Moreover, violence against women, including sexual harassment and domestic violence, is widespread. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some women are exploited through forced prostitution.

The government has also failed to meet its commitment to foster ethnic reconciliation between Croats and Serbs. It does not protect Serbs, Muslims, and other ethnic minorities against patterns of discrimination in the administration of justice, employment, housing, education, freedom of movement, and citizenship. No minority group has achieved proportional representation in Parliament.

Ethnicity and religion are closely related to each other. Therefore, ethnic tensions are often accompanied by violent attacks on religious institutions. There have been several reports of the defacement of Serbian (Orthodox) cemeteries. Some ethnically motivated killings have been reported as well. Various forms of harassment, including property destruction, forcible evictions, and assaults, commonly occur between home occupiers of one ethnicity and returning homeowners of another. In particular, a large number of ethnic Serbs, who escaped and lost their dwellings during the war, are unable to return to or to regain their property because of a lack of government will to evict ethnic Croat occupiers. They also face numerous obstacles to obtaining financial and health benefits, to which all returnees are entitled by law.

The government allows freedom of movement within the country, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation, except in a few circumstances for security reasons. It generally cooperates with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other human rights organizations in assisting refugee and asylum seekers. With the

refugee crisis in Kosovo, the government accepted up to 5,000 Kosovar refugees. However, there were reports that the authorities occasionally refused to grant asylum status to Kosovar Albanians, and that some of them were expelled to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Within the country, there is still a significant number of displaced persons and refugees who are not under the government's care. The government is proceeding very slowly to verify and legalize the citizenship of hundreds of thousands of ethnic Serbs who fled the country after the military actions in 1995 and who wish to return to Croatia.

Local and international human rights organizations are free to operate in the country. The government-appointed ombudsman meets regularly with human rights representatives and addresses cases brought to his attention. In the past, however, the government's response to problems raised by both the ombudsman and by non-government organizations has not been fully satisfactory.

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# Cuba



The Republic of Cuba is an island country in the Caribbean Sea, situated off the south coast of Florida and east of Mexico. Havana is the capital city. Its population of approximately 11 million is mainly of Spanish and African origins. Santeria, a blend of native African religion and Roman Catholicism, is the most practiced religion. However, Roman Catholicism remains the most organized religious denomination.

## BACKGROUND

A former Spanish colony, Cuba gained independence in 1902 after the United States won the Spanish-American War. The United States, however, retained the right to intervene to preserve Cuba's stability. Cuba's history was characterized by a succession

of military rulers. In 1959, Fulgencia Batista's oppressive regime was overthrown by Fidel Castro, who, in 1961, declared Cuba a socialist state. For the next thirty years, Castro consolidated his power by pursuing strong relations with the Soviet Union. Cuba received substantial Soviet military and economic assistance, which ended in 1991 with the demise of the Soviet Union. By 1993, all Soviet military forces withdrew from Cuba.

Cuba is a totalitarian state controlled by the Communist Party and its affiliated mass organizations, including the government bureaucracy and the state security apparatus. Fidel Castro is the chief of state, head of government, first secretary of the Cuban Communist Party (PCC), and commander-in-chief of the armed forces. The Ministry of Interior is the most important organ of state security and control. The ministry's Department of State Security has the function, among others, to suppress organized opposition and dissent. Fidel Castro is president of the Council of State, the organ vested with all executive and administrative power; Raul Castro, Fidel's brother, is its first vice president. The National Assembly holds the country's legislative power. The judiciary is subordinated to the National Assembly and to the Council of State. The People's Supreme Court is the highest judicial authority. In practice, Cuba is completely under the control of Fidel Castro.

Cuba's economy is organized under Marxist-Leninist precepts. The government has the monopoly of most means of production and employs about 75 percent of

the population. Tourism is the largest sector of the Cuban economy, although sugar remains an important part of the economy. In the 1990s, after a period of economic decline following the loss of Soviet subsidies, the Cuban government launched an economic program to attract foreign tourism and investment. Investments have come from Canada, Italy, the United Kingdom, Mexico, Spain, and France. The failure to launch serious economic reforms has resulted in the development of a large black market and growing corruption.

In general, investors are constrained by the 1996 U.S. Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act, also known as the Libertad, or Helms-Burton Act. The act codifies and tightens enforcement of the U.S. economic embargo; it provides sanctions against those who traffic in property expropriated from U.S. citizens; it states U.S. policy toward a transition or democratic government in Cuba; and it requires the U.S. executive branch to deny visas to, and exclude from the United States, any foreign nationals determined to have confiscated or trafficked in confiscated property claimed by a U.S. citizen.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights reports continue to be poor. The government is responsible for the violation of fundamental civil and political rights of its citizens. The constitution states that all legally recognized liberties can be denied if the person opposes the "decision of the Cuban people to build socialism."

Cubans do not have the legal right to change their government peacefully through free and fair elections. The Communist Party is the only political organization legally recognized by the government and allowed to participate in the national

elections. The twenty-four members of the central party's Politburo and the 149 members of the Central Committee together include most of the country's military and civilian leaders. The constitution provides for direct elections of provincial, municipal, and National Assembly members. However, the government controls the selections and approves candidates through mass organizations, such as the Confederation of Cuban Workers and the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDRs). No opposition candidates have ever been able to run for election. The party monopolizes all government positions, including judicial offices. Communist Party membership is a prerequisite to holding an official position.

In 1996, President Castro signed the Declaration of Vina del Mar at the VI Ibero-American Summit, in which he stated that his government was committed to democracy and political pluralism. However, the last national elections, held in January 1998, demonstrated that the government continues to support the one-party structure.

The national police continue to commit human rights abuses. There were reports of abusive treatment of detainees, prisoners, pro-democracy activists, and human rights advocates who are in custody, in the form of harassment, beating, and torture. In some cases, people died because of excessive use of force by the police and prison guards. The government took little or no action to investigate and convict the perpetrators of those crimes.

The government also continues to arbitrarily arrest and detain independent journalists, human rights activists, and demonstrators. They are usually subject to degrading treatment, physical violence, repeated interrogations, and psychological intimidation to extract confessions. In addition, they are eventually imprisoned

with violent criminals, and thus subjected to further abuse.

Prison conditions are very harsh. Prison officials deny prisoners basic rights, such as family visitation, adequate nutrition, medical attention, and the right of correspondence. The government does not allow domestic and international human rights organizations access to prisons. It has been estimated that 1,600 political prisoners are in custody on charges such as spreading enemy propaganda, illicit association, rebellion, and contempt for the government. They are forced to comply with the rules for common criminals. Exile is also used to control internal opposition.

The judicial courts are subordinate to the Communist Party, which is constitutionally designated as the superior organ of the society and the state. Trials do not meet international standards and do not grant fair due process, especially in cases involving

political offenses. There are no jury trials. Trials are closed to the public in political cases in which the state security is allegedly involved. Legal counsel is often denied to the accused.

The government regularly uses articles included in the penal code to threaten prosecution against suspected criminals and political opposition activists. They may be subjected to therapy or political reeducation when they are considered dangerous to the state. The government also encourages members of state-controlled mass organizations and civilians to publicly repudiate, physically attack, protest, and report against those who are dissident against government policies. Those who refuse to participate in these activities may be subject to disciplinary action and may lose their jobs.

The state interferes with privacy, family, home, and correspondence. The interior

ministry exercises repressive social control through an intricate system of informants and block committees (the CDRs) that report on suspicious activities. People are afraid to speak openly, even in the privacy of their own homes. International correspondence and overseas calls are carefully monitored. The authorities regularly conduct searches without warrants.

The government does not allow freedom of speech or freedom of the press. All print and electronic media are state property controlled by Communist Party. The law forbids any criticism of the revolution and its leaders. The media is used as a means to indoctrinate the public and must reflect government views. Foreign newspapers and magazines are restricted. The government imposes censorship of news and information. Independent journalists and visiting international correspondents are subject to surveillance, internal travel bans, seizure of written material, confiscation of computer and photographic equipment, periodic detention, harassment of family members, and threat of imprisonment. Many have been expelled from the country.

The distribution of information is highly monitored and subject to restrictions. Among what is considered enemy propaganda and false news, the government includes international reports on human rights violations. The government does not allow diplomatic missions in Havana to print or distribute publications without prior government approval. The Cuban Dignity and Sovereignty Law prohibits citizens from providing or seeking information from any representative of the U.S. government. Internet access is limited to certain government officers and foreigners.

The government restricts academic, artistic, and literary freedom. The educational system supports the state's ideology in con-

tent and in practice. Teachers are required to evaluate the students' character, and file reports that affect the students' future educational and career opportunities. Universities are available only to those who share Castro's revolutionary beliefs.

Citizens are denied their rights of peaceful assembly and free association. All legally recognized associations are affiliated or controlled by the government. The law punishes unauthorized meetings and is used to harass or arrest members of human rights organizations and other groups. Consequently, domestic human rights groups function illegally, and the government refuses to consider applications for their legal recognition. In addition, the government does not allow international human rights monitoring, including visits of the United Nations Special Reporter for Human Rights.

Labor organizations are under the control of the state and the Communist Party. Their function is to ensure that governmental goals are met; they do not act as trade unions for promotion of individual workers' rights. Strikes and independent unions are prohibited. Workers can lose their jobs for their political beliefs or for refusing to join the official union.

Freedom of religion is severely restricted. Cuba has been an atheist state for most of the Castro era. However, a constitutional amendment adopted in 1992 changed Cuba into a secular state, enabling religious believers to belong to the Cuban Communist Party, which had been prohibited.

All churches and religious groups are required to register to obtain official recognition. Members of the armed forces and their families are not allowed to observe religious practices, which are considered dangerous to the revolution's ideology. In January 1998, Pope John Paul II was allowed to visit Cuba and celebrate Mass. The government

further relaxed its restriction on religion and announced that citizens would be allowed to celebrate Christmas as an official holiday. However, the government continues to ignore the Pope's appeal to recognize the church's role in Cuban society. In addition, it continues to restrict the church's access to the media, and maintains its prohibition against the establishment of religiously affiliated schools. Although some foreign priests and nuns were allowed to enter the country, many have been denied entry visas or their applications are still pending.

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on sex, race, disability, or social status, and the government generally enforces these provisions. However, there were reports of police harassment of black youths, and forced expulsion of individuals and families from Havana to the poor, predominantly black and mixed, eastern provinces.

The law does not mandate access to public buildings for people with disabilities.

Although illegal, forced labor by children is permitted by the government. Students over age eleven are required to work in the farming sector, without compensation, for up to eight hours a day during their summer vacation.

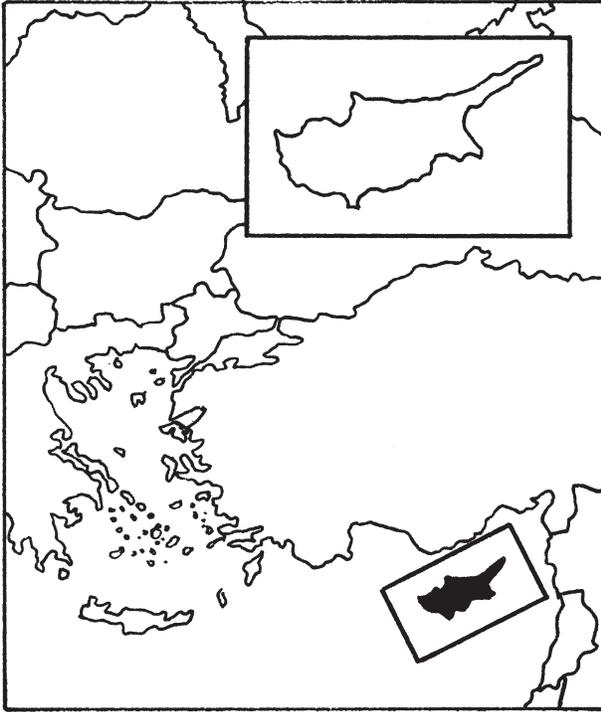
Citizens do not enjoy freedom of movement. There are restrictions on both domestic and foreign travel. They particularly apply to human rights activists and independent journalists. The authorities occasionally deny exit permits without formal explanation to persons who qualify for immigrant or refugee status in other countries. In addition, migrants and approved refugees often are unable to pay the high exit fees imposed by the government. The government provides first asylum and does not force persons to return to countries where they fear persecution.

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# Cyprus



Cyprus is a republic situated at the north-eastern end of the east Mediterranean basin. Cyprus is the third-largest island in the Mediterranean Sea, with an area of 3,572 square miles and a population of approximately 754,000, of whom 78 percent are Greek-Cypriots, 18 percent are Turkish-Cypriots, and 4 percent are foreigners. The official languages are Greek and Turkish, with English often used as a second language and widely understood by both ethnic groups. The state religion is Christian Orthodoxy for the Greek-Cypriot majority and Islam for the Turkish-Cypriot minority.

## BACKGROUND

The Republic of Cyprus joined the United Nations on September 20, 1960, soon after

independence, and gradually became a member of nearly all UN specialized agencies. Cyprus is also a member of the Council of Europe and the Commonwealth, formerly known as the British Commonwealth. Cyprus participates in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. It has a Customs Union Agreement with the European Union and applied on July 4, 1990, to become a full member. It maintains economic relations with a host of foreign countries and international organizations. Cyprus is also a founding member of the non-aligned movement.

Cyprus has played an important role in the history of the eastern Mediterranean because of its privileged geographic position on the crossroads between the East and the West. Because of its geographic position, Cyprus has also suffered many attacks, invasions and occupations throughout its long history that can be traced back to the eighth century B.C.E.

Today, Cyprus suffers under military occupation of 38 percent of its territory by Turkey, the result of Turkey's invasion of the island in July 1974. The Turkish invasion was prompted by claims of the island's ethnic Turkish inhabitants that their rights were being violated.

Because of the Turkish military occupation, the government of Cyprus has been prevented from exercising any form of control, power, or authority over the areas under Turkish occupation, and therefore provides no protection for human, civil, and other rights of the Cypriot population living in these locations.

Nearly one-third of the Cypriot population was displaced from their homes and properties in the Turkish-occupied areas and has lived in refugee camps since 1974. They are refused the right to return to their homes, despite resolutions in their favor from the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the European Union, and other organizations, and despite the favorable judgments of the European Court of Human Rights.

The president of the Republic of Cyprus is elected by universal suffrage for a five-year term. The executive power is exercised by the president through a ten-member Council of Ministers.

The Cyprus Parliament is composed of eighty members, fifty-six of whom are elected by the Greek-Cypriots, and twenty-four by the Turkish-Cypriots for a five-year term by universal suffrage among the two respective ethnic parts of the population. Since 1963, the leaders of the Turkish-Cypriot minority have prevented the members of their community from electing their twenty-four representatives, therefore the twenty-four seats of the Cyprus Parliament have been vacant since that time. The Maronite, Armenian, and Latin religious groups residing in Cyprus are also represented by one representative each.

The establishment and function of political parties is absolutely free. There are eight political parties at present, five of which are represented in the Parliament.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

The 1960 constitution of the Republic of Cyprus provides for a full enjoyment of human rights by the Cypriot population and by those residing in or visiting Cyprus. Articles 6 to 35 of the constitution are, more or less, a reproduction of the European

Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and they are interpreted and implemented by the courts according to the principles and guidelines of the European judicial bodies.

Freedom of conscience, expression, thought, speech, assembly, association, and religion are safeguarded by the constitution. Freedom of the press and the right to criticize the government and public officers are adequately granted.

The island's independent judiciary exercises the administration of justice. Acts and decisions of the administration are subject to the judicial control of a supreme court, while the constitutionality of any law is also under the judicial control of the courts. The appointment, promotion, transfer, termination of appointment, and disciplinary control of all judicial officers is entrusted by the constitution to the Supreme Council of Judicature, which is composed of the president and the judges of the supreme court.

The institution of the ombudsman, initiated in July 1991, provides an extrajudicial check on the acts or omissions of the administration. The ombudsman, as an independent officer of the state, investigates any complaints submitted by individuals, and suggests remedies in cases in which a violation of the constitution, the law, or the proper administrative practice is proven.

In 1998, a National Organization for Human Rights was established by a decision of the Council of Ministers. The organization is composed of representatives of governmental departments and non-governmental organizations, and is divided into two sections. The main task of the first section, consisting of government representatives, is to monitor the implementation of international human rights instruments in Cyprus and to draft the reports submitted

by the state to the relevant international bodies about this implementation. The second section, consisting of representatives of the non-governmental organizations, has the authority to investigate complaints submitted by individuals regarding human rights violations, and to present suggestions for the improvement of human rights standards to the government.

Three specialized human rights non-governmental organizations, officially registered according to the relevant legislation, function in the Republic of Cyprus. Several other organizations focus on specific human rights issues, such as the rights of women, the rights of economic emigrants and foreign workers, and the rights of those infected with HIV. There is also an Amnesty International section and a Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights.

These organizations exercise pressure on the state to make positive strides regarding human rights safeguards. They also play a very constructive role in educating people, especially the youth, about their rights and freedoms, and about how to defend and claim them.

There is fair access to health care and very good access to every level of public education, which is free at all levels, from elementary school to the university. Unfortunately, social services do not meet the expected standards in the area of social welfare, but they are adequate in terms of social security for the elderly.

Women participate in the economic, social, cultural, and political life of the island. Despite that, the number of women participating in politics is reduced because many

Cypriots believe in upholding the traditional roles for women as wives and mothers. Non-discrimination against women is improving in Cyprus through the ratification of international conventions, and through the monitoring of the enforcement of existing laws by the courts.

Incidents of violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms by law-enforcement personnel are reported from time to time. Such incidents concern mainly police brutality against foreign workers and economic emigrants, and against youth groups demonstrating for various issues. Complaints against such police behavior, submitted to the attorney general by human rights organizations and individuals, are investigated by independent criminal investigators. As a result, some police officers have been brought before criminal courts.

The Cypriot community, with its small size and geographic isolation, does display signs of discrimination and intolerance against foreign workers and economic emigrants.

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# Czech Republic



The Czech Republic is located in East-Central Europe. It is bounded on the northeast by Poland; on the east and south by Slovakia; on the south by Austria; and on the west and northwest by Germany. Prague is its capital. Czechs (95 percent), Germans, Gypsies (Roma), Poles, Silesians, and Slovaks compose its population of more than 10 million. The official religion is Roman Catholicism. The official language is Czech.

## BACKGROUND

The former Czechoslovakia was founded in 1918, after World War I, from territories of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In 1938, Germany occupied Czechoslovakia, which remained part of Germany for the duration

of World War II. In 1945, Czechoslovakia was “liberated” by the Soviet Army. In 1948, the Communist Party, supported by the Soviet Army, assumed power in Czechoslovakia after a coup. The country then became part of the Warsaw Pact and COMECON. In 1989, the communist regime was overthrown by the “velvet revolution.” In 1990, 22,000 political prisoners were released and the Soviet Union agreed to withdraw its troops. In 1993, divided by ethnic tensions between Czechs and Slovaks, Czechoslovakia split into the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

The Czech Republic is a parliamentary republic, whose constitution was signed on December 16, 1992. The president, the prime minister, and the cabinet form the executive branch. Two bodies form the legislature: the Chamber of Deputies (the Czech National Council) and the Senate. The supreme and national courts represent the judiciary, which is independent.

The economy of the Czech Republic is one of the most developed among the emerging republics of the former Soviet block. However, the Czech Republic is still struggling through the transition from a centralized economy linked to the Soviet Union to a free-market economy. Czech manufacturers lost all their markets among the eastern communist countries. In addition, the Czech Republic lacks energy resources and sufficient raw materials. Today, heavy industry and agriculture are the country’s main activities, and Western countries represent its main commercial partners.

A petrochemical factory belches pollution into the environment.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

The constitution of the Czech Republic guarantees its citizens respect for human rights and freedom, and the government respects these provisions. However, there are still problems of discrimination and skinhead violence, especially against Jews and Roma.

During 1998, there were some reports of the excessive use of violence by the police in containing a group of anarchists and environmentalists who were rioting in Prague, causing damage to cars and shops. The Office for the Documentation and Investigation of the Crimes of Communism continues its investigation of cases of torture during the communist era.

According to human rights observers, Czech prisons meet minimum international standards despite some overcrowding. The prison system was at 114 percent of capacity in August 1998.

Police may hold a suspect in custody for up to forty-eight hours before giving a suspect access to legal assistance. Pretrial detention can be very long. The average pretrial detention period is two years, but can be extended to up to four years for exceptional cases under the criminal code. For certain crimes bail cannot be granted. In addition, the judicial system is experiencing a backlog of cases due to a lack of experienced police investigators. As of July 1998, approximately 50 percent of detainees were awaiting trial.

The law prohibits exile, and the government respects this provision. However, following the formation of the Czech Republic in 1993, local courts and police have expelled all Slovaks without proper citizenship or residency papers. Most of them were Slovak Roma. This is clearly a result of racism. In February 1998, presidential amnesty was granted to those who received expulsion, but some courts have not implemented it.

The law grants a fair trial to all citizens. Nevertheless, the 1991 Lustration Law, issued to prevent communist-era collaborators from being given high state responsibilities, has been criticized for violating human rights principles, because it discriminates in employment and assigns collective guilt. Moreover, the information on collaborators came from the communist secret police logs, which were widely incomplete and unreliable. In 1998, of ninety-nine cases considered for prosecution under the Lustration Law, action was recommended against forty-two people; twenty-seven cases resulted in criminal punishment.

The law provides for freedom of speech and the press, and there are a variety of newspapers, magazines, and journals owned by private individuals or firms operating without government interference. There are three television stations, two private and one public, and sixty private radio stations and one public radio station (Czech Public Radio).

The Czech Republic grants asylum and cooperates with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other humanitarian organizations in assisting refugees. The law for asylum and refuge is in accordance with the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of

Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. The Czech Republic provides refugees with a reception center, three camps, and six integration centers. Human rights groups operate without government restriction, and the authorities are usually cooperative and responsive.

Citizens above age eighteen are eligible to vote. However, many members of the Roma community are not enjoying this right because they were not granted citizenship after the split between the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

The rate of violence against women is not known because attention is not given to the problem in spite of many women's efforts. According to some studies, 11 to 19 percent of women experience sexual abuse by their husbands or partners. In addition, the law does not directly address the problem of spousal abuse, although the legal code covers some cases of domestic violence. Moreover, police personnel are not experienced in dealing with such cases. However, there are fifty-four state-supported shelters around the country, providing medical and social assistance. Women enjoy the same rights under the law as do men in terms of pay. However, women's salaries are still 25 percent lower than those of men, although the gap is being reduced.

The government is committed to children's welfare, with programs providing health care, education, and nutrition. In 1995, a children's crisis center was established with 70 percent state support.

The disabled experience difficulties in finding jobs, and in obtaining access to buildings and public transportation. Education for the disabled is a problem because of architectural barriers, although there is one barrierfree school in each district.

Racial and ethnic discrimination is still a problem, especially for Jews and Roma. In spite of all government efforts, the members of the Roma community are far from being integrated into society. Workers have the right to strike, but before declaring a strike, the law requires a mediation to take place. Union membership declined during the year 1999.

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# Denmark



The Kingdom of Denmark consists of a peninsula and a number of islands in Northern Europe, bounded on the south by Germany, and on the west by the North Sea. Denmark has a population of over 5 million. Copenhagen is the capital city. Denmark became a constitutional monarchy in 1849. Queen Margrethe II is the head of state and appoints both the prime minister and the cabinet ministers, who administer the government. Legislative power is held by the unicameral Parliament (the Folketing) whose leaders are elected by a system of proportional representation and can dismiss the cabinet by a vote of no con-

fidence. The judiciary is independent. The Danish government also represents the Faroe Islands and Greenland.

Denmark was invaded by Germany in 1940 and liberated by the Allies in 1945. Since then, it has been a charter member of the United Nations. It was also a founding member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

The major ethnic groups are Scandinavians, Eskimos, Faeroese, and Germans. The principal religious denomination is the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Danish, Faroese, Greenlandic, and German are the main languages, with English as the predominant secondary language.

Denmark's industrialized economy and liberal trade policy within the European Union provide a very high standard of living to its citizens. Unemployment is low. It is one of the few countries to exceed the United Nations goal of assisting developing countries. A well-developed welfare system guarantees that all Danes receive basic health care and public support if needed.

The government grants and, through the judiciary, enforces human rights provisions for its citizens. It also cooperates with human rights groups in their investigations and in publishing their findings. Citizens can change their government by means of periodic, fair, and free elections based on universal suffrage.

Women are active and participate equally in the public and private sectors. They are also well represented in the government. However, some wage inequalities still

Squatters clash with police, 1993.

persist. Women imported from Eastern Europe for the purpose of prostitution represent a major social problem.

Children's welfare is highly protected by the government. The law prohibits physical punishment of children by adults, including parents. There are no reports of societal discrimination against disabled persons.

Some tension exists between Danes and refugees or immigrants, especially with those from Somalia and the former Yugoslavia. The government has modified immigration laws so that immigrants or refugees have to be residents for three years before acquiring permanent resident status. Additionally, they have to demonstrate their complete integration into society. One of the more recent immigration laws has

been criticized by human rights organizations for its potential to discriminate against refugees by granting them 20 percent fewer social benefits than those enjoyed by Danish citizens.

*Michela Zonta*

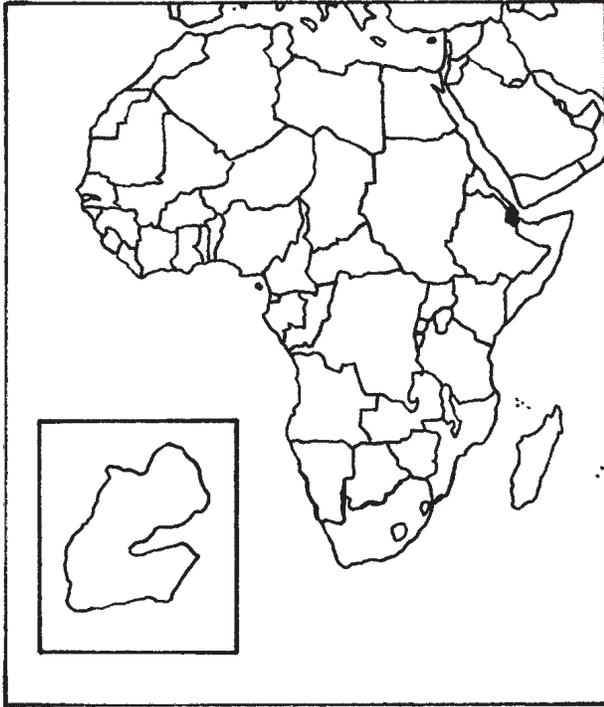
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# Djibouti



Previously known as the French Territory of the Afars and the Issas, Djibouti gained its independence from France in 1977. Djibouti is slightly smaller than the state of Massachusetts, and it is located in eastern Africa, bordering the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea. Its capital city is Djibouti, and its current head of state is President Ismail Omar Guelleh. The population is approximately 450,000. The majority of Djiboutians belong to the Somali ethnic group, although the Afar form a significant minority. French, Arabs, Ethiopians, and Italians comprise about 5 percent of the total populace.

## BACKGROUND

The economy is primarily based on service activities connected with the country's

strategic location (all shipping through the Suez Canal must pass the coast of Djibouti) and its status as a free-trade zone. Djibouti serves as a transit port for all of eastern Africa and as a refueling center for international cargo ships.

Because the climate is dry, there is very little arable land and most food must be imported. Djibouti suffers from an extremely high unemployment rate.

On April 9, 1999, Djibouti elected its second president since gaining its independence. International and local observers reported that the elections were generally free and fair, citing only minor technical glitches.

The 8,000-member National Police Force (FNP) is responsible for internal security and border control. The FNP is in turn overseen by the Ministry of Interior. The army is a separate entity, overseen by the Ministry of Defense. The president has his own security force, the Gendarmerie Nationale, which is an autonomous unit, responsible only to the executive. Djibouti also has a small intelligence agency, which reports directly to the president.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

Djibouti's human rights record is poor. The last parliamentary elections, which took place in 1997, were riddled with fraud. The People's Rally for Progress, Djibouti's ruling party, continues to use its power to suppress organized opposition. Ethnic strife between Somalis and Afars has weakened the government's ability to maintain order. The judiciary is not independent of the executive

branch. It is therefore not impartial, and many prisoners have been held for years without trial. The government continues to infringe on its citizens' rights to privacy, freedom of speech, and freedom of the press.

Some members of the FNP and other security agencies have committed human rights abuses. On April 27, 1999, government forces killed three private citizens and left a fourth for dead, reportedly in retaliation for a series of land mine explosions that killed several soldiers. There were many reports of fighting involving the Djiboutian army and Afar rebels. In 1998, gendarmes killed one man and injured another in downtown Djibouti, when they shot into a crowd while attempting to make an arrest. The gendarmerie was able to avoid an investigation into the incident, and no punitive action has been taken against the gendarmes involved. Also in 1998, security forces killed two Afar community leaders in the countryside, ostensibly in retaliation for another land mine explosion.

There have been no reports of politically motivated kidnappings or disappearances. Perpetrators of torture in Djibouti are subject to fifteen years in prison, although there is evidence that police often beat and otherwise torture prison inmates. Five unrelated cases were brought against the government in 1999, alleging torture and other physical abuse while the plaintiffs were in prison. One such report states that police beat a civilian after trying to force him to walk on a land mine.

Prison conditions are harsh and prisons are overcrowded. One prison, built for 350 inmates, houses twice that number. Food is so scarce that inmates must bribe prison guards to obtain it. Sources within the prison system report that they have seen evidence suggesting that prison guards routinely rape women inmates. Medical care is

inadequate. In April 1999, approximately forty inmates in one prison went on a hunger strike to protest the conditions. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) sent a delegation from nearby Kenya to observe and report on the prison conditions in Djibouti, but they were denied access.

Interference from the executive branch hampers private citizens' right to a fair trial, even in non-political cases.

The Djiboutian constitution provides for freedom of the press, but at times this right has been denied in practice. There are many opposition-run newspapers that are extremely critical of the government and that circulate freely, but newspaper vendors who sell opposition papers are occasionally arrested or intimidated by the police. In April 1999, the government banned one radio station from broadcasting Radio France International (RFI) for a period of several weeks after RFI reported on a hunger strike in Paris protesting prison conditions in Djibouti. In August, two leading opposition newspaper editors were arrested and held on charges of distributing false information. During their six-month imprisonment, both of their newspapers were banned from publication. The ban was subsequently lifted and the editors were both later released.

Djibouti citizens' right to assembly is also restricted. In February 1999, police arrested and detained three opposition party leaders and six busloads of their supporters for several hours after using tear gas to break up their rally. In March of the same year, police used tear gas to break up a rally of around 1,000 people for the opposition presidential candidate, Moussa Ahmed Idriss. Seventeen people were arrested, and several of the participants were severely beaten.

For the most part, the government of Djibouti respects freedom of religion in prac-

tice. Religious groups have to register with the government, but there have been no reports that the government refused registration to any religious group. The government discourages proselytizing.

Although wife beating and rape remain problems, reports of violence against women are rare. The government has shown concern over the problem of rape and has revised the Penal Code to include sentences of up to twenty years for convicted rapists, although the government has shown hesitancy to use rape as a charge. The police rarely intervene in domestic disputes. Soldiers systematically rape Afar women in rural provinces, and very few charges have been filed for these incidents because the victims are ashamed and fearful of reprisal. Few women attain managerial or professional positions, and traditional Islamic law discriminates against women in most civil, domestic, and economic matters.

There are almost no public funds dedicated to the advancement of children's rights and welfare. Although primary education is compulsory, the government does not monitor compliance. Most schools are in disre-

pair and lack sufficient educational materials. More than 53 percent of primary and secondary school students are illiterate—only 32 percent of girls are able to read, as compared with 60 percent of boys. The government has not addressed the issue of child abuse. When a child is abused, the perpetrator is usually only fined the cost of the child's medical care.

The government has not been cooperative with human rights groups. The government intermittently detained and released the leaders of two domestic human rights organizations during 1998 and 1999. The Red Cross manages to maintain a small, locally staffed office.

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# Dominican Republic



The Dominican Republic is located in the West Indies, and occupies the eastern two-thirds of the Island of Hispaniola, with Haiti occupying the western third. The Atlantic Ocean bounds it on the east, and the Caribbean Sea bounds it on the west. Santo Domingo is the capital. The population of approximately 8 million is primarily of a mixed ethnicity (73 percent). Other groups include Europeans (16 percent) and Africans (11 percent). Catholicism is the major religious denomination (96 percent). The official language is Spanish.

## BACKGROUND

The Dominican Republic was proclaimed independent in 1844 after a victorious revolution against Haiti led by Don Pablo

Duarte, the national hero. In 1930, a military coup led by Rafael Trujillo established a dictatorship that lasted until 1961 when the dictator was assassinated. Democratic elections took place in 1962. However, in 1963 another coup reestablished the dictatorship. In 1965, the U.S. Marines intervened and restored democracy.

The Dominican Republic is a representative democracy. The president and the cabinet make up the executive branch of government. The Senate and the Chamber of Deputies represent the legislative branch. The Supreme Court represents the judicial branch.

The Dominican Republic is a middle-income developing country primarily dependent on agriculture, trade, and services, especially tourism. Tourism accounts for more than \$1 billion in annual earnings. Free-trade-zone earnings and tourism are the fastest growing economic sectors.

The Dominican Republic belongs to the UN and many of its specialized and related agencies, including the World Bank, the International Labor Organization, the International Atomic Energy Agency, and the International Civil Aviation Organization. It is also a member of the Organization of American States, the Inter-American Development Bank, and INTELSAT.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

The Dominican constitution grants human rights to the citizens of the Dominican Republic. However, violations of human rights by police and state officials are still reported frequently. In 1998, there were no offi-

One of many families made homeless by the government's decision to build a huge monument to Christopher Columbus.

cial reports of political killings by the police, but there were a number extrajudicial killings reported, slightly more than in 1997. Police tribunals on occasion have tried, convicted, and sentenced government personnel charged with extrajudicial killings. Police courts sentenced fifty members of the police (thirty-nine enlisted persons and eleven officers) convicted of serious crimes, while the authorities dismissed a number of other members of the police and remanded their cases to the civilian court system.

Torture and other forms of physical abuse are illegal, but allegations continue of security service personnel physically abusing detainees. Lack of supervision,

training, and accountability throughout the law enforcement and corrections system exacerbate the problem of physical abuse. Human rights groups and the press have reported many incidents of physical abuse of detainees while in custody. Penalties for torture and physical abuse were toughened by a law passed in 1997 that provides for sentences ranging from ten to fifteen years in prison. However, these provisions were not fully known or enforced by prosecutors and judges, and some sentences were less than that stipulated by law.

The constitution provides that authorities may detain suspects for a maximum of forty-eight hours before arraignment, after which they must charge or release them,

although in special circumstances, suspects may be detained for longer periods with the approval of the prosecutor's office. However, the security forces continue to violate constitutional provisions by detaining suspects for investigation or interrogation beyond the prescribed forty-eight-hour limit.

Although the constitution stipulates an independent judiciary, interference from other public and private entities, including the executive branch, undermines judicial independence. The constitution provides for public trial and for representation by counsel. During the closed pretrial investigative phase of the criminal justice process, the state traditionally provides no counsel to imprisoned indigents. In August, the government inaugurated a small (thirteen-person) public defender organization to provide service to indigent defendants in the Santo Domingo metropolitan area. Where no public defender is available, the judges assign indigent cases to seventy part-time, private attorneys, whose services are paid for by the state.

The security forces have been accused of a number of human rights abuses. The security forces have detained relatives and friends of suspects to try to compel suspects to surrender. The police allegedly followed a leader of a human rights group on several occasions in late 1997.

Haitians continue to migrate in great numbers to the Dominican Republic, some legally, but most without legal documents, in search of economic opportunity. At any given time, the security forces, particularly the army, deport undocumented Haitian nationals believed to be in the country illegally. International observers estimated that the Dominican government deports more than 10,000 Haitians a year. In many

cases, the government denied those deported the opportunity to demonstrate that they resided legally in the Dominican Republic.

The government cooperates with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other humanitarian organizations in assisting refugees. Non-governmental human rights organizations operate freely without government interference. In addition to the Dominican Human Rights Committee, the National Human Rights Commission, and the non-government Truth Commission, several Haitian, church, women's, and labor groups exist.

Domestic violence and sexual harassment are widespread. Under the 1997 Law Against Domestic Violence, the state can prosecute a suspect for rape, even if the victim does not file charges. This law also allows a rape victim to press charges against her husband without having her marriage annulled. However, because the law was passed relatively recently, its effectiveness in enhancing women's lives is yet to be determined. The government's Office of Women's Issues assists women with outreach programs on domestic violence and legal rights. In May 1998, the government opened a center for the forensic examination of abused women, which handled ten to fifteen cases a day, most of them involving minors. However, there still are no shelters for battered women. The government does not enforce the law against prostitution.

Women do not share equal social and economic treatment or opportunity with men. In many instances, women are paid less than men are in equal jobs and with equal skills. Some employers in industry reportedly give pregnancy tests to women before hiring them, as part of a required medical examination. Union leaders and

human rights advocates report that pregnant women often are not hired.

Private social and religious institutions carry out most of the child welfare work, although there are government institutions for that purpose. The most serious abuse involving children is the failure of the judicial system to protect the status of minors in criminal cases. The authorities sometimes treat minors as adults and incarcerate them in prison rather than juvenile detention centers. According to local monitors, instances of child abuse were underreported because of traditional beliefs that family problems should be dealt with privately by the family. However, child abuse is receiving increased public attention. Some in the tourist industry have facilitated the sexual exploitation of children. Some tours are marketed overseas with the understanding that children can be obtained as sex partners.

Disabled persons encounter discrimination in employment and in the provision of other services. However, since 1997 the government has made many efforts to improve conditions for the disabled.

A strong prejudice against Haitians runs through Dominican society, harming many Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian ancestry. The government has not acknowledged the existence of this discrimination nor has it made any effort to combat it. Darker-skinned Dominicans also face informal barriers to social and economic advancement.

The constitution provides the freedom for the workers to organize unions and to strike. Unions represent all workers except the military and the police.

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# Ecuador



The Republic of Ecuador is located in western South America, on the Pacific Ocean. It has borders with Colombia and Peru. Its population, estimated to be 12.5 million, is composed of indigenous peoples (25 percent), mestizos (55 percent), Africans (percent), Spanish and others (10 percent). Quito is the capital city. Roman Catholicism is the principal religion. Spanish is the official language, although indigenous languages such as Quichua—the Ecuadorian dialect of Quechua—are spoken.

## BACKGROUND

Ecuador is rich in oil resources and agricultural products. The economy is based on private enterprise, although the government is heavily involved in such key sec-

tors as petroleum, utilities, and aviation. The major exports are oil, bananas, and shrimp. Because of inadequate fiscal stabilization measures, corruption in the government, and high domestic interest rates, the country has experienced uneven economic growth in recent years. In 1995, Ecuador joined the World Trade Organization, but did not comply with many of its rules. In 1998, after a brief increase in economic activity, Ecuador's economic growth was adversely affected by lower world oil prices and by poor weather caused by the El Niño weather patterns.

Before the Spanish arrived and defeated the Inca armies in 1534, the territory had long been inhabited by advanced indigenous cultures. During the first decades of Spanish rule, the indigenous population was decimated by disease and mistreatment. Independence from Spain was achieved on May 24, 1822. The nineteenth century was characterized by instability and a rapid succession of rulers. After World War II, following years of political instability and military coups, the country finally achieved prosperity and peace. This lasted until the populist politics and domestic military interventions of the 1960s. A nationalist military regime ruled the country from 1972 to 1979, after which Ecuador returned to democracy.

Ecuador is a member of the United Nations and the Organization of American States, as well as of a number of regional groups, including the Rio Group, the Latin American Economic System, the Latin American Energy Organization, the Latin American Integration Association, and the Andean Pact.

The national government has separate executive, legislative, and judicial branches. The executive branch consists of the president and fourteen cabinet ministers. A unicameral Congress represents the legislative branch, whereas the judicial branch consists of a supreme court, provincial courts, and ordinary civil and criminal judges. The military enjoys substantial autonomy, whereas the national police fall under the civilian Ministry of Government and Police.

#### HUMAN RIGHTS

According to human rights monitors, the politicized, inefficient, and corrupt legal and judicial system is responsible for a number of human rights abuses. Although the constitution provides for an independent judi-

ciary, in practice the judiciary is susceptible to outside political pressures and the payment of bribes, and operates slowly and inconsistently. Furthermore, both the police and the military are often involved in human rights abuses.

Persons are frequently subject to arbitrary arrest, and, once incarcerated, may wait years before being convicted or acquitted unless they pay bribes. Although the law prohibits incommunicado detention, this practice is frequently adopted. The large majority of prisoners in jail have not been formally sentenced. The authorities often do not observe internationally accepted due process rights for criminal defendants, and there are relatively few public attorneys available to defend the large number of indigent suspects. Extrajudicial killings and mistreatment of pris-

oners by the police are very common. There have been several allegations of extrajudicial killings committed by drunken police members. Although torture and similar forms of intimidation are prohibited by the law, police often abuse suspects and prisoners, usually without fear of punishment. Among the most common forms of torture used by the police are burning with cigarettes, applying electric shocks, and psychological threats.

Prison conditions are very poor. Overcrowding constitutes a major problem, although it has been reduced recently. There are no separate facilities for dangerous criminals and minor offenders, and there are no effective rehabilitation programs.

The constitution provides for freedom of speech. The authorities usually respect this provision, although charges of slander and libel brought by and against public figures are frequent. Furthermore, although there is freedom of the press, some degree of self-censorship is practiced in the print media, particularly when political or military issues are involved. The constitution also provides for freedom of association and for the right of free assembly, and the government generally respects these rights in practice.

The government respects freedom of religion and allows religious demonstrations by all religions. By contrast, discrimination against women, Afro-Ecuadorians, and indigenous people is widespread, despite the fact that the constitution prohibits dis-

crimination based on race, religion, sex, or social status. Violence against women, including abuse within marriage, is a serious problem. Although many rapes occur, few are reported because of victims' reluctance to confront perpetrators. Women particularly experience discrimination in the areas of educational and economic opportunities.

Poor children, especially in urban areas, often experience severe hardships. Child prostitution is common, and although the constitution states that children must attend school until age fourteen, children often leave school at an early age in order to support themselves or to augment the family income.

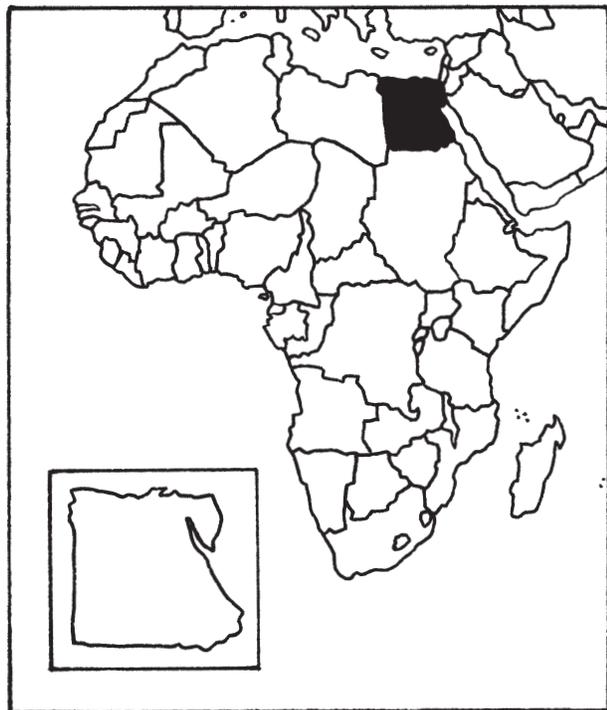
The indigenous peoples of Ecuador are at the bottom of the socioeconomic scale, and Indians and Afro-Ecuadorian citizens suffer pervasive discrimination. Disabled persons are not provided with any special government assistance, nor are there laws to guarantee access to public buildings or services.

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# Egypt



The Arab Republic of Egypt is situated in North Africa, bounded on the north by the Mediterranean Sea, on the east by the Red Sea and the Suez Canal, on the south by Sudan, and on the west by Libya. It controls the Sinai Peninsula, the only land bridge connecting Africa with Asia, and the Suez Canal, a sea link between the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean. Cairo is the capital city. One of the most populous countries in the Arab world and the second most populous on the African continent, Egypt has a population of approximately 67 million, mainly of Hamitic origin. Ethnic minorities include Bedouin Arab nomads living in the eastern and western deserts and in Sinai, and Nubians concentrated along the Nile in Upper Egypt. Islam is the state religion. About 94 percent of

the population are Sunni Muslim, while the remainder are mostly Coptic Christians. Arabic is the official language; French and English are widely understood by members of the educated classes.

## BACKGROUND

Because of its location, Egypt has always played a major role in Middle Eastern geopolitics. After achieving independence from the United Kingdom in 1922, Egypt remained under British political influence. In 1952, following an outbreak of violence between Egyptians and British in the canal area, Lt. Col. Gamal Abdel Nasser led a military coup that overthrew King Farouk. Egypt was declared a republic the following year. Nasser's anti-Israeli policies provoked the Suez war in 1956, and the war of June 1967, in which Egypt's military forces were defeated. As a result, Egypt lost the Sinai Peninsula to Israel.

Nasser's successor, Anwar el-Sadat, signed the historic Camp David accords in 1978. As a consequence of this treaty, Egypt regained control of the Sinai Peninsula and relations with the United States improved. Sadat's domestic policy aimed at promoting political freedom and liberalization. In October 1981, he was assassinated by Islamic extremists. Hosni Mubarak, who had been vice president since 1975, was elected president shortly afterward. Mubarak was reelected in October 1987, and again in October 1993. Mubarak has maintained Egypt's commitment to the Camp David peace accords. Egypt played a key role during the 1990–1991 Persian Gulf

war, with its military contingent representing the second-largest coalition forces. It also played an important role in the Madrid Peace Conference in 1991, and in ongoing discussions promoting peace in the Middle East.

The constitution provides for a strong executive. The president appoints the members of the cabinet and the country's local governors, with the power to dismiss them at his discretion. Mubarak's National Democratic Party dominates the popularly elected legislative body, the People's Assembly, and the partially elected Consultative Council. The judiciary is independent. The president is also commander-in-chief of the military forces. In practice, Mubarak operates as the dictator of Egypt. The minister of interior controls several security services, including the State Security Investigations Sector (SSIS) and the Central Security Forces, whose function is to combat terrorism.

Egypt is a member of the Arab League, of the Organization of African Unity, and the United Nations.

Egypt's economy is moving toward a decentralized, free-market system through an ongoing program of economic reforms initiated in 1991. Agriculture, mainly in private hands, still provides employment to more than one-third of the labor force. Cotton is the largest exported crop. Tourism, petroleum exports, and Suez Canal revenues represent major sources of foreign currency. Per capita gross domestic product was estimated at \$3,000 in 1999.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

Since 1981 the government has been battling against increased activity by terrorist groups. Islamic extremists have been responsible for serious human rights abus-

es, including the deaths of hundreds of civilians, governmental officials, members of security forces, foreign tourists, and Egyptian Christians.

The government is also responsible for human rights abuses in several areas. Egypt is a social democracy according to its constitution, yet its citizens do not, in practice, have the ability to change their government. The ruling National Democratic Party controls the legislative body, the local governments, the media, and the public and private sectors. Administrative courts recognized the 1995 legislative elections as fraudulent. However, the Assembly did not call for new elections. The government also controls the licensing of new political parties.

In 1981, the government enacted the Emergency Law as part of its antiterrorist campaign, and since then special decrees and provisions have been invoked to protect national security. The Emergency Law restricts many human rights. Under its provisions, authorities can arrest without warrant or detain without charge any individual who poses a threat to national security or public order. There are reports by human rights groups of detainees who have been in prison for several years without being formally charged. Mass arrests have been conducted as part of the government's antiterrorist campaign. In addition, under the Emergency Law, cases involving terrorism are tried by military or State Security Emergency courts, in which the accused are not granted the constitutional protections of civilian judicial courts. Hundreds of civilian defendants have been denied due process and the right to appeal.

Police have also committed extrajudicial killings. Some of these killings occurred during antiterrorist operations. Others have taken place while people were being held by authorities. In a few cases, the govern-

ment took light disciplinary actions against perpetrators. Human rights groups also believe that the SSIS employs torture to extract confessions from suspected terrorists and to deter others from antigovernment activities. Human rights monitors are still investigating the 1992 to 1996 disappearances of dozens of people likely involved with terrorist organizations.

Police occasionally use arbitrary arrest and detention against any person suspected of criminal acts. Prison conditions are very poor. Cells are overcrowded and poorly ventilated. Prisoners lack medical care and adequate nutrition. Some prisons are closed to visits, including those by relatives and lawyers. In addition, restrictions are applied to prisoners incarcerated for political or terrorist crimes. Human rights monitors have been denied visits to several prisons or have been prevented from meeting with prisoners. Egypt also denies access to prisons to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

The government infringes on citizens' rights to privacy on the basis of the Emergency Law. Journalists, foreigners, suspected subversives, writers, and political activities are subject to surveillance. Their correspondence, especially their international mail, is often intercepted. Authorities may conduct searches without warrants, use wiretaps, and confiscate property.

The government continues to restrict freedom of speech and freedom of the press by holding a monopoly of the media. It controls the printing and distribution of newspapers, and operates all domestic radio and television broadcasts. The Penal Code, the Press Law, and the Publications Law establish fines or prison terms for criticism of the president, members of the government, or foreign heads of state. In spite of this, however, opposition newspapers pro-

vide in-depth reporting on human rights abuses and open criticism of government policies and figures.

Journalists and editors have often been accused of libel. The public prosecutor has the authority to ban publications pertaining to cases involving national security. The interior minister can stop foreign newspapers from entering the country. Other ministries can legally censor, ban, or confiscate books, works of art, plays, and films deemed offensive to social morals, detrimental to religion, or capable of causing a disturbance in the public order. The Islamic Research Center at Al Azhar University is the official authority in charge of censoring publications dealing with the Koran and Islamic scriptural texts, and judges the suitability of non-religious books and works of art. Many moderate Muslims and secularist writers live abroad and fear persecution by Islamic extremists if they return. Foreign films cannot be viewed in theaters. The production of films for foreign distribution made in Egypt is monitored by government censors, who make sure the country is portrayed in a favorable light.

Freedom of assembly and association are also severely restricted. Citizens must obtain governmental authorization before holding public meetings, demonstrations, or marches. The Ministry of Social Affairs has extensive control over associations, and can dissolve organizations involved in political or religious activities. Workers' rights are limited. All trade unions are required to belong to a single federation legally recognized by the government. Strikes are illegal.

Although the Egyptian constitution provides for freedom of religion, in practice the government limits this right. Islam is the state religion and the primary source of legislation. All religious practices that conflict with Islam are prohibited. Muslims may be

During the Cairo World Population Conference, a member of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood seizes the microphone and lectures the audience on the evils of abortion, September 1994.

subject to criminal charges and, consequently, to travel restrictions if they convert to another faith.

Members of the non-Muslim minority generally operate freely. However, discrimination against Christians is a problem. Coptic Christians, in particular, are victims of harassment and violent attacks by Islamic terrorists. The government does not seem sufficiently determined to prevent such attacks or to address issues of discrimination in education, employment, and politics. The government and the opposition press support anti-Semitic propaganda. Religious minorities are not represented in government or politics.

Societal discrimination against women, enforced by traditional practices, is a prob-

lem as well. Women remain underrepresented in government and politics. Rape and domestic violence are widespread. Marital rape is not illegal. Despite the government's effort to eradicate the practice, female genital mutilation is common. Extremist Islamic groups oppose greater rights for women.

Egypt is committed to child welfare, a policy which is supported by international donors. Violence and abuse against children is common. Although the constitution prohibits child labor, the government is unable to enforce this provision, especially in the private sector.

The government is also committed to the rights of people with disabilities, as reflected in its cooperation with United Nations

agencies and other international organizations. Although there is no legislation granting accessibility to public buildings or transportation for the physically disabled, in practice, most services are available. Egypt generally cooperates with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in assisting refugees or asylum seekers.

Citizens and foreigners are free to travel within the country and abroad. Some travel restrictions apply to married women, who require their husband's permission, and to unmarried women under the age of twenty-one, who need their father's authorization.

The government denies legal status to human rights groups by alleging that they are involved in political activities. Since 1985, it has refused to license the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights (EOHR). Government restrictions on the activities of non-governmental organizations significantly affect the reporting of human rights

abuses, although the EOHR and other groups continue to operate openly and receive funding from international human rights organizations. Occasionally, human rights activists are victims of government harassment.

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# El Salvador



The Republic of El Salvador is located in Central America on the Pacific Ocean. Its territory is bounded by Guatemala and Honduras. San Salvador is the capital city. Its population of 6 million is composed of mestizos (90 percent), and indigenous peoples (1 percent). Although Roman Catholicism is the official religion, several Protestant groups have been growing throughout the country. Spanish is the official language.

## BACKGROUND

Until the Spanish conquest in 1525, two large Indian states and several principalities made up the territory that is now known as El Salvador. The district remained under control of the Captaincy

General of Guatemala until 1821, when El Salvador achieved independence from Spain along with other Central American provinces. El Salvador became an independent republic in 1838. The following years were marked by frequent revolutions. Relative stability was not achieved until the 1930s. The economic elite and the military ruled the country, and from 1932—the year of General Maximiliano Hernandez Martinez’s coup—until 1980, virtually all Salvadoran presidents were army officers.

During the years of military rule, the government employed political repression and limited reform to maintain power. The political situation began to dissolve during the 1970s, when leftist groups opposed to the government became convinced that armed insurrection was the only means to achieve change. Guerrilla warfare broke out in the cities and the countryside, initiating a twelve-year civil war. A large quantity of arms and munitions were provided by the new Sandinista government of Nicaragua.

On October 15, 1979, a revolutionary junta—composed of reform-minded military officers and civilian leaders—defeated the right-wing government of General Carlos Humberto Romero, and began a program of broad economic reforms. On March 28, 1982, Salvadorans elected a new constituent assembly, and in 1983, a constitution was drafted. In 1984, Jose Napoleon Duarte became the first freely elected president of El Salvador in more than fifty years, and five years later the inauguration of Alfredo Cristiani as the next president marked the first time that power had passed peacefully from one freely elected

Child standing near dead civilian, victim of the guerilla conflict, November 1989.

leader to another. Cristiani was committed to ending the decade of conflict between the government and guerrillas, and initiated an unmediated dialogue between the two sides. This dialogue lasted until the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) launched a nationwide offensive in November 1989. The two sides finally signed the New York City Accord in September 1991, by invitation from the United Nations, and in December of the same year, both sides initiated a peace agreement. The official end of the conflict was marked by a ceremony held on December 15, 1992. Most aspects of the accords have been implemented. The peace process was monitored by the United Nations until 1997.

The Salvadoran economy, which is based on agriculture and manufacturing, is committed to free markets and careful fiscal management. The country benefits from a rich soil, a moderate climate, and a hard-working and enterprising labor force. Coffee and sugar are the principal export crops. The manufacturing sector is dominated by apparel manufacturing and represents the principal source of new jobs. The civil war significantly affected the economy from 1979 to 1990, damaging the country's infrastructure and means of production, and reducing export earnings. Since the attacks on economic targets ended in 1992, private investments have increased significantly. Both the Cristiani

and Calderon administrations introduced free-market policy initiatives, from the privatization of the banking system and the reduction of import duties to the improved enforcement of intellectual property rights and the privatization of the telecommunications and electrical enterprises. Furthermore, the sizable trade and fiscal deficits of the nation have been offset by remittances from Salvadorans living abroad and by external aid.

El Salvador is a member of the United Nations and several of its specialized agencies, the Organization of American States (OAS), the Central American Common Market (CACM), the Central American Parliament (PARLACEN), and the Central American Integration System (SICA). In addition, El Salvador actively participates in the Central American Security Commission (CASC), which seeks to promote regional arms control, and is a member of the World Trade Organization.

El Salvador is a constitutional, multiparty democracy. The national government consists of an executive branch with a president and vice president; an eighty-four-member legislative assembly; and a judiciary represented by a supreme court. The judiciary is independent, but suffers from inefficiency and corruption.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

During the twelve-year civil war, human rights violations by both left- and right-wing forces were pervasive. The peace accords established a truth commission to investigate the most serious cases. The 1993 commission report recommended that those identified as human rights violators be removed from all government and military posts. The accords also recommended the reduction of the armed forces by over 70

Two Salvadoran army soldiers look at the body of a peasant. According to Catholic groups, the army was responsible for his murder. El Zapote, January 1991.

percent; the replacement of the discredited National Police with a new Civilian National Police; and the integration of the former guerrillas into political life.

Since the civil war, the nations' human rights record has improved considerably. Virtually all basic human rights are respected, although there are still violations in some areas. There have been a few cases of extrajudicial killings by the police. Although the constitution prohibits torture, some members of the police continue to use excessive force and to otherwise mistreat detainees. Similarly, police often arrest and detain persons arbitrarily. Prison conditions are poor. Overcrowding is a problem,

although it has been reduced in recent years. The judiciary's inefficiency has led to a backlog of cases, which results in lengthy pretrial detention and delays in trials. The new court system has shown some improvement by removing time-consuming investigative responsibilities from the judge and placing them with the police and the prosecutor's office.

Discrimination against women, the disabled, and indigenous peoples is present in the areas of salaries, hiring, and access to credit and education. Violence against homosexuals and women, including domestic violence, as well as child abuse, are serious problems. It has been estimated that some 270,000 minors work, mostly as street vendors. These children usually lose their opportunity for an education and are often sexually abused or forced into prostitution. A 1997 study by the non-government organization network Prociportes documented that about 1,000 children below the age of sixteen were living on their

own in the streets. Substance abuse—especially glue and paint sniffing—is a serious problem among urban street children. Allegedly, many street children suffer from police brutality.

International, local, and non-governmental organizations operate freely and monitor the human rights situation in El Salvador. The main human rights investigative and monitoring body is the Ombudsman for the Defense of Human Rights.

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# Equatorial Guinea



The Republic of Equatorial Guinea is situated in West Africa. It is bounded on the north by Cameroon, on the east and south by Gabon, and on the west by the Atlantic Ocean. It also includes five offshore islands, including Bioko, off the coast of Cameroon. Malabo, on Bioko Island, is the capital city. Equatorial Guinea has a population of approximately 470,000. Ethnic groups include the majority Fang, the minority Bubi, and less than 1,000 Europeans, who are primarily Spanish. The majority of the population is nominally Christian, mainly Roman Catholic, but pagan practices are widespread as well. Spanish and French are the official languages.

## BACKGROUND

Under Spanish rule since 1885, Equatorial Guinea achieved independence in 1968. Francisco Macias Nguema became the first president, but he soon assumed dictatorial powers. In 1979, Macias was overthrown and replaced by his nephew, Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, of the majority Fang ethnic group. He established a military regime and has been in power ever since. He was reelected president for another seven-year term in 1996, in elections that were considered fraudulent by both domestic and international observers.

Although nominally a multiparty constitutional republic, the government is highly centralized, and the president's Democratic Party of Equatorial Guinea (PDGE) controls both the unicameral legislature and the judiciary. The court system includes traditional courts that deal with civil and minor criminal matters. The president controls the security forces and the police through the minister of interior, who is also president of the National Electoral Board.

The country's economy is based primarily on subsistence agriculture, hunting, and fishing. Government officials and their family members dominate these sectors. A small monetary sector exports petroleum, cocoa, and timber. Since 1995, the discovery and exploitation of oil deposits have contributed to dramatic economic growth. However, oil revenues have not been used for the public welfare. Widespread corruption, economic mismanagement, and

human rights abuses have contributed to the suspension of financial aid programs sponsored by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

Citizens do not have the right to change their government through free and fair elections. The February 1996 presidential elections were marred by irregularities and intimidation. Voting was done without secrecy. Opposition parties were denied access to polling areas. There were also reports of opposition party members being beaten, arrested, and jailed before the elections.

Security forces are allegedly responsible for serious human rights abuses. There are reports of extrajudicial killings and deaths

under custody. Prisoners have been beaten, tortured, and mutilated. There have been allegations of disappearances of individuals during police raids following protests and revolts on the island of Bioko by the Bubi ethnic group. Authorities apparently authorized and directed these crimes, and did not convict the perpetrators. Police officers and local authorities are allegedly responsible for harassment, intimidation, and the extortion of money. Governmental authorities routinely ignore procedural safeguards regarding detention. Police use arbitrary arrest and detention against foreigners, ethnic minorities, and political activists. Prison conditions are harsh, often life-threatening. There is overcrowding in prisons and a lack of sanitation. The food supply is inadequate.

The judicial system is corrupt, with judges serving at the pleasure of the president. In addition, judges often do not have legal training. Authorities do not respect provisions regarding legal representation and the right to appeal. Trials are not fair, with defendants' confessions often obtained via torture. Civil cases are rarely conducted in public. Political prisoners are tried before military tribunals. There were reports of defendants not being allowed to testify in cases where capital punishment was a possible outcome.

The government infringes on the citizens' rights by interfering with their privacy, homes, families, and correspondence. Security forces usually conduct searches without warrants. The constitutional provision granting freedom of speech and freedom of the press is not respected. Criticism of the president and security forces is not tolerated. All journalists must be registered with the Ministry of Information, and foreign reporters are regularly escorted by guides from the same ministry. There were reports of arrests and expulsion of foreign journalists from the country. All local publications and the only monthly newspaper practice self-censorship. Only a few foreign newspapers are available.

The government exercises a monopoly over domestic radio and television broadcasting. Prodemocracy opposition parties are denied access to news broadcasting. Foreign cable television is available, but few citizens can afford it. There are no domestic Internet service providers.

Academic freedom is restricted by a lack of infrastructure for higher education. The right to peaceful assembly and to freedom of association, especially the right of workers to form unions, are severely restricted. Strikes are prohibited by law. Membership in the ruling PDGE is considered a prereq-

uisite for employment and promotion. The government controls the country's major employers and sets wages. Abuses of workers' rights are particularly evident in the oil industry, where a government agency keeps about two-thirds of the worker's wages.

Although the constitution prohibits discrimination based on sex, race, and religion, in practice these provisions are not respected. Societal discrimination against women is supported by government policies. Women are traditionally confined to secondary roles in society and have limited educational opportunities. Violence against women, particularly domestic abuse, is a serious problem. The government also shows little or no concern for the welfare and education of children. The constitution does not prohibit discrimination based on disability in employment or education. There is no law mandating accessibility to buildings by the physically disabled.

Ethnic minorities and citizens from neighboring countries face discrimination, and are victims of harassment and violence by the authorities. Since January 1998, political tensions have intensified between the majority Fang ethnic group and the Bubi ethnic minority after the latter led a separatist revolt on Bioko. The Fang-dominated government responded by intensifying its repression of minorities. There were credible reports that the security forces summarily executed an unknown number of people after the revolt. Their bodies were buried in shallow graves in the jungle. Vigilantes of the dominant Fang ethnic group arrested members of the Bubi ethnic group, raped women, and exposed many to humiliating and degrading treatment. They looted homes, threw residents' belongings into the streets, and encouraged the public to join in the looting. Authorities did nothing to prevent these abuses or to convict the perpetrators.

The constitutional provision regarding freedom of religion is not respected, and certain religious groups are discriminated against. All religious organizations must obtain legal recognition by the Ministry of Justice and Religion. In particular, the activities of the Catholic Church are restricted. Some priests and members of the Catholic non-governmental organization Caritas were reportedly harassed or arrested for denouncing human rights abuses, corruption, and social injustice in the country.

Freedom of movement and travel throughout the country and abroad is limited. Local authorities at checkpoints demand bribes from travelers. Opposition members are often victims of arbitrary searches and harassment at roadblocks. They are also denied the right to travel abroad. There have been reports that authorities illegally captured and forced repatriation of its citizens living abroad.

There are no local human rights non-governmental organizations operating in

Equatorial Guinea. In 1992, the government established a parliamentary commission on human rights, but it has been of little or no use. Amnesty International is allowed to visit periodically, but its reports are not acknowledged by authorities. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights for Equatorial Guinea has visited the country and has received some government cooperation.

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# Eritrea



Eritrea is a country in the Horn of Africa, on the southwest coast of the Red Sea. It is bounded on the west and northwest by Sudan, on the south by Ethiopia, and on the southeast by Djibouti. It has a population of approximately 3.75 million. There are nine major ethnic groups, including the Tigrinya and Tigre, who make up four-fifths of the total population. They speak different Semitic or Arabic languages. English is widely spoken as well, especially in academic settings. About 50 percent of the population is Christian, mostly Orthodox, while 48 percent is Muslim, and the remainder hold indigenous beliefs.

## BACKGROUND

An Italian colony since 1885, Eritrea became a federate state joined with Ethiopia

at the end of World War II. On May 24, 1993, Eritrea achieved independence after a thirty-year war led by the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) against Ethiopia. Its leader, Isaias Afwerki, continues to be the president of the Provisional Government of Eritrea. The EPLF has established itself as the sole political party, changing its name to the People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ). Eritrea is still in the process of establishing a permanent government. A new constitution was promulgated in 1997, but has not yet been implemented. New general elections were scheduled for the year 1997, but they were delayed and indefinitely postponed following an outbreak of conflict at the Ethiopian border. In addition, Sudan's attempt to spread Islamic fundamentalism to neighboring countries since 1993 has increasingly forced Eritrean military forces to deal with terrorist attacks organized by Eritrean Islamic Jihad, a Sudan-based insurgent group.

The present government provides for the separation of powers. The legislature, the National Assembly, holds the highest legal power until the establishment of a democratic, constitutional government. The ministers of the cabinet and the president hold the executive power that is accountable to the National Assembly. The judiciary is independent.

Eritrea is a member of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), and maintains a close relationship with the United States, Italy, and other European nations, which have become important aid donors. It has also close relations with Ethiopia, its largest trading partner, and with Uganda.

Eritrea's economy is slowly recovering from the devastating effects of the independence war, which left the country in extreme poverty. The development process aims to replace a centrally planned economy with a free market and privatization. Agriculture remains the main source of employment; nevertheless, it accounts for only a small percentage of the gross domestic product (GDP). Instead, trade, services and manufacturing provide the greatest portion of the GDP. Eritrea has obtained international economic assistance for several development projects.

In May 1998, a war broke out with Ethiopia that continued into the middle of 2000. Although, as of this writing, the fighting has stopped, tensions between the two nations remain high.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

Although the constitution, as ratified by a constituent assembly, provides for human rights and freedoms, Eritreans are still denied a few basic rights. Citizens are not able to change their government in a multiparty election, because the transition to democracy has not been yet fulfilled. The PFDJ currently dominates the government and proposes that public education and institutional structures have to be implemented before multiparty elections can be held.

Civilians have been killed or injured as a result of the conflict with Ethiopia. No extrajudicial killings were officially reported; however, the Ethiopian media allege that several Ethiopians living in Eritrea were killed or have disappeared.

In June 1998, an air strike on the airport of Asmara made by the Ethiopian military forces killed one civilian. Eritrean soldiers were reportedly responsible for raping Ethiopian women or physically abus-

ing Ethiopian nationals, and for conducting improper searches and for detaining diplomats after the air strike. Police officers often harass or mistreat people, especially Ethiopians.

Pretrial detention often exceeds the time accorded by the penal code. There are reports that four Jehovah's Witnesses have been detained without charge for more than four years. In addition, several suspected collaborators of the previous regime and other terrorist organizations, or supporters of the Ethiopian conflict, are being held in detention without formal charge. Prison conditions are harsh, and the government does not allow prisoners to have visitors or to correspond with their family or friends.

The still-developing judiciary is weak and inefficient due to untrained personnel, inadequate funding, and poor infrastructures. In rural areas, citizens rely on traditional village courts for civil matters. There were press reports that in 1997, special military courts had tried 2,431 civilians with no defense lawyers and no right to appeal. Although fewer in number, many criminal cases also were handled by military courts during 1998.

The government restricts the freedom of speech and freedom of the press of its citizens. It controls all the media and has the power to ban foreign publications. The media practices self-censorship. As of the end of 1998 there were eleven independent newspapers and magazines. However, the government does not allow private ownership of any broadcast media. The Ministry of Information requires that all newspapers obtain a license and that reporters register under its authority. The Ministry of Internal Affairs has the power to arrest or detain people for expressing inappropriate views in public. There are reports of people arrested for criticizing the government. Ac-

Ethiopian prisoners of war, casualties of Eritrea's war of independence, August 1993.

cess to the Internet through government telecommunication systems is limited.

Academic freedom is restricted as well. The government controls the administration and the research activities of the University of Asmara.

The government limits the right of peaceful assembly and the freedom of association of ethnically or religiously based parties. Unions are encouraged; the National Confederation of Eritrean Workers is independent from the government and receives assistance from the International Labor Organization in resolving complaints of discrimination. The law does not prohibit forced labor; however, it is not known to occur.

The government generally enforces the law prohibiting discrimination based on sex, race, religion, disability, or social status. However, a few problems persist. Despite the government's effort to improve women's status, Eritrea remains an essentially patriarchal society. In practice, women have less access to education, employment, and career opportunities than do men. Although strongly discouraged by the government, the practice of female genital mutilation is widespread and estimated at 95 percent.

Children's welfare is under the responsibility of the Children's Affairs Division, which is committed to providing childcare,

counseling, and probation. However, about 50 percent of the children in the country are unable to attend school because of a lack of the funding needed to increase the number of schools and to train teachers.

Discrimination based on religion is a problem. The government itself restricts freedom of religion in order to safeguard the delicate balance between Muslims and Christians. Foreign religious groups and non-governmental organizations are denied the right to proselytize. Members of the small community of Jehovah's Witnesses continue to be persecuted in the form of economic, employment, and travel restrictions.

The government generally cooperates with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in providing assistance to refugees and asylum seekers. However, progress is slow in the repatriation of more than 150,000 Eritreans in Sudan who wish to return.

There are no domestic or international human rights organizations operating in the country. The government restricts the activities of non-government organizations that support health and education. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Inter-

nal Affairs handle cases of human rights abuses. In 1998, the International Committee of the Red Cross was allowed to open an office in the country. It is granted limited visits to detainees and prisoners of war.

The years 1998 to 2000 have been dominated by a bloody border war with Ethiopia. Both sides in this conflict have been accused of numerous human rights violations. Compared to many combatants in African wars, Eritrea has treated its Ethiopian prisoners tolerably well, but many of them have suffered from needless crowding, shortages of food, and abusive treatment. Eritrea has never signed the Geneva Conventions on the conduct of war.

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# Estonia



The Republic of Estonia is situated in northern Europe. It is bounded on the east by Russia, on the south by Latvia, and on the north and west by the Baltic Sea. Its population of approximately 1.5 million includes Estonians (64 percent), Russians (29 percent), Ukrainians (3 percent), and Belarusians (1.5 percent). Estonian is the official language, although Russian is widely spoken as well. The majority of the population is Lutheran, with the remainder Russian Orthodox and Baptist.

## BACKGROUND

After fifty years of Soviet occupation, Estonia declared full independence following a plebiscite in 1991. In September 1991, the Soviet government and Western nations

recognized Estonia as an independent state. In August 1994, the remaining armed forces of the Russian Federation withdrew from Estonia.

In 1992, a new constitution approved by popular referendum established a parliamentary democracy with a president as the head of state and a prime minister as the head of government. The unicameral legislature is the highest organ of state authority for approving legislation. The judiciary is independent. A new penal code will be implemented in the year 2000 to fully comply with Western European standards. Domestic and international observers considered the Estonian elections to be free and fair.

After decades of integration into the Soviet centrally planned structure, Estonia's economy is growing steadily, moving toward complete privatization and a free market in line with the West. Economic cooperation with the United States has increased its trade with Western markets, which now comprise two-thirds of Estonian export targets. Financial business and tourism have replaced the once prominent food production and light industry in importance. Per capita gross domestic product is estimated at \$3,140. The unemployment rate is relatively low (about 8 percent), although it is reportedly higher in rural areas.

Estonia has been a member of the United Nations (UN) since 1991. It is also a signatory to a number of UN organizations. Other memberships include the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Partnership for Peace, the North Atlantic Coordinating Council, and the Council of Europe. Estonia also seeks fur-

Election in northern Estonia.

ther integration with North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the European Union (EU), and other Western organizations.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

Estonians enjoy extensive human rights and freedoms. The government generally enforces these rights. In 1997, the Council of Europe ended its mission of human rights monitoring in Estonia. In May 1998, President Lennart Meri announced his plans to form an international commission to conduct research on human rights abuses and crimes perpetrated in Estonia during the Soviet occupation.

Problems persist in a number of areas. The process of transforming the Soviet-style militia into a police force is still under way, and the lack of resources and trained per-

sonnel create serious problems. Police and correction personnel have committed a number of human rights abuses. There were reports that police beat and mistreated prisoners to extract confessions. Prison conditions are also poor. Despite improvements designed to meet international standards, prisons remain overcrowded, and lack sanitation and proper infrastructure.

The government respects freedom of speech and freedom of the press. However, the law does not provide for freedom of information. Journalists and parliamentarians rejected the first government law proposed in this area because it too vaguely defined official information, and because it granted officials the right to withhold official information.

Although the constitution prohibits discrimination based on sex, in practice,

women still do not benefit from equal treatment. Women's average pay for equal work is lower than men. Some professions continue to be male dominated. Violence against women, including domestic abuse, is a serious problem, especially in rural areas.

The government has shown a real commitment to the welfare of children, particularly in public education, which is compulsory until age sixteen. However, there are also reports of child sexual abuse and prostitution. Additionally, the law does not explicitly prohibit forced and bonded labor by children. There have been reports of families forcing their children to beg or peddle.

People with disabilities do not benefit from a public access law, and are not fully accepted in society. There have been allegations of discrimination, predominantly against ethnic Russians, in employment, salaries, and housing, because of Estonian language requirements. There are also complaints about the slow processing of approximately 19,000 residence applications made by Russian military pensioners. Some

complaints have also been filed with regard to delays in obtaining travel documents for non-citizens.

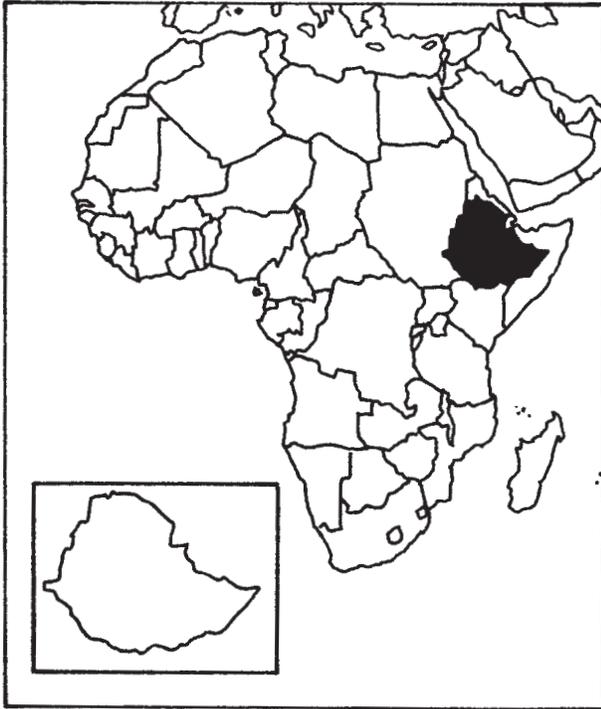
Estonia operates in conformity with the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, and assists refugee or asylum seekers. Human rights organizations are allowed to freely investigate and publish their findings. In addition, the government established the Human Rights Institute, whose functions range from investigating human rights violations to providing information to the international community.

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# Ethiopia



The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia is located in eastern Africa, bordering Somalia, Kenya, Sudan, Djibouti, and Eritrea. The population is approximately 60 million and is divided between a dozen major ethnic groups. The largest ethnic groups are the Oromo (40 percent) and the Amhara (32 percent). Its capital is Addis Ababa. It was unique among African countries in that, aside from an Italian occupation lasting from 1936–1941, the ancient Ethiopian monarchy maintained its freedom from European colonial rule. In 1974, a military junta known as the Derg deposed Emperor Haile Selassie, who had ruled since 1930, and established a socialist state. The regime was beset by coups, rebellions, a widespread draught, and massive amounts of refugees, and was finally

overthrown by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) in 1991. Ethiopia adopted a constitution in 1994 and held its first multiparty elections in 1995.

Ethiopia's ongoing border dispute with Eritrea has drained Ethiopia's economic resources. Each side in the dispute accuses the other side of committing human rights violations. Heavy fighting between Ethiopia and Eritrea broke out in February 1999, breaking a three-month lull. More than 300,000 Ethiopian soldiers were deployed to the contested areas. As of late 2000, a ceasefire exists between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

Ethiopia's human rights record is generally poor, although it has shown initiative in some areas. There have been a number of extrajudicial killings. In November 1999, security forces opened fire into a crowd of protesters. Ten people were killed. The government's actions in the border war with Eritrea have resulted in the deaths of civilian bystanders. Ethiopian military forces have bombed and shelled Eritrean villages, resulting in the deaths of a number of people. The government has also provided financial support to Eritrean opposition groups, whose land mines have claimed civilians within the borders of Eritrea. Similarly, Eritrea has given support to opposition groups operating within Ethiopian borders. These groups have laid land mines and conducted numerous hit-and-run attacks. Soldiers and combatants have been killed as a result of these activities.

In 1997, the federal High Court in Addis Ababa initiated legal proceedings against 5,198 people accused of genocide under the previous regime. Of the 5,198 charged, 2,246 are currently in detention, and the rest have been charged in absentia. In November 1999, the High Court handed down the first death sentence for one of the accused, a former district governor and army lieutenant convicted of executing five opponents of the Derg regime.

The new constitution prohibits the use of torture and abuse; however, there were credible reports that security forces engaged in such practices. Prison conditions are poor and overcrowded. Procuring food is difficult, and many inmates rely on family members or their own funds to purchase food. Visitors are permitted. Women and men are housed separately, and rape does not appear to be a problem. The government allows the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and other organizations to monitor prison conditions, although one ICRC delegation was denied access to the Central Investigation Division prison facility in the capital, which holds an estimated 200 people.

Under Ethiopia's Criminal Code, all detained persons must be charged, informed of the charges, and in most cases offered release on bail within forty-eight hours of arrest. Those persons suspected of committing a serious offense may be held for fifteen days while the police investigate, and this period can be extended in fifteen-day increments should the investigation demand it. The government often detains persons without a warrant and does not charge them within the required forty-eight-hour period. Thousands of people remain in prison without having been charged, and most of these have been accused of terrorist activities.

Ethiopia's legal system is weak, over-taxed, and suffers from a lack of trained personnel and financial resources. The new constitution introduced a new court structure in which the federal High Court and Supreme Court hear cases involving federal law, regional issues, and national security. The regional courts function as circuit courts, with their own structure reaching down to the local level. According to the constitution, detainees have the right to a speedy trial, but because of the judiciary's strained resources, many are detained for long periods of time before their trials; there have been instances of closed proceedings; and some detainees were allowed little or no contact with their legal counsel.

Although the law requires authorities to obtain search warrants, in practice they are seldom obtained outside of Addis Ababa.

The government continues to violate the freedoms of speech and the press. The government has prosecuted journalists and editors for the content of their articles, and some journalists practice self-censorship. The private press in Ethiopia is very active, and, at times, very critical of the government. Ethiopia has a Press Law, which prohibits the publication of false information. There were eight journalists in prison at the end of 1999. In April, Samson Seyoum, the former editor-in-chief of the now-defunct weekly newspapers, *Agere* and *Tequami*, was sentenced to four and a half years in prison for incitement to war and attempting to spread Islamic fundamentalism. He has been detained without trial since 1995. In August 1999, he was released pending appeal of his trial.

Despite the government's attempts to discourage anti-government material, private publications continue to publish false information and unsubstantiated rumors about the government. Foreign journalists

operate freely within Ethiopia and are usually granted greater access to government officials than are local journalists.

Large public meetings and demonstrations must be registered with the government. Although no groups have been denied the necessary permits, there have been long delays in granting permission. The Coalition of Ethiopian Opposition Political Organizations held a rally in January 1999 to announce and publicize their political agenda, but they were not granted their permit until the day before their scheduled event, which, they claim, greatly reduced the number in attendance. In November 1999, student demonstrations in support of two teachers who had been arrested for criticizing textbooks were dispersed violently when police fired into the crowd, killing ten and injuring hundreds. As many as a thousand demonstrators were arrested. In November, students of the Nuer ethnic group held a demonstration demanding the use of Nuer language in schools. One month later, twenty-six of the alleged instigators of the event were arrested and charged with inciting the Nuer students to demonstrate.

Local authorities infringe on the right to freedom of religion. The government requires that all religious groups be registered. There were some instances of strife among religious groups, most notably between Orthodox Christians, evangelicals, and Pentecostals. While some Pentecostals had complained in years past of inadequate police protection, there were no such complaints in 1999. The constitution stipulates the separation of church and state, and the government has interpreted this to mean that there can be no religious teaching of any kind in any school, public or private.

The constitution provides for freedom of movement of Ethiopia's citizens, but the

government restricts this right in practice. Citizens of Eritrean origin have been subject to deportation since the start of the war with Eritrea. By the end of 1999, approximately 67,000 people had been forced to leave Ethiopia for Eritrea. The law requires all citizens to obtain an exit visa before leaving the country. Ethiopians of Eritrean origin have been allowed to leave, but often have been barred from returning.

Ethiopia was hosting 261,661 refugees at the end of 1999, most from either Somalia or Sudan. The government cooperates with the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees in settling these refugees into camps. The government treats asylum seekers according to international law.

Marital rape and wife beating are pervasive social problems. Women do have recourse to the police and the courts, but societal norms prevent many women from seeking legal redress. Many women are not aware of their legal rights in such situations. Domestic abuse alone is not sufficient legal reason for a woman to seek divorce. Women are discriminated against in matters of divorce and property. In cases of divorce, irrespective of the number of children, women are entitled to only three months of financial support. Many women are abandoned along with their families. Although outlawed, women and girls are abducted and forced into marriage in some regions of Ethiopia.

In 1997, the government introduced an initiative, called the National Program of Action, to enhance the opportunities of women in the workplace, improve access to health care, and educate women about the dangers of some traditional practices, such as early marriage. The Penal Code has been updated to include stronger penalties for rape, domestic violence, and child abuse. But despite these efforts on the part of the government, traditional values still hold

sway over the popular view of marriage and women's role in society.

The government has encouraged non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to lend their support to improve conditions for children. Officials have provided free transportation to NGO outreach events. The government is limited in its ability to adequately provide for children's health, social, and legal needs. Nationwide, only 52 percent of male children and 31 percent of female children attend primary school. Societal abuse of young girls continues to be a problem. An estimated 72 percent of Ethiopian women have undergone female genital mutilation, a practice widely condemned by international health organizations. This is a decrease from 1990 levels, which was estimated at 90 percent of the female population. The law does not prohibit this ritual, although the government officially discourages the practice, and has been supportive of international agencies working to educate women about its dangers.

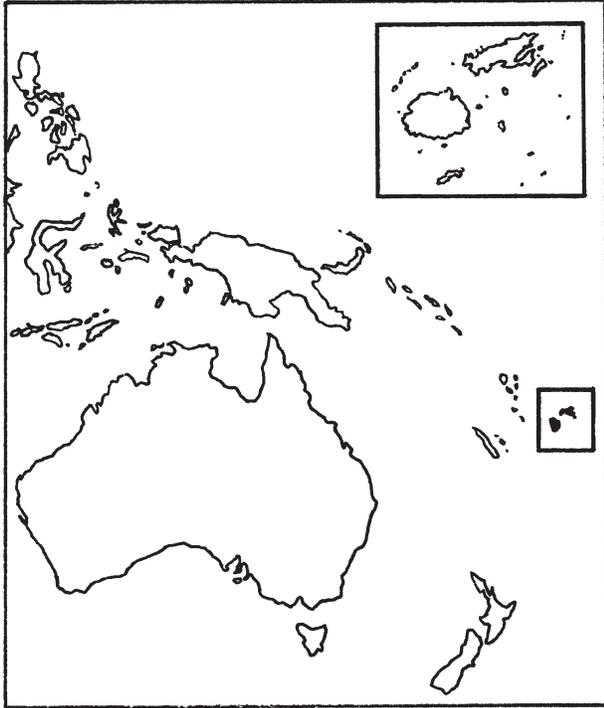
Ethiopia has maintained an open attitude about human rights and has shown its willingness to work with and allow international and domestic human rights organizations to operate freely. The ICRC has been able to gain access to most police facilities and has also been allowed to escort deported ethnic Eritreans across the frontier into Eritrea. The government encourages human rights groups and other NGOs to observe the war crimes tribunal that in 1984 began to punish war criminals from the Derg regime.

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# Fiji



The Republic of Fiji consists of 844 islands and islets in the southwest Pacific Ocean. The capital city is Suva. Its population of approximately 812,000 is composed of Fijians (49 percent), South Asians, mostly Indians (46 percent), and others (Europeans, Chinese, and Pacific Islanders). The main religious denominations are Christian (52 percent), Hindu (38 percent), and Islam (8 percent). English is the official language, but Fijian is widely spoken as well.

A British colony since 1874, Fiji became a sovereign nation within the Commonwealth in 1970. Fiji is a parliamentary democracy. The executive power is held by the president, the prime minister, and the cabinet. The president is appointed by the Great Council of Chiefs, which is composed of ethnic Fijians. Since 1997, the constitu-

tion allows different ethnic groups to be represented in the bicameral Parliament. Elections occur every five years. The judiciary is independent.

The Fijian economy is mainly based on sugar refining, tourism, garment manufacturing, gold, fishing, lumber, and small industries. Fiji receives financial assistance from the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan, and other Western countries. In general, the Fijian economy provides a high standard of living.

Fijians enjoy a variety of human rights and freedoms. Nevertheless, a few problems persist in some areas. In 1998, there were a few reports of police abuse of detainees. However, the authorities convicted the officers responsible for these violations. The law allows corporal punishment for crimes, but it is rarely used.

Freedom of speech and freedom of the press is granted by the constitution and the government respects it in practice. However, the government restricts open criticism of the constitution or other political issues. On some occasions, the government has criticized the media for undermining the reputation of the authorities. In addition, there were credible reports that some members of the cabinet tried to interfere with the autonomy of the press. The media practice self-censorship. In August 1998, the government asked all foreign diplomats to submit their speeches to be reviewed by the authorities.

The government does not always grant permission for large political rallies.

Although the constitution grants freedom of religion, there were allegations of police

officers violating Hindu temples. The amended constitution forbids discrimination based on political opinion, sex, color, race, or creed. In 1998, reports show that about 10 percent of women have been abused in some way. There are private shelters for women in the major cities that provide counseling and assistance to female victims of violence.

The government is committed to children's rights but the resources for protecting children are limited. There are reports that corporal punishment is still practiced in schools and private homes. Education is not mandatory. Child labor provisions are not enforced.

The law does not grant rights to people with disabilities. However, there are small voluntary organizations providing services to the disabled.

One of the most significant problems remains discrimination against ethnic groups, particularly against Indo-Fijians. The government continues to protect indigenous Fijian interests to the disadvantage of other communities. Fijian nationalists have attacked ethnic Indians, burning their homes and businesses, and sometimes murdering them. While the government prosecutes some of those accused of these crimes,

human rights advocates say that far too little is being done. A recent unsuccessful attempted coup by native Fijians was directed toward limiting the power of ethnic Indians.

The law forbids forced labor. Nevertheless, there are allegations that forced labor is still practiced in some plantations in the more remote islands of the Republic.

The government generally cooperates with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other humanitarian organizations. There are no local organizations that focus solely on human rights issues. Women's rights groups, the labor movement, and several political groups advocate and promote human rights.

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# Finland



The Republic of Finland is located in Scandinavia. It is bounded on the north by Norway; on the east by Russia; on the south and west by the Baltic Sea; and on the northwest by Sweden. It has a population of approximately 5 million. The official languages are Finnish and Swedish; Finnish is the most widely spoken. Lutheran and Eastern Orthodox are the main religious denominations.

Finland achieved independence from Russia in 1917 and was recognized as an independent republic in 1919. Its new constitution was proclaimed in 1929. The president is the head of state and shares executive powers with the prime minister, who holds office as long as he receives the vote of confidence of the Parliament. Elec-

tions are held every four years by universal suffrage to elect the 200 members of the unicameral Parliament. The independent judiciary is organized in a system of local courts, regional appellate courts, and the Supreme Court.

Finland joined the United Nations (UN) in 1955 and the European Union in 1995. It is also a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) Partnership for Peace, as well as an observer in the North Atlantic Cooperation Council and the Western European Union. It actively participates in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Finland has an industrialized economy based on forestry resources, technology, and capital investment. After a deep recession in the early 1990s, its entry into the European Union, as well as its cooperation with other Scandinavian countries, helped stabilize the country's economy.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

Citizens are provided with an efficient social welfare system, and enjoy all individual and political rights and freedoms. In 1999, there were no large-scale reports of violations of basic human rights. However, problems still persisted in some areas.

Women were still underrepresented in top management jobs and in the ministries of government, and tended to occupy lower paying sectors of the economic life. Since 1985, the government has worked to implement plans aimed at promoting women's equality. Among its programs, the govern-

ment has tried to integrate women's perspectives into its activities at the UN and the Council of Europe.

Violence against women was reported as still being a major problem. A study concluded that 40 percent of women over fifteen years of age were still victims of some form of domestic abuse. Family violence, often alcohol-related, was also reported with regard to children and elderly people. The Union of Shelter Homes helped publicize this problem by exposing many previously underreported cases of family violence.

The law grants people with disabilities the right to access public buildings. However, many buildings still remain inaccessible to them. The law does not regulate public transportation accessibility for the disabled.

Despite the government's efforts to promote tolerance and combat racism by means of legislative initiatives, concern has

been expressed over episodes of racism and xenophobic behavior. In particular, discrimination against foreigners, and tensions between the Finnish-speaking majority and the Swedish-speaking minority, still persist.

Finland cooperates with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. It also supports humanitarian organizations and cooperates with human rights groups.

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# France



The French Republic is located in western Europe. It is bounded on the northeast by Belgium and Germany; on the east by Germany, Switzerland, and Italy; on the south by the Mediterranean Sea; on the southwest by Spain and Andorra; and on the west by the Atlantic Ocean. It has a population of approximately 58 million. French is the official language. Roman Catholicism is the major religious denomination (90 percent), and Protestants and Muslims represent small minorities.

## BACKGROUND

During World War II, France was under German occupation until 1944, when it was liberated by the Allies. For a short period after the end of the war, France was governed by

General Charles de Gaulle's provisional government, which was followed by the Fourth Republic and a new constitution. De Gaulle became prime minister in 1958, and was later elected president of the Fifth Republic. France is a member of the United Nations (UN), as well as a prominent member of the European Union.

The constitution of the Fifth Republic was approved by national referendum on September 28, 1958. The president of the republic and the prime minister share executive power. The president is elected every seven years by direct vote. The president appoints the prime minister, presides over the cabinet, commands the armed forces, and concludes treaties. In national emergencies, the president can assume full powers. The National Assembly and the Senate constitute the legislative bodies. However, the Senate has limited legislative powers. In the event of disagreement between the two houses, the National Assembly has the last word. The National Assembly is elected every five years by direct vote. Senators are chosen for nine-year terms, although these terms are staggered so that one third of the Senate is elected every three years.

The judiciary is efficient and independent. The two most distinctive features are the Constitutional Council, which considers only legislative matters, and the Council of State, which provides recourse to citizens with claims against the public administration.

France has one of the West's largest industrialized economies. It has substantial agricultural resources, as well as a large industrial base and a skilled labor force. In

January 1999, France joined ten other European Union countries in adopting the euro as its currency. Currently, its monetary policy is set by the European Central Bank in Frankfurt. The government controls large portions of the French economy by owning shares in many corporations in areas such as banking, energy production and distribution, automobiles, transportation, and telecommunications. France is one of the most successful countries in developing telecommunications, aerospace technology, and weapons. It relies heavily on nuclear power for its electricity sources.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

In general, France provides reasonable protection of its citizens' human rights. There are, however, areas where human rights are abused.

Despite extensive constitutional and statutory safeguards, the French police are frequently guilty of human rights abuses. As recently as 1998, for instance, there were

reports of the excessive use of force by police officers against immigrants, which, in some cases, resulted in death. There were also reports of abuses by prison guards against prisoners. In July 1997, the United Nations Human Rights Committee expressed disappointment and concern regarding the excessive use of force by the police. In addition, the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture criticized the mistreatment and poor conditions of detainees in police stations. Persons of North African and African origins filed most of the complaints of alleged police abuse. In January 1998, a draft law was introduced to create the Superior Council on Ethics and Security to oversee the implementation of codes by the local police and federal police.

The inadequacy of cells in police stations is well documented. In many cases the cells lack adequate light, sleeping space, blankets, and meals. Regular prison conditions usually exceed minimum international standards, although cases of brutality—particularly against African prisoners—are common.

Three hundred would-be immigrants seeking refuge in a Paris church. Police later stormed the church, arresting some of the refugees.

The judiciary is able to provide citizens with fair and efficient trials. Nevertheless, the judicial system has often been criticized for not being able to process cases quickly. Some suspects spend many years in prison before their trials. According to a recent report by the International Observer of Prisons, about 40 percent of the inmates are awaiting trial.

The government grants asylum to those who make formal request for such status. However, the United Nations Human Rights Committee has expressed its concern about the long delays in clearing such procedures in airport waiting areas. Observers do not usually have access to those areas.

Women are still underrepresented in politics. However, in order to increase women's participation in politics, a few parties have established specific quotas in electoral lists. Rape represents a serious problem. There were 6,540 reported cases of rape or sexual assault on women in 1995, and more than 15,700 cases of wife beating in 1993. The government provides shelters, assistance, and hotlines for battered women. In addition, sixty such private associations operate in the country. There have also been cases of foreign women forced into prostitution after being promised attractive jobs. And, in recent years, police discovered a Paris-based network that was forcing African women into prostitution. Women are still paid 22.5 percent less than men for equal employment. Recent statistics also show that 80 percent of persons earning less than \$650 per month are female.

Despite very strict laws against child abuse, there were 20,000 cases in 1995, 5,500 of which involved sexual abuse. The government provides counseling, financial aid, foster homes, and orphanages to abused children. Special branches of the police are assigned to deal with child abuse. There are also many private organizations

helping minors seeking justice in cases of mistreatment by parents.

In 1991, a new law was issued requiring new buildings and public transportation to be accessible to people with disabilities. Despite this law, however, most buildings and public means of transportation are not yet accessible to disabled people.

There are some cases of attacks against ethnic minorities. The reported cases usually involve skinheads and those affiliated with right-wing political groups. The number of attacks against minorities has been on the decrease in recent years. On the other hand, many companies continue to deny employment to North Africans. A new law passed in 1997 grants citizenship to all children born in France.

French law grants freedom of association to all workers. Although they represent less than 10 percent of all workers, unions have considerable political and economic influence, and play a legal role in the administration of social institutions. The freedom to strike is granted to all workers, but can be denied whenever it threatens public safety. Most strikes usually affect state-owned companies. The law prohibits children under the age of sixteen from being employed. In addition, minors under the age of eighteen are forbidden from working at difficult jobs or from working between 10:00 P.M. and 5:00 A.M.

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# Gabon



The Gabonese Republic is situated in central Africa. It is bounded on the north by Cameroon; on the east and south by Congo; on the west by the Atlantic Ocean; and on the northwest by Guinea. Libreville is the capital city. It has a population of approximately one million, of which about 12,000 are French. There are approximately forty tribal groups of Bantu origin and 3,500 Pygmies living in the country; they speak different languages and maintain separate cultures. French is the official language.

## BACKGROUND

An important center for slave trade since the sixteenth century, in 1910 Gabon became a French colony and one of the four

territories of French Equatorial Africa. In 1960, independence was achieved.

In 1961, Gabon adopted a constitution that was theoretically democratic with a presidential form of government, but which was actually ruled as a one-party state. The first multiparty elections were not held until 1991. In October 1994, following a period of civil unrest and violent repression of dissenters, the president and his supporting parties and the opposition parties negotiated the Paris Accords to ensure the inclusion of opposition leaders in the government and greater respect for human rights. However, the 1997 elections were marked by organizational frauds. In December 1998, President El Hadj Omar Bongo was reelected for a seven-year term, with his supporting party occupying two-thirds of the seats in the National Assembly. The opposition has called for the annulment of the election.

The president is the head of state and retains strong executive powers including the authority to dissolve the National Assembly and to declare a state of siege. The president can submit proposed laws, and he appoints the prime minister as the head of government, the members of the cabinet, and the judges of the independent judiciary. The legislature is divided into the National Assembly, whose 120 deputies are elected by universal suffrage every five years, and the Senate, whose members are indirectly elected.

Gabon's economy is based primarily on the export of its abundant natural resources, including petroleum, manganese, uranium, phosphates, and wood. The oil sector accounts for 50 percent of the GDP. However, the income from these exported

products is unevenly distributed, and a large proportion of the population remains poor. Poor financial management and corruption have damaged the economy, with resulting domestic and external debt. Although Gabon is moving toward privatization, the formal sector is mostly state-owned. Legal and illegal immigrants from West Africa dominate the informal sector.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

The constitution of Gabon provides human rights and freedoms to the Gabonese, and the government generally respects those provisions. However, human rights abuses continue to be practiced in some areas.

Security forces reportedly beat prisoners or detainees in custody as a means of punishment or to obtain confessions. Prison conditions are harsh and, in some cases, life threatening. Prisons are overcrowded, and lack proper sanitation facilities and medical care. Prisoners are not adequately fed.

Pretrial detentions are lengthy and the police do not respect the constitutional provision requiring a detainee to be charged before a judge within forty-eight hours from the time of the arrest. In principle, the judiciary is independent; however, it remains under the pressure of the executive, particularly in state security trials. In the past, there were reports that judges willingly provided search warrants to be used by the government against opposition leaders and their families.

The government interferes with citizens' privacy by monitoring their movements, their telephone conversations, and their personal mail. Freedom of speech and press are generally respected. The government controls the only daily newspaper and the national electronic media. Other periodicals and weekly magazines represent independent views and other political parties,

and they often criticize the government. International broadcasters are free to air their programs. However, in 1998, a few journalists were arrested and sentenced to prison from one to eight months under the charge of defamation. One opposition newspaper was closed and another was suspended. Local organizations and the political opposition claimed that the incarceration of the journalists and other events were the result of the government's effort to control the media prior to the December 1998 presidential election.

In practice, citizens are not free to change their government, because legislative and presidential elections have been marred by irregularities in the past ten years. Despite the establishment of an independent National Electoral Commission in 1995 (whose electoral functions were recently transferred to the Interior Ministry), inaccurate electoral lists, alterations of documents, and fraudulent vote counts continued to take place, during the 1997 legislative elections and the 1998 presidential elections.

The government does not enforce constitutional provisions against discrimination based on sex. Although women have equal access to education and employment, and participate in politics, they are still victims of societal abuses, especially in domestic affairs and property matters. They are limited in their right to medical or legal assistance. Domestic violence against women is common in rural areas and remains unpunished. By law, women need their husband's permission to travel abroad. In addition, the law does not explicitly provide against abuses such as female genital mutilation.

The government does not protect children's welfare. UNICEF has expressed great concern over the exploitation of expatriate children in the labor market. In general, the

government does not enforce constitutional provisions regarding the labor code in sectors where the labor force is not Gabonese.

The law does not prohibit discrimination against people with disabilities.

Ethnic favoritism in employment and career is widespread. The Pygmies are not represented in government; they live in isolation and do not benefit from governmental programs or assistance. Members of the security officers reportedly harassed African immigrants legally working in the country by extorting bribes or demanding services with the threat of confiscating their residence documents.

The government generally cooperates with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in providing assistance to refugees

or asylum seekers. However, human rights groups are restricted in their activities. Human rights monitors are not allowed to visit prisons. In October 1998, the immigration police arrested three non-governmental organization workers who came from Togo to monitor the pre-election process.

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# Gambia



The Republic of the Gambia is situated in West Africa, bordering Senegal and the Atlantic Ocean. Banjul is the capital city. Gambia's population of 1.3 million includes a variety of ethnic groups, each preserving its own language and traditions. The largest tribe is the Mandinka (42 percent), followed by the Fula, Wolof, Jola, and Serahuli. Europeans and people of Lebanese descent comprise 1 percent of the population. Approximately 90 percent of the population is Muslim, while most of the remainder are Christian of different denominations. English is the official language.

## BACKGROUND

A former British colony, Gambia achieved independence in 1965, becoming a constitutional monarchy within the British Commonwealth. In 1970, Gambia became a republic following a national referendum. However, a military coup organized by the Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council (AFPRC) suspended the 1970 constitution and deposed the government. In September 1996, Yahya A.J.J. Jammeh, former chairman of the AFPRC, was elected president in what were considered fraudulent elections. He currently rules the country. In January 1997, a formal constitutional government was restored with the Second Republic. The new constitution provides for a strong presidential power, a unicameral legislature, and an independent judiciary. President Jammeh's party, the Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction (APRC), occupies the majority of seats in the National Assembly. The president is also the secretary of state for defense, and therefore controls the Gambian National Army. The security forces exert a strong influence over the government.

The Gambian economy employs 75 percent of the labor force in subsistence agriculture. Agriculture accounts for 23 percent of gross domestic product (GDP). Tourism, trading, and fisheries comprise the growing private sector. Per capita GDP is estimated at \$360. Gambia is a member of the Economic Community of West African

States (ECOWAS). It maintains close relations with the United States, the United Kingdom, Senegal, and other African countries, although its representation in international organizations is limited.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

In the human rights area, it should first be noted that citizens do not have an effective right to change their government. President Jammeh continues to impose restrictions on opposition politicians by enforcing bans on political activity and public meetings. The government has not yet formally revoked military decrees enacted prior to the constitution, and they remain in effect unless inconsistent with constitutional provisions. However, these decrees have not been subject to judicial review. Security forces are reportedly responsible for mistreating and beating detainees or prisoners. They occasionally arrest or detain citizens without formal charges.

Prison conditions are poor. They are overcrowded and lack medical facilities. There have been reports of political, military, and security detainees being malnourished and physically abused. Authorities do not always enforce the constitutional provision for detainees being brought before a court within seventy-two hours of their arrest. Although nominally independent, the judiciary partially remains under the influence of the executive branch, especially at the lower levels. Traditional courts based on customary law deals with civil and minor matters.

Authorities occasionally infringe on the privacy rights of citizens by monitoring their activities, authorizing searches without warrants, and confiscating property without due process. Freedom of speech and the

press is severely restricted. The government uses police pressure, regulatory scrutiny, and decrees that limit the rights of the media. Independent radio stations and newspapers are subject to governmental interference, which at times results in intimidation, arrest, and detention of journalists and editors. Although the independent press practices self-censorship, criticism of the government still appears quite often. Foreign newspapers and radio news reports from foreign countries are accessible. State radio and television broadcasting stations serve as state propaganda tools, and give little coverage to opposition views.

The government violates constitutional provisions regarding freedom of peaceful assembly and association. The authorities deny permits to the principal opposition party to organize public meetings. Former governmental figures are banned from becoming involved in political activity. In addition, police officers, military personnel, and other civil service employees are prohibited from forming unions and striking.

Traditional customs contribute to discrimination against women in education and employment. Domestic violence and abuse of women, although only occasionally reported, is believed to be widespread. Female genital mutilation is practiced extensively, and the government has not passed legislation against it. Lack of resources and infrastructure limit education and health services for children. Child labor is common. There are no regulations mandating accessibility for people with disabilities.

Freedom of movement is occasionally restricted. Authorities reportedly denied passports to opposition politicians and to people under investigation for security matters. Former President Dawda Jawara is cur-

rently in exile, under threat of arrest and detention if he returns.

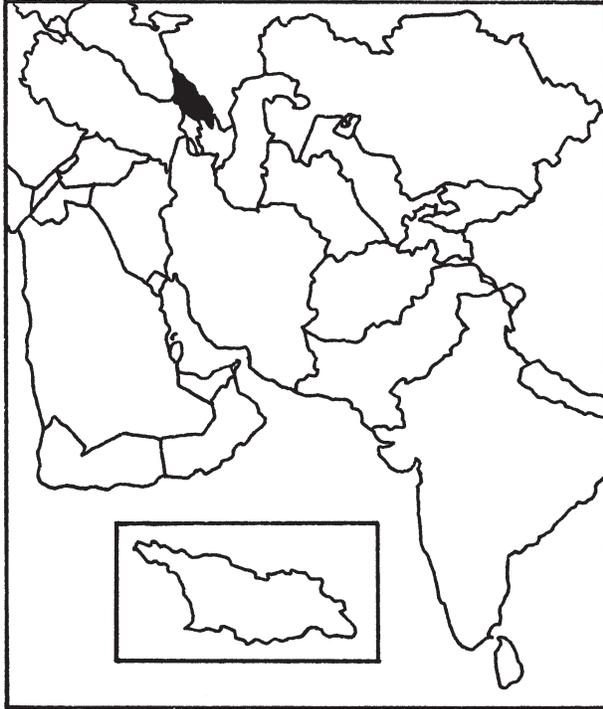
The government generally cooperates with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in processing claims and assisting refugees or asylum seekers. Several human rights NGOs operate in the country, although they are required to register with the National Advisory Council.

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# Georgia



The Republic of Georgia is located in the Caucasus area of southeastern Europe. It is bounded on the north by Russia, on the east by Azerbaijan, on the south by Armenia, and on the west by the Black Sea. Tbilisi is the capital city. Georgia's population of approximately 5 million includes six major ethnic groups: Georgians (70.1 percent), Armenians (8.1 percent), Russians (6.3 percent), Azerbaijanians (5.7 percent), Ossetians (3 percent), Abkhazs (about 1.8 percent), and others (5 percent). Georgian is the official language, while Abkhaz is spoken in Abkhazia. More than half of the population is Christian Orthodox (about 65 percent). The remainder are Muslim (about 11 percent), Russian Orthodox (about 10 percent), and Armenian Apostolic (about 8 percent).

## BACKGROUND

A former member of the Soviet Union, Georgia achieved independence on April 9, 1991. However, the newly formed republic immediately had to deal with separatist forces within its own territory—in Abkhazia and Ossetia—and did not achieve a moderate degree of political stability until 1995. The political situation in Georgia continues to be fragile. The nationalist desires of ethnic minorities have the potential to tear the country apart. Negotiations have achieved some measure of success in Ossetia. Conflicts continue in Abkhazia. The Georgian government is addressing most of its efforts and economic reforms toward the goal of reviving the old Silk Road, an ancient economic bridge between Asia and Europe.

In 1992 Georgia was admitted into the United Nations. The constitution was approved on October 17, 1995. Although the Republic of Georgia is a democratic state, its powers are highly centralized, with the exception of the autonomous regions of Abkhazia and Ajaria. The president of the republic is elected for a five-year term. The legislative power is held by a unicameral Parliament composed of 235 members who are elected for five-year terms.

Georgia's economic development has been stalled by the internal conflicts in Abkhazia and Ossetia, the Russian and Asian economic crisis, and internal political resistance against a Western model of developed society. However, under President Eduard Shevardnadze, the government has made progress in the area of

economic recovery. Most of these economic achievements have been possible because of new laws on commercial banking, land, and tax reform. In addition, many small, medium, and large enterprises have been privatized. Nevertheless, improvements in transportation and communication infrastructures are greatly needed.

### HUMAN RIGHTS

Although the constitution grants all basic human rights, and the government makes efforts to enforce these provisions, problems still persist. There are, for example, reports of prisoners dying while in government custody. Physical abuse, inhuman conditions, and torture are among the

causes of death. Authorities have not shown great interest in investigating, prosecuting, or punishing allegations of brutality by members of the security forces.

Additionally, there are numerous reports of political killings attributed to both sides of the Abkhazia conflict. Approximately 1,000 Georgians and several hundred Abkhaz have disappeared as a direct consequence of the conflict. Both sides occasionally take hostages for exchange. Security forces use torture and other forms of abuse during interrogations. Moreover, correction facilities are overcrowded, and lack adequate food, sanitation, and medical care. Diseases, especially tuberculosis, are frequent among prisoners, occasionally resulting in the death of prisoners. Pre-

trial detention is also a problem. Many prisoners are held for extended periods of time without being granted a trial.

Although the constitution provides for the independence of the judiciary, in practice the executive branch often influences the courts. Human rights observers have reported many cases of judicial incompetence and widespread corruption, which result in unfair trials. Human rights monitors have reported that there are political prisoners in Georgia, but their number is uncertain.

Authorities infringe on citizens' right to privacy by monitoring telephone conversations. Police often conduct searches without a warrant or stop cars without probable cause. Freedom of speech and freedom of the press are restricted. Security and law enforcement officers reportedly intimidate journalists in public and in private settings. Government officials often refuse to answer press inquiries and deny access to information. Moreover, there is no legal protection for journalists, who can be charged with offending the dignity of the authorities. Despite these restrictions, there are more than 200 independent newspapers, and one important television network, TNG, which have broken the state's monopoly on the media. Reports of harassment by the authorities against independent newspapers and television are frequent.

Government authorities do not respect the citizens' right of peaceful assembly.

Women remain underrepresented in Parliament. Of the 223 members elected during the elections of 1995, only sixteen were women, and only two women hold a ministerial position. Women are also subject to spousal abuse, which frequently is not re-

ported. The government does not support any facility for women in distress, and few private institutions exist to provide battered women with shelter. However, the non-governmental organization Women for Democracy has promoted women's rights in Georgia. As a consequence, women have more access to jobs, although they remain underpaid compared to males.

The state provides very limited services for children, including education and health care. The Law on Labor provides special discounts and social policies for the disabled, especially veterans. Overall, the government does not supply services for the disabled because of a lack of funding.

Several non-governmental human rights organizations operate in the country, generally without restrictions. However, access to prisons by human rights monitors is restricted. Since 1997, the United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe have established offices in the territory of the Republic of Georgia to investigate security incidents and human rights abuses.

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# Germany



The Federal Republic of Germany is located in central Europe. It is bounded on the north by the North Sea, the Baltic Sea and Denmark; on the east by Poland and the Czech Republic; on the south by Austria and Switzerland; and on the west by France, Luxembourg, Belgium, and the Netherlands. Germany is a constitutional parliamentary democracy with a bicameral federal Parliament and an independent judiciary. Berlin is the capital. Primarily native German speakers comprise its homogeneous population of more than 82 million inhabitants. Other ethnic minorities include Danish and Slavic citizens, as well as 7.3 million non-citizens. The major religions are Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. Most non-citizens are Turkish and Kurdish immigrants, who are predominantly Muslim.

## BACKGROUND

In 1871, the German Empire was created under the leadership of Otto von Bismarck, its first chancellor. The Empire collapsed at the end of World War I. From 1919 until 1933, there was an attempt to establish a peaceful, liberal, democratic regime, the Weimar Republic. However, economic problems and the weakness of the Weimar government led to the rise of the National Socialist (Nazi) Party under Adolf Hitler. The Nazi Regime fell at the end of World War II, after having committed many crimes against humanity, most notably the slaughter of 6 million Jews. In addition, 6 million non-Jewish civilians were killed by the Nazis.

In 1945, the United States, France, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union occupied Germany and assumed responsibility for its administration. The United States and the Soviet Union were unable to agree on the kind of government a new Germany should have, so they divided Germany into East and West, and each created their own German government in their sectors. In 1949, Germany was split into two separate countries: the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) and the German Democratic Republic (East Germany). In 1990, as the Soviet Union was disintegrating, the two German countries reunified under the name Federal Republic of Germany.

The reunification of Germany has caused difficulties, both economic and social. Eastern Germany is far poorer than western Germany, and the disparities in wealth

A band of German neo-Nazis marching in eastern Germany.

have caused resentment. Some of this resentment has fueled the rise of racist political parties and a neo-Nazi skinhead youth movement.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights are generally respected in Germany. The law prohibits cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment, and authorities generally respect this prohibition. However, episodes of police abuse still occur, especially when foreigners are involved. Such episodes are usually racially motivated. According to a July 1999 Amnesty International report, there is a "clear pattern of abuse" by the police against foreigners. The state has prosecuted several police officers guilty of abusing persons in custody. Prison conditions meet minimum international standards, and visits by

human rights observers are permitted.

The law grants freedom of speech and freedom of the press, although the propagation of Nazism and certain other proscribed groups is illegal. In addition, the law forbids the propagation of certain other materials, such as child pornography. The law provides for freedom of assembly, but denies this right to neo-Fascists. The law also bans organizations whose activities are found to be illegal or opposed to liberal democratic order.

The constitution provides for religious freedom. However, the Jehovah's Witnesses have been denied public law corporation status. In addition, the Church of Scientology is under scrutiny by both federal and state officials, who claim that it is not a religion but an economic enterprise.

Violence against women is a problem. Rapes frequently go unreported. The feder-

al government has supported numerous projects throughout the country in order to assist abused women and their children by providing shelter, counseling, medical and legal aid, and police protection. Although the state is strongly committed to children, there have been cases of abuse against children, many of which are unreported.

The law mandates special services for people with disabilities, and the government enforces these provisions. The severely disabled are entitled to special benefits, such as tax breaks, free public transportation, special parking facilities, and exemption from radio and television fees. The federal government has set a number of policies for "barrier-free" public buildings and for modifications of streets and pedestrian traffic walks.

The law provides for the right to strike for all employees, except for civil servants (including teachers) and personnel in sensitive positions, such as the members of the armed forces. The governmental definition of "essential services," however, has been severely criticized by the International Labor Organization (ILO). The law forbids forced or compulsory labor, as well as child labor, and these provisions are generally respected. Recently, the Diehl Armaments Company announced that it would pay compensation to Jewish women who were forced to work for the company during World War II. There is no provision for a minimal wage. Wages are usually set by collective bargaining agreements between unions and employer federations or by individual contracts. These negotiations give German workers some of the highest average hourly wage rates in the industrialized world.

Germany cooperates with the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian organizations in assisting refugees. Nevertheless, there has been growing unofficial

resistance in Germany toward the acceptance of immigrants and refugees, particularly those from Africa and the Middle East. Racist attacks on immigrants and refugees have become commonplace, particularly in eastern Germany, where higher unemployment rates have led frustrated young people to take out their resentments on those who look different. Government authorities have been generally good about prosecuting the perpetrators of these racist attacks, but human rights advocates say that more should be done.

Beyond asylum seekers, Germany must also deal with the problem of its millions of foreign *gastarbeiter* (guest workers). These are immigrant workers, mostly from Turkey, who have lived in the country for many years, some for decades. Although they are an important part of the economy, it is very difficult for them to become citizens, a status that is largely restricted to those who can prove German ancestry. Some critics have argued that Germany's unwillingness to absorb its Turkish workers is motivated by racism, and that these attitudes help to fuel the more blatant racist attacks of skinheads and neo-Nazis.

A variety of human rights groups operate without restriction, investigating and publishing their findings on human rights cases. German officials are generally very cooperative.

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# Ghana



The Republic of Ghana is located in West Africa. It is bounded on the north by Burkina Faso, on the east by Togo, on the south by the Gulf of Guinea, and on the west by Côte d'Ivoire. Accra is the capital. Its population of about 19 million is divided in small ethnic groups speaking more than fifty languages and dialects. English is the official and the commercial language. Among the most important linguistic groups are the Akan, the Guan, the Ga and Ewe-speaking tribes, and the Moshi-Dagomba. About 24 percent of the population is Christian, 30 percent is Muslim, and the remainder practice indigenous beliefs.

## BACKGROUND

Ghana's history is marred by continuous political struggles to establish democracy.

A British colony, Ghana achieved independence within the Commonwealth in 1957. In 1960, it became a republic with strong presidential power. A combination of military coups, economic mismanagement, corruption at all levels of public life, and ongoing human rights violations characterized Ghana's politics until 1979, when civilian rule was restored. The Third Ghanaian Republic was established, with a new constitution modeled after those of Western democracies. However, under the presidency of Dr. Hilla Limann, the new government failed to stop the economic decline and the widespread corruption that characterized post-independence Ghana's history.

In December 1981, a junior officer, Flight Lt. Jerry John Rawlings, launched a military coup, suspended the constitution, and dissolved the Parliament. Under Rawlings, a Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC) exercised authoritarian rule. International and domestic forces pushed for a return to democracy, and in 1992 new parliamentary and presidential elections took place. In 1993, the Fourth Republic was founded with Rawlings as its president. The 1996 elections reconfirmed Rawlings in his current position by giving him 57 percent of the popular vote. Rawlings' National Democratic Party won the majority of the seats in Parliament. The opposition contested the results of the elections, which were considered free and fair by international and domestic observers.

The new republican democratic government is founded upon the principle of the division of powers. However, the Parliament remains under the strong influence of the president's party and the judiciary occa-

Boys carrying water to their village, a task that must be done many times a day.

sionally receives pressure from the executive. Furthermore, the lack of adequate resources undermines the effectiveness of all three branches of the government. Internal corruption and pressure from the executive compromise the legal system.

The president and the Council of State hold the executive power. The president is the head of state, head of government, and commander-in-chief of the armed forces. The unicameral Parliament has legislative powers and its members are elected for terms of four years by universal adult suffrage. The opposition complains that the executive imposes impediments on proposed legislation by opposition members.

Ghana's economy is based primarily on agriculture and the export of gold, cocoa, and timber. Tourism constitutes the third

greatest source of income from foreign exchange. Ghana's industrial activity is relatively advanced compared to other African countries. Even so, Ghana remains heavily dependent on international financial and technical assistance.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

Ghana is an active member of the United Nations, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Despite the government's effort to improve human rights practices, violations and abuses are committed in several areas. The police sometimes abuse prisoners and harass citizens; there are also reports of excessive use of force in the

form of beatings and torture under police custody that resulted in extrajudicial killings. The security forces have used live ammunition to control riots and during some demonstrations. There are reports of people being killed on these occasions. Sometimes the authorities filed charges against the perpetrators, and several investigations are still pending.

Police often conduct searches without a warrant. Arbitrary arrests and detentions are also widespread, and police checkpoints are used to solicit bribes. Police corruption is a serious problem, and the population has little or no faith in the security forces.

Prisons are unsanitary, overcrowded, and poorly ventilated. Prisoners' families usually supply them with food and bribe guards for visitation rights. Pretrial detainees comprise about 30 percent of the prison population. As late as 1999, Amnesty International was reporting that at least eight prisoners of conscience arrested in previous years were still being detained.

The constitution grants freedom of speech and press; however, the government exercises pressure on journalists, editors, and media organizations. Journalists and editors have been imprisoned by use of the criminal libel laws, which provide for up to ten years' imprisonment for reporting stories that might harm the reputation of the government. In 1999, after a five-year libel trial, the editor of an independent newspaper was sentenced to ninety days in prison for printing allegations against the president's wife. Foreign periodicals have free circulation.

Most radio stations are independent and air a variety of viewpoints. There are three television stations; one is government-owned and has a nationwide audience, while the other two are partially owned by the government and broadcast only to the

capital. Government-owned media never criticize government policies. One private cable service is accessible to subscribers throughout the country.

The government generally respects the right to peaceful assembly and freedom of association. However, student demonstrations on Accra University campus are banned. Although the law initially recognized the right to strike, all strike actions were denied legal status under the provisions of the Industrial Relations Act.

The government does not enforce constitutional provisions against discrimination based on race, sex, religion, disability, language, or social status. Women are underrepresented in government and are victims of societal discrimination in all sectors of public life, including education. Violence against women is a serious problem. There are press reports of penal villages in the northern region for pregnant teenagers or women suspected of witchcraft by village authorities. They live in harsh conditions, under forced labor, and constantly fear death. The press often reports deaths or episodes of violence related to vigilantism; angry citizens or mobs have attacked suspected criminals or women accused of being witches.

Female genital mutilation is still practiced. Female and child slavery still exist. The law does not prohibit forced childhood marriage. Child prostitution and labor, although illegal, are widespread. In 1998, legislation was passed to better protect women and children's rights.

The government respects freedom of religion. However, violent confrontations sometimes take place between Muslim sects, and there are tensions between the Christian community and traditional authorities. Ethnic conflict is also a problem. In 1995, the Permanent Peace Negotiating

Team was created to help solve ethnic conflicts in the northern region and the northern part of the Volta region. A few positive results were achieved.

The government generally cooperates with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Ghana continues to provide first asylum to refugees from West African nations.

Non-governmental and international human rights organizations operate without interference from the government. The Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) has jurisdiction to investigate and remedy proven violations of human rights, to settle individual cases of grievances against government offices, and to provide informative workshops on human right issues. In August 1998, the Supreme Court accorded the CHRAJ the right to in-

vestigate violations that took place prior to the 1992 constitution.

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# Greece



The Hellenic Republic (the official name) is a Balkan or southeast European state, and a member of the European Union. It has a population of 11 million. Greece achieved independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1829 and was one of the founding members of the United Nations. Since the collapse of its most recent dictatorship in 1974, Greece has been a multiparty democracy. The official language is Greek and the state religion is Eastern (Orthodox) Christianity. Over 90 percent of the population formally identify as Orthodox. A few hundred thousand Orthodox belong to various Genuine (Old Calendarist) Orthodox Churches that have split from the official (New Calendarist) Orthodox Church to which most Greeks belong. Among Greek

citizens, there are also 96,000 Muslims, 50,000 Jehovah's Witnesses, 50,000 Catholics, 30,000 Protestants, 5,000 Jews, and other smaller (new and old) religious communities.

In recent years, some 500,000 to 700,000 immigrants have settled in Greece, mostly illegally; three-fifths of them are Albanians, and most of these are Muslim. In 1998, a legalization procedure for those immigrants was launched, eventually leading to some 201,000 people applying for residence permits. Besides immigrants, Greece has an estimated 300,000 Roma (also called Gypsies). Most Muslim Greek citizens identify themselves as ethnic Turks, even though for some 30,000 of them the mother tongue is Pomak (a form of Bulgarian); another few tens of thousands identify themselves as ethnic Macedonians. Considerably larger numbers (some 200,000 in each case) of ethnic Greeks have a non-Greek mother tongue: Makedontsi (Macedonian), Arberichte (Arvanitika, a form of Tosk Albanian), and Arminesti (Aromanian, a neo-Latin language akin to Romanian).

## HUMAN RIGHTS

Greece has only a fair record of defending human rights. Many of its more troublesome human rights issues revolve around its large ethnic minorities.

Officially, Greece recognizes only one religious minority, that of the Muslims. Greek citizens who have claimed a Macedonian or a Turkish ethnic identity have often been harassed, and sometimes prosecuted and

convicted. Popular sentiment, supported by the government, rejects the human rights of these ethnic minorities to claim a different national status. Greek courts have also banned Macedonian and Turkish associations. In July 1998, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) found Greece guilty of violating the human rights of its citizens because of a 1990 ban of one such an association, called the "Home of Macedonian Culture." The ECHR was clearly warning Greece that it has to allow the free establishment of ethnic minority associations as a basic human right. The ECHR is not alone in its criticism of Greece's human rights stance. Most major international human rights organizations have consistently reported a multitude of small to serious violations of the education, religious, and other rights of Greece's two largest ethnic minorities.

In 1997, Greece belatedly ratified the United Nations International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights and signed the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (a convention that still awaits ratification).

Despite these formal steps, Greece still has not completely accepted the right of some of its citizens to freely identify themselves, individually as well as collectively, ethnically as non-Greeks. The need for such adaptation of Greek policy was first mentioned publicly by Foreign Minister George Papandreou in July 1999, coincidentally a few days after a public appeal for the recognition of Macedonian and Turkish minorities was made by minority members of Parliament and organizations, and by a few human rights non-government organizations (NGOs). The ensuing public debate was dominated by strong verbal reactions—often rising to the level of hate speech—

against the minister and the signatories of the appeal, from almost all sides of the political, media, and intellectual communities. For many Greeks, this xenophobia is born out of a nationalistic fear that Greece is in danger from its neighbors, particularly Turkey.

Religious minorities are also discriminated against. It is characteristic of Greece's intolerance toward minorities that the ECHR has repeatedly convicted Greece of the violation of the rights of its Jehovah's Witness, Catholic, and Protestant communities. Some of the ECHR verdicts have included strong criticism of related legislation passed by the Greek Parliament. Similar criticism can be found in a 1996 report by a UN Special Rapporteur on Religious Freedom. However, pressure from the Greek Orthodox Church, combined with popular resistance, have prevented the necessary liberalization of legislation on the treatment of religious minorities.

The Roma have also suffered from discrimination in Greece. Perhaps half of the Roma have successfully integrated themselves into Greek society, while the other half live in scores of settlements under poor living conditions. An ambitious government plan to help the Roma was announced in 1996. Very little has been achieved since then, though, because of prejudice by police and government officials, combined with the reluctance of reelection-minded ministers to show the necessary political will. Instead, at least a dozen Roma communities have been expelled or threatened with expulsion in the late 1990s. Police brutality against and harassment of Roma remains frequent and unpunished, even in the rare cases that prosecutors indict alleged offenders. Finally, comparative studies have shown that tent-dwelling Roma

have the some of lowest education levels and some of the highest incidence of serious health problems (such as the widespread occurrence of hepatitis) in Europe.

The ongoing policy of regularization of the immigrant population has not lessened the rising xenophobia of Greek public opinion. This xenophobia, enhanced by the hostile coverage by the Greek print and electronic media, erroneously states that immigration is the main cause of rising crime and unemployment in Greece. Under such pressure, the Greek government often resorts to conspicuous "broom" operations (or "broomsweep," as the informal name of "sweeping" the country of unwanted foreigners) that have led to the usually inhuman expulsion of thousands of mostly Albanian immigrants.

The press in Greece is largely free, and many critics have charged that it frequently resorts to the use of hate speech, especially toward minorities and dissident intellectuals. The government is more sensitive to political attacks than it is to ethnic prejudice. The courts have sentenced journalists and publishers to prison in libel cases, mostly for articles that could not be considered anything more than harsh criticism of public officials. Such convictions can be intimidating, especially for small provin-

cial media. The government has ignored repeated appeals by all major international freedom of expression organizations to bring Greece's press legislation in line with current international norms.

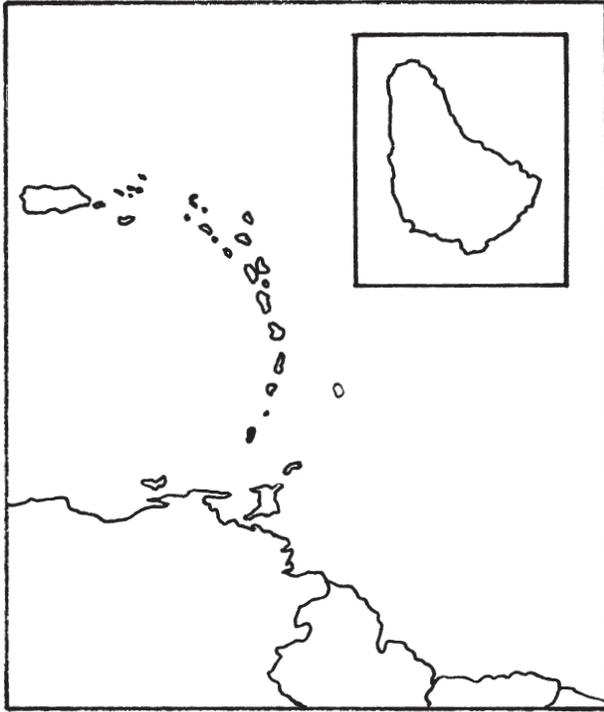
Since the 1996 change of government (when Costas Simitis succeeded Pan Hellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) party founder Andreas Papandreou as prime minister), Greek authorities have slowly been trying to adapt their human rights policy to the prevailing international standards. These changes have been thwarted by the resilience of middle-level administrators who, like most Greeks, believe that Greece is, and should remain, one indivisible nation.

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# Grenada



Grenada is an island nation in the eastern Caribbean. Its capital city is St. George's. It is a constitutional monarchy with a multiparty parliamentary democracy, and is a member of the Commonwealth of Nations. Queen Elizabeth II, the British monarch and head of state, appoints a governor-general who represents the head of the state with largely ceremonial powers. The prime minister, as leader of the majority party, and the cabinet hold the executive powers and are responsible to the Grenadan Parliament.

Grenada's population of approximately 100,000 is almost entirely of African origin. Other ethnic groups are from South Asia (East Indian) and Europe. Roman Catholicism is the official religion, although Protestant denominations are also widespread. Many South Asians are Hindus; some are Muslim. English is the official language.

The economy of Grenada is based on agricultural products—nutmeg, mace, cocoa, and bananas—as well as tourism. Agriculture accounts for over half of the merchandise exported, and a large portion of the population is employed directly or indirectly in agriculture. Tourism is the key earner of foreign exchange. Grenada is a member of the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM).

Grenada was granted full autonomy in March 1967, and achieved full independence on February 7, 1974. Sir Eric Gairy was Grenada's first prime minister. On March 13, 1979, the new joint endeavor for welfare, education, and liberation (New Jewel) movement ousted Gairy in a nearly bloodless coup and established a People's Revolutionary Government (PRG) headed by Maurice Bishop, who became prime minister. His Marxist-Leninist government established close ties with Cuba, the Soviet Union, and other communist countries. In October 1983, a power struggle within the government resulted in the arrest and subsequent murder of Bishop and several members of his cabinet by elements of the People's Revolutionary Army.

Following a breakdown in civil order, a joint U.S.-Caribbean military force landed on Grenada in 1983 in response to an appeal from the governor-general and a request for assistance from the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States. As a result of the invasion, U.S. citizens were evacuated and order was restored. New general elections were held in December 1984. The New National Party (NNP), led by Herbert Blaize, won fourteen of fifteen seats in free and fair elections and formed a democratic govern-

ment. Grenada's constitution had been suspended in 1979 by the PRG, but it was restored after the 1984 elections. In the parliamentary elections on June 20, 1995, the NNP won eight seats and formed a government headed by Dr. Keith Mitchell.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

The constitution of Grenada grants human rights to its citizens and the government generally respects them in practice. However, there have been several reports of police brutality toward those arrested. Torture is forbidden by the constitution, but flogging remains a legal form of punishment, although it is rarely used.

Persons under arrest must be charged within forty-eight hours. Legal detention usually lasts up to fifteen days, but can be extended up to sixty days. Bail is almost always granted. The judiciary provides fast and efficient trials. The judiciary is independent and is held in high esteem by the public. Access to legal assistance is easy, and the authorities provide attorneys to the indigent.

All newspapers, radio, and television stations enjoy independence from the state and regularly report opposition views. The television news often airs reports on opposition activities, including coverage of political rallies held by various political parties and candidates, public forums featuring political leaders of each of the major parties, and other public service broadcasts.

Violence against women is a serious problem. Most cases of abuse are not reported, and others are settled out of court. The law provides for long terms of imprisonment for crimes such as rape, but many women are afraid to bring charges. A shelter for battered women was opened providing medical and psychological assistance. The abuse of children is increasingly a problem. However, the state provides services to youth, day-care ser-

vices, and social work programs for families. In addition, funds are available for private children's homes.

The law does not protect job seekers with disabilities from discrimination in employment, nor does it require accessibility for public buildings or services. The National Council for the Disabled and the National Children's Home assist the government in placing disabled students into community schools. The Council also seeks assistance from architects and builders in the construction of disabled access ramps at hotels and public buildings.

Child labor, as well as forced or bonded labor, is illegal. However, children sometimes work in the agricultural sector. The statutory minimum age for employment of children is eighteen. Inspectors from the Ministry of Labor enforce this provision by means of periodic checks.

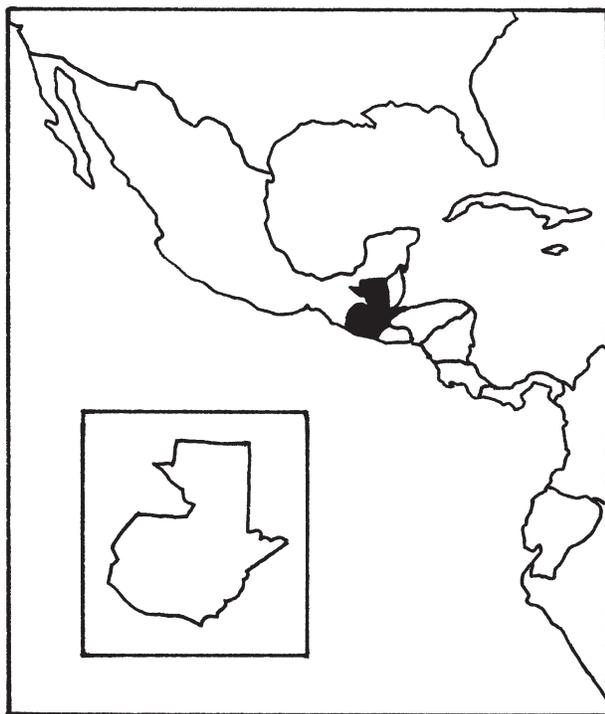
The constitution protects freedom of movement within and outside the country. Nevertheless, the right to leave the country can be denied in special circumstances as outlined by the 1986 Act to Restrict the Freedom of Movement of Certain Persons. General elections are held every five years, and they are usually free and fair. Local human rights groups operate without government restriction, and the government cooperates with visits from international human rights organizations.

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# Guatemala



The Republic of Guatemala is located in Central America. It is bounded by Belize, El Salvador, Honduras, and Mexico. Guatemala City is the capital. Its population of approximately 12 million consists primarily of mestizos—mixed Spanish-Indian—and indigenous Indians. Roman Catholicism is the dominant religion, although Protestantism and traditional Mayan religions are also practiced. Spanish is the official language, more than twenty Indian languages—including K'iche', Kakchiquel, K'ekchi, and Mam—are spoken throughout the country.

## BACKGROUND

Guatemala is a constitutional democratic republic. Its constitution, which dates back

to May 1985, was amended in November 1993. The government consists of an executive branch—the president; a legislative branch—a unicameral eighty-member Congress; and a judiciary—a thirteen-member Supreme Court of Justice.

Rich in natural resources—oil, timber, and nickel—Guatemala has an agriculture-based, private sector-oriented economy. Coffee, sugar, and bananas are the major exports. About half of the population engages in some form of agriculture, and a smaller amount are engaged in manufacturing. A considerable disparity exists in the income distribution of Guatemalans, and the poverty rate is very high, particularly among the indigenous people. About 80 percent of the population and 90 percent of the indigenous community live in poverty. Guatemala's economy was adversely affected in October 1998 by Hurricane Mitch, which caused 250 deaths and did much damage to the nation's infrastructure and crops.

Mayan civilization dominated the territory until 1523–1524, when Pedro de Alvarado established Spanish colonial rule. Most Central American countries came under the control of the Captaincy General of Guatemala. During the seventeenth century, Antigua—the capital of Guatemala since 1543—was one of the richest capitals of the New World. Antigua, however, was severely damaged by two earthquakes in 1773, and Guatemala City became the new capital in 1776. Guatemala achieved independence from Spain on September 15, 1821, and was briefly part of the Mexican Empire. It later became a member of the United Provinces of Central America.

Soldier standing guard in a Guatemalan hamlet.

A series of dictatorships, insurgencies, coups, and stretches of military rule characterized the history of Guatemala from the mid-nineteenth century until the mid-1980s. In 1986, President Vinicio Cerezo's new civilian government committed itself to ending political violence and to establishing the rule of law. Among Cerezo's reforms were the creation of a legislative human rights committee and the office of Human Rights Ombudsman. Cerezo's government, however, was strongly criticized for its unwillingness to investigate cases of human rights violations and for its inability to deal with many of the nation's problems, including high infant mortality, widespread illiteracy, and deficient health and social services. Guatemala's most serious problem was an ongoing civil war with

leftist guerrillas led by the revolutionary Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity Party (URNG).

Jorge Serrano won the 1990 presidential elections. On May 25, 1993, Serrano illegally dissolved Congress and the Supreme Court, and tried to restrict civil freedoms, in an alleged effort to fight corruption. This coup, however, failed because of strong protests from Guatemalan society as well as international pressure. Serrano eventually fled the country and was replaced by the human rights ombudsman Ramiro De Leon Carpio, who launched an ambitious anticorruption campaign to purify Congress and the Supreme Court. The De Leon government made peace with the URNG guerrillas, and signed agreements on Human Rights (March 1994), Resettlement of Dis-

placed Persons (June 1994), Historical Clarification (June 1994), and Indigenous Rights (March 1995).

## HUMAN RIGHTS

The agreement on the reinsertion of the URNG into political life contributed to an improvement in Guatemala's human rights situation. In the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch, President Alvaro Arzu Irigoyen had "temporarily" suspended certain civil liberties as a thirty-day emergency measure, ratified by the Congress. The ending of Arzu's attacks on civil liberties advanced human rights for Guatemalans. In recent years, the human rights situation has continued to improve considerably, although problems have remained in some areas.

Members of the police have been accused of extrajudicial killings. Indigenous people were the most common victims of extrajudicial killings during the internal conflict. Additionally, although the constitution provides for the integrity and security of the person and prohibits torture of prisoners, security forces have mistreated suspects and detainees. Arbitrary arrests and detentions, as well as lengthy pretrial detentions, are widespread problems. Police routinely ignore writs of habeas corpus in cases of illegal detention, and it is estimated that 62 percent of all those in prison are awaiting trial.

About seventy clandestine cemeteries have been found in the past five years. Most of the exhumed bodies were those of victims of military or paramilitary killings. According to a number of reports, social cleansing operations still occur and typically consist of cases in which persons considered socially undesirable are murdered.

Corruption among the police and in the judiciary is also a problem. A number of in-

dividual police officers have been involved in criminal activity, including kidnapping. Judges and other law enforcement officials are regularly subject to intimidation and corruption, and the inefficient judicial system is often unable to ensure fair trials and due process. Lynchings and mob attacks are frequent; they are vigilante responses to the government's inability to control crime and of the courts to assure speedy justice. Prison conditions are harsh, and prison security and medical facilities are inadequate. Many prisons are overcrowded, and food is inadequate. Drug-related corruption is common; escapes and prison unrest are also serious problems.

Although the constitution states that all persons are free and equal in dignity and rights, in practice discrimination and violence against women is common, as are societal child abuse and discrimination against the disabled and indigenous people. Violence against women, including domestic violence, is common among all social classes. Victims rarely report criminal sexual violence and relatively few rape cases go to court. Women face job discrimination and generally receive significantly lower pay than men. They are predominantly employed in low-wage jobs and in the informal sector of the economy. The abuse of street children is a serious problem in major cities. Moreover, discrimination against physically disabled persons in employment is widespread, and few resources are devoted to assisting the disabled. In general, rural indigenous people have limited educational opportunities and thus have fewer employment opportunities. Because of their limited comprehension of Spanish, indigenous people arrested for crimes are usually at a disadvantage.

The constitution provides for freedom of expression and the government generally

respects this right. The constitution also provides for the right of peaceful assembly and for freedom of association. Workers are allowed to form and join trade unions. Forced or compulsory labor is forbidden by the law. The constitution, however, does not specifically prohibit forced or bonded labor by children, who are regularly employed in the informal and agricultural sectors. Workers are often forced to work overtime without premium pay, and occupational health and safety standards are inadequate.

Guatemala generally permits human rights groups to operate freely, and a number of domestic and international groups

are very active and report freely on human rights issues.

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# Guinea



The Republic of Guinea is situated in West Africa, bordering the North Atlantic Ocean between Guinea-Bissau and Sierra Leone. Conakry is the capital city. The country's population of approximately 7.5 million is ethnically and regionally diverse. The largest ethnic groups are the Puhlar, also called Peuhl or Fulani (about 40 percent), the Malinke (about 30 percent), and the Soussou (about 20 percent). Each of these groups speaks its own language and is concentrated in a distinct region. French is the official language. About 85 percent of the population is Muslim, with the remainder professing Christianity or indigenous beliefs.

## BACKGROUND

A former French colony, Guinea achieved independence in 1958. The current president Lansana Conte has been ruling since 1984, when he successfully organized and led a military coup. He was elected president of a civilian government in 1993, after elections that were totally controlled by the government with no opposition participation. The first multiparty legislative elections were held in 1995. President Conte's Party of Unity and Progress (PUP) won 60 percent of National Assembly seats. The elections were considered fraudulent by both local and international observers. Conte won a second five-year term in 1998.

Although a constitutional republic providing for the separation of powers, the presidency maintains effective power and the Party of Unity and Progress dominates all three branches of the government, including the judiciary.

Guinea is one of the poorest countries in the world, despite its major mineral, hydropower, and agriculture resources. About 85 percent of the labor force is engaged in subsistence agriculture. Coffee and fruit are produced for export. Guinea is the second largest bauxite producer in the world. Most national export earnings come from mining, particularly bauxite, gold, and diamonds. Per capita annual gross domestic product was estimated at \$540 in 1997. Widespread corruption and government policies hold the country's economic growth in check. Guinea receives financial assis-

tance from international institutions, although foreign investments are meager.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

Guinea is a member, among others, of the Organization for African Unity and the United Nations. Although improvements have been reported in recent years, the country's human rights record continues to be poor. Citizens do not have the ability to change their government. The government dominates the election process and has refused to create an independent electoral oversight commission since the first multiparty presidential election in 1993.

The December 1998 presidential elections were marred by serious irregularities, intimidation, violence, and civil unrest. PUP and opposition party supporters engaged in violence before and after the election. Opposition candidates were prevented from holding public meetings and did not receive equal access to—or effective coverage by—the state-controlled broadcast media. Security forces allegedly arrested members of opposition parties during the vote-counting process. Widespread antigovernment protests and riots resulted in the deaths and injuries of civilians caused by members of the security forces.

Members of opposition parties, as well as local non-governmental and human rights organizations, allege that the government is responsible for the disappearances of political activists and for holding dozens of political prisoners convicted under criminal charges. Both civilian and military security forces regularly use torture, physical abuse, and other cruel and degrading treatments against detainees or prisoners. Prison conditions are inhuman and often life threatening. Prisoners rely on humanitarian assistance or on family members for food

and medical care. Some die of malnutrition and various diseases. Prison guards are often responsible for sexual assaults on, and harassment of, female inmates.

Arbitrary arrest is a serious problem. Long pretrial detentions are common. Authorities do not always enforce the law providing access by attorneys to their clients. Magistrates and lawyers are mostly unqualified and corrupt. The penal code is outdated and judges serve at the pleasure of influential members of the government. Citizens often prefer to rely on traditional systems of justice in the villages or urban neighborhoods. Vigilante violence against suspected criminals is also widespread.

Government officials routinely infringe on citizens' right to privacy. There are credible reports that security officials monitor telephone calls and mail. Local businesses and foreign companies are occasionally victims of harassment and intimidation by government officials. Police often ignore legal procedures in the process of arresting suspected criminals.

The government restricts freedom of speech and the press, and has a monopoly on domestic radio and television broadcasting, although access to foreign television satellite broadcasts is growing. The only official daily newspaper is state owned. Journalists associated with the official press practice self-censorship. The private press is critical of the government and the president. Foreign newspapers are available. On several occasions in 1997 and 1998, independent journalists and editors have been harassed by the authorities, arbitrarily arrested, and convicted under criminal charges for defamation, slander, and disturbing the public peace.

The constitution restricts freedom of assembly by prohibiting any gathering that might be threatening to the national unity,

including meetings of an ethnic or racial nature. The government also limits opposition activities. Although the law provides for freedom of association, there are a number of restrictions political parties must overcome before obtaining legal recognition.

While the constitution forbids discrimination based on sex, ethnicity, language, beliefs, disability, or social status, these provisions are not enforced. Discrimination against women based on traditional customs is common, especially in rural areas. Women receive less pay than men for equal work. The law generally favors men in civil and family matters. Legal evidence by women in court is considered less relevant than that of men. Women remain underrepresented in government. Although prohibited by law, polygamy is widely practiced. Violence against women is common. Domestic violence is a criminal offense. However, the police rarely enforce the law in domestic disputes.

Although illegal, female genital mutilation continues to be widely performed. The government is committed to children's welfare, especially in providing for education. However, it fails to monitor and actively address child prostitution and child labor.

The constitution does not include special provisions for the disabled, such as accessibility to public services and buildings. Ethnic discrimination is strong and particularly evident in the private sector, in ethnically segregated urban neighborhoods, and in the paucity of interethnic marriages. Members of the ruling party's ethnic group occupy most senior positions in the public sector. Incidents of ethnic violence also occur among the major ethnic groups.

Citizens are restricted in their freedom of movement within the country. All citizens

are required to carry national identification cards. Police officers often stop and extract bribes from travelers at security checkpoints. The authorities can also limit foreign travel for political reasons.

The government cooperates with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other humanitarian organizations in assisting refugee and asylum seekers, primarily coming from Liberia and Sierra Leone. However, there have been reports of sexual assaults and harassment of refugees by border patrol guards. Occasionally, refugees have been subject to arbitrary arrests and detention by security forces. In some instances, suspected rebels have been forcibly returned to the government of Sierra Leone.

There are several local non-governmental organizations that address human rights issues, and the government generally cooperates with their investigations, and sometimes (with mixed sincerity) attempts to educate the citizenry and officials about human rights. A human rights office within the Ministry of Defense organizes seminars to teach military personnel about international and regional agreements on human rights.

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# Guinea-Bissau



The Republic of Guinea-Bissau is a small country in western Africa, between Guinea and Senegal on the Atlantic coast. The population is approximately 1.2 million, divided between a variety of ethnic groups. Its capital city is Bissau. In terms of land mass, it is roughly three times the size of Connecticut. Guinea-Bissau gained its independence from Portugal in 1974, although the first multiparty legislative and presidential elections were not held until 1994. In 1998, it underwent a bloody civil war, making refugees out of hundreds of thousands of its citizens. The elected president, President Bernardo Vieira, was ousted in a military coup in May 1999 by a military junta (faction), which provisionally ruled Guinea-Bissau until February

2000, when a popularly elected government came to power.

The police are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of the Interior and is Guinea-Bissau's foremost organ of security. During the unrest of 1998, supporters of both Vieira and the military junta openly carried firearms and conducted their own patrols. After Vieira was ousted, however, the police were able to reinstate the rule of law and resume most of their responsibilities.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

The election in February 2000 marked a turning point in Guinea-Bissau's human rights record. Most international observers agreed that the elections were free and fair.

However, there were substantiated reports of extrajudicial killings on the part of the government, particularly under the Vieira administration. Both forces loyal to President Vieira and the military junta continued to use beatings, arbitrary arrest and detention, and other forms of harassment against Guinean citizens. Supervision of security forces remains lacking, and there was no action taken to discipline security force members responsible for human rights violations. Prison conditions remain poor, but are not life threatening.

Even though the civil conflict between government forces and Vieira supporters came to an end in 2000, it remains difficult to determine how many people were killed during the conflict; some estimates range as high as 2,000. It is not known how many of these people were civilian non-combat-

ants. There were many reports during the conflict of mass killings of innocent civilians. One such account indicates that in May 1999, during the coup to oust Vieira from power, rebel forces killed sixty civilians seeking refuge in a mission school outside the capital. There were credible reports that soldiers on both sides of the conflict committed rape and mistreated prisoners.

Immediately following the May coup, the new government detained as prisoners of war as many as 600 soldiers who had supported Vieira during the civil war. According to the government, 180 of these soldiers were subsequently released, and an additional fifty were released in the following months. More than 385 remain in detention.

Freedom of the press is limited and journalists frequently practice self-censorship. Prior to the violent outbreak in June 1998, Guinea-Bissau's print media consisted of one independent daily, three independent weeklies, one government-owned biweekly, and one independent monthly. Circulation is limited due to financial constraints. Many papers lack the raw materials necessary to publish consistently. During the civil war, most journalists were permitted to circulate freely and report on the fighting and associated political developments.

During the civil war, most of Guinea-Bissau's academic institutions ceased functioning. When the war ended, the universities were reactivated, and academic freedom has generally been respected.

The government respects the rights of peaceful association and assembly. In November and December 1999, unarmed soldiers were allowed to conduct unannounced one-day demonstrations to protest against non-payment of their wages.

The government also respects the rights of freedom of religion. All religious groups

must be licensed by the government, but so far, all applications have been accepted. Various faiths, including the Jehovah's Witnesses, were allowed to conduct missionary activity throughout 1999. Freedom of movement, even during the height of the conflict, was not severely restricted on a national level, although many police officers set up informal checkpoints where they engaged in bribe-taking and harassment of travelers.

The government of Guinea-Bissau has provided asylum to refugees from neighboring countries, including Senegal, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. According to a census conducted in January 1998 by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), there are just under 5,000 Senegalese refugees in Guinea-Bissau. Although there are no formal provisions for the acceptance and maintenance of refugees, asylum seekers continue to be granted refugee status on a case-by-case basis. No refugees have been deported forcibly to countries in which they feared persecution.

Physical violence, including domestic violence, is currently an accepted means of settling disputes within households. The police do intervene if they are called, but the government of Guinea-Bissau has not taken any specific measures to counteract the national prejudice against reporting domestic violence. Women are vastly underrepresented in the National Assembly, where they occupy only 9 of 102 seats. Female genital mutilation, which has been condemned by most international health organizations as a physically and mentally damaging practice, still persists in certain ethnic groups within Guinea-Bissau, particularly with the Fulas and the Mandinkas. As Islam gains prominence in Guinea-Bis-

sau, the practice seems to be increasing: not only is this practice performed on adolescent girls, but also on babies as young as four months. The government has not outlawed the practice, but it has formed a committee in order to conduct a nationwide education campaign to discourage it.

Most human rights groups temporarily ceased operations during the 1998 civil war, although there is now a substantial human rights presence in Guinea-Bissau. The Guinea-Bissau Human Rights League and some international organizations have continued to investigate reports of human

rights abuses freely and without government interference.

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# Guyana



The Co-operative Republic of Guyana is situated in South America. It borders the Atlantic Ocean on the north, and lies between Suriname and Venezuela. Georgetown is the capital city. Guyana's population of approximately 705,000 includes ethnic groups of East Indian origin (about 49 percent), of African origin (about 32 percent), indigenous Indian (about 6 percent), mixed (12 percent), and European and Chinese (1 percent). About half of the population is Christian, with the remainder practicing Hinduism (33 percent), Islam (9 percent), and other religious beliefs (8 percent). English is the official language, although Guyanese Creole and indigenous Indian dialects are widely spoken as well.

## BACKGROUND

A British colony since 1831, Guyana achieved independence in 1966 and became a Republic within the Commonwealth in 1970. Forbes Burnham ruled the country from 1964 to 1985, establishing an autocratic socialist regime characterized by the suppression of human rights and liberties. His successor, President Hugh Desmond Hoyte, eased the restrictions on freedom of the press and assembly, and promoted a market economy. However, the People's National Congress (PNC) continued to control Guyana's politics.

In 1992, Cheddi Jagan, a minority leader in Parliament, won the presidency in what were internationally recognized as the country's first free and fair elections. He was deeply committed to democracy. Following his death, Janet Jagan, Cheddi Jagan's wife, was elected president after the December 1997 national elections, and her party, the People's Progressive Party, won 55 percent of the seats in the Parliament. The PNC objected to the results of the elections and boycotted the Parliament for several months. Opposition supporters organized demonstrations, which occasionally turned violent, resulting in physical attacks on citizens and in one death.

The country has a multiparty political system with proportional representation. The constitution provides for the separation of powers and the independence of the judiciary. The president, who is directly elected by the citizens, appoints the members of the cabinet and the prime minister. Together,

they hold executive power. Legislative power rests in the indirectly elected unicameral national assembly.

Guyana is one of the poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere, despite the privatization program started in 1989. Per capita gross domestic product is estimated at approximately \$800. Agriculture and mining are the most important economic activities, with rice, sugar, bauxite, and gold being the major exports. The support of international organizations and the promotion of a free market have resulted in economic growth in recent years. However, the lack of a skilled labor force, inadequate transportation, poor power distribution, and poor communications are major economic challenges.

Guyana is a member of the United Nations. It also played a significant role in the founding of the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM). Guyana cooperates in all major international agreements against narcotics trafficking, and actively supports U.S. law enforcement agencies.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

The country's human rights record has been improving over the past few years. Nevertheless, there remain serious problems in a number of areas. The security forces have committed human rights abuses. Nine civilians died in 1999 following a violent confrontation with the police. The police also reportedly use torture and other forms of physical abuse against detainees under custody.

In a few cases, the relevant authorities have taken disciplinary action against the perpetrators, although they have rarely faced imprisonment. In general, the government does not thoroughly investigate al-

leged police abuses, and most cases go unpunished. Prison conditions are very poor, characterized by a lack of sanitation and medical care, inadequate nutrition, and overcrowding. Poor staff morale further aggravates the situation.

Although the constitution provides for the independence of the judiciary, lawyers and certain law enforcement officials have alleged that the government often influences the judges in criminal and civil cases. Pre-trial detentions are common due to the inefficiency of the judicial system. There is no public defender system, so that the right to counsel is limited to those who can afford it.

The government generally respects freedom of speech and the press. However, it has held back the authorization to open private radio stations. The Ministry of Information, which previously censored the Internet and restricted its accessibility, lifted these restrictions in January 1999. The government does not effectively enforce constitutional provisions against discrimination based on sex, race, religion, disability, language, or social status.

Women are underrepresented in government, politics, and the private sector. Violence against women is widespread. Women are not legally protected in cases of sexual harassment in the workplace. Sexual abuse is rarely reported to the authorities because of the social stigma attached to victims of rape, incest, and spousal abuse.

Child welfare is seriously compromised by the inadequacy of the public health system. Although the government provides for education, in reality, many children are not attending school because they must contribute to their household income by working. Child abuse, including rape and incest, are common, and usually go unreported. Child labor in the informal sector and child prostitution are significant problems.

Discrimination based on ethnicity influences Guyana's society and political life. Historical patterns of social organization have become politicized, as the major political parties represent opposing ethnic groups. Incidents reflecting racial tensions between Indo-Guyanese and Afro-Guyanese are common. Indigenous Indians are also victims of societal discrimination in decisions affecting their lands, cultures, and traditions.

The constitution does not mandate provisions regarding accessibility for people with disabilities, and discrimination in employment and public services is common. Workers' rights to safety and health standards are not effectively enforced by the authorities because of a lack of resources within the Ministry of Labor. In addition, there is no legislation prohibiting anti-union discrimination.

The government cooperates with the United Nations High Commissioner for

Refugees and other organizations in assisting refugee and asylum seekers. The government also cooperates with local human right groups and international organizations in their investigations of human rights abuses. The most active domestic non-governmental organization is the Guyana Human Rights Association.

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# Haiti



Haiti is located in the Caribbean, on the island of Hispaniola. It has a population of approximately 7 million, of whom 99 percent are descendants of African slaves. Its capital is Port-au-Prince. Haiti is one of the poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere and has long been plagued by political violence.

## BACKGROUND

Haiti was colonized by the French in the late seventeenth century. The French established valuable sugar plantations on the island using slave labor. In 1804, a slave uprising led to Haiti's independence. Since then its history has been characterized by political turmoil and endemic poverty. The election of François (Papa Doc) Duvalier in 1957 led to the creation of a harsh dicta-

torship. Duvalier helped to destroy what little economic or political promise Haiti might have had. Upon his death in 1971, his son Jean Claude (Baby Doc) Duvalier took over the country. Like his father, he ruled by violence and intimidation.

In 1986, public protests against Duvalier's rule forced him to flee the country. A series of military leaders ruled the country until, under international pressure, the government allowed free elections for a new president. Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a left-leaning Catholic priest, won those elections in 1990, but was overthrown by a military coup in 1991. Haiti descended into further chaos until 1994 when American troops landed and forced the Haitian army to accept Aristide as president. Backed by a United Nations presence, Aristide ruled until 1996. After Duvalier's death, a period of political chaos ensued, which was ended by United Nations (UN) intervention in 1994.

A constitution was drafted in 1997, but it has yet to be ratified and Haiti remains an unstable nation without strong democratic roots. Shortly after the military was disbanded in January 1995, the Haitian government created the Haitian National Police (HNP) to provide order and stability. The UN maintained a police mission in Haiti (called MIPONUH), which advised and trained the HNP, but it withdrew from the country in March 2000. Under the guidance of the UN, the HNP has gained valuable experience, but it still is weak, corrupt, and prone to human rights violations. Aristide was elected president again in 2000. Originally viewed as a human rights defender, he has been accused of using force to maintain his influence over the country.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

Despite Haiti's movement toward representative government, its human rights record remains poor. As the UN mission drew to a close, the HNP displayed an increasing tendency toward excessive violence, which resulted in a sharp rise in extrajudicial killings. At the end of 1999, there were credible reports of sixty-six extrajudicial killings by HNP members. In what was perhaps the most grievous example, on May 28, 1999, HNP officers were called to an area near Port-au-Prince to investigate reports of banditry. The officers summarily executed eleven men on the spot. After the killings, six of the officers were arrested and the police chief, Jean Coles Rameau, fled to the Dominican Republic. He was later arrested at Santo Domingo Airport and returned to Haiti to stand trial for the killings. He was still in custody at the end of 1999, and the Haitian judiciary had assembled a three-magistrate panel to investigate the case. The investigation was still under way at the end of 1999.

On January 8, 1999, one off-duty HNP officer killed a civilian following a traffic dispute. He was detained and almost immediately released for what the examining magistrate characterized as "many other considerations." Two months later, another off-duty officer killed a youth who he suspected of stealing his wallet. He was charged with "theft of a weapon." Another policeman attacked with a rock a suspect he had just arrested, citing self-defense. In Port-au-Prince, on April 20, 1999, police killed Michelson Jean Philippe Guillame. Guillame had been a coordinator for the Fanmi Lavalas Party (former President Aristide's political party), and there were allegations that the killing was politically motivated. Although a committee was formed to investigate, the case remains unsolved.

Vigilante justice also remains a problem. Although most incidents occurred without the knowledge or sanction of the government, there have been reports that link vigilante brigades to the HNP and other government organizations. Brigades that included officers from the HNP were responsible for the killings of sixteen people and the disappearances of four others. In one of these instances, a man was seized in the emergency waiting room of a Port-au-Prince hospital and lynched. Lynching is in fact a typical form of local justice in rural areas outside of police control. The UN International Civilian Mission in Haiti (MICIVIH) recorded seventy-six deaths in forty-eight separate lynchings during 1999.

Police frequently beat suspects, and there have been reports of torture and other forms of abuse. Beating with fists, rocks, and belts constitute the majority of police brutality complaints. However, there have also been other documented forms of abuse, including burning with cigarettes, severe boxing of the ears, and choking. There were also sporadic reports of torture by electric shock, although none of these have been verified.

Prison conditions remain dire. Prisoners are held in overcrowded facilities and lack basic sanitation and health care. Food is scarce, and some prisons have experienced water shortages. There were four recorded deaths due to malnutrition in 1999. Prisoners whose diets were not supplemented by supplies from family members were at the greatest risk of starvation. Women prisoners are housed separately from men, although overcrowding prevents the separation of juveniles from adults, and non-violent from violent criminals. There has been a decline in reports of mistreatment by prison guards, although some degrading treatment continues. The Haitian government continues to offer unfettered

access to international and domestic human rights organizations.

The HNP continues to arrest and detain citizens arbitrarily. Citizens must contend with a corrupt and neglected judiciary. The right to a fair trial is guaranteed in the constitution, but this right is routinely violated in practice. There is a shortage of adequately trained judges and lawyers, and many suspects are detained for years without trial. If an accused person is tried and found innocent, there is no redress against the government for time served in prison. Haiti's Justice Minister has acknowledged the weaknesses of the judiciary and has introduced several committees to study the wide range of problems confronting the judicial system and make recommendations for its improvement.

The constitution prohibits arbitrary interference in citizens' family, home, or correspondence, however, the police have at times arrested the family members of suspects when the suspects themselves could not be located.

The government generally respects the rights to freedom of speech and freedom of the press. There are two French-language daily newspapers, *Le Nouvelliste* and *Le Matin*, both of which are privately owned and frequently critical of the government. During a demonstration on May 28, 1999, the police were filmed beating four journalists. In protest, approximately 150 journalists marched on HNP headquarters. The HNP formally apologized, although it did not investigate the individual officers involved. Foreign journalists are generally allowed to cover events without interference.

The government respects the rights of freedom of association, freedom of movement within the country and abroad, and freedom of religion.

According to women's rights groups, women are routinely raped and abused.

These reports also indicate that women are not confident in the ability of law enforcement or the legal system to provide assistance. According to a UN report, 33 percent of Haitian women report having been raped or physically abused. Haitian law also discriminates against women. If a husband catches his wife in the act of adultery in the home, he is legally allowed to murder her, however, the law does not excuse a wife who murders her husband upon discovering him in bed in the act of adultery. Most women are relegated to farming, marketing, or domestic labor. Women who become professionals are rarely promoted to supervisory positions.

The government does not actively promote children's welfare. Rural families often send their children to the city to work as domestic help for more affluent city dwellers. The family receives payment for their child's labor. This practice is called *restavek* (literally translated as "lives with" in Creole), and has been cited by the UN as a form of slavery. An estimated 300,000 children, 85 percent of them girls, are victims of this practice. Society holds children in little regard, and the Ministry of Social Affairs has been reluctant to take any action in this area.

Human rights organizations generally operate without hindrance, although there were threats from unknown sources and sporadic violence against some groups throughout 1999.

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# Honduras



The Republic of Honduras is located in Central America, between the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea. It is bounded by El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua. Tegucigalpa is the capital city. Its population of approximately 6 million is predominantly mestizo (Spanish-Indian mixed ethnicity) (90 percent). Other ethnic groups include indigenous Indians and people of European, Arab, African, and Asian origins. Roman Catholicism is the official religion, although a number of Protestant denominations constitute a religious minority. Spanish is the official language and is spoken by the majority of the population. Other languages include English and a number of indigenous Indian dialects.

## BACKGROUND

Honduras is a democratic constitutional republic. The constitution dates back to 1982. The government consists of an executive branch (the president), a unicameral national congress, and an independent judiciary consisting of a Supreme Court of Justice and several lower courts. Honduras is a member of the United Nations (UN), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Organization of American States (OAS), the Central American Parliament (PARLACEN), the Central American Integration System (SICA), and the Central American Security Commission (CASQ).

Honduras is one of the least developed countries in Latin America. Its market economy is based mainly on agriculture, with coffee and bananas representing its major exports. Honduras is rich in natural resources, but widespread slash-and-burn agricultural methods jeopardize Honduran forests. In the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch, which devastated the Honduran economy in 1998, economic growth has been led by strong performances in the manufacturing, financial services, utilities, and mining sectors.

Ancient Mayan culture flourished in Honduras for many hundreds of years until 1524, when Spanish Conquistador Hernan Cortes arrived and Honduras came under the control of the Captaincy General of Guatemala. Independence from Spain was achieved on September 15, 1821. Honduras was then briefly annexed to the Mexican Empire. In 1823, it joined the newly formed

United Provinces of Central America. After the 1838 collapse of the federation, restoring Central American unity was the major aim of Honduran foreign policy until after World War I. The history of Honduras following independence was characterized by nearly 300 internal rebellions, coups, civil wars, and changes of government.

After the overthrow dictator of Anastasio Somoza in Nicaragua in 1979, the Honduran military accelerated plans to return the country to civilian rule. A new constitution was approved in 1982, and the government began a program of close cooperation on economic, political, and military issues with the United States. Honduras became host to the largest Peace Corps mission in the world. During the 1990s, President Carlos Roberts Reina's

"Moral Revolution" prosecuted corruption and pursued those responsible for human rights abuses in the 1980s. The Reina administration effectively institutionalized the rule of law in Honduras. In addition, it made successful efforts to increase civilian control over the armed forces. The national police was transferred from military to civilian authority. Reina's successor, President Carlos Roberto Flores Facusse, took office on January 27, 1998. He is Honduras' fifth democratically elected president since free elections were restored in 1981. Flores inaugurated programs of reform and modernization of both the government and the economy. These programs focused on improving the lives of poorer citizens while maintaining the country's fiscal health and improving international competitiveness.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

The human rights record of Honduras has significantly improved since the police were separated from the military forces. However, human rights violations from members of both the armed forces and the police are still common. In particular, security forces have been responsible for a number of extrajudicial killings of presumed criminals as well as for establishing neighborhood death squads. A significant increase in violent crime in recent years has stimulated the growth of private, unlicensed guard services and volunteer groups patrolling their neighborhoods or municipalities to deter crime. The proliferation of private security forces has made it more difficult to distinguish between homicides perpetrated by security forces, private vigilantes, or common criminals. Mistreatment of those arrested and other abuses by the police continue to be a problem, despite the constitutional prohibition of torture. Police beatings of street children are also widespread.

Prison conditions are harsh and prisoners usually suffer from severe overcrowding, malnutrition, and a lack of adequate sanitation. A number of prisoners have been subjected to various abuses, including rape. The destruction of prison facilities and mass escapes are very common. Often, the mentally ill, as well as those suffering from tuberculosis and other infectious diseases, are housed among the general prison population because of the lack of alternative facilities. Prisoners without money routinely lack the most basic necessities and legal assistance.

Detainees do not always receive due process, and lengthy pretrial detention is common. The judicial system—which is often subject to outside influence—gener-

ally denies swift and impartial justice to prisoners awaiting trial. In contrast, Honduras' economic and political elites enjoy almost complete immunity from arrest or criminal convictions, despite widespread corruption among them. If the wealthy and influential are arrested, bail is almost always granted, ostensibly for medical reasons, while poor defendants are seldom able to take advantage of this provision.

The constitution provides for freedom of speech and of the press, of peaceful assembly and association, and for all forms of religious expression, and the government largely respects these rights in practice.

Although the constitution bans discrimination based on race or sex, human rights violations against women, children, disabled persons, and indigenous people are widespread. Violence against women is commonplace, and only a few shelters are maintained specifically for battered women. Women's educational and career opportunities are often limited because of cultural attitudes and family pressures.

Authorities are unable to prevent the abuse of street children and child laborers. According to government estimates, only half of the 8,000 street children have shelter on any given day. Many street children are routinely molested sexually and 40 percent are engaged in prostitution. Many street children are HIV-positive and some are addicted to sniffing glue. The number of street children has increased considerably due to Hurricane Mitch.

There does not exist any specific statutory or constitutional protection for disabled persons, and there is no legislation requiring access for disabled persons to government buildings or commercial establishments. The small communities of indigenous people have little or no ability to participate in decisions affecting their

lands, cultures, traditions, and the allocation of natural resources.

Although workers have the legal right to form and join labor unions, as well as to strike and bargain collectively, the government does not enforce effectively all labor laws. Child labor is very common, especially in rural areas and in the informal economy, as well as in the construction industry. According to the Ministry of Labor an estimated 350,000 children work illegally. Many of them work as street vendors or in small workshops to supplement the family income. Moreover, the Ministry of Labor does not enforce national health and safety laws effectively, and there is no provision allowing workers to leave a dangerous work situation without losing their job.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch, the government temporarily suspended certain civil liberties as an emergency measure in accordance with the constitution. Civil liberties were restored after four weeks.

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# Hungary



The Republic of Hungary is located in central Europe. It is bounded on the north by Czechoslovakia, on the northeast by the Ukraine, on the east by Romania, on the south by Yugoslavia and Croatia, and on the west by Austria and Slovenia. Budapest is the capital city. Hungary's population of slightly over 10 million includes Magyars (90 percent), Roma (4 percent), Germans (2 percent), Slovaks (1 percent), and others (1 percent). The official language is Magyar. About 68 percent of the population is Roman Catholic. The remainder are Calvinist (20 percent), Lutheran (5 percent), Jewish (1 percent), and other religions (3 percent).

In 1918, Hungary achieved independence from the Austro-Hungarian Empire and became a republic. During World War II, Hungary was occupied by the Soviet army.

Hungary remained under Soviet influence until the end of the 1980s. In the wake of substantial political and economic reforms, Hungary slowly developed into a Western-style democracy. In 1990, the first free multiparty election was held.

The Republic of Hungary is a constitutional parliamentary democracy. The president is the head of state; he has few formal powers, but he can appoint the prime minister. The prime minister and the cabinet hold the executive power. The unicameral Parliament is comprised of 386 members who are elected every four years. The judiciary is independent.

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, Hungary has been one of the most economically active countries of the former Eastern block. The government has pushed through significant market reforms. However, backlashes from the former communist bureaucracy have heavily affected both agriculture and industry.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

The constitution grants citizens all of the fundamental human rights. There are, however, problems in a number of areas. The police have committed human rights abuses, such as harassment, using excessive force, and beating suspects. In 1998, a total of sixty police officers were accused of abuse. Of these, approximately 10 percent to 15 percent were prosecuted and convicted. Workers' rights are generally respected.

Prison conditions meet minimum human rights requirements, but the prison system is working at over 40 percent of its capaci-

ty, and overcrowding is occasionally the cause of human rights infringements. Human rights monitors have encountered no difficulties inspecting such facilities. The law grants access to legal counseling to suspects. According to some reports, however, low-level authorities have sometimes denied this right.

Pretrial detention is limited to a maximum of three years and bail is not granted to suspects. The judicial system provides fair trials, although they are all quite lengthy. Free legal assistance is given to indigent citizens, though lawyers are not allowed to meet their clients until their first court appearance.

A 1998 public statement by Prime Minister Viktor Orban stated that some politicians and their families were secretly under surveillance in 1997. In the wake of this public statement, an investigation was opened and is still ongoing. Freedom of peaceful public assembly is usually granted, although it has been denied if such meetings are to be held near military facilities, government buildings, or embassies.

The Hungarian government generally enforces constitutional provisions against discrimination based on ethnicity or race. However, there have been some cases involving local authorities trying to force Roma to live in ghettos or to force them to leave the country.

Women generally occupy low positions in business and government, though they are well represented in the medical and teach-

ing professions. Violence against women, especially spousal abuse, is widespread, although a large number of violations are not reported to the authorities. Most of the public buildings are not accessible to the disabled. However, a recent law mandates accessibility within ten years.

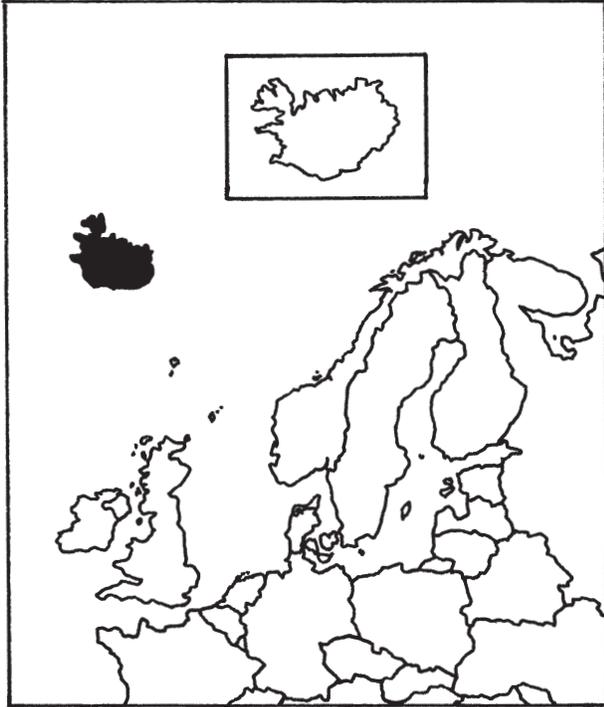
Hungary cooperates with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other humanitarian organizations in assisting refugee and asylum seekers. The government has granted asylum to refugees from the former Yugoslavia. The government has also estimated that around 60,000 immigrants, mostly from Romania, live in the country without legal status. Several humanitarian organizations operate freely in the country, and authorities are usually responsive to their requests.

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# Iceland



The Republic of Iceland is an island located in the North Atlantic Ocean. It was settled during the ninth century, mostly by sea-borne Scandinavian warriors. Iceland became an independent republic on June 17, 1944, after having been under the rule of different Scandinavian monarchies since 1262. Iceland is a constitutional republic and a multiparty parliamentary democracy. The legislative and executive powers are vested in the president, the Parliament, and the government, with the president and the members of Parliament democratically elected. The official language is Icelandic and approximately 90 percent of the population belong to the National Lutheran Church. The population of Iceland is approximately 275,000.

Iceland has a written constitution dating from June 17, 1944, the historical roots of

which can be traced to the Danish constitution of 1849. The constitution has been changed several times during the last forty years, but it was not until 1995 that a human rights chapter was introduced into it. In the amended constitution several important improvements were made. For example, equality of all before the law was introduced, as well as a prohibition against torture, ill treatment, and capital punishment. The constitution also asserted the right to freedom of expression and the equality of women and men.

Iceland belongs to various international organizations, including the United Nations (UN), the Council of Europe, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Furthermore, Iceland is very active in Nordic cooperation. Iceland is a party to several international and regional human rights agreements. However, Iceland has a dualist legal system, meaning that international law and national law constitute distinct legal systems. Iceland adheres to the legal doctrine that international treaties do not assume the force of domestic law, but rather are only binding according to international law. The only human rights convention that has been incorporated into law in Iceland is the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. In 1994, Iceland recognized the powers of the European Court of Human Rights to rule on human rights cases in Iceland.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

It is generally assumed that Icelandic legislation is in harmony with the interna-

tional human rights instruments that have been agreed to by Iceland. In no instance has a comprehensive comparison been made between domestic legislation and international agreements to ensure conformity. There are rights enshrined in the United Nations' International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights that provide fuller protection of human rights than does domestic legislation, but these rights are not guaranteed for Icelandic citizens because of differences between national legislation and this international treaty.

In most instances legal protection of human rights in Iceland is adequate, but policies and allocations of funds to make those rights a reality is insufficient in many areas. This is especially evident with respect to economic, social, and cultural rights. In the amended constitution of 1995, there is little mention of social rights, and protection of essential economic, social, and cultural rights is absent. In fact, suggestions from Icelandic non-government organizations (NGOs) that economic, social, and cultural rights should be included in the human rights chapter of the amended constitution were dismissed. This position of the legislature contradicts the position Iceland has taken in the international forum, where it has been an advocate for the universality of human rights and the equal importance of economic, social, and cultural rights, and civil and political rights.

An example of an area in which implementation of legal rights is insufficiently guaranteed is the right to equal pay. In spite of the laws guaranteeing women the right to equal pay and the development of detailed action plans, little progress has been made, and women's salaries are still substantially lower than men's. Depending on their levels of education, women receive

about two-thirds to three-quarters of the wages men receive, and the wage disparities are larger in the public sector than in the private sector.

The most important area in which comprehensive human rights legislation is lacking is with respect to the rights of foreigners in Iceland, both for immigrants and for refugees. The only law in force is the law on the surveillance of foreigners which dates to 1965, and it is insufficient to guarantee legal rights to immigrants and refugees. Furthermore, the law on the rights of foreigners to work in Iceland discriminates between foreigners coming from the European Economic Area (EEA) and those from other parts of the world. The law limits the rights of foreigners from other than EEA countries to work in Iceland, even though they may have permanent residence in Iceland and be married to an Icelandic citizen.

There is no formal human rights education in Icelandic schools and public debates on human rights issues are a relatively recent phenomenon. There is no history of systematic and gross violations of human rights in Iceland, which for the last few hundred years has been a very peaceful society that does not have a national army and has not suffered from civil wars or significant internal conflict. There is, therefore, relatively little awareness of human rights in Iceland, both among the public and the government. One area that has a special need to be addressed is racism. In 1999, one of the major daily newspapers in Iceland published a front page story expressing racist attitudes against Asian immigrants to Iceland.

Civil society and non-governmental human rights organizations are becoming more established in Iceland. Recently, two organizations were founded that are dedicated to working for the rights of immi-

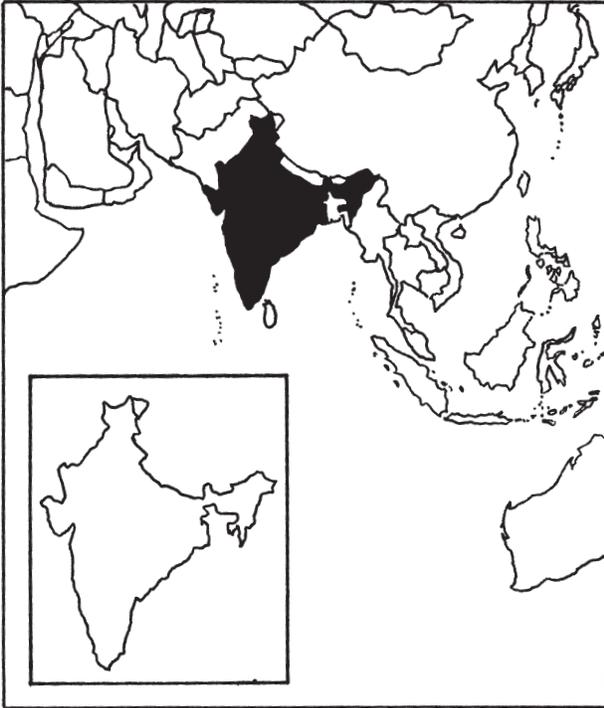
grants in Iceland and to prevent racism. In 1999, the voices of NGOs are becoming stronger and are having a more positive effect in the area of human rights, particularly in the area of protecting the rights of vulnerable groups. It is anticipated that this development will continue in the coming years.

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# India



The Republic of India, which is located in South Asia, is formed by twenty-five states and seven union territories. Although India's territory occupies only 2.4 percent of the world's land area, it supports over 15 percent of the world's population. India has an estimated population of more than 1 billion. Over the course of thousands of years, India has been exposed to a variety of peoples and cultures through innumerable invasions from the Iranian plateau, central Asia, Arabia, Afghanistan, and the West. The resulting ethnic mix features Indo-Aryans (72 percent), Dravidians (25 percent), Mongoloids (2 percent), and others. Each of these groups is divided into many subsidiary ethnic, religious, and cultural subgroups.

India's social and political organization is greatly determined by religion, language,

and caste. Although 83 percent of its population is Hindu, India has more than 120 million Muslims, one of the largest concentrations in the world. The population also includes Christians, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, and Parsis. Hindi is the most widely spoken language, although the government has recognized sixteen languages as official, including English. The caste system is a central feature of Indian society. It traditionally numbered four main castes, plus an additional group known as outcasts, often referred to as "dalits," or the oppressed. Thousands of subcastes also exist, and they include the majority of India's population.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The last four centuries of India's history were dominated by British colonialism. In the early 1600s, the British opened permanent trading stations in Madras, Bombay, and Calcutta. Over the next hundred years they expanded their influence throughout most of present-day India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh.

Efforts at self-government began in the late 1800s, when Indian councilors were appointed to advise the British viceroy, and several provincial councils with Indian delegates were established. In 1920, Mahatma Gandhi began recasting the Indian National Congress from just a political party to a mass movement dedicated to achieving complete independence from Great Britain. Led by Gandhi, the Congress Party used parliamentary methods, non-violent resistance, and non-cooperation to force the British to leave.

On August 15, 1947, India became an independent dominion within the British Commonwealth. British India was partitioned into Muslim Pakistan in the north, and Hindu India in the south. After independence, the Congress Party—the party of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru—ruled India under the influence first of Nehru, then under that of his daughter Indira Gandhi (no relation to Mahatma Gandhi), and later under that of his grandson Rajiv. India's democracy was real, but it was dominated by the Nehru family's widespread popularity.

Rajiv Gandhi's government was brought down in 1989 by allegations of corruption. He was later assassinated on May 27, 1991, by Tamil extremists from Sri Lanka while he was campaigning in Tamil Nadu. The 1991 elections were won under the leadership of P.V. Narasimha Rao—the first Congress Party prime minister in thirty years not connected to the Gandhi/Nehru family. Rao's government served for a period of five years, during which a gradual process of economic liberalization and reform began, along with a transformation of India's domestic politics.

The March 1998 elections were won by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which formed a coalition with several regional parties. The BJP is a Hindu nationalist party that preaches a doctrine of Hindu chauvinism. Its victory may portend changes for the previously pluralistic nation (although many Indians seem to have voted for the BJP less because of its Hindu nationalism and more because of the Congress Party's political corruption).

## GOVERNMENT AND ECONOMY

According to the 1950 constitution, India is a “sovereign, socialist, secular, democra-

tic republic” and has a federal form of government. The bicameral federal parliament consists of the Rajya Sabha (Council of States) and the Lok Sabha (House of the People). The government exercises its broad administrative powers in the name of the president, whose duties are largely ceremonial. The president and vice president are elected indirectly for five-year terms by a special electoral college. The national executive power is centered in the Council of Ministers (the cabinet), led by the prime minister. The judicial system resembles that of Anglo-Saxon countries. The Supreme Court consists of a chief justice and twenty-five other justices, all appointed by the president on the advice of the prime minister.

India boasts the world's fifth-largest economy in terms of purchasing power parity, despite its relatively low gross national product (GPD). It is currently undergoing a transition from a government-controlled economy to one that is largely market oriented. The private sector dominates in agriculture, most non-financial services, consumer goods manufacturing, and some heavy industry. Income distribution is still very unequal. About 62 percent of the population depends directly on agriculture—wheat, rice, coarse grains, oilseeds, sugar, cotton, jute, and tea—and more than 35 percent of the population lives below the poverty line. A large and growing middle class of 150 million to 200 million has disposable income for consumer goods. Industry—textiles, jute, processed food, steel, machinery, transport equipment, cement, aluminum, fertilizers, mining, petroleum, chemicals, and computer software—and the service sectors are growing in importance and account for 29 percent and 42 percent of GDP, respectively.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

Despite extensive constitutional and statutory safeguards, there are many human rights abuses in India, some of which can be traced to intense social tensions, secessionist movements, and security forces' attempts to repress these elements. Extrajudicial executions and political killings—including deaths while in custody—as well as excessive use of force, disappearances, torture, and rape by security forces have been reported, particularly in Jammu and Kashmir, whose judicial system has been disrupted by the armed conflict between government forces and armed separatist groups. Impunity, or freedom from fear of punishment has been and remains a serious problem in such areas. Despite the record of abuses, the Indian defense minister told Parliament that during the first half of 1998 (when many of the abuses occurred), no members of the army had been prosecuted and punished for any of these crimes, nor had any compensation been paid to the victims or their families.

The dispute over Jammu and Kashmir stems from the desire of many Kashmiris to be free from Indian control, or to merge with Pakistan. (The population of Jammu and Kashmir, like that of Pakistan, is heavily Muslim.) Indian nationalists are loathe to let this region secede, and have even fought battles over it, part of which is now under Pakistani control.

The Jammu and Kashmir Disturbed Areas Act of 1990, which has been in force in several districts in Andhra Pradesh, gives police extraordinary powers of arrest and detention. Police officials in these areas rarely if ever are held accountable for human rights abuses. According to human rights groups, security forces have also kept prisoners in incommunicado detention, and

such missing persons have often been found dead. Thousands of people are held by the military and paramilitary forces in long-term, unacknowledged detention in interrogation centers and transit camps in Jammu and Kashmir, as well as in the northeast. These camps are supposedly intended for only short-term confinement. Human rights groups are afraid that many of these unacknowledged prisoners are subject to torture and extrajudicial killing.

A number of reports have documented that police throughout the country often do not file required arrest reports. Hundreds of unsolved disappearances occur, and relatives often claim that individuals taken into police custody and are never heard from again.

Although the law prohibits torture and confessions extracted by force are generally inadmissible in court, torture is common throughout the country. Authorities systematically use torture during interrogations both for punishment and to extort money. Rape is also common as part of the broader pattern of custodial abuse. Although explicit guidelines exist on the arrest, search, and police custody of women, rape still occurs systematically.

Prisons operate above capacity and are often severely overcrowded because the court system itself is overloaded. The result has been the detention of thousands of persons awaiting trial for periods longer than they would receive as sentences if convicted. Prisoners may be held for months or years before obtaining a trial date. Furthermore, food and medical care in prisons are inadequate.

The government supposedly respects the right of freedom of religion, but in the effort to gain support of fundamentalist Hindus, the persecution of religious minorities—particularly of Muslims in Kashmir and of Sikhs in Punjab—has been de facto national policy for decades. Since the mid-1960s

Traditional marriage ceremony of children in India. Child marriage is common in some communities.

India has refused to admit new resident foreign missionaries. In addition, tension between Hindus and Muslims continues to pose a challenge to the secular foundation of the state. In 2000, as in most earlier years, there were several reports documenting attacks on Christians, Muslims, and other religious minorities, especially in the Gujarat state. Many of the attacks were allegedly carried out by members of militant Hindu groups.

Citizens may emigrate without restriction and enjoy freedom of movement within the country except in certain border areas where special permits are required. The government prohibits the foreign travel of some government critics, especially those advocating Sikh independence. On occasion,

human rights activists in Jammu and Kashmir, fearing threats by militants and security forces, have been unable to move around the state to document human rights violations. International human rights groups have had difficulty in obtaining visas to visit India for research purposes.

Despite laws designed to prevent discrimination based on ethnicity, religion, and language, other laws coupled with social and cultural practices, promote discrimination. According to the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, caste clashes are common in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Tamil Nadu. In general, strong prejudice still exists against dalits—also called “untouchables”—by the members of India’s other castes. While the

government officially condemns racist attacks on dalits, they often do little to prevent them. Dalits today, like African Americans in the United States in the 1950s, still do not have equal political and social standing with higher-caste Indians.

Although many laws protect the rights of women—including the Equal Remuneration Act, the Prevention of Immoral Traffic Act, the Sati (widow-burning) Prevention Act, and the Dowry Prohibition Act—the government often fails to enforce these laws, especially in rural areas where traditions remain deeply rooted. Domestic violence is very common and dowry disputes pose a serious problem. In the typical dispute, a groom's family members harass a woman whom they believe has not provided a sufficient dowry. This harassment often results in the woman's death, which family members usually try to portray as a suicide or kitchen accident. Prostitution is widespread, and many indigenous tribal women are forced into prostitution. According to women's rights organizations and non-governmental organizations, more than 7,000 women and children are brought into the country annually from neighboring states for the sex trade. A 1996 study documented that organized crime plays a major role in this trade, and that those women and children are subject to extortion, beatings, and rape.

Child prostitution also constitutes a major problem. There are an estimated 500,000 street children nationwide.

The traditional preference of Indian families for male children continues. Although a 1994 law prohibits the use of amniocentesis and sonogram tests for sex determination, the tests are widely misused for this purpose, and termination of a disproportionate number of pregnancies with female

fetuses occurs. In India, as in China, there are more men than women because infant girls are either aborted or killed at birth.

The rights of indigenous groups in eastern India are often ignored. These people have been deprived of their land, suffer from discrimination and harassment, and are often subject to torture and arbitrary arrest. Mob lynchings, arson, and police atrocities against tribal people occur in many states. There has been encroachment on tribal land throughout eastern India by both illegal immigrants from Bangladesh and businesses that have removed forest and mineral products without authorization. Moreover, persons from other backgrounds often usurp places reserved for members of tribes and lower castes in national education institutions.

Enforcement of safety and health standards in the workplace remains lax. The law does not provide workers with the right to remove themselves from work situations that endanger their health and safety without jeopardizing their continued employment.

Freedom of the press exists in India. Newspapers and magazines regularly publish investigative reports on human rights violations and allegations of government wrongdoing. In contrast, television and radio, which are government monopolies, are frequently accused of manipulating the news to benefit the government. A government censorship board reviews films before licensing them for distribution and deletes material that portrays the government in an unfavorable light.

In recent years, India has made minimal progress in resolving its human rights problems. In Punjab, the serious abuses of the early 1990s were acknowledged and condemned by the Supreme Court. Ongoing prison visits to Jammu and Kashmir by

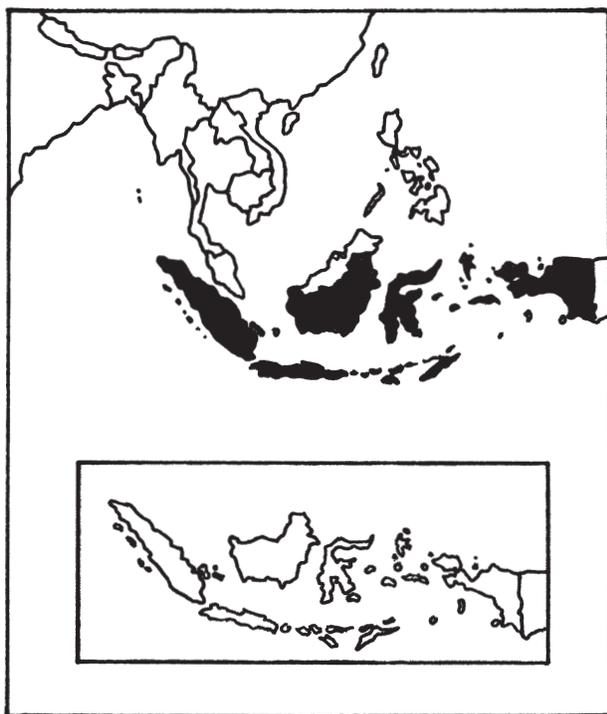
the International Committee of the Red Cross have demonstrated at least some government openness on human rights problems. However, researchers for international human rights organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch are not permitted to visit certain areas of the country where human rights violations are the worst.

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# Indonesia



The Republic of Indonesia is located in Southeast Asia. It is made up of 13,500 islands situated between the Indian and the Pacific oceans. Jakarta is the capital city. Indonesia has a population of approximately 200 million people. Ethnic groups include Javanese (45 percent), Sundanese (14 percent), Madurese (7.5 percent), coastal Malays (7.5 percent), and others (26 percent). Bahasa Indonesian is the official language, although each group also speaks a local language. The majority of the population is Muslim (87 percent), with the balance being Protestant (6 percent), Roman Catholic (3 percent), Hindu (2 percent), Buddhist (1 percent), and other religions (1 percent). In addition, the government per-

mits the practice of the traditional beliefs of Aliran Kepercayaan.

## BACKGROUND

Indonesia became a Dutch colony in the seventeenth century, with the exception of East Timor, which remained under Portuguese rule until 1975. The Japanese occupied Indonesia during World War II and, after their surrender to the Allies in August 1945, a small group of Indonesians proclaimed independence and established the Indonesian Republic. A provisional government and constitution were adopted until elections could be held. Four years of negotiations and warfare with the Dutch resulted in the recognition of an independent Indonesian government.

President Sukarno, a former leader of the independence movement, ruled from 1945 to 1965. When the constitutional assembly failed to draft a new constitution, Sukarno imposed an authoritarian regime and established a foreign policy characterized by non-alignment with either the Western or the Soviet blocks. However, he also moved closer diplomatically to Asian communist states and supported the domestic Indonesian Communist Party, which achieved control of many cultural and civic organizations. Under his rule, many human rights violations were committed.

In 1967, General Suharto overthrew Sukarno and changed Indonesian domestic and foreign policies. As president, Suharto pursued closer ties with the United States and moved Indonesia in the di-

East Timorese women in a highland village. In the background are Indonesian soldiers. December 1993.

rection of a capitalist-style economy. As a former head of the armed forces, he maintained an authoritarian political system with the support of the military, but he was also open to advice from Western economic experts. In 1975, Indonesian troops forcibly occupied East Timor. The United Nations did not recognize the occupation of this territory by Indonesia. The East Timorese resisted Indonesian rule, and in the years that followed, serious human rights violations were committed in East Timor, including extrajudicial killings, torture, and "disappearances."

The 1997 Asian financial and economic crisis exacerbated the already precarious

economic and political situation in Indonesia. Student protests and civil unrest forced Suharto to resign in May 1998. His successor, B. J. Habibie, immediately implemented an economic plan based on international financial support, and took political actions aimed at easing some of the restrictions imposed on civil liberties. In addition, he announced that the people of East Timor could decide their own future.

In June 1999, elections for the national, provincial, and subprovincial Parliaments were held in what was internationally recognized as a free and fair climate. Indonesia, Portugal, and the United Nations signed Tripartite Agreements under which the East Timorese people could vote to accept or reject autonomy within Indonesia. The balloting took place on August 30, 1999, and the majority of the East Timor population voted in favor of independence from Indonesia. The United Nations had been given provisional authority before the transition was completed. However, after the results were announced, pro-Indonesian armed groups, backed by the Indonesian military, committed numerous human rights abuses in revenge for the East Timorese vote to leave Indonesia.

Although increasingly dominated by the private sector, the government has always played a significant role in the economy of the country. Indonesia still suffers from the Asian financial crisis of mid-1997. Massive unemployment, widespread corruption, extreme poverty, and food shortages are among the most significant problems. Other symptoms of social breakdown include a rise in crime and looting. Economic reforms are being attempted, financed largely by private investment, both foreign and domestic.

Indonesia has been a member of the United Nations since 1950. Although maintaining a position of non-alignment, Presi-

dent Habibie has sought constructive relations with many nations including the United States, Western Europe, Australia, and Japan. Indonesia has participated in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations since its founding in 1967.

The 1945 constitution provides for a limited separation of powers. The president—the dominant government and political figure—is elected by the People's Consultative Assembly, which consists of 500 members of the House of Representatives, 135 provincial representatives, and sixty-five representatives appointed by social and community groups. Although the constitution stipulates its independence, the judiciary is subordinated to the executive and the military. Judges are usually paid by the executive branch, and their low salaries encourage widespread corruption. Bribes can influence prosecution, conviction, and sentencing in civil and criminal cases. Under a doctrine known as “dual function,” the military assumes a sociopolitical as well as a security role.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

The nation's human rights record continues to be extremely poor, especially in East Timor, where the situation became critical following the August 1999 ballot. Politically related extrajudicial killings by security forces are common in areas where separatist movements are active—East Timor, Aceh, and Irian Jaya. Mass graves have been found in Aceh. The police often employ deadly force when dealing with suspects or alleged criminals.

Disappearance is also very common, and, although the criminal code prohibits torture as well as other degrading forms of punishment, in practice security forces continue to employ torture as well as other

abusive techniques. Before the recent withdrawal of Indonesian troops from East Timor, security forces regularly detained civilians for interrogation in extralegal military detention centers, tortured them, and released them after several days.

The criminal code contains provisions against arbitrary arrest and detention, but authorities regularly violate them. In addition, authorities sometimes make arrests without warrants and often violate the law requiring that families of detainees be notified promptly of their detention. The authorities regularly extend periods of detention. In areas where guerrilla movements are active, people have been detained without warrants, charges, or court proceedings. Prisoners are often denied a fair trial.

Freedom of speech is limited in Indonesia. People are prosecuted every year for peacefully expressing views contrary to those of the government. Among prisoners serving sentences for subversion are members of the banned Communist Party of Indonesia, Muslim militants, and those convicted of subversion in Irian Java, Aceh, and East Timor.

Although judicial warrants for searches are generally required, security forces regularly make forced entries, engage in surveillance of persons and residences, and monitor local and international telephone calls without legal restraint.

Despite the constitution's provisions for freedom of the press and speech, some serious restrictions and monitoring are still common, although the government's respect for these rights has recently improved. As far as foreign publications and videotapes are concerned, a review of significant amounts of such material by government censors still occurs. For example, most books by former political prisoner Pramodya Ananta Toer are banned.

The government significantly restricts the practice of free assembly, although it has eliminated the permit requirements for some types of public meetings. The constitution also provides for freedom of association, but the government places significant controls on the exercise of this right. According to the 1985 Social Organizations Law, all organizations, including recognized religions and associations, are required to adhere to the ideology of “Pancasila” (the official belief system of Indonesia, which mixes religion, civic duty, and nationalism together). By limiting political activity, this provision is designed to inhibit groups from engaging in democratic political activities that are believed to act against government ideology. Such organizations are usually disbanded by the authorities.

The government generally respects religious freedom and the practice of five out of six officially recognized religions—Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism, and Hinduism. Persons from other religions generally have difficulty having their marriages officially recognized. Because the first tenet of Pancasila is belief in one supreme god, the government forbids atheism. A number of religions are banned, including Jehovah’s Witnesses, Bahai, Confucianism, and the messianic Islamic sect Darul Arqam. Furthermore, the government closely monitors Islamic sects deviating from orthodox tenets, and strongly opposes Muslim groups advocating an Islamic state. Minority houses of worship often become targets of damage and destruction during riots. Proselytizing by recognized religions in areas heavily dominated by another recognized religion is generally discouraged because it is viewed as potentially disruptive. Foreign missionaries are usually allowed to spend only a limited number of years in Indonesia.

The Indonesian government restricts movement by citizens and foreigners to and within parts of the country. Population movement to crowded cities is closely monitored. The government sponsors a transmigration program seeking to resettle people from densely populated areas to sparsely populated areas outside Java. Special permits are required to visit certain parts of the country, such as Irian Jaya, and some former prisoners are still required to obtain permission if they want to move.

Although the constitution stipulates equal rights and obligations for all citizens, both native and naturalized, there is no explicit law against discrimination based on gender, race, disability, language, or social status.

According to marriage law, the man is the head of the family. Further, cultural norms dictate that problems between husbands and wives are private matters, and rape of a wife by a husband is not considered a crime. Social changes brought about by rapid urbanization as well as by the economic crisis have significantly aggravated the problem of domestic violence. Domestic violence is believed to be seriously underreported. Similarly, rape is significantly underreported due to the social stigma attached to the victim. Harassment is not a crime, although sexual harassment charges can damage a civil service career. Trafficking in women and temporary contract marriages with foreigners are common, and prostitution is widespread. Female domestic servants are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. The majority of women face economic discrimination. They generally receive lower wages than men, and are represented disproportionately at the bottom of the socioeconomic scale. In addition, women often are not given the extra benefits and salary that are their due

when they are the head of a household. Women taking maternity leave are often dismissed or replaced, and some companies require that women sign statements that they do not intend to become pregnant. A disproportionate number of women experience illiteracy, poor health, and inadequate nutrition.

Provisions on child protection have not yet gone into effect. Child labor is very common, and the number of working children and street children has increased as a result of the economic crisis. Many children work under hazardous conditions. Child prostitution and other forms of sexual abuse are a serious problem, and the government has made strong efforts to prevent this. Because a separate criminal justice

system for juveniles does not exist, juveniles are often imprisoned with adults. The ceremonial practice of female genital mutilation in babies or young girls still occurs in some parts of Indonesia, although it appears to be declining.

The disabled face considerable discrimination in employment as well as in other areas, such as access to education. As of 1999, virtually no buildings or public transportation had been designed to include accessibility for the disabled.

The rights of indigenous people are often violated, especially in the case of the government's migration program which, according to critics, threatens indigenous cultures and sparks social envy. Migrants are often settled on land of disputed own-

ership, causing significant tensions to arise. When indigenous people clash with commercial/private sector development projects, wealthy developers usually win.

The constitution provides for the right of association and collective bargaining, although the Department of Manpower supports unions only within the context of the national ideology, Pancasila.

Domestic human rights organizations are active in pressing the government to respect human rights, although they are still subject to monitoring by authorities. The government appointed National Human Rights Commission has been active in examining reports of human rights violations, although it lacks enforcement powers. By contrast, foreign-based inves-

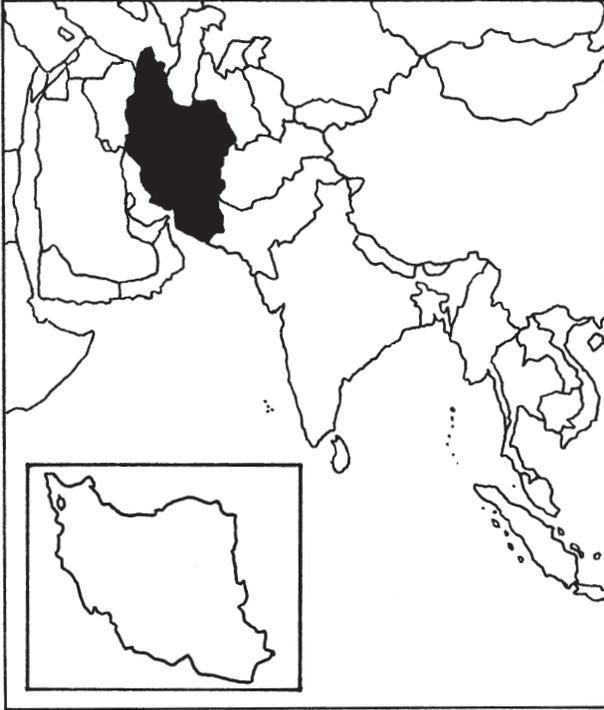
tigations and criticism of alleged human rights violations are generally viewed as interfering in the internal affairs of the government, and foreign human rights observers are harassed.

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# Iran



Iran is a Middle Eastern country that is bordered by the Persian Gulf on the south and the Caspian Sea on the north. It is slightly larger than Alaska. It has common borders with Iraq, Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. The climate is mostly arid or semiarid, although it is subtropical along the Caspian coast. The terrain is rugged. Only 10 percent of the land is arable, with pastures, forests, and woodlands covering another 35 percent. The other 55 percent of the land is covered by deserts.

The country has a population of 65 million, 34 percent under fifteen years of age. The population growth rate is 2.4 percent. Just over half of the population is Persian, with Azerbaijanis forming the largest minority (24 percent), and Kurds, Arabs, Lurs,

Balochies, and Turkmens forming other sizeable minorities. Nearly 99 percent of the population are Muslim (89 percent Shi'a), with Zoroastrians, Jews, Christians, and Bahais making up the other 1 percent.

## BACKGROUND

Since the revolution against the Shah of Iran in 1979, the country has been run as the Islamic Republic of Iran, a theocracy with a legal system based on traditional Islamic law. Opposition and secular political groups have been systematically repressed over the years. Many disbanded and were forced to go underground or move out of the country. Among the most notable of such groups (now largely active only outside Iran) are the Mojahedin-e Khalq Organization (MKO), the People's Fedayeen, and the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan. MKO had been locked in a fierce armed struggle with the government since 1981, inflicting heavy losses by means of bombings, assassinations, and armed incursions. It also suffered the bulk of the government's repression in the form of mass executions of thousand of its members and supporters. It is now based in the neighboring country of Iraq, with a regular army of several thousand equipped with heavy armor.

Iran has some democratic forms—an elected Parliament and president—but most of the political power is in the hands of the Muslim clergy, led by a senior ayatollah (religious leader). It was the influence of the first ayatollah, the Ayatollah Khomeini, that inspired the overthrow of the Shah of Iran in 1979. Khomeini ruled as Iran's religious

leader until his death in 1989, when he was replaced as supreme religious leader by the Ayatollah Khamenei.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

The early years after the 1979 revolution were marked by great political upheavals and a devastating war with Iraq that lasted for eight years. Shortly after the revolution, the religious autocracy of the ayatollahs came into power and began clamping down on all opposition parties. Severe restrictions on the rights of women and various minorities were initiated, and the death penalty was introduced for crimes such as apostasy and unlawful sexual relations. Physical punishments, such as flogging, amputation, and stoning to death, were introduced for a variety of crimes from drinking alcohol to theft and illicit sexual relations.

Political executions in the early 1980s numbered as high as thousands a year. Moreover, large-scale executions were carried out for narcotics crimes. In 1988, soon after the end of Iran-Iraq war, an estimated 2,500 people were executed—clearing political prisoners from prisons throughout the country. Over the years, many citizens have also been executed for their religious beliefs, including hundreds of followers of Bahai, a religious minority not recognized by the government. Though the number of executions greatly decreased in the 1990s, Iran has consistently maintained its position among the top five countries having the highest number of executions. Almost all executions have been carried out after summary trials with no defense lawyers present. Torture of political prisoners has been widely used and many deaths under torture have been reported.

Internationally, the clerical government was also involved in acts contrary to inter-

national laws and human rights rules. Less than a year after the revolution, in November 1979, fifty-two members of the United States embassy staff were taken hostage in Tehran and kept imprisoned, with the complicity of the government, for 444 days. In February 1989, Ayatollah Khomeini, the supreme leader, pronounced a death sentence on Salman Rushdie, the British author of the novel *The Satanic Verses*, and others involved in the publication of his book. Soon afterward, the Japanese translator of the book was assassinated and both its Italian translator and its Norwegian publisher were injured in terrorist attacks. Over the years, scores of Iranian dissidents have been slain in various countries in Europe, North America, and Asia in what is generally assumed to be the work of government-sponsored hit squads. In 1996, a court in Berlin, Germany, implicated four top Iranian officials—the ayatollah, the president, and the intelligence and foreign ministers—in the 1992 assassination in a Berlin restaurant of four leaders of an opposition group.

Because of its abysmal human rights record, both internally and internationally, Iran has been the subject of constant criticism by various international bodies. It is the government most criticized by the United Nations. The United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) has condemned Iran's human rights record in its annual sessions every year for the last nineteen years. In 1984, it appointed a special representative to report annually on the situation of human rights in Iran. The mandate of the representative has been extended every year since then. Over the last twenty years, repeated requests by human rights bodies such as Amnesty International to visit Iran have all been denied, and even the UNCHR representatives have been

allowed to enter the country only a few times over the last fifteen years.

However, since May 1997, when the reformist Mohammad Khatami was elected president, a new atmosphere of openness has been evident. Scores of new publications have been licensed and subjects hitherto deemed untouchable have been brought into the public domain. Limited political activities are allowed for those who do not oppose the clerical regime. In February 1999, the first elections for local and municipal councils were held. Nevertheless, despite Khatami's reforms, most power still resides with the Muslim clergy and their leader, the Ayatollah Khamenei.

## WOMEN

Women were one of the groups to suffer the most from the creation of an Islamic republic in Iran. According to Iran's Muslim clergy, women should be treated as second-class citizens, with no political rights and few economic rights. Severe restrictions on women are still in place. Iranian women suffer from a variety of discriminatory and restrictive laws. They must follow a very strict set of dress codes. They are discriminated against in jobs, education, inheritance, marriage, and justice. The law values a woman's testimony in courts at half that of a male's testimony and rates her murdered body, when it comes to paying compensation for her or death, at half that of a man's body.

Laws governing marriage are among the most regressive in the world in terms of discrimination against women. While males are allowed to have up to four wives at a time in permanent marriage, and an unlimited number of women in what is known as "temporary" marriage, strict monogamy is expected from women. Any woman who

deviates from this traditional law may be brutally punished by being stoned to death publicly—the officially sanctioned and frequently executed punishment for extra-marital affairs.

Inside marriage, the man is given a free hand in controlling his wife or wives. Marital rape is sanctioned (as no consent is required for sexual relations inside marriage) and even wife beating may be tolerated. A woman's freedom of movement and choice of jobs may be restricted by her husband, and his permission is required for obtaining official travel documents. The law gives very few rights to women in sharing the decisions of married life and with regard to the custody of children.

In divorce, too, men have almost a free hand. The grounds on which a man can divorce his wife are almost unlimited, while only in very unusual circumstances can a woman file for divorce. Divorce law also inflicts huge financial and emotional blows on the woman. The woman has to forfeit almost all financial claims if she files for divorce, while the settlement she receives if the divorce is initiated by the man is still very limited. Women who divorce are usually deprived of the custody of their children. Within and outside marriage, even the child's grandfather is given priority over the child's mother in custody matters.

The plethora of discriminatory laws against women has created favorable conditions for widespread abuses practiced against women. Women have no effective recourse to the law in cases where they are abused, beaten, or raped. Many incidents of rape outside marriage go unreported because of the justifiable fears of the victim of being "dishonored" and cursed, or even murdered by members of her own family and friends. She may also be prosecuted by the government, and brutally punished

by whipping or by being stoned to death, if she is judged by the court as being a willing partner in the rape.

## RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION

Iran practices an official policy of discrimination on the basis of religion. Islam is regarded as the official religion. Some minority religions such as Judaism and Zoroastrian are also recognized and tolerated, but others are not.

As a result, followers of the largest minority religion in Iran, the Bahai, with an estimated population of up to 300,000, have been systematically persecuted as renegades. They are denied the most basic rights in jobs, education, and property, and have been executed on various charges ranging from espionage to apostasy.

Followers of other minority religions have been subjected to discrimination and persecution, though on a smaller scale. Elections to the "Islamic" National Assembly are carried out on religious lines, with followers of recognized minority religions allowed only to vote for a candidate of their own faith. Scores of Jews have been persecuted and jailed on charges of spying for Israel and some have been executed. A number of Christians have also been persecuted or executed on religious charges, such as trying to convert Moslems to Christianity. Even Sunni Muslims, (population 10 percent), are discriminated against in government jobs and education.

## POLITICAL AND SOCIAL FREEDOM

Although a degree of political freedom has been in evidence since the election of President Khatami, this is largely limited to groups loyal to the principle of the supreme

authority of the religious leader. Other political parties, brutally suppressed in the early years after the revolution, are still banned.

The press, though more vociferous in reporting and expressing opinions than it was under the Ayatollah Khomeini, is nevertheless tightly regulated and continuously harassed by the clergy-dominated judiciary. A spate of political killings in late 1998 led to the revelation that they were organized and carried out by top officials of the information ministry.

Tensions between the reformist president and his conservative opponents in the judiciary and Parliament have at times threatened the fragile state of limited political openness. Extrajudicial killings and other attacks carried out by the unofficial Hizbollah (Party of God) against the political and secular opposition have inhibited many from organizing political opposition to the regime.

Iran's civil and criminal laws are generally based on Shari'a, traditional Islamic law. These cover large areas such as strict dress codes (especially for women), what one is allowed to eat or drink, sexual behavior, and even what one may think and believe in. Apostasy is regarded as an offense against God, and people have been punished by death for this crime. All sexual activities outside marriage are deemed criminal, with punishments ranging from flogging to death. Adulterers (mostly women) are stoned to death. Homosexuality is also a capital crime punishable by death.

Religious affiliation and gender are also relevant factors in the punishment of a criminal. Sexual relations between a unmarried couple are punished by flogging—except when the man is a non-Muslim and the woman is a Muslim; in such a case the

man is executed. Also, murder is punished by death, except when a Muslim kills a non-Muslim, in which case, the punishment is usually less severe.

### CURRENT HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

As late as 2000, according to Amnesty International, hundreds of political prisoners, including prisoners of conscience, were being held. Reports of torture and ill treatment continued to occur and judicial punishments of flogging and stoning continued to be imposed. Reports also suggested that possible “disappearances” and extrajudicial executions had occurred. Amnesty International recorded 165 executions, including at least one prisoner of conscience. However, the true number may be considerably higher.

Political prisoners continued to receive unfair trials. Detainees were reportedly denied access either to any legal counsel or to a lawyer of their choice, despite legislation providing for the right to legal representation.

Trials before special courts, such as the Special Court for the Clergy, continued to fall far short of international standards. Torture and ill treatment continued to be reported; methods used reportedly includ-

ed beatings with hands, feet, and sticks; flogging with whips; sleep deprivation, at times combined with being forced to stand for long periods; exposure to loud noises; lack of food; and threats to relatives.

The death penalty continued to be widely used, often imposed for vaguely worded offenses—including political offenses and those relating to freedom of belief—frequently after unfair trials. Scores of executions, including a number carried out in public, were reported.

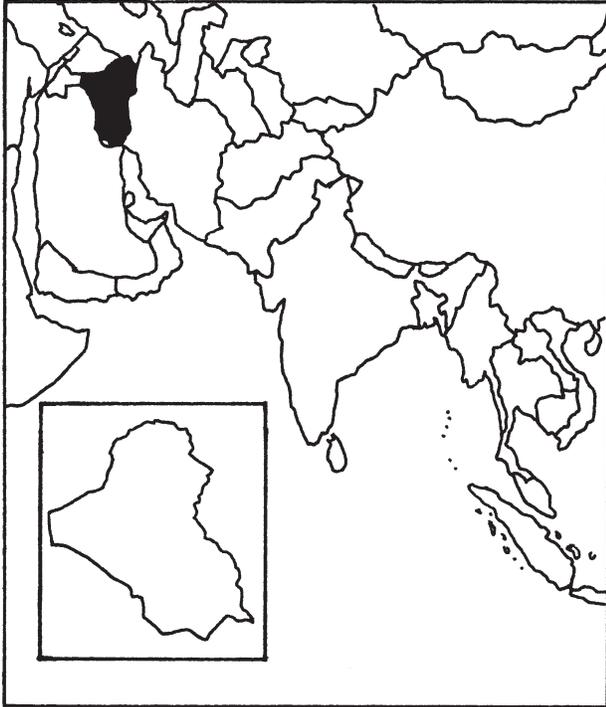
The UN Commission on Human Rights Special Representative for Human Rights in Iran continues to be denied access to the country.

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# Iraq



Iraq is a country in the Middle East, bounded on the north by Turkey, on the east by Iran, on the southeast by the Persian Gulf and Kuwait, and on the south by Saudi Arabia. Baghdad is the capital city. Iraq has a population of approximately 22 million. Ethnic and linguistic groups include Arabs (about 75 percent), Kurds (about 20 percent), Turkomen, Assyrians, Yazidis, and Armenians (about 5 percent). The majority of the population is Muslim (Shi'a 65 percent; Sunni 32 percent), while the remainder is Christian or belongs to other religious denominations.

## BACKGROUND

A former British protectorate, Iraq achieved independence in 1932 and joined the Unit-

ed Nations in 1945. In 1958, Iraq became a republic and, with the overthrow of the monarchy, it ended its pro-Western alignment. The history that followed was filled by a succession of military coups and the rise to power of Saddam Hussein in 1979. Since then, Saddam Hussein and his extended family have been ruling through a repressive one-party apparatus, the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party, and the Revolutionary Command Council, which exercise all executive and legislative power. In practice, Hussein rules as dictator of Iraq.

In 1980, a war between Iraq and Iran broke out following a dispute over the control of a waterway. A cease-fire was agreed to in 1988. In 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait, but a Western coalition, led by the United States, fought the Gulf War ("Operation Desert Storm") and forced Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait. To force Iraq's disarmament, the United Nations (UN) imposed a trade ban. During this conflict, Iraq used chemical weapons against Kurdish rebels seeking greater autonomy in the north, while an uprising of Shi'a Arabs in the south was also brutally suppressed (Hussein and his most loyal followers are Sunni Muslims).

The Gulf War allies imposed "no-fly zones" (areas where no Iraqi planes were allowed to fly) over the northern and southern sections of Iraq to protect the Kurds in the north, and Shi'a marsh dwellers in the south. However, the government militias continue to launch ground attacks in those regions and commit serious human rights abuses against civilians. Iraq's non-cooperation with UN Security Council resolution obligations, specifically its refusal to

Kurdish refugees from the Gulf War, victims of Iraqi attacks, April 1991.

allow inspections of its weapons stockpiles, continues to be a major problem.

In the areas under Kurdish control, fighting continues between Turkish government forces and members of the Kurdish opposition Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). Human rights abuses have been reported.

Iraq's highly centralized economy has always been dominated by the oil sector; however, in the 1980s, Iraq suffered economic losses due to the massive expenditures caused by the conflict with Iran and war damage to its oil export facilities. In addition, subsequent economic embargoes and the military action by the international coalition following the seizure of Kuwait further reduced Iraq's economic activities. What resources are available are currently allocated to support the regime and its large military and internal security forces. As a

result, it is the Iraqi people who suffer the worst consequences of Saddam Hussein's military ambitions.

Since 1996, the UN has been implementing an "oil-for-food" program, which allows the export of oil and the import of food, medicine, and other humanitarian goods for civilian needs. However, the government has been interfering with the provision of humanitarian assistance by the international community, siphoning off much of the aid for the benefit of the army and the ruling elite.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

Iraq's human rights record continues to be extremely poor. Citizens do not have the right to change their government. In 1995, Saddam Hussein won a referendum on his

presidency with 99.96 percent of the vote. However, the referendum included neither secret ballots nor opposing candidates, and was conducted in a climate of intimidation and fear of reprisal. Many people were arrested. International observers alleged the election results to be a sham.

Only members of the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party have full political rights, and opposition political organizations or parties are considered illegal, and therefore are suppressed. The security forces are tools for repression and are closely attached to Hussein, the Ba'ath Party, and the Interior Ministry.

The government is responsible for extrajudicial killings and mass executions. Most of these killings were committed without due process. In recent years, the government has increased the number of offenses that can be punishable by death, which include any act or expression of dissent, membership in certain political parties, and economic crimes. It is estimated that more than 2,500 to 3,000 summary executions have been carried out since 1997. There are reports that political detainees with sentences of fifteen to twenty years were killed en masse.

The UN can provide documentation of 16,000 persons who have disappeared in the course of the 1980–1988 Iran-Iraq war, as a result of the 1990–1991 Gulf War, after individual arrests, and during ethnic conflicts. However, other human rights organizations estimate the number to be much higher. In addition, human rights groups allege that the government continues to hold thousands of Iraqis in detention without allowing them to communicate with anyone outside prison. Arbitrary arrests and detention are common and are directed against persons perceived as security

threats or because of personal or family association with opponents of the government. The authorities routinely hold innocent people responsible for crimes committed by family members or close associates.

According to international human rights organizations, several foreigners have been arbitrarily arrested in the past and continue to be detained. No official estimates exist with regard to political prisoners; however, the number is believed to be in the tens of thousands.

Prison conditions are life threatening. There are reports of prisoners who have died because of the harsh conditions and mistreatment inflicted by security guards. Overcrowding is a serious problem. It is believed that summary executions are carried out for the purpose of emptying overcrowded prisons. The government does not allow visits of prisons by human rights monitors.

The security services make use of torture, psychological intimidation, prolonged interrogations, and other cruel treatment of detainees under custody. Torture techniques include branding, electric shocks, mutilations, burning with hot irons, rape, breaking limbs, deprivation of food or water, and other inhumane treatments. Detainees are also subject to threats that their family members will be raped or harmed.

The judiciary is dependent on the president's decisions. The legal system is based on Islamic law judged in special religious courts, and on a civil law system everywhere else.

The nature of the political and legal systems precludes any possibility of due process and rule of law. Defendants are often denied contact with lawyers. The courts permit confessions extracted by torture as the basis for a defendant's conviction.

The government infringes on the citizens' right to privacy by ignoring constitutional provisions regarding the safeguarding of mail, telephone conversations, and telegraphic correspondence. The authorities routinely conduct searches without warrants.

Freedoms of speech and the press are suppressed. The government has the monopoly on all print and broadcast media, and opposing views are not reported. Journalists must adhere to the recommendations of the Iraqi Union of Journalists, which is controlled by the government. Foreign journalists or reporters must be escorted everywhere by officers of the Ministry of Culture and Information. Foreign news broadcasts are regularly jammed. The government has banned satellite dishes. Academic freedom is also restricted, and academic publications are strictly under governmental control.

The government restricts freedom of assembly and associations. Citizens may assemble only to express support of the regime. Political parties other than the Ba'ath Party are banned. Trade unions can function only under governmental control. Workers' rights are not protected.

Although the constitution provides for freedom of religion, the government limits this right in practice. Traditionally, Sunni Arabs, who represent a minority of the population, have dominated the political and economic life of the country, despite the fact that the majority of the population are Shi'a Arabs. Since the aftermath of the 1991 civil uprisings, the government has repressed the Shi'a proponents and imposed restrictions on their activities, including desecrating their mosques and holy sites, because of their opposition to the government. In addition, the government is re-

sponsible for harassment, persecutions, and killings of Shi'a people in the south.

Ethnic discrimination also has historical roots, and the government has long engaged in discriminatory resettlement policies directed against ethnic Kurds, Turkomen, Assyrians, Shi'a inhabitants, and other minorities, in an attempt to "Arabize" the country. It is estimated that since 1991, more than 90,000 Kurds have been displaced. Many Kurdish families still live in tent camps. Children and elderly people have died because of harsh conditions. Kurds remain particularly subject to harassment and discrimination in employment and education. Shi'a inhabitants of the southern marshes have been relocated to major southern cities. However, there are reports that many of them have been transferred to detention centers. Citizens of Iranian origin are also targeted by discriminatory policies.

Women continue to face discrimination in employment, education, government, and politics. Women cannot travel outside the country alone. Violence against women, particularly spousal abuse, is known to occur, but there are no official estimates regarding its extent.

The government neglects children's rights and welfare. It is believed that children are most affected by the economic sanctions and by the government's mismanagement of the "oil-for-food" program. Poor distribution of medicine and food has resulted in many deaths of children. Child labor is widespread. In addition, each year the government enrolls children between ten to fifteen years of age in a paramilitary training program.

Movement of citizens and foreigners within the country is highly controlled and restricted by the authorities. The government does not respect the rights of refugees and

does not provide first asylum. Hundreds of thousands of Iraqi refugees remain abroad.

The government prohibits the establishment of independent human rights organizations. A few human rights groups are active in the northern areas that are not under government control. International human rights monitors, including the United Nations Special Rapporteur, are not allowed to visit Iraq. The government is also responsible for the harassment and intimidation of UN personnel and relief workers.

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# Ireland



Ireland is an island nation located just to the west of the United Kingdom. Its capital is Dublin. Ireland has a population of approximately 3.7 million, 98 percent of whom are Irish. More than 90 percent of the population is Catholic. Almost all Irish people speak English; a small minority also speak Gaelic. The Irish government is a parliamentary democracy.

Ireland was conquered by the English in the sixteenth century and remained under English control until the twentieth century. A bloody war led the United Kingdom to agree to the granting of Irish independence in 1921. The six northern counties of Ireland had a majority population that wished to remain part of England and so were not included in the new Irish state. These six

counties, called Northern Ireland, were allowed self-rule under the supervision of the United Kingdom's government. Until recently, independent Ireland has had nothing to do with the governance of Northern Ireland.

Ireland is a prosperous country that has become an increasingly important part of the world's information industries. A number of high-tech companies have factories and offices in Ireland.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights are generally well protected in Ireland. Since independence, Irish democracy has functioned well. Citizens have complete control over their government. Elections are free and open. The government is run by a prime minister who is chosen by Parliament. There is also a directly elected president who serves a largely symbolic role as head of state.

The courts in Ireland function effectively, and most of those accused of crimes are given fair trials. Poor defendants are provided with defense attorneys free of charge.

The law forbids torture or abusive treatment of those in police custody. Generally the police obey these laws. There have been some reported cases of police abuse in Ireland, but they are not widespread and are not a sign of a significant human rights problem.

Ireland has a relatively small prison population and prison conditions are generally good. Some prisoners suffer because of the deteriorating conditions in some of Ireland's

older prisons. A shortage of prisons has led to overcrowding. Some cells do not have running water. New prisons are being built, but many prisoners remain in the older, less well-equipped prisons. International observers are allowed to visit Irish prisons.

The government protects the freedom of the press, free speech, and free assembly. There are some restrictions on the publication of material considered morally repugnant—in practice, some forms of pornography are restricted. Some pornographic videos are banned by the government every year. Some magazines and newspapers have been temporarily banned for printing advertisements for massage parlors.

The government protects freedom of religion. There are no religious restrictions in Ireland.

Workers also have the right to form unions and strike.

Mistreatment of women is probably Ireland's most serious human rights problem. While women are generally treated well, there remain problems. Spousal abuse remains common, supported by a tradition which allows men to control their wives with violence. Women's groups complain that the government has not done enough to educate men and women about the importance of preventing violence against women. Discrimination against women in employment is illegal but still occurs. Women are also not well represented in politics. Only a few women serve in Parliament, although women do serve as president.

Children are well protected by Irish law and government departments. Child abuse is harshly punished, and police have the right to remove children from homes that are considered unsafe.

Disabled people are also protected under the law and have access to most public buildings, particularly those built after 1992.

There is some ethnic discrimination, particularly against the Irish Travellers, a small nomadic ethnic minority (numbering perhaps 25,000) who slightly resemble Europe's Roma. Irish Travellers often face discrimination in employment and education. Some restaurants and bars resist serving Irish Travellers. The government has passed laws making discrimination against the Travellers illegal, but it still continues to occur.

Local and international human rights groups operate without government interference.

Carl Skutsch

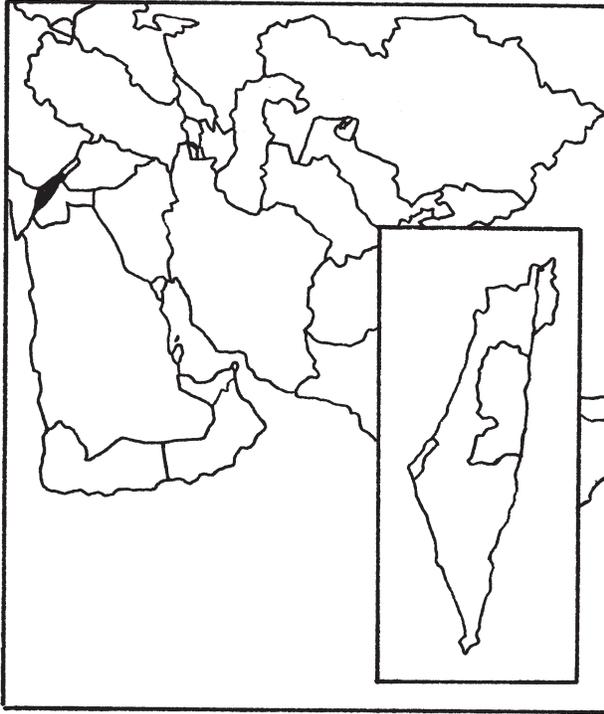
See also United Kingdom.

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# Israel



Israel is a country in the Middle East, bounded on the north by Lebanon, on the east by Syria and Jordan, on the south by the Gulf of Aqaba, and on the west by Egypt and the Mediterranean Sea.

Jerusalem is the capital city. The population of approximately 6 million includes Israeli settlers in the West Bank, in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, in the Gaza Strip, and in East Jerusalem. About 80 percent of the population is Jewish; the remainder is mostly Arab. The three broad Jewish groupings are the Ashkenazim, or Jews who came to Israel mainly from Europe, North and South America, South Africa, and Australia; the Sephardim, who trace their origin to Spain, Portugal, and North Africa; and Eastern or Oriental Jews, who descend from ancient communities in

Islamic lands. The major religious denominations are Judaism, Islam, Christianity, and Druze. Hebrew, Arabic, Russian, and English are widely spoken.

## BACKGROUND

Israel has a technologically advanced market economy, with substantial government participation. Its natural resources are limited. However, Israel has intensively developed its agricultural and industrial sectors over the last decades. It is largely self-sufficient in terms of food, except for grains. Leading exports include diamonds, high-technology equipment, and agricultural products. Israel's account deficits are usually covered by large transfer payments from abroad and by foreign loans, especially from the United States. Israel's economy grew rapidly in the early 1990s, due to the influx of Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union and the opening of new markets at the end of the cold war. The economic growth, however, began slowing in 1996, when the government imposed tighter fiscal and monetary policies.

In 1948, after fifty years of efforts by the Zionist movement (founded at the end of the nineteenth century by Theodore Herzl) to establish a sovereign nation as a homeland for Jews, Jewish settlers in the territory formerly called Palestine were able to declare the independence of the state of Israel. Fighting immediately ensued between the Jews and the Palestinian Arabs, who were helped by neighboring Arab states. With the Israelis victorious, many of the Arabs who lived in Palestine were forced to

flee. They became refugees, living in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, Lebanon, and elsewhere. Those Arabs who remained behind became a minority within the now predominantly Jewish state of Israel.

Since its independence, Israel has been in an intermittent state of war with neighboring Arab countries over territories such as the Sinai Peninsula, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights, and the formerly Jordanian-controlled West Bank of the Jordan River, including East Jerusalem.

In 1979, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin signed a treaty under which Israel was to return the Sinai to Egypt. This led to a permanent peace with Egypt. Despite Iraqi missile attacks against Israel, Israel refrained from entering the Gulf War in 1990–1991. In 1994, Israel signed a non-belligerency agreement with Jordan, and in 1995, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat signed the historic Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, broadening Palestinian self-government. The assassination of Prime Minister Rabin by a right-wing Jewish radical in November 1995 climaxed the bitter national debate over where the peace process was leading, and led to further peace negotiations sponsored by the United States. Currently the PLO and Israel share control of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and negotiations continue on the subject of a permanent peace settlement and sovereignty over these areas.

Israel is a parliamentary democracy. The unicameral Parliament—the Knesset—enacts laws and elects the president every five years. The prime minister exercises executive power. The independent judicial system includes both secular and religious courts.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

Citizens generally enjoy a variety of human rights and liberties. However, problems continue in the occupied territories, especially in the West Bank and Gaza, and also as a result of Israel's fight against Arab terrorism. In northern Israel and in southern Lebanon, violent attacks conducted either by Palestinian guerrillas or Israeli troops have resulted in numerous deaths, including those of civilians.

A key problem connected with human rights in Israel is the dual nature of Israeli society. In theory, Israel is a parliamentary democracy that grants political and human rights to all citizens. However, Israel was founded for the purpose of giving Jews a state of their own. For this reason, its laws and practices have tended to favor the Jewish majority over the Arab minority. Although Arab citizens are supposed to have the same rights as Jewish citizens, human rights advocates have claimed that Arabs are often treated as second-class citizens.

Even more problematic is the issue of non-citizen Arabs living in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. These two territories were conquered by Israel during earlier wars with Arab states, but they are not legally considered a part of Israel. The result is that while Israeli troops and police control these territories, the people living in them—the vast majority of whom are Palestinian Arabs—have few rights under Israeli law. Most importantly, perhaps, they cannot vote, and hence have no access to the human right of democratically choosing their leaders. This situation has led to resentment and violence by Palestinian Arabs, and to repressive tactics by Israeli security forces.

In essence, Israel is a liberal democracy in its own territory, but behaves more re-

A soldier spraying mace at West Bank Palestinian women during the Intifada uprising, March 1988.

pressively in the occupied territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. This situation may be resolved if Palestinian Arabs are eventually given political control over these territories through peace negotiations. As of late 2000, the Palestinians have not been given an independent state. In the meantime, Israeli human rights abuses continue.

Israeli security forces commit human rights violations against Palestinians suspected of security offenses. Torture, physical and psychological abuses, and other forms of coercion have been used during interrogation. Prison conditions for Israeli citizens convicted of common crimes meet minimum international standards. Security detainees, however, who are mostly Palestinians, are held in detention camps or

other police detention facilities that fall below minimum international standards. Some Palestinian detainees have died in government custody. In addition, human rights monitors have expressed great concern over the detention of Arab minors with adult inmates.

Although the law prohibits arbitrary arrest or detention, the government permits detention without charge or trial in security cases. The targets for these detentions are almost always Palestinian Arabs. The judiciary is subject to the government's influence over security cases. According to the Israeli High Court of Justice, security needs take precedence over an individual's rights.

Palestinian detainees do not benefit from the protection of civil law and fall under the

jurisdiction of military courts. The government continues to detain Palestinian Arabs without charge or trial. Human rights advocates claim that the Israeli legal system imposes harsher punishments on Palestinians than on Jewish Israelis for the same crimes.

The Israeli authorities occasionally infringe on citizens' right to privacy in cases involving criminal or security charges.

The government respects freedom of speech and the press. However, the law authorizes the government to apply censorship to any material that can undermine national security. In addition, emergency regulations prohibit the expression of support for illegal organizations.

Freedoms of assembly and association for Israeli citizens are generally respected. Workers can form unions and have the right to strike. However, Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza Strip cannot join Israeli trade unions or organize their own unions in Israel. They cannot freely demonstrate.

Local human rights groups lament that the government does not effectively enforce laws against discrimination based on sex, race, religion, disability, language, or social status. In particular, women continue to receive lower wages for equal work, and have fewer promotions and career opportunities than do men. They also remain underrepresented in government. Religious laws also restrict women's rights in family and divorce matters.

Violence against women, including domestic violence, is a problem in both the Jewish and Arab communities. Funds have been allocated by the government to fight such violence. In addition, women's groups and human rights advocates are trying to raise public awareness about this issue and establish a greater number of women's shelters.

Trafficking in women and girls for prostitution and illegal work, particularly with women from the former Soviet Union, has increased significantly in recent years.

The government is committed to children's welfare; however, children of foreign workers residing illegally in the country do not have access to education or health services. Although prohibited by law, child labor is concentrated among Israel's Arab population and Jewish immigrants from outside Israel.

There is no law mandating access to public buildings for people with disabilities.

The government continues to permit discrimination against non-Jewish communities. The latter receive less governmental financial support than do Jewish communities. Israeli Arabs do not receive equal quality education, housing, employment, and social services, and remain underrepresented in higher-level professional and academic ranks. In addition, Israeli Arabs are not allowed to work in security-related fields. Arab groups also complain that land expropriation for public use has affected the Arab community over the years.

The government respects freedom of religion and each religious community has legal authority over its members in matters of marriage and divorce. However, the non-Orthodox Jewish community has complained of discrimination and intolerance by Orthodox Jews.

The establishment of military or security zones limits citizens' right to free movement within the country. Citizens can travel abroad and return, provided that they do not have military obligations. However, the government restricts travel to some Arab states, including Syria and Saudi Arabia.

The government cooperates with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in assisting refugee or asylum

seekers. It also welcomes Jewish immigrants and their families, who can receive citizenship and residence rights under the Law of Return. The same rights do not apply to persons of non-Jewish descent or who have converted to another faith.

Several domestic and international human rights groups operate in the country without governmental restrictions, investigating and publishing their findings on human rights issues. However, the government continues to deny access to a few security detainees by the International Committee of the Red Cross. In addition, the United Nations Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories re-

ported that the government is not cooperating with its operations.

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# Italy



The Italian Republic is a peninsula located in southern Europe that extends into the central Mediterranean Sea, northeast of Tunisia. Italy also occupies a number of islands, including Sicily, Sardinia, Elba, Lampedusa, and Pantelleria. It has borders with France, Switzerland, Austria, and Slovenia. Rome is the capital city. Its population of 56.7 million consists primarily of Italians, as well as minority populations of Germans, French, Slovenes, and Albanians. Roman Catholicism is the majority religion, although the constitution grants equal freedom to all religious denominations. Italian is the official language, and several dialects are spoken throughout the country. Two regions are bilingual. In ad-

dition to Italian, French is spoken in Valle d'Aosta and German is spoken in Trentino-Alto Adige.

## BACKGROUND

Since the end of World War II the Italian economy has undergone profound changes. From an agriculturally based economy, it has developed into an advanced industrialized market economy. Small and medium-sized companies—most of which are family-owned firms—employ from 70 to 80 percent of the workforce, and major products include machinery, textiles, apparel, transportation equipment, and food and agricultural products. Nearly all sectors are privatized, although the government still owns a substantial number of enterprises in finance, communications, industry, transportation, and services. Italy has slowly recovered from the economic crisis of the early 1990s. Historically an inflation-prone country, Italy is now firmly within norms specified for the European and Monetary Union (EMU). Imbalances in public finances, however, still represent a major problem, and since 1992, economic policy in Italy has focused primarily on reducing government budget deficits. Moreover, unemployment is very high, especially in the south.

After the collapse of the Roman Empire in the fifth century A.D., the Italian peninsula experienced a series of invasions and lost its political unity. A succession of small states, principalities, and kingdoms characterized Italian history until unification in

the 1860s. From 1870 to 1922, Italy was a constitutional monarchy. In 1922, Benito Mussolini came to power and installed a fascist dictatorship. Mussolini allied with Adolf Hitler—the leader of Nazi Germany—and declared war on the United Kingdom and France in 1940, and on the United States and the Soviet Union in 1941. After the Allied invasion, an antifascist popular resistance movement, which grew during the last two years of the war, helped the Allies drive the German forces out of the country in April 1945.

A 1946 plebiscite ended the monarchy and elected a constituent assembly in charge of forming a new republic. The constitution went into effect on January 1, 1948.

The 1994 national elections marked the emergence of new political forces and new alignments, which replaced some of the major political parties that were beset by scandal and loss of voter confidence.

Italy is a founding member of the European Community—now the European Union—as well as a member and strong supporter of the United Nations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade/World Trade Organization, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Western European Union, and the Council of Europe.

Italy is a multiparty parliamentary democracy. The president of the Republic nominates the prime minister after consulting with leaders of all political groups in Parliament. The judicial system is based on Roman law modified by the Napoleonic code and subsequent statutes. The government and parliament control the armed forces, which include four separate police forces, each reporting to different or local author-

ities. In exceptional circumstances, the army can be called on to provide internal security.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

The Italian government generally respects the human rights of its citizens, but problems still exist in some areas. The law prohibits torture and cruel or degrading punishment. However, the police often commit abuses against detainees. Such abuses normally occur at the time of arrest or during the first twenty-four hours in custody, before detainees see an attorney or a judicial authority. Examples of abuse include kicking, punching, beatings with batons, or deprivation of food. A substantial proportion of abuses involve non-European Union immigrants—mostly from Africa—Roma, and persons held in connection with drug-related offenses.

Prisons are generally overcrowded, despite the construction of new facilities and the Parliament's approval of a law allowing persons sentenced to less than three years' imprisonment to apply for an alternative penalty within a period of thirty days after final sentencing. Because of overcrowding, prison conditions are poor in terms of sanitation and medical services, and barely meet minimum international standards. AIDS represents a major problem. As of 1998, more than 29 percent of the prison population was addicted to illegal drugs. Of those, 13.6 percent were HIV-positive, and 5.8 percent of those who were HIV-positive had AIDS.

Lengthy pretrial detention represents a major problem, despite the reform of judicial procedures intended to speed up trials. The average wait for lower-court trials is three years and four months. As of 1999, 44 percent of inmates were awaiting trial

A woman begging on the street in Venice.

or the outcome of appeals, rather than serving final sentences. There are no provisions for bail, although judges may grant provisional liberty to suspects awaiting trial.

According to some critics, some magistrates are highly politicized or influenced by other interests in choosing targets of inquiry, and often fail to show adequate respect for the rights of suspects. Many abuse their authority by making excessive use of preventive detention.

The constitution prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, sex, religion, ethnic background, or political opinion. However, societal discrimination against women, immigrants, and other foreigners is routinely practiced. Violence against women, including spousal rape, is very common. Victims often do not press charges because of fear,

shame, or ignorance of the law. Legislation to protect women from violence was updated in 1996, making easier the prosecution of perpetrators of violence against women and shielding women from publicity who have been objects of attack. There are numerous cases of trafficking in foreign women—usually illegal immigrants—for the purpose of prostitution. Women's salaries are 20 percent lower than men's for comparable work. Women are underrepresented in management positions and the professions, and generally experience higher unemployment rates compared to men.

Child abuse also represents a serious problem. Many minors are involved in cases of violence every year, and an estimated 90 percent of violence against minors is committed within their own families. There are

also many minor-age prostitutes, the majority of whom are illegal immigrants, mostly from Albania and Nigeria. Other areas of child abuse include child pornography and the trafficking of minors. In August 1998, the Parliament passed a law to combat such abuses.

Substantial discrimination is practiced against immigrants and other foreigners, who are often subject to physical attack. Among these are the Roma, predominantly from the former Yugoslavia, who usually encounter difficulties in finding places to reside. These nomadic Roma normally live in tents. They have difficulty obtaining work permits because they do not possess valid identity documents, and often turn to begging or petty crime. Racial discrimination and violence against illegal immigrants from African countries have increased in recent years.

A host of human rights groups are active without government restriction, and government officials are generally responsive to their views.

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# Jamaica



Jamaica is an island of the West Indies, located in the Caribbean Sea. Kingston is the capital city. Its population of 2.6 million consists of people of African (90.9 percent), East Indian (1.3 percent), Chinese (0.2 percent), European (0.2 percent), and mixed descent. Protestant, Roman Catholics, and Rastafarians are the main religious groups on the island. English is the official language.

Jamaica is a constitutional parliamentary democracy based on the United Kingdom model. The governor general—who is appointed by Queen Elizabeth II, the prime minister, and the cabinet represent the executive branch of the government, while the legislative branch consists of the bicameral Parliament. The judiciary is formed by the Supreme Court.

Rich in natural resources—primarily bauxite—Jamaica has an economy based on agricultural products as well as on light manufacturing and services. Tourism is favored by the island's ideal climate. There is a large gap between the wealthy and the extremely poor. The country has been facing serious economic problems—high unemployment, inflation, high interest rates, and labor unrest—that have worsened its social problems. Violent crime has also stemmed from an increase in the use and trafficking of narcotics. Jamaica is a major producer of marijuana and is an increasingly significant cocaine-trafficking country.

Prior to Spanish occupation (1510), Jamaica was inhabited by the Arawaks, who had migrated from South America. The Arawaks were eventually exterminated by disease, slavery, and war during the Spanish rule. In 1517, the first African slaves were brought to the island. In 1670, Great Britain gained formal possession of the territory, and the British Parliament abolished slavery in 1834. Jamaica achieved independence in 1962, and has remained a member of the British Commonwealth. Traditionally, Jamaica has experienced heavy emigration of its citizens to the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada.

Jamaica has diplomatic relations with most nations and is a member of the United Nations and the Organization of American States.

Human rights are generally respected in Jamaica, although some problems continue to exist in some areas. Members of the security forces sometimes commit extrajudicial killings and beatings and regularly

carry out arbitrary arrests and detentions. The police frequently use excessive violence against those suspected of breaking the law. Vigilantism, involving spontaneous mob executions in response to crime, continues to be a problem.

Prison conditions are very poor. Prisons are usually overcrowded, and sanitary conditions as well as food are generally inadequate. Insufficient medical care is typical. Guards are often responsible for acts of brutality against detainees. The judicial system is overburdened and operates with inadequate resources. Therefore, delays in trials are very common. In some instances, cases are dismissed because files cannot be located.

Women suffer from economic discrimination, sexual harassment in the workplace, and domestic violence. Spousal abuse is widespread, a result of social and cultural traditions that perpetuate violence against women.

No laws require that the disabled have access to public buildings.

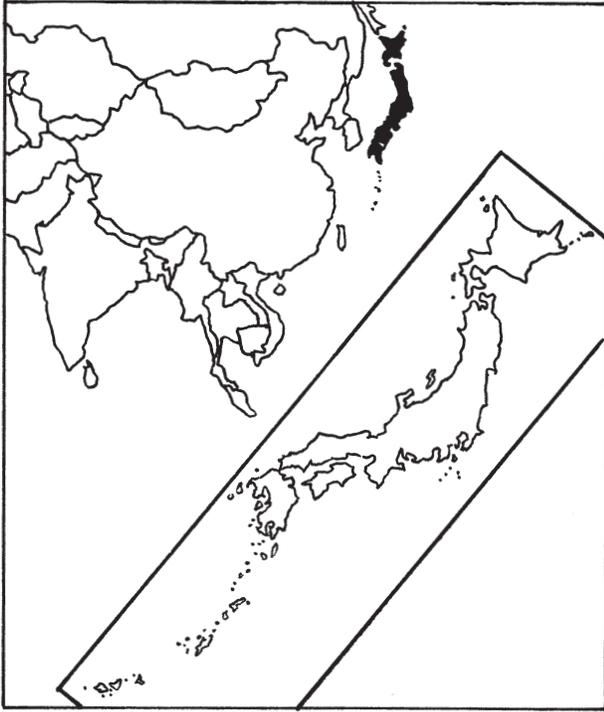
A number of human rights groups operate without government restriction. They investigate and publish their findings on human rights cases. The Independent Jamaica Council for Human Rights is the country's only formal organization concerned with all aspects of human rights, although the Jamaican Bar Association has lodged protests against certain police actions as well.

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# Japan



Japan is a group of islands located to the east of China on the edge of the Pacific Ocean. The capital is Tokyo. Japan's population is approximately 126 million, of whom more than 99 percent are ethnic Japanese. Japan's four main islands have a combined land area of 145,882 square miles—making it about the size of Montana. This relatively small land area, combined with Japan's large population, gives the country one of the highest population densities in the world. Japan's 865 people per square mile is more than ten times the United States' density of 73 people per square mile. Japan has a thriving democratic system of government. The leader of Japan's government is the prime minister,

who is chosen by the leading parties in Japan's Diet (or Parliament). Acting as symbolic head of state is Japan's Emperor Akihito, who has been on the throne since 1989.

## BACKGROUND

For many centuries, Japan was dominated by a military dictatorship called the shogunate. The shoguns, acting as generals in chief, ruled in the name of the Japanese emperors, who served in only a symbolic role. Starting in the seventeenth century, the shoguns, suspicious of European traders and missionaries, closed Japan off from almost all contact with the outside world.

Japan's isolation ended with the 1854 arrival of an American fleet in Japanese waters. The modern American gunboats forced the Japanese government to open its borders to trade and thereby inaugurated a period of rapid change in Japanese society. Japan modernized its industry, army, and navy and quickly became a strong regional power. Led by increasingly aggressive military men, Japan embarked on a series of conquests—Taiwan, Korea, northern China—that aroused international hostility and led to its involvement in World War II. In 1945, Japan lost World War II and was left devastated (to end the war, the United States dropped two atomic bombs on Japan).

With the forceful guidance of American occupation troops, Japan's government was transformed into a functioning democracy. Under the 1947 constitution, the emperor was allowed to keep his symbolic role, but

all political power was put in the hands of the Diet. Japan constitutionally renounced war as an instrument of policy.

Since 1947, Japan has been an economic and democratic success story. Rapid growth and industrial innovation have made Japan the second richest country in the world, after the United States. Japanese corporations make cars, televisions, and electronic devices that are used around the world. As a result of their successful and mostly booming economy, the Japanese enjoy one of the world's highest standards of living.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

Japan in general protects its citizens' human rights.

The Japanese people have the right and the ability to change their government. The Diet is chosen with universal suffrage, and elections are scheduled at frequent intervals. Some critics of Japanese politics have pointed out that the same political party—the Liberal Democratic Party—has ruled the country since 1947, suggesting that Japan's democracy is not as mature as it should be. These criticisms are valid, but they ignore the fact that the Liberal Democrats are divided into different wings and factions and that shifts in electoral results have altered the relative power of these factions and led to changes in the leaders of government. In recent years, other political parties have gained in strength, and the Liberal Democrats have been obliged to participate in coalition governments for the first time.

The Japanese judiciary is independent and largely free of corruption. Japanese trials are fair and open, and the military and police forces are firmly under civilian control.

Despite Japan's high human rights standards, there remain some problem areas.

The police have been guilty of occasional abuse against prisoners and detainees. Police sometimes use physical violence or intimidation to obtain confessions from prisoners. Approximately 90 percent of all criminal cases include a confession on the part of the accused. There remains a strong suspicion that some of these confessions are coerced. There have also been some reports of police harassment of foreign immigrants and residents.

Japan's prisons meet international standards but can be very rough. Insufficient heating in some prisons has led to cases of frostbite among prisoners. Some inmates complain that not enough food is provided. Japan's prisons are run according to a very rigid set of rules and regulations, which some human rights observers believe contribute to the degradation of prisoners. Prison wardens use solitary confinement liberally, and some inmates have been kept in solitary confinement for many years.

Japan allows its citizens freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and the right to assemble. Japanese workers have the right to form unions. Japanese have the right to move freely about, both inside and outside the country. Academic freedom is also protected. Some academics complain that although they are allowed to speak freely, a national reluctance to acknowledge past human rights failures has led to a kind of self-censorship in Japanese textbook publishing. Japanese history textbooks usually touch only lightly on the crimes committed by Japanese soldiers during World War II.

Partly because of this self-censorship in Japanese publishing, some critics believe that Japan has not sufficiently acknowl-

edged the human rights abuses committed by its armed forces during World War II. Japanese troops behaved with great brutality toward Koreans, Chinese, and Filipinos, among others. China and South Korea, in particular, have asked the Japanese government to apologize for Japan's wartime atrocities. While Japanese leaders have made some statements that admit to wrongdoing, their words of apology have been muted and have not satisfied those who suffered under Japanese rule. Japan's reluctance to apologize stems partly from internal political considerations. A significant part of the Japanese population feels that it would be dishonorable to apologize for Japan's actions; these people also tend to downplay the severity of Japan's wartime criminality, and most Japanese students grow up very ignorant of these parts of their country's past.

Theoretically, Japan protects the right to worship freely. While in general this right is protected in practice, there have been some exceptions. The Japanese cult known as Aum Shinrikyo, some of whose members were responsible for a series of poison gas attacks in Japanese subways, has suffered from government surveillance and restriction. Members of the Unification Church and Jehovah's Witnesses have also complained of government harassment and intolerance.

Women suffer some limits on their human rights. Domestic abuse is suspected to be widespread, but social pressure prevents many women from reporting instances of abuse. Sexual harassment remains a common problem in the Japanese business world. Compared to European or American corporations, Japanese women are more likely to suffer sexual harassment or demands for sexual favors by supervisors.

Women are still not regarded as business equals and do not have the same opportunities to advance up the corporate ladder. An ongoing complaint by many women is that sexual groping or molestation occurs in Japan's crowded commuter trains.

Japan strongly protects the rights of children.

The disabled suffer some discrimination in Japanese society, but the government has been making efforts to reduce this problem.

Discrimination against minorities remains a human rights problem in Japan. The Ainu are descendents of Japan's first inhabitants, and are an ethnic minority, who live in northern Japan. They have long suffered from discrimination at the hands of the Japanese majority. The 1997 passage of The Law to Promote Ainu Culture eliminated the legal discrimination that had existed against the Ainu, but social discrimination remains a problem.

Also suffering from discrimination are the Burakumin, a caste of outcasts who traditionally performed "unclean" tasks in Japan's past. Although discrimination against Burakumin is not supported by law, long time prejudices by the population keep the Burakumin from enjoying full human rights in Japan. Many Burakumin hide their background in an attempt to avoid this discrimination.

Discrimination, legal and societal, against foreigners also continues. Culturally, with their homogenous society, some Japanese tend to be suspicious of foreigners. Foreign workers, the largest percentage of whom are ethnically Korean, face employment and societal discrimination. The government places difficult hurdles in the way of ethnic Koreans, even long time residents, who wish to become Japanese citizens.

Japan cooperates with international and local human rights organizations and is very open to accepting human rights observers. Japan is also very active in promoting human rights around the world, and often is one of the main financial backers of international human rights missions. (The United Nations' mission in Cambodia, for example, was supported, in part, by large Japanese contributions.)

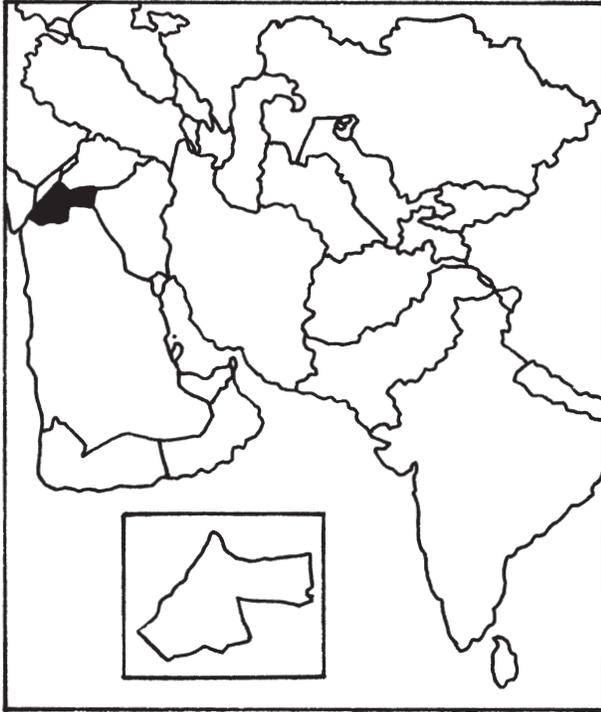
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# Jordan



The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is located in the Middle East, northwest of Saudi Arabia. It borders Iraq, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and the West Bank. Amman is the capital city. Jordan's population of approximately 4.5 million consists primarily of Arabs and a few small communities of Circassians, Armenians, and Kurds. More than half the Arab population are refugees from Palestine or their descendents. Arabic is the official language, although English is used widely in commerce and government. Sunni Islam represents the majority religion; only 4 percent of the population practices Christianity.

## BACKGROUND

Jordan is a small country with inadequate natural resources and water supplies. Its economy has traditionally been based on phosphates and potash and their fertilizer derivatives, as well as on overseas remittances and foreign aid. For its energy needs, the country depends almost entirely on its oil-producing neighbors. Since 1987, Jordan has faced a substantial debt burden, low per capita income, and increasing unemployment rates. The Gulf War crisis of 1990–1991 further aggravated Jordan's economic problems.

The origins of Jordan date back to around 2000 B.C., when Semitic Amorites settled in the area called Canaan, by the Jordan River. In the course of its history, the territory has been invaded by a variety of peoples, including Hittites, Egyptians, Israelites, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Arab Muslims, Christian Crusaders, Mameluks, Ottoman Turks, and the British. Jordan was awarded to the United Kingdom by the League of Nations at the end of World War I and became the independent Hashemite Kingdom of Transjordan on May 25, 1946.

Jordan assisted Palestinians in their opposition to the establishment of the State of Israel. In 1967, it participated in the war between Israel and the Arab states of Syria, Egypt, and Iraq. This war led to a dramatic increase in the number of Palestinians living in Jordan and to an upsurge in the power of Palestinian guerrillas in Jordan. Open fighting between the Palestinian

Arabs and the government erupted in June 1970. After a year of heavy fighting, Jordanian forces won against the Palestinians and expelled many of them from the country. Jordan has been at peace with all its neighbors since 1980. Despite popular support for Iraq, Jordan did not participate in the Gulf War of 1990–1991.

Jordan is a member of the United Nations (UN) and several of its related agencies, including the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and the World Health Organization (WHO). It is also a member of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), the Non-Aligned Movement, and the Arab League.

Jordan is a constitutional monarchy based on the constitution of 1952. A high degree of executive and legislative authority is vested in the king and his council of ministers, although the bicameral National Assembly also has legislative power.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

The human rights record in Jordan continues to be poor in several areas. Citizens do not have the ability to change their government. The king has the power to appoint and dismiss the prime minister and the cabinet, to dissolve Parliament, and to establish public policy. High government posts are decided by the king and do not require legislative approval.

The distribution of parliamentary seats favors regions with populations known for their traditional pro-Hashemite views (those with majorities of non-Palestinian Arabs). Furthermore, the November 1997 parliamentary elections, despite a boycott by Islamist and other parties, were marred by irregularities and fraud on the part of pro-

government candidates. During the electoral campaign, the press and other campaign materials were restricted. Centrist candidates representing major tribes dominate the Parliament. In fact, a new amendment in the electoral system limits the chances of many non-tribal candidates, including women, to be elected. In addition, the Palestinian community is not represented proportionately in the government.

The security forces are allegedly responsible for extrajudicial killings and numerous deaths of detainees while under custody. The authorities are reluctant to conduct investigations into those crimes. The police and security forces sometimes use physical and verbal abuse against prisoners during detention and interrogation. Governmental officials deny allegations of torture and abuse, but they are known to occur. However, these actions are difficult to verify because the security officers frequently deny detainees timely access to legal counsel.

Prisons and local police detention facilities do not meet minimum international standards; overcrowding and lack of personnel are the main problems. The security forces arbitrarily arrest and detain citizens. Lengthy pretrial detention is a problem, especially in state security cases. In addition, defendants are not allowed to meet their lawyers until shortly before trial.

The government also detains persons, including journalists, for political reasons. The constitution provides for the arrest, trial, and punishment in cases of persons involved in the defamation of heads of state or public officials, in attacks on state dignity, and in disseminating false or exaggerated information outside the country.

The judiciary is subject to pressure from the executive branch. Islamic, or shari'a, courts, have jurisdiction over marriage and divorce among Muslims and over inheri-

tance cases involving both Muslims and non-Muslims. Military courts conduct trials in state security cases, and they are closed to the public.

The government infringes on the citizens' right to privacy; the authorities monitor telephone conversations, read private correspondence, and engage in surveillance of persons who are believed to pose a threat to the national security. In addition, security officers often conduct searches without warrants.

The government restricts freedom of speech and the press. Journalists practice self-censorship. Private citizens may be prosecuted for slandering the royal family, the government, or foreign leaders. The law limits the practice of journalism to Jordan Press Association (JPA) members, excluding many writers from the profession, and forbids publishers from hiring non-journalists. The government can issue fines, withdraw licenses, and order shutdowns to control the newspapers. Foreign publications are available, although occasionally distribution is blocked.

The government has a monopoly on the country's broadcast media. Radio and television news broadcasts are more restricted than the print media, and they report only governmental views. However, international satellite and Israeli and Syrian television broadcasts are available.

The government restricts freedom of assembly and association. Public gatherings need to be authorized. The authorities often deny permits for peaceful demonstration, public protests, and rallies that pose a threat to national security.

Membership in an unlicensed political party is illegal. Workers' unions must be registered to be considered legal.

Women face societal discrimination, resulting from traditional values and practices,

in employment, social security benefits, inheritance, divorce, value of court testimony, and other areas. Women may not petition for citizenship for their children or for non-Jordanian husbands. Some women's groups claim that the problem of discrimination is not really one of law but rather because of women's lack of awareness of their rights or their unwillingness to assert those rights. It is unlikely, however, that more assertiveness among Jordanian women would appreciably diminish discrimination against them. Violence against women, especially spousal abuse, is widespread. Cultural norms discourage women from seeking medical or legal help.

Although the government is committed to children's welfare in education and medical care, its efforts are constrained by limited financial resources. The law prohibits children under the age of sixteen from working; however, children are commonly found on the streets of the capital city. It is believed that rates of child abuse in families, particularly child sexual abuse, are quite high. The law specifies punishment for abuses against children, including the death penalty for rape or sodomy. Illegitimate children suffer severe discrimination in a society that does not tolerate adultery.

The government is committed to the welfare of people with disabilities. However, the implementation of constitutional provisions regarding their full access into society is still slow. Workers' rights are generally enforced. However, the law does not provide workers with the right to remove themselves from hazardous conditions without jeopardizing their jobs.

The government imposes some restrictions on freedom of religion, and some minorities are subject to societal discrimination, particularly the Bahai. The government does not recognize Jehovah's Witnesses, the United

Pentecostal Church, the Church of Christ, the Assembly of God, or the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, but each denomination is allowed to conduct religious services and activities without interference. Muslims who convert to other faiths complain of social and government discrimination. They might be regarded as apostates and legally be denied their basic rights.

Palestinians residing in Jordan who make up 60 percent of the population, face discrimination in employment and education. Most Palestinians in Jordan are citizens of Jordan; but 150,000 Palestinians in Jordan are residents—not citizens—and have restricted rights.

Citizens can travel freely abroad and within the country; however, their freedom of movement is restricted in some areas controlled by the military. In addition, women need to obtain permission from a male guardian to apply for a Jordanian passport or to travel abroad with children. All Palestinians must obtain permits from the Ministry of the Interior to travel between Jordan and the Israeli-occupied territories.

Although the constitution prohibits the deportation of citizens, the government has deported Palestinians who hold Jordanian passports but do not enjoy the rights of citizens. The government has also prevented

Jordanians from attending conferences for Palestinian opposition groups.

The government generally cooperates with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in assisting refugee and asylum seekers. The children of asylum seekers face bureaucratic impediments in enrolling in school.

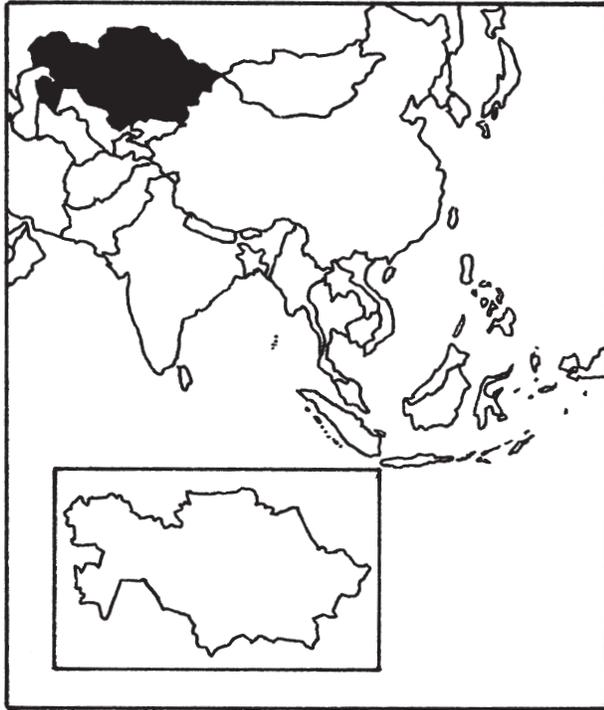
Local and international human rights groups are free to investigate and publish their findings on allegations of human rights abuses. However, they are limited in their ability to publish reports alleging torture and other abuses committed by the security services. Local chapters of the Jordanian Human Rights Organization (JHRO) are registered with the government. The government responds to only about 10 percent of the complaints submitted on behalf of victims of human rights violations committed by the security forces.

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# Kazakhstan



The Republic of Kazakhstan is located in central Asia, on the Caspian Sea. It has borders with China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Its population of 16.8 million is formed by the following ethnic groups: Kazakhs (46 percent), Russians (34.7 percent), Ukrainians (4.9 percent), Germans (3.1 percent), Uzbeks (2.3 percent), Tatars (1.9 percent), and others (7.1 percent). Islam and the Russian Orthodox Church represent the major religious denominations practiced in Kazakhstan. Protestantism and other religions are practiced by a minority. Kazakh is the state language, although Russian is considered the official language and is spoken in everyday business. The city of Alma-Ata is the capital.

## BACKGROUND

Upon the overthrow of the Russian empire in 1918, Kazakhstan became a republic within the new Soviet Union. The Soviet regime carried out massive political repression and purges in Kazakhstan, although the later years under Brezhnev allowed the region, like the Soviet Union, to stagnate. In September 1991, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Communist Party of Kazakhstan was disbanded and Kazakhstan achieved independence on December 16, 1991.

Kazakhstan is very rich in natural resources, especially fossil fuel reserves, as well as supplies of other minerals and metals. Since independence, the government has made considerable efforts toward achieving a market-based economy. The nation's industrial sector is based on the extraction and processing of minerals and metals, as well as on large machine building—construction equipment, tractors, agricultural machinery, and defense items. The economy has suffered from the breakup of the Soviet Union and the consequent collapse of demand for traditional heavy industry products. Between 1995 and 1997, however, the government program of economic reforms and privatization improved the country's economic situation. Small and medium-sized firms and most large-scale industrial complexes have been privatized. In 1996, the Caspian Pipeline Consortium agreement led to the construction of a new pipeline from western Kazakhstan's Tengiz oil field to the Black Sea, thus increasing prospects for larger oil

exports for the following years. The 1998 oil price depression and the August 1999 financial crisis in Russia resulted in a decline in Kazakhstan's gross domestic product (GDP) growth and in living standards for the majority of the population.

The current constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan, which was adopted following the August 1995 all-national referendum, concentrates power in the president. It cannot be amended without the president's consent. The president can appoint and dismiss the government, dissolve Parliament, call referenda at his discretion, and appoint administrative heads of regions and cities. The judiciary is under the control of the president and the executive branch, and corruption is deeply rooted. The Committee for National Security—KNCB—reports directly to the president and is responsible for national security, law enforcement activities, and counterintelligence.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

The constitution adopted in 1995 does not fully safeguard human rights, and violations are committed regularly in a number of areas. In general, democratic institutions are weak, and the government violates citizens' right to change their government. The government's conduct was flawed during the campaign for the January 1999 presidential election. In various instances, the government harassed the opposition by pressuring managers of conference facilities to deny access at the last moment to opponents who had arranged meetings and press conferences or by interrupting electricity at the facilities used for opposition meetings. Further, the government prohibited some opponents from running in the election. Kazakhstan is not technically a

dictatorship, but its democratic practices have yet to meet international norms.

Despite a constitutional provision against torture, violence, or other treatment and punishment that is cruel or humiliating to human dignity, members of the security forces often beat or mistreat detainees to obtain confessions. Law enforcement officials usually are supervised very poorly. According to credible reports, detainees sometimes are choked, handcuffed to radiators, or have plastic bags or gas masks placed over their heads to force them to divulge information.

Arbitrary arrests and prolonged detentions are very common. Moreover, prison conditions are very harsh, and overcrowding, inadequate prison nutrition, and a lack of medical supplies and personnel often contribute to the spread of tuberculosis and other major diseases.

Although the constitution provides that citizens have the right to confidentiality of personal deposits and savings, correspondence, telephone conversations, and postal, telegraph, and other messages, the government regularly violates citizens' right to privacy.

The government controls nearly all broadcast transmission facilities and reluctantly tolerates independent media. Journalists cannot criticize the president, his family, and other officials. Opposition newspapers and other media are regularly ordered to close or are forced to sell to progovernment interests. Sometimes independent televisions and radio stations are threatened with non-renewal of their broadcast licenses. According to credible reports, the government pressured newspapers and television stations not to cover the opposition during the 1999 presidential campaign. Similarly, academic freedom is not respected.

Although the constitution provides for the right to peaceful assembly, the government regularly imposes significant restrictions on unsanctioned gatherings, public meetings, marches, demonstrations, picketing, and strikes. Further, freedom of association is often hindered by controversial registration requirements. Organizations, movements, and political parties must register annually with the government. Political parties established on a religious or ethnic basis are usually denied registration on the grounds that their activities could spark social unrest.

The constitution states that no one may be subjected to discrimination for reasons of origin, social position, occupation, property status, sex, race, nationality, language, attitude to religion, convictions, place of residence, or any other circumstances. However, the government regularly discriminates against women, the disabled, and ethnic minorities.

Domestic violence against women represents a serious problem, and every year hundreds of thousands of women are the victims of spousal abuse. Moreover, traditional cultural practices limit the role of women in everyday society and in owning and managing businesses or real property.

Citizens with disabilities are not given equal consideration by employers. In addition, the government does not enforce the requirement that the disabled have ac-

cess to public buildings and commercial establishments. The government also discriminates in favor of ethnic Kazakhs in government employment, where ethnic Kazakhs predominate, as well as in education, housing, and other areas.

The government routinely limits workers rights, including the right to organize and the right to strike. Authorities usually limit the influence and activities of independent trade unions, which often come under pressure for holding unsanctioned demonstrations and marches. Members of independent trade unions are often harassed. Working and safety conditions in the industrial sector are substandard, and safety consciousness is poor. Workers in factories usually do not wear protective gear and work in conditions of poor visibility and ventilation. Further, workers have no legal right to remove themselves from dangerous work situations without jeopardizing their employment.

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# Kenya



The Republic of Kenya is an East African country on the Indian Ocean. It shares borders with Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda. Its capital is Nairobi. It gained its independence from Britain in 1963. Daniel arap Moi is currently the president and head of state. Its legislature is the unicameral (single house) National Assembly, and its legal system is based on English common law, tribal law, and Islamic law. Since 1993, Kenya has undergone state-sponsored economic liberalization, including the removal of import licensing and the relaxation of price controls. Backed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Kenya has pushed for privatization within its national industries. The gross domestic product (GDP) increased by around 5 percent in 1995.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

Despite the zeal with which President Moi and his ruling party, the Kenya Africa National Union (KANU), have pursued economic reforms, very little has been done in recent years to address Kenya's ongoing human rights problems. There are reports of police harassment, excessive use of force, torture, and deaths in custody. Refugees from neighboring countries and migrant workers have also been targeted for police harassment, as well as for relocation to rural camps and arbitrary deportation. More ominous perhaps is the government's increasing reliance on gangs of thugs to break up rallies and meetings held by opponents of the government.

Kenya's press is for the most part free of coercion, but some editors and writers have endured reprisals for inflammatory statements; one such editor, who published an article about a corrupt judge, was jailed for six months for contempt of court. Kenya is also struggling with the increasing effects of the AIDS epidemic.

According to the government of Kenya's own figures, police killed 63 suspected criminals and another 151 prisoners between the months of January and October 1999. Police show an alarming lack of restraint when employing lethal force. Examples abound of Kenyan authorities shooting and killing suspected criminals without just cause. In one case, police were sent to a mosque during a religious ceremony to arrest a man wanted for assault, after which they began shooting indiscriminately and killed five innocent worshippers.

Authorities have shown little tolerance for protesters as well, opening fire on a crowd of rice farmers in Mwea who were protesting the policies of the National Irrigation Board, killing two. Lack of adequate training has also shown itself to be a problem; as when responding to a burglary in progress, Nairobi police opened fire on members of the household being robbed, shooting two children. One of the children died.

Some of the persons who died in custody were apparently victims of torture. Police beat one man and dropped him off at a hospital where he died six days later. According to the Kenyan Human Rights Commission (KHRC), police also tortured to death an elementary school student in February 1999, during a night in a town prison. There has been no concerted effort on the part of the Kenyan government to investigate these extrajudicial killings. The government has denied responsibility for these events, saying that although there are forms available at local police stations for police brutality complaints, very few such crimes get reported. This may be explained by the fact that police are reluctant to give out the forms and the Kenyan public remains skeptical of a process that would require the victims of police violence to report it to the same police.

Mob violence in Kenya is on the increase. According to the KHRC, 157 people were killed in mob violence in the first nine months of 1999. Although there are no statistics, there have been reports of deaths during the year caused by violence against persons accused of practicing witchcraft. The KANU Youth, or youth faction of the ruling party, has been involved in dozens of instances of violently dispelling peaceful protests.

Citizens have been subjected to restrictions on their freedom of movement within the country, and many have been denied the right to a fair and speedy trial. The po-

lice have conducted massive warrantless "sweeps" in Kenya's major cities, searching for illegal immigrants and firearms. Security forces closely monitor the activities of known dissidents by tapping phones and electronic communications, as well as intercepting mail.

For the most part, the Kenyan press remains forthright and autonomous. Weekly tabloids are extremely critical of the government and often air unsubstantiated rumors. There are four major newspapers, the largest of which is independent and often critical of the government. The second largest newspaper is owned by an investment group with close ties to the ruling party, although it at times has also published articles that chastise the actions of the government. The third-largest newspaper is owned by an opposition politician and rarely praises the authorities.

Although the constitution provides citizens with a right to change their government through free and fair elections, such an event has yet to be proven possible. There has never been an opposition majority in the National Assembly, although the last major elections, held in 1997, were said to represent the view of the majority. However, while in office, the executive holds power over every branch and level of the government. The president appoints provincial and district commissioners, and they appoint all local officials. In elections, many local officials actively aided KANU. There are reports that KANU has received financing through the sale or transfer of state assets. These activities are said to be known to President Moi.

Violence against women is serious and widespread. Cases of rape rose from 903 in 1998 to 1,329 in the first nine months of 1999. Authorities are not inclined to interfere in domestic disputes, owing to the so-

Mothers and children at a clinic in Kiambu.

cial taboos about public discussion of sex and fear of retribution. Women are limited to second-class citizenship and are restricted in their political and economic rights. Women are substantially outnumbered by men in higher education and hold only 5 percent of land titles.

Private citizens must fund their own children's tuition and expenses for school, from kindergarten through university. Additionally, the health care system, which once provided free checkups for school children, is now defunct. Female genital mutilation, widely condemned by most international health organizations, continues in many rural areas. Some estimates assert that as much as 50 percent of the female population of Kenya have suffered from the practice.

Immediately after independence, Kenya set off on an ambitious course, attempting to leave behind its status as less-developed

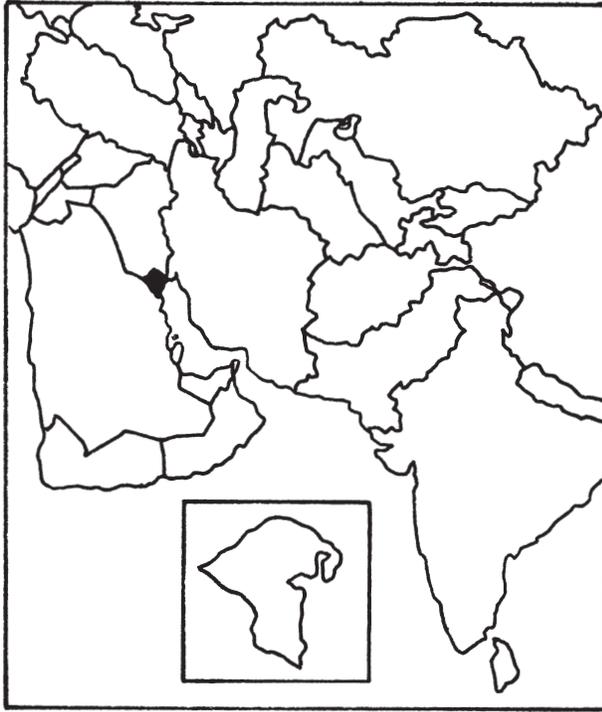
country and model itself on Western democracies. Kenya has found that it must struggle against the same difficulties as its neighboring countries, and in some ways it has succeeded. Nevertheless, the example of Kenya serves as a warning to those who say that human rights automatically follow from economic success.

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# Kuwait



The State of Kuwait is a country in the Middle East, bordering the Persian Gulf, between Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Kuwait City is the capital city. Kuwait's population of 1.9 million—including non-nationals—is composed primarily of Arabs (78 percent). Less than half of them are from the Arabian Peninsula; many moved to Kuwait from nearby states because of the prosperity brought by oil production after the 1940s. Kuwait also has a sizable population of Indians, Iranians, and Southeast Asians. Islam is the majority religion, and about 85 percent of Kuwait citizens are Muslim. Forty-five percent of Kuwaitis are Sunni Muslims and 40 percent are Shi'a Muslims. There are very few Christians. Arabic is the official language of Kuwait, but English is also widely spoken.

## BACKGROUND

The origins of Kuwait date back to the eighteenth century, when the city of Kuwait was founded by the Anaiza tribe, which wandered north from Qatar. Amirs, or princes, from the Al-Sabah family have ruled Kuwait for over 200 years. In 1899, Sheikh Mubarak Al Sabah signed an agreement with the United Kingdom, whereby Kuwait would not cede any territory or receive agents or representatives of any foreign power without the British government's consent. Britain was responsible for the security and foreign affairs of Kuwait until June 19, 1961, when Kuwait became fully independent.

Following Kuwait's independence, however, Iraq claimed Kuwait, asserting that when Kuwait had been part of the Ottoman Empire it had been subject to Iraqi authority. In August 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait and occupied its territory until February 1991, when Iraqi forces were expelled by a United Nations (UN) coalition led by the United States. Arab states, especially the other five members of the Gulf Cooperation Council—Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates—as well as Egypt and Syria, supported Kuwait by sending troops to fight with the coalition. After liberation, the UN demarcated the Iraq-Kuwait boundary on the basis of the 1932 and the 1963 agreements between the two states. Nevertheless, Iraq continues to make claims on Kuwait.

Kuwait is a small country with massive crude oil reserves—it holds 10 percent of the world's oil reserves. Despite its empha-

Demonstrators marching in favor of American action to protect the Kurds. Kuwait City, April 1991.

sis on an open market, the government continues to dominate the local economy. As a member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries—OPEC—Kuwait benefited from the dramatic rise in oil prices in the 1970s. More recently, however, its economy has suffered from the triple shock of the 1982 securities market crash, the mid-1980s drop in oil prices, and the 1990 Iraqi invasion, which set ablaze or damaged 749 of Kuwait's oil wells. Industry in Kuwait consists of several large export-oriented petrochemical units, oil refineries, and a range of small manufacturers. Agriculture, on the other end, is very limited because Kuwait lacks water and has practically no arable land. Kuwait depends

on food imports, with the exception of fish.

Kuwait is a member of the UN and some of its specialized and related agencies, including the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade; it also belongs to the African Development Bank, the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, the Arab League, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries.

Kuwait is a constitutional monarchy. The constitution, adopted in 1962, provides for an elected National Assembly—the Majlis al-'Umma. The amir—head of state—represents the executive branch of the government, whereas the High Court of Appeal represents the judiciary. The amir can suspend the constitution during periods of martial law. Furthermore, the judiciary is independent to some degree, but the amir appoints all judges. The Ministry of Interior supervises the security apparatus, including the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and Kuwait State Security (KSS). These two agencies, in addition to the regular police, investigate internal security problems.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

The government generally respects the human rights of its citizens, although serious violations continue to occur in a number of areas.

Citizens cannot change their head of state, and the National Assembly's power to approve the amir's choice of his successor is very limited. Formal political parties are banned, and women and citizens naturalized for less than twenty years may not vote or be elected to the National Assem-

bly. Moreover, members of the armed forces, police, and other personnel of the Ministry of Interior may not vote.

The constitution prohibits torture. However, some police and members of the security forces routinely mistreat detainees during interrogation. Among the abuses practiced are blindfolding, verbal threats, and slaps and blows. Usually it is non-Kuwaitis—especially citizens of non-Gulf Arab nations and Asians—who are victims of such abuses. Prisons are overcrowded but meet minimum international standards in terms of nutrition, access to basic health care, family visits, cleanliness, and opportunities for work and exercise.

The government does not respect citizens' privacy rights in some areas. The security forces occasionally monitor the activities of individuals and their communications. The law requires that men obtain government approval to marry foreign-born women. Moreover, the government advises women against marrying foreign men and prohibits marriage between Muslim women and non-Muslim men.

Journalists frequently practice self-censorship, despite the constitutional provision guaranteeing freedom of the press and freedom to criticize the government at public meetings and in the media. The government often practices informal censorship against publishers and editors believed to have attacked government policies and/or discussed issues considered offensive to Islam, tradition, and the interests of the government. The Ministry of Information censors all imported books, films, videotapes, periodicals, and other such materials. In general, academics are subject to the same restraints as the media regarding criticism of the amir or Islam.

The government restricts freedom of assembly and association. Public gatherings,

as well as private gatherings of more than five persons, are permitted only upon governmental approval. Political activity is allowed only in what are known as *diwaniyas*, which are informal, family-based, almost exclusively male social gatherings. All non-governmental organizations (NGOs) must obtain a license from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor.

The government places some limits on freedom of religion. Islam is the state religion, and Islamic law is considered the main source of legislation. The ruling family belongs to the Sunni branch of Islam. Shi'a Islamists, however, are free to conduct their traditional forms of worship without government interference, although they claim that the government has not approved the construction of new Shi'a mosques in recent years. Several legally recognized foreign congregations and churches—Catholics, Anglicans, and Protestants—are allowed to practice their religion freely.

Those practicing religions not sanctioned in the Koran are restricted, including Hindus, Sikhs, Bahais, and Buddhists. Members of such religions may not build places of worship, although they may worship privately in their homes. Missionaries may not proselytize among Muslims, and the establishment of non-Islamic publishing companies or training institutions for clergy is not permitted. The law also prohibits the naturalization of non-Muslims as Kuwaiti citizens. When marrying a Muslim woman, a non-Muslim man must convert to Islam, whereas a non-Muslim woman does not have to convert to Islam to marry a Muslim man, although it is to her advantage to do so.

The government also places some restrictions on freedom of movement. Married women who apply for passports must obtain their husbands' signature on the ap-

plication. Husbands may also prevent their wives' departure from the country by placing a twenty-four-hour travel ban on them. Also, all minor children must have their fathers' permission to travel outside of the country. The government prevents the return to Kuwait of the *bidoon*—stateless persons of mainly Iraqi or Iranian descent who resided in Kuwait prior to the Iraqi invasion. Further, the government restricts the presence of nationals of the countries that supported Iraq during the Gulf War, especially Jordanians, and Yemenis, as well as Palestinians.

Although the constitution prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, national origin, language, or religion, it does discriminate against women and non-citizens.

Violence against women, including domestic abuse, is very common. Some employers regularly abuse foreign women working as domestic servants. These women often do not sue their employers for fear of deportation as well as the justified fear that the judicial system is biased against them. Moreover, women are denied the right to vote, and their testimony is not given equal weight to that of males in the Islamic courts. Traditionally, women are not allowed to choose certain roles in society or to work in industries or trades considered dangerous or harmful to their health. There are no female judges or prosecutors. The law discriminates against women married to foreign

men. Such women must pay residence fees for their husbands and are not entitled to government housing subsidies. Polygamy is legal, while the marriage of girls under the age of seventeen remains a practice of the Bedouins, a traditional, tribal Arab group.

Although the constitution provides for the right to join unions, the government restricts workers' rights by prohibiting workers from freely establishing trade unions. In general, strikes are not allowed, and all labor disputes must be referred to compulsory arbitration. Furthermore, despite the law against forced labor, some foreign workers—especially unskilled or semiskilled South Asian workers—are treated like indentured servants.

The government allows international human rights organizations to visit the country and establish offices. In contrast, it prevents the establishment of local human rights groups.

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# Kyrgyzstan



Kyrgyzstan is located in central Asia, and is bounded on the north by Kazakhstan, on the east by China, on the west by Uzbekistan, and on the south by Tajikistan. Bishkek is the capital city. The population of slightly over 4.5 million includes Kirghizs (52.4 percent), Russians (18 percent), Uzbeks (12.9 percent), Ukrainians (2.5 percent), Germans (2.4 percent), and others (11.8 percent). The official languages are Kirghiz and Russian. The great majority of the population is Muslim (about 75 percent); the remainder is Russian Orthodox (20 percent) or professors of other religions.

In March 1991, after a referendum, Kyrgyzstan became independent from the former Soviet Union. However, the newly formed republic joined the new Common-

wealth of Independent States (CIS). In January 1992, Kyrgyzstan was admitted into the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). In March 1992, it became a member of the United Nations (UN).

Kyrgyzstan has a predominantly agricultural economy. However, since its independence, Kyrgyzstan has carried out many market reforms and the government has been trying to adopt adequate countermeasures to overcome economic problems, including a high unemployment rate.

The president is the chief of the state and appoints members of the cabinet on recommendation of the prime minister. The legislative branch is a bicameral Parliament called the Supreme Council, which is formed by the Assembly of People's Representatives (seventy seats) and the Legislative Assembly (thirty-five seats). Elections are held every five years. The judiciary consists of the Supreme Court, which is appointed for a ten-year term by the Supreme Council on recommendations of the president.

The constitution grants all the fundamental human rights, but violations are reported in several areas. Citizens have limited rights to change their government. As a matter of fact, local and international observers have reported irregularities in the 1995 presidential and parliamentary elections.

The police reportedly use violence in order to obtain confessions from detainees during interrogation. Prison conditions do not meet minimum international standards. Overcrowding, inadequate nutrition, and a lack of necessities such as food are among the main problems. Visits by human

rights monitors are allowed, but many activists claim that permission can be obtained only through personal connection with the police.

The constitution provides for an independent judiciary, but in practice the courts are subject to the influence of the executive branch. In addition, judges often are willing to accept bribes in exchange for leniency.

Numerous private magazines, newspapers, and radio and television stations exist nationwide, but the government occasionally restricts freedom of speech and the press. The government does not respect the constitutional provisions regarding freedom of assembly and association. Permission is required for rallies and demonstrations, and such permission is sometimes denied.

Violence against women is a serious problem, with rape a too-frequent occurrence. However, many of these incidents are not reported because of cultural traditions, psychological pressure, and negligence by the authorities. Shelters for women are not sufficient to meet the need. The government does not assure decent living conditions for

children because of the poor socioeconomic situation.

A law passed in 1991 provides the disabled with access to public transportation and parking. The government cooperates with United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other humanitarian organizations in order to assist refugees.

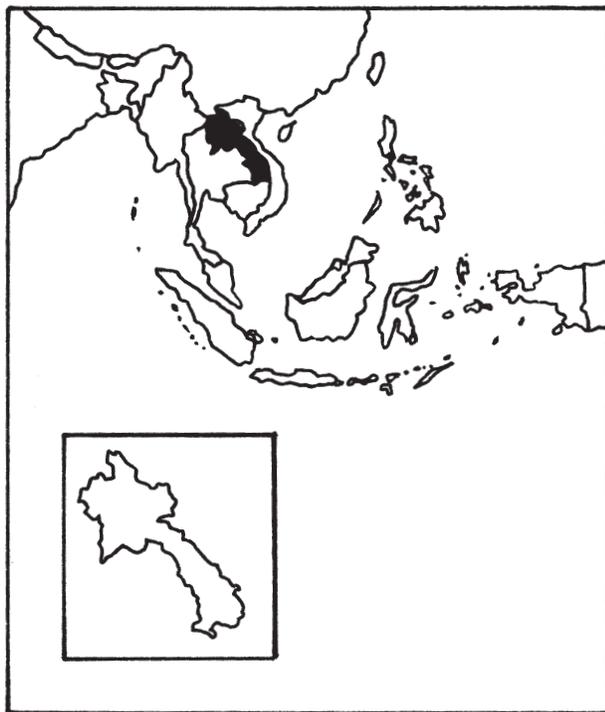
Several human rights organizations operate in the country without restriction, and the authorities are generally cooperative with them.

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# Laos



The Lao People's Democratic Republic is located in Southeast Asia. Its capital is Vientiane and it became independent from France in 1949. It shares borders with Vietnam, China, Myanmar (Burma), Thailand, and Cambodia. Laos is ruled by an authoritarian, communist government. It is under one-party rule, and although it has the constitutional rudiments of defined executive, legislative, and judicial bodies, in practice, the Lao People's Revolutionary Party (LPRP) has exerted complete control over all government functions since its rise to power in 1975. The Laotian legal system is based on traditional customs, French legal procedures, and socialist practice.

Laos is extremely poor, even by regional standards. It has a primarily agricultural economy. Since the mid-1980s, Laos has

incrementally shifted to a free-market economy. Today, the Laotian government encourages foreign investment and has endeavored to create a more effective legal system to entice potential investors.

The Ministry of the Interior (MOI) is the primary instrument by which the government maintains internal security, although it shares many of its function with various LPRP organizations. Foreigners are primarily monitored by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, although once again, it shares many of its duties and resources with both the MOI and the party apparatus.

All security agents in Laos, including local, border, and communications police, work under the auspices of the MOI. The armed forces' primary responsibility is external security, although they do maintain units specializing in counterterrorism and counterinsurgency. Most observers believe that the civilian government maintains solid control over the security forces.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

Laos has traditionally struggled in matters of human rights, and many problems still remain. Under the one-party system, citizens do not have the right or the means to change their government. Security forces under the LPRP have committed numerous human rights violations, such as arbitrary arrest and detention, intrusive surveillance tactics, and brutal treatment of suspected dissidents. Many captives are detained for inordinately lengthy periods before trial. Because the judiciary is subject to executive and party influence, it cannot ensure due

process. The Laotian government also restricts freedom of speech, assembly, and association. The government restricts freedom of religion and freedom to move within the country. Women and minorities must contend with social and legal discrimination, and workers do not have access to collective bargaining. The government has acknowledged the issue of human trafficking (mostly women and children) and has taken some preventative measures in this area.

In matters of free speech, the Laotian government has an extremely poor recent record. In October 1999, at least thirty people were arrested for planning an anti-government demonstration in Vientiane. They reportedly intended to demand the abdication of the current government, more freedom, and a multiparty democracy. Laotian officials characterized the abortive demonstration as an illegal anti-government activity. This demonstration and others like it were never reported in the Laotian press.

Security laws in Laos allow the authorities to monitor the communications of private citizens. Evidence indicates that the Laotian government increased its surveillance efforts during 1999. The Laotian Penal Code makes allowances for the protection of privacy, including mail, telephone, and electronic correspondence. In practice, however, it is difficult to judge the efficacy of these legal safeguards.

Restrictions of freedom of religious expression continue: people belonging to small church groups not under state control face imprisonment and in some cases forced relocation. More than fifty-five Christians were arrested between January and July 1999 in various provinces. Most of the men arrested were rice farmers and day laborers belonging to the Bru ethnic minority, and several had been arrested previously on similar charges.

Those who are arrested and detained face ill treatment and unsanitary conditions. Prisoners are reportedly denied adequate food and medical care. In many cases, political prisoners and prisoners of conscience face the most harsh prison conditions. Some cases of torture have been reported. Although both the constitution and penal code of Laos prohibit torture, members of the Laotian security service have treated their prisoners abusively. In March 1998, Laotian authorities wearing police uniforms arrested and detained a foreign citizen and three family members for four days. The detainees were reportedly kept in solitary confinement and subjected to arduous interrogation. The government has offered no explanation for this treatment. Additionally, some reports have indicated the use of leg chains, wooden stocks, or hand manacles for extended periods in some Laotian prisons.

Laos has its difficulties with discrimination against minorities. One of the most numerous ethnic minorities in Laos are the Hmong. Societal discrimination against the Hmong persists, although there are now several Hmong officials holding senior positions within the government. Beginning in the early 1990s, the Laotian government introduced programs to overcome racial and economic disparities in Hmong areas. Some observers note that the Laotian government's attempts to assimilate the Hmong into the general Laotian culture are not respectful of Hmong culture.

Women are equal in the eyes of the law and enjoy general parity with men in matters of law and society. Reports of rape and sexual harassment are rare, and in most cases that go to court, defendants are convicted. The Lao Women's Union operates nationally to advance the position of women

With her children standing nearby, an impoverished Loatian woman cooks food in her makeshift home.

in society. The Family Code prohibits legal discrimination in matters of marriage and inheritance. Government funding for children's basic health and nutritional needs is lacking. Education is compulsory until the fifth grade, although many rural children are working with their parents at much younger ages. Violence against children is prohibited and violators are punished severely. Reports of physical abuse are rare.

Laos, like many other countries, is trying to integrate itself into the fast-paced capitalism of the region while holding onto its traditional authoritarian modes of gov-

erning. The impact of this transition will likely have a major effect on human rights.

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# Latvia



The Republic of Latvia is situated in eastern Europe, bordering the Baltic Sea, between Estonia and Lithuania. Riga is the capital city. Latvia has a population of approximately 2.5 million. Ethnic groups include Latvian (56.5 percent), Russian (30.4 percent), Belarusian (4.3 percent), Ukrainian (2.8 percent), Polish (2.6 percent), and other (3.4 percent). Lettish is the official language, although Russian is also widely spoken. Most Latvians belong to the Evangelical Lutheran Church, but a large minority are Russian Orthodox and eastern Latvians are predominantly Roman Catholic.

## BACKGROUND

Along with other small nations of Europe, Latvia shares a history of invasion by a suc-

cession of expansionist nations, including Sweden, Poland, Germany, and Russia. After a brief period of independence between the two world wars, Latvia was annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940. German occupation followed, but the Soviet Union recaptured Latvia in 1944. Latvia reestablished its independence in August 1991, a few months prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union; the last Russian troops left in 1994. Russia has expressed concern about how Latvia's laws on language and naturalization may affect non-ethnic Latvians (mostly Russians), who comprise about 30 percent of the population. In turn, Latvia is committed to the welfare of over 210,000 ethnic Latvians who reside in Russia. Both countries refuse dual citizenship to their inhabitants.

Latvia is a parliamentary democracy. The president is the head of state and is elected by the Parliament every four years. The prime minister, as chief executive, and the cabinet are responsible for the government. The Saeima is a unicameral legislative body and the highest organ of state authority. The 1998 elections for its 100 seats, and the national referendum for amending the Citizenship Law to meet European standards, were recognized internationally as free and fair. The judiciary is independent.

Latvia has been a member of the United Nations (UN) since 1991 and is a signatory to a number of UN organizations and other international agreements. It is also a member of the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe and of the North Atlantic Coordinating Council. Latvia welcomes further cooperation and integration

with National Atlantic Treaty Organization, the European Union, and other Western organizations. In addition, Latvia was the first Baltic country invited to join the World Trade Organization in 1998.

The country's economy is in transition toward full privatization and a free market. With the exception of enterprises in the sectors of shipping, telecommunications, and energy, all state monopolies, including agricultural land, have been privatized. Per capita gross domestic product is estimated at approximately \$4,100. The unemployment rate is about 9 percent and inflation about 4.7 percent. Foreign investment is still modest.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

Citizens enjoy a variety of human rights and liberties. In October 1998, the Saeima passed amendments to the 1992 constitution providing for the protection of fundamental human rights, including the freedoms of speech, the press, religion, and association, together with protection against discrimination based on race, sex, religion, language, or disability. However, the country's human rights record shows problems in a few areas.

The security forces, including the police and the Interior Ministry Forces, have been responsible for some human rights abuses. There have been reports that police and prison officers beat and mistreat detainees and prisoners. Civilians are often victims of harassment, extortion, and use of excessive force by the municipal police. In most cases, the government has taken steps to discipline the perpetrators.

Prisons lack sanitation, medical care, and other resources. Cells are overcrowded and poorly ventilated. Pretrial detention is a problem. The judiciary remains inefficient

because of untrained personnel and corruption. The government does not restrict freedom of association. However, communist, Nazi, and other organizations whose activities are judged as dangerous to the constitution are banned and denied legal status. Non-citizens are also prohibited from forming political organizations.

Women face discrimination in employment and wages, especially in the private sector. They are underrepresented in government and politics. Violence against women, including domestic violence, is a serious problem. Sexual harassment in the workplace is widespread. The authorities do not effectively enforce laws concerning prostitution. Both adult and child prostitution are widespread and linked to organized crime. The government is committed to the protection of children's rights in accordance with Western models. However, resources are inadequate to enforce legal provisions regarding children's welfare. There are reports that child abuse, including sexual abuse and abandonment, is common.

Although freedom of religion is generally respected, the Law on Religious Organizations accords certain rights and privileges only to those religious organizations that register with the government. Foreign evangelists and missionaries can proselytize only if they have been invited by Latvian religious organizations. There have been reports of incidents of religious intolerance, particularly directed against synagogues.

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on ethnicity. The new Citizenship Law passed in 1998 eased restrictions on the naturalization process; however, non-citizens occasionally encounter difficulties in participating fully in civic life. More than 70 percent of Latvia's residents are citizens, including non-ethnic Latvians. The law pro-

vides for the basic needs of non-citizens, including unemployment compensation and social security benefits. However, certain laws prohibit the employment of non-citizens in certain categories. In addition, non-citizens must overcome complicated procedures to own land. Non-ethnic Latvians, particularly Russians, allege that the Citizenship Law has a language requirement that discriminates against them. The Citizen and Migration Affairs Office deals with immigration issues and provides alien passports to non-citizens. Permanent resident non-citizens, including former Soviet citizens, can change residence, travel abroad, and return to the country.

The government cooperates with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and is implementing the terms for Latvia's accession to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. Many nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)

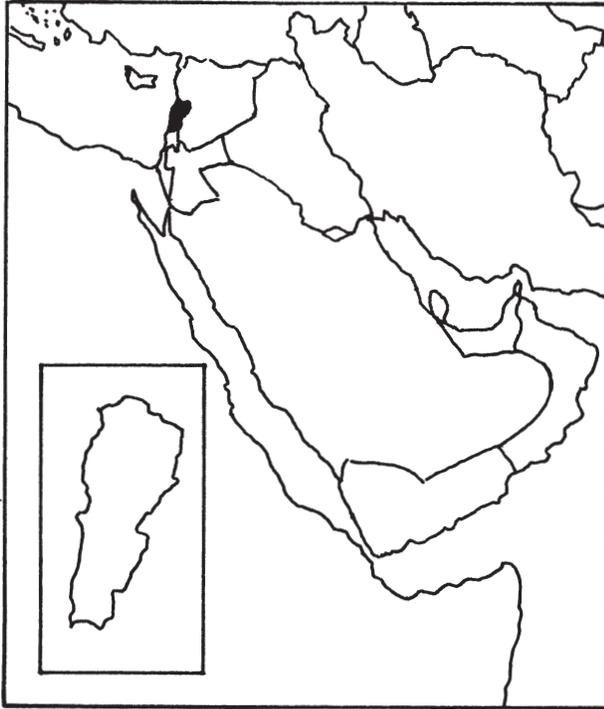
dealing with human rights issues are encouraged by the government and are growing in number. These NGOs particularly address prison conditions, women's rights, and children's rights. The National Human Rights Office operates independently by promoting human rights and conducting investigations of alleged violations.

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# Lebanon



Lebanon is located in the Middle East on the east coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Its neighbors are Syria and Israel. It has a population of 3.5 million. Almost the entire population are ethnic Arabs. The important divisions in Lebanon are religious: approximately 70 percent of the population are Muslims, and the remaining 30 percent are Christians. Arabic is the official language of Lebanon, but French is also widely spoken. The capital is Beirut. The government is a republic headed by a president.

## BACKGROUND

Lebanon has a long history stretching back to the earliest days of civilization. Occupied by a variety of peoples and civilizations, Lebanon was a center of Christianity dur-

ing its earliest years. With the rise of Islam, Arab invaders conquered Lebanon and much of its population eventually embraced Islam. Lebanon's unique Middle Eastern mix of Christian and Muslim populations stems from this history.

For most of the last 500 years, Lebanon was not independent but was a province of the Ottoman Empire. World War I (1914–1918) destroyed the Ottoman state, and after its disintegration Lebanon was put under the supervision of France, one of the victors in the war. Lebanon gained its independence on January 1, 1945.

Since independence, Lebanon has had to deal with three threats to its stability: the internal tensions between Muslims and Christians; the desire of some Syrians to absorb Lebanon into a “Greater Syria”; and the fallout from the conflicts inside Israel.

The conflicts in Israel caused particular tension in the region after tens of thousands of Palestinian refugees fled from the newly created State of Israel (1948); they and their descendents are still in refugee camps in Lebanon today. Some of those refugee camps were used as bases for Palestinian guerrillas who launched attacks on Israeli territory. Partly as a result of these attacks and the Israeli military strikes in response to them, a Lebanese civil war broke out 1975. That war escalated with Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon, which led to a temporary occupation of half of Lebanon and a seven-year occupation of southern Lebanon. The fighting damaged much of Lebanon and helped destroy the once-beautiful city of Beirut. The war was an enormous human rights catastrophe for Lebanon.

Civilians in a makeshift hospital (a parking garage basement) while Beirut faces Israeli attack, July 1982.

The civil war ended in 1991, but not all the fighting ceased. Syria still maintains a military presence in Lebanon and continues to influence its internal political situation. Israel also has continued to intervene in Lebanon, carrying out air raids against suspected Palestinian guerrilla bases. The ongoing friction that has resulted from these two foreign powers' presence in Lebanon has continued to have a negative impact on Lebanon's human rights situation.

## **HUMAN RIGHTS**

Lebanon has a mixed human rights record. The government generally makes good-faith efforts to protect the human rights of its peo-

ple, but the fractured nature of Lebanon's political world means that the government does not always control the human rights situation in the country. In particular, the 25,000 Syrian troops that remain in Lebanon are believed to be responsible for human rights violations, and the same is suspected of the Israeli-backed militias in southern Lebanon (which were withdrawn in early 2000). Israeli raids and Palestinian guerrilla actions also lead to crimes against human rights. Each year, dozens of fighters allied with these various factions are killed in small-scale skirmishes.

The citizens of Lebanon have the right to change their government to a limited extent. Recent parliamentary and presidential elec-

tions were generally fair, but the government's lack of control over much of the country—those areas under Syrian, Palestinian, or local militia control—meant that polling in those areas was flawed. Syrian influence, in particular, affects political campaigns and prevents entirely free elections. However, Lebanon has made much progress in this area and seems to be on the road toward eventually granting its people the right to freely choose their own government without any restrictions or limitations.

The human rights record of Lebanon's security forces is not good. The use of arbitrary arrests is common. Police use harsh methods to interrogate detainees and sometimes these methods cross over the line into torture. Palestinian security forces in Palestinian refugee camps are also sometimes believed to use torture on those they arrest. Before their withdrawal early in 2000, the Israeli-backed Southern Lebanon Army was responsible for numerous arbitrary arrests and the use of torture. The Syrian security forces are also believed to be responsible for arbitrary arrests and torture.

The Lebanese judiciary is nominally independent, but in reality it is prone to respond to political pressure. The political importance of individuals often determines whether or not they will be arrested or convicted. The courts generally avoid convicting persons closely connected to Syria, largely out of fear of Syria's large military presence in Lebanon.

Prisoners in Lebanon are not treated well. Prisons are overcrowded, lack adequate heat, sufficient plumbing facilities, including toilets, and decent medical care. Human rights advocates are allowed access to some, but not all, Lebanese prisons. Some Lebanese still are believed to be held in Syrian prisons.

The Lebanese government does protect its citizens' right to privacy. Phone taps and visual surveillance of political opponents are commonplace. Syrian security forces, with the acquiescence of the Lebanese government, are also believed to be responsible for numerous privacy violations.

The right to free speech and a free press is under pressure in Lebanon, but for the most part it is protected. Government officials put pressure on journalists to offer a favorable view of government actions, and this results in some degree of self-censorship by journalists. Nevertheless, Lebanon's print media are lively, and newspapers are fairly free in their criticism of the government and its officials.

The government protects the right to worship freely. In a country with as many denominations of Islam and Christianity as Lebanon, religious freedom is almost a necessity for survival. There are occasional clashes between religious extremists in Lebanon, but the government, for the most part, is able to keep these from escalating.

One of Lebanon's biggest human rights problems is the existence of Palestinian refugee camps that have been located within its borders for more than fifty years. There are between 200,000 and 300,000 Palestinians living in refugee camps. Conditions in these camps, which more resemble urban slums than the sea of tents that the word "refugee" usually conjures, are difficult. They are largely self-governed and the local police often do not follow human rights guidelines. Sanitation, health care, and shelter are inadequate for the large number of Palestinian refugees who are forced to live in Lebanon. The Lebanese government makes it difficult for Palestinians to obtain the legal documents necessary to find employment, thereby causing them to suffer great economic hardships.

Discrimination and violence against women, particularly spousal violence, remain problems in Lebanon. Nevertheless, Lebanon has a vibrant and active women's movement that is working to fight for women's rights and create greater awareness of the issue of spousal abuse. Like many Arab countries, Lebanon's courts are more lenient to men who kill female relatives for reasons of "honor"—these women are usually targeted by their families because of having engaged in adulterous relationships, and some Lebanese continue to feel that these murders are entirely justified.

In theory, the government supports the rights of children, but in practice inadequate funding and Lebanon's war-torn

landscape put many children in jeopardy. Education and health care have still not reached pre-1975 levels for many Lebanese children.

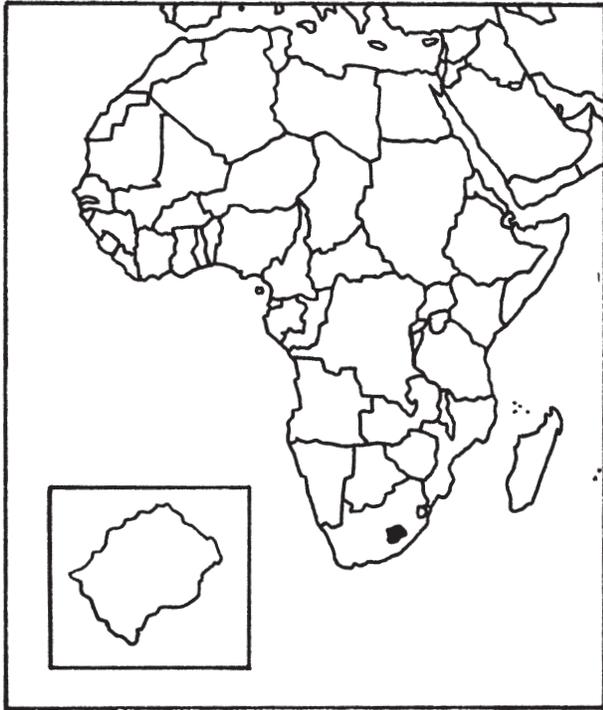
Local and international human rights groups are permitted to operate in Lebanon and are quite active.

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# Lesotho



Lesotho is a small African country existing as an enclave within the nation of South Africa. Originally called Basutoland, it was renamed the Kingdom of Lesotho upon achieving independence from Great Britain in 1966. The population is approximately two million; almost all are members of the Sotho ethnic group. The capital is Maseru.

Lesotho is a modified constitutional monarchy, much like that of the United Kingdom, in which the king, in this case King Letsie III, fills a ceremonial role, having no executive authority and being prevented from taking an active part in political affairs. Prime Minister Pakalitha Mosisili took power in 1998, and serves as

the executive and head of government. Opposition leaders claim that the elections which carried the prime minister to office were fraudulent, and they protested by using violence to destabilize the government, attack the police, intimidate business leaders and merchants, and attempt to spark a rebellion in the army.

In September 1998, the South African Development Community (SADC), a regional security organization, created a military task force to intervene in Lesotho in order to subdue an army mutiny and restore law and order. Political tension in Lesotho persists, however, injuring the cause of human rights for Lesotho's citizens.

Lesotho's security forces consist of the Lesotho Defense Force (LDF), the Lesotho Police Service (LPS), and the National Security Service (NSS). The government has made attempts to put all three of these organs under direct civilian control. However, the Lesotho armed forces have had a history of intervening in the country's political affairs (the LDF ruled Lesotho under two successive military regimes: from 1985–1990 and 1990–1993). Under the leadership of the SADC, fifty army officers were charged with fomenting rebellion and court-martialed. This instance marked the first instance in which any member of Lesotho's armed forces were disciplined by a civilian legal system.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

Lesotho's recent human rights record has been marred by the violence of the 1998 re-

volt. In February 1998, police opened fire on a group of protesters, killing two and injuring twenty. The police officers were subsequently arrested, but later released when no one registered a formal complaint. During the unrest of 1998, violence between police, protesters and opposing political factions claimed the lives of nine people, including one police officer. In the war, over fifty members of the LDF and forty civilians aligned with the opposition died in combat with troops from the SADC.

There have been no reports of extrajudicial killings. However, there have been substantiated reports that the police used excessive violence against detainees. Opposition leaders charge that LDF soldiers and the police tortured soldiers accused of mutiny, although no evidence has been given to support this claim.

Prison conditions are poor, but not life-threatening. Representatives from Amnesty International were allowed to visit prisoners being held on charges of mutiny in Lesotho's maximum security prison. They reported that the inmates' cells were infested with insects and lacked adequate light, ventilation, and sanitation facilities. The judge advocate later ordered prison officials to improve prison conditions, after which inmates received better food and sanitation. Women and men are housed separately and there have been no reports of rape in prison.

Lesotho's constitution provides for freedom of speech and freedom of the press, and the government usually respects these rights in practice. There are several independent newspapers, including a Roman Catholic Church publication, one controlled by the Lesotho Evangelical Church, and four English-language newspapers. All of

them frequently criticize the government. Although some journalists have complained about the inaccessibility of government documents, the press is allowed to freely cover government activities. The government controls two weekly newspapers and one radio station and conducts a one-hour daily newscast on a local television channel. Citizens have access to South African media and satellite television broadcasts from around the world. Lesotho's government runs the only university and respects academic freedom.

Domestic violence occurs frequently in Lesotho, and is believed to be a widespread problem, although accurate statistics are not currently available. Local tradition allows women to return to their "maiden homes" if they are abused by their husbands. Common law stipulates that wife beating is a criminal offense, but few domestic violence cases are brought to trial. Lesotho custom and common law limit the rights of women in matters of property disputes and inheritance. Women have the right to sue for divorce, but as long as a woman is married, her legal rights are co-opted by those of her husband. She cannot enter into legally binding contracts without the consent of her husband. Traditionally, suitors are expected to pay a "bride price," reinforcing the idea that women are a form of property.

The government has not adequately addressed issues of child welfare, although it has allocated substantial sums to improving national primary and secondary schools. Education is not compulsory at any age, and 25 percent of Lesotho's children do not attend school of any kind. Child abuse is not common, but children are often forced to work at very young ages.

The Lesotho government's attitude toward human rights has been generally open and favorable. The government does not prevent or hinder the efforts of non-governmental human rights groups, which continue to operate freely and openly criticize the government.

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# Liberia



The Republic of Liberia is a country in western Africa, bordering the Atlantic Ocean, between Ivory Coast and Sierra Leone. Monrovia is the capital city. Liberia has a population of approximately 3 million. Ethnic groups include indigenous African tribes (about 95 percent) and Americo-Liberians (about 2.5 percent), who are descendants of freed slaves who came to Liberia from the United States and the Caribbean. About 70 percent of the population are animists; the rest are Christians or Muslims.

## BACKGROUND

Founded as an independent republic in 1847, Liberia's turbulent history has been characterized by a succession of military

coups and internal civil wars. Until 1980, the minority Americo-Liberians dominated the government through the True Whig Party. However, in 1980 Samuel Doe, a member of the indigenous Krahn ethnic group, seized power through a military coup. Doe was killed in 1990, at the onset of a civil war that ended in 1996 with the Abuja Peace Accords. In July 1997, presidential and legislative elections were held in an atmosphere of intimidation, although they were considered administratively open by international observers. Charles Taylor, leader of one of the warring faction, won the presidency, and his National Patriotic Party (NPP) obtained the majority of seats in the National Assembly.

Although the constitution provides for the separation of powers, traditionally the presidents have retained extraordinary power. The state remains highly centralized. The president is both the head of government and head of state. The bicameral National Assembly does not exercise genuine independence, and the judiciary is subject to the influence of the executive.

Liberia's economy has been mostly destroyed by the civil wars of 1989–1997. The newly elected government has inherited massive international debts. Despite its natural resources, such as iron ore, rubber, timber, diamonds, and gold, together with a climate favorable to agriculture, Liberia's productive capacity is depressed. The main problems are, among others, the lack of infrastructures, the corruption and exploitation at all levels of society, and the internal displacement of civilians. Unemployment rate is estimated at over 70 per-

Dead rebels being carried toward a mass grave near Monrovia, November 1990.

cent. Approximately 80 percent of the population lives below the poverty line.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

Liberia's human rights record continues to be very poor in many areas.

The security forces are reportedly responsible for human rights abuses, including extrajudicial killings, ritualistic killings, and use of excessive force. Clashes between governmental forces and ethnic Krahn fighters that opposed Taylor's faction during the civil war have resulted in hundreds of deaths and disappearances.

Security personnel routinely use torture and other degrading treatments during interrogations of suspected criminals. Civilians living in rural areas, refugees at the border, and displaced persons are commonly harassed and extorted of money or goods by the security forces. The govern-

ment occasionally investigates some of the alleged abuses committed by the security forces; however, those convicted are either exonerated or receive light sentences.

Prison conditions remain harsh, often life-threatening. Prisons are overcrowded and detainees are not provided with adequate food and medical care. Children are often incarcerated with adult inmates.

Arbitrary arrests and detention are serious problems as well. Citizens are not granted the right to due process. Corruption, lack of professionalism, and pressure from the executive characterize the judicial system. Lengthy pretrial detentions are common and result from inefficiency and lack of resources. Traditional courts still operate in several localities where the judiciary has not been reestablished. The authorities condone clan chieftains' habits of administering criminal justice with the use of "trial-by-ordeal" methods of determining guilt or innocence. One such method is the placement of a burning piece of metal on a suspect's body to determine whether the person is telling the truth.

The government infringes on citizens' right to privacy. Police and security forces routinely conduct searches without warrants and often loot homes. They are also responsible for harassment and threats against opposition figures and their families, human rights activists, and journalists.

The government restricts freedoms of speech and the press. Private newspapers and radio stations have been closed down. Journalists and editors practice self-censorship. International cable or satellite television broadcasts are not available. News programming is usually pro-government.

The government generally respects the rights of freedom of assembly and association. Workers can form trade unions and they have the right to strike. However, their activ-

ities remain limited, partly because of widespread illiteracy. Workers' health and safety standards are not enforced.

Although the constitution prohibits discrimination based on sex, race, language, religion, disability, or social status, the government does not enforce those provisions in practice. Women are subject to discrimination, especially in rural areas where traditional practices are stronger. They remain underrepresented in government and politics. Violence against women is quite common, although widely ignored by the authorities. The practice of female genital mutilation is on the rise again. The government has taken no action to stop this internationally condemned ritual.

Children are widely neglected in terms of education and care. Schools are in poor condition. The civil war left thousands of children orphaned, abandoned, and psychologically traumatized. Their welfare is left in the hands of humanitarian organizations, such as UNICEF. Although prohibited by law, child labor, including forced and bonded labor, is known to occur and is commonly ignored by the government.

The number of people with disabilities also increased as a result of the civil war. There are no laws mandating accessibility to public buildings or services for the disabled.

Although prohibited by law, discrimination based on religion exists, and the government supports it in public policies. Christians have better opportunities in employment and career advancement. Muslims allege discrimination in high-level government jobs. The constitution allows discrimination by stating that full citizenship is granted only to "Negroes or those of Negro descent." In this way, many people of Asian and Lebanese ancestry are denied full citizenship rights. As an ethnically diverse country, Liberia has always been a

land of ethnic conflicts. Societal ethnic discrimination continues to be common. Political tensions and episodes of violence persist between rival ethnic groups.

The government restricts freedom of movement within the country; the police and the security forces have set up several checkpoints where travelers often are subject to extortion or arbitrary searches.

The government complies with the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 protocol in addressing refugee or asylum seeker status. In particular, it currently cooperates with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other humanitarian organizations in assisting the more than 120,000 Sierra Leoneans living along the western border of the country.

Although the government generally permits domestic and international human rights organization to operate freely in the country, there have been reports of harassment and threats by members of the security forces against human rights activists and non-government organization workers. The government has taken no action to convict the perpetrators. A human rights commission was created in 1997, but it is still inactive due to restrictions and impediments set by the government.

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# Libya



Libya is a country in Northern Africa, bordering the Mediterranean Sea, between Egypt and Tunisia. Tripoli is the capital city. Libya's population of approximately 5 million is primarily a mixture of Arabs and Berbers. Other ethnic groups include Greeks, Maltese, Italians, Egyptians, Pakistanis, Turks, Indians, and Tunisians. Arabic is the official language; however, Italian and English are widely understood in the major cities. About 97 percent of the population are Muslims.

## BACKGROUND

Libya's official name is the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. In theory, it is a state of the masses, governed through local

councils. In reality, it is a military dictatorship that has been ruled by Colonel Muammar al-Qadhafi since September 1969.

A former Italian colony, Libya achieved independence in 1951 through United Nations (UN) negotiations. Libya was proclaimed a constitutional monarchy under King Idris I, who governed until he was overthrown by a military coup in September 1969. The Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) established the Libyan Arab Republic (LAR), and its leader, Colonel Qadhafi, emerged as the chief of state.

In its foreign policies, Libya has supported Arab and African revolutionary forces, the Palestinians' cause, and favored the elimination of external, particularly Western, influences in the Middle East and Africa. It also has tried to play an active role in various international organizations, including the UN.

The economy depends on oil revenues, which represent the principal source of foreign exchange. Widespread corruption, mismanagement, and massive investments in the military have caused high levels of inflation and increases in import prices, preventing economic expansion, much to the detriment of the general population. In addition, Libya has been subject to economic and diplomatic sanctions imposed by the UN Security Council following the bombings of Pan Am Flight 103 over Scotland in 1988 and UTA Flight 772 over Chad in 1989 (both of which have been blamed on Libyan-controlled terrorists). The Libyan government continues to violate the UN sanctions against air travel to and from the country and has engaged in an aggressive

campaign to gain international support for the elimination of all sanctions.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights violations continue to be extensively reported. Citizens do not have the right to change their government. The political system rejects the principles of democracy, and Qadhafi exercises absolute power with the support of a pervasive security apparatus and powerful revolutionary committees. The government also controls the judiciary.

Since the late 1980s, Qadhafi has pursued a radical policy of eliminating potential opponents of the regime, particularly Islamic fundamentalists, in the country and abroad. This policy has led to violent clashes between Islamist activists and security forces in Benghazi.

The government has adopted tight security measures. Security forces use arbitrary arrests, detention, intimidation, abduction, and extrajudicial killings to control opposition activists or suspected sympathizers. Political dissidents in exile are targeted as well. Family ties with political dissidents can result in government harassment and detention. Entire communities can be punished for providing aid or not informing the regime about criminals and opponents of the government who are in their midst.

Political and economic crimes are punishable by the death penalty. Special revolutionary courts conduct trials in cases involving political dissidents. These trials are often held in secret or in the absence of the accused. Capital cases are tried unfairly.

Torture and other cruel, degrading treatments are reportedly used by security personnel during interrogation or as punishment. Prison conditions are believed to

be very poor, although official information is unavailable and the government does not permit human rights monitors to visit its prisons. It is estimated that at least 1,000 political prisoners are detained and denied communication with anyone outside prison.

The government infringes on the citizens' right to privacy. Security forces routinely conduct searches without warrants. Purification Committees have the power to seize property from members of the middle and wealthy classes.

Freedoms of speech and the press are severely restricted. The government has a monopoly over all media. Any opinion critical of the regime is considered illegal. A few foreign publications are available, although they are subject to censorship. Academic freedom is limited as well.

Public gatherings must be authorized by the government. Associations or institutions not affiliated with the regime are prohibited, including independent trade unions and professional associations.

The government does not enforce constitutional provisions against discrimination toward women. Societal attitudes and practices still prevent women from attaining family or civil rights, although some progress toward equality has been achieved, especially in the area of education. Violence against women remains a problem, including domestic violence. Female genital mutilation is still practiced by nomadic tribes in remote areas.

Discrimination based on tribal status persists, especially against non-Arab minorities.

The government restricts freedom of religion. The Islamic Call Society is the organ of the state-approved religion and is the main tool for exporting the Libyan revolution

abroad. Other Islamic groups are banned. Some minority religions are tolerated, including Catholicism.

Movement within the country is restricted in those regions where anti-government attacks are more likely to occur. Citizens are required to have exit permits to leave the country. Women need their husband's authorization to travel abroad. The regime continues to encourage citizens, including students, who are abroad to return. They are routinely interrogated upon their return.

The government also uses threats of expulsion of foreign workers or residents as a tool against countries that oppose Libya's regime. On some occasions, the regime reportedly forced foreign workers into committing subversive actions against their own countries or coerced them into involuntary military service.

The government does not grant asylum, first asylum, or refugee status.

Qadhafi continues to deny the right of independent human rights organizations to form. International human rights groups are not permitted to visit Libya, and the government ignores their appeals on behalf of victims of human rights abuses.

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# Liechtenstein



The Principality of Liechtenstein is located in western central Europe and is bounded on the east by Austria and on the west by Switzerland. Vaduz is the capital. Liechtenstein's population of over 32,000 is composed primarily by Alemannics; other ethnic groups include Italians and Turks. The official language is German. Roman Catholicism (80 percent) and Protestantism (7.4 percent) represent the major religious denominations.

Since 1921, Liechtenstein has been a hereditary constitutional monarchy. The Parliament is elected every four years by universal suffrage. All new legislation must have the monarch's consent. In 1984, women received the right to vote in national elections. In 1990, Liechtenstein joined the United Nations.

Despite its small size and limited natural resources, Liechtenstein has achieved a

highly developed industrial economy with a vital financial sector and a low unemployment rate. The citizens' standard of living is high. Since 1923, the country has participated in a customs union with Switzerland and uses the Swiss franc as its currency. As a member of the European Economic Area (EEA) since 1995, the government's economic policies have attempted to align with those of the European Union.

The government generally respects the human rights of its citizens, and the judiciary deals effectively with rare instances of abuse.

In recent years, there have been no reports of violations at any level of individual and public life, except those regarding societal discrimination against women and the disabled and domestic abuse. Women have been denied equal treatment and opportunity in economic life, although the government has been enacting new laws to improve their situation. The constitution does not explicitly address discrimination against people with disabilities, and buildings and governmental services are often inaccessible to them.

The government generally cooperates with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, humanitarian organizations, and human rights groups.

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# Lithuania



Lithuania is a country in eastern Europe, bordering the Baltic Sea, between Latvia and Russia. Vilnius is the capital city. The population of approximately 3.5 million includes Lithuanians (80.6 percent), Poles (7 percent), Belarusians (1.6 percent), and others (2.1 percent). Lithuanian is the official language, although Polish and Russian are spoken as well. The population is primarily Roman Catholic.

Lithuania is a parliamentary democracy. The country regained its independence in 1991, after more than fifty years of Soviet rule. The 1992 constitution provides for a unicameral legislature, a president as the head of state, and a government led by a prime minister and his cabinet. The judiciary is independent.

Since independence, Lithuania has been progressing from a centrally planned econ-

omy to a free market, and about 50 percent of the state property is now privatized. Agriculture employs the largest number of workers. Inflation rates remain high.

The citizens enjoy a variety of human rights. However, problems remain in a few areas. The police continue to commit human rights abuses and reportedly beat or mistreat some prisoners held in custody. There were also reports of human rights violations committed by non-commissioned military personnel. The Interior Minister took disciplinary actions and charged the perpetrators when allegations of abuse were made against government officers. Corruption is widespread among police officers, and the government is making practical efforts to contain the problem by improving wages and training. Prison infrastructure is poor, with overcrowding a major problem. Pretrial detention is also a problem.

Although the constitution provides for a defendant's right to legal counsel, in practice the shortage of trained attorneys and the increasing number of criminal cases prevent the judicial system from ensuring due process for all defendants.

President Adamkus has promoted the establishment of an international commission to investigate crimes against humanity that were perpetrated in Lithuania from 1939 to 1991. However, the commission continues to lack the funding necessary to proceed with its plans.

Conservative attitudes keep women in a subordinate role in society. They remain underrepresented in the managerial sector, in government, and in politics. Violence against women, including domestic vio-

Funeral for a reporter killed by government troops, August 1991.

lence, is a serious problem. Women are particularly targeted by organized crime. A number of women, some underage, reportedly have been forced or tricked into prostitution and sent abroad for purposes.

Child abuse is a problem as well. The press commonly reports cases of sexual abuse, mistreatment, child pornography, child prostitution for tourists, and murders committed by parents under the influence of alcohol.

People with disabilities are entitled by law to a broad category of rights and public benefits. However, many of these services are not readily available to them, including accessibility to public buildings. Discrimination and violence against religious or ethnic minorities are rare. Workers' rights are generally respected. However, the authorities do not effectively enforce safety regulations.

Citizens are not restricted in their rights to free movement within the country and to foreign travel. The government cooperates with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in assisting refugee or asylum seekers. Illegal immigrants de-

part of their own accord or are repatriated with the financial assistance of international organizations.

Domestic and international human rights organizations operate freely. They are generally encouraged by the government to perform their investigations of alleged violations of human rights. However, the Ministry of the Interior has refused to release information on police brutality and other human rights abuses. On a positive note, the Department of International and Human Rights within the Ministry of Justice was established in 1994, and its function is to monitor human rights issues.

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# Luxembourg



The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg is situated in western Europe and is bounded on the north and the west by Belgium, on the east by Germany, and on the south by France. Its population of about 430,000 is composed primarily of people of French and German descent. Other major groups have Italian and Portuguese origins. The official languages are Luxembourgian, French, and German. Ninety-seven percent of the population is Roman Catholic, while the remainder are Protestant or Jewish.

Luxembourg achieved independence in 1839. Since 1868, it has been a constitutional monarchy. The Grand Duke is the chief of state and has ceremonial and administrative duties. The prime minister is the leader of the party or coalition holding

the majority of seats in the Chamber of Deputies. The Council of State serves as an advisory body to the Chamber of Deputies. The judiciary is independent. In 1948, Luxembourg, Belgium, and the Netherlands formed the BENELUX custom union. Since 1949, Luxembourg has been a member of NATO. It is also a member of the European Union (EU).

Luxembourg's economy is based on industrial and banking activities, which provide citizens with a high standard of living. Unemployment is 3 percent, the lowest in the EU. One-third of Luxembourg's labor force are foreign workers.

The constitution grants the Luxembourgers all basic human rights, and the government respects them in practice. As of 1998, there were no allegations of major human rights abuses. However, a few problems were reported.

Despite the fact that the constitution grants equal treatment, women were still receiving wages 9 to 25 percent lower than those of men for equal work. There was still great concern about the abuse of women and children. In 1997, 342 women and 363 children received assistance from women's shelters.

The law does not guarantee accessibility for the disabled. The great majority of buildings and public transportation are not accessible to people with disabilities.

In 1998, the police broke into the house of a journalist who published an article about a case of corruption in which the Interior Minister was involved. They tried to force him to reveal his sources of information. This incident brought attention to the

need for a reform of the Press Law, which has been in effect since 1869.

Luxembourg has always operated in cooperation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. In addition, the authorities have been very cooperative with human rights observers.

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# Macedonia



Macedonia is a Balkan country bordered by Yugoslavia, Albania, Greece, and Bulgaria. The population of approximately 2 million is divided between Macedonians (65 percent) and Albanians (22 percent), with smaller groups, primarily Roma and Bulgarians, making up the remainder of the population. The capital of Macedonia is Skopje. Macedonia is a republic led by an elected president.

Macedonia has long been dominated by foreigners. Turkey ruled the area until 1912, when it was conquered by Serbia. Macedonia then became a part of the new Kingdom of Yugoslavia. In 1991, with the collapse of Yugoslavia, Macedonia declared its independence.

The new state has suffered a number of political problems. To begin with, Greece objected to the use of the name *Macedonia*,

arguing that this name should solely apply to a region of northern Greece. This name controversy may have seemed trivial to outsiders, but Greeks took it very seriously and imposed an economic blockade on Macedonia during 1994 and 1995. Although relations have improved, Greek officials still insist on calling Macedonia the "Former Yugoslavia Republic of Macedonia."

Macedonia has also been adversely affected by the crises in next-door Yugoslavia and Albania. A significant percentage of Macedonia's population is ethnically Albanian, and many of those Albanians were sympathetic to the problems of their nearby ethnic cousins. The 1999 NATO bombing campaign in Kosovo, and the simultaneous ethnic purges carried out by the Yugoslavian army, also led to a large influx of ethnic Albanian refugees pouring across the Macedonian border.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

The Macedonian government is moderate effective at defending its citizens' human rights. Elections are free and open, and it is possible for citizens to successfully change their government. There remain, however, significant problems.

The police have been accused of beating and abusing suspects and prisoners. Roma, sometimes also called Gypsies, have commonly been targeted as victims of this kind of abuse. Roma rights organizations accuse police of harassing Roma and of always favoring ethnic Macedonians in confrontations involving Roma and ethnic Macedonians. The police have also been accused of harassing ethnic Albanian refugees from Kosovo. Prison

conditions are fairly harsh, but they meet minimum international standards.

Ethnic discrimination remains a problem. Social discrimination against Roma, ethnic Albanians, ethnic Turks, and ethnic Serbs remains commonplace. There have also been a number of cases of ethnic Albanian Kosovar refugees harassing Roma, and some of these incidents required police intervention. Despite their making up more than one-fifth of the population, ethnic Albanians are underrepresented in the police and army officer corps.

The constitution protects freedoms of speech and the press both in law and in practice. The country has many independent newspapers. Some newspapers receive government subsidies or are partially government owned, and this has led to the suspicion, probably true, that their reporting is more favorable to government interests. But even these papers provide coverage of the activities of opposition political parties.

The government respects academic freedom, but higher education is only provided in Macedonian. Some ethnic Albanians believe that this is a human rights violation because it makes it more difficult for ethnic Albanians to receive a college education.

The government allows religious freedom. Religious groups are required to register with the government, but few limitations are put on them in practice. The government also allows people to travel freely in and outside of Macedonia.

The 1999 war in Kosovo left Macedonia with a huge refugee problem. An estimated 250,000 to 300,000 or more ethnic Albanians fled the fighting in Kosovo and moved into Macedonia. Macedonia, a relatively poor country, was heavily burdened by the expense of this influx. The arrival of large numbers of ethnic Albanians also heightened tensions between Macedonia's own ethnic Albanian minority and the Macedonian majority. The Macedonian government was accused of

sometimes treating refugees with harshness, or of not providing sufficient facilities for refugees (it is believed that a small number of refugees died because of harsh conditions at border crossing areas). However, considering the scale of the crisis, the government's response met the requirements of human rights mandates. After the establishment of refugee camps, frictions continued between refugees and the Macedonian police. The end of fighting in Kosovo ended Macedonia's refugee problems. Most refugees had returned to Kosovo by the end of 1999.

Family violence against women is common. Wives rarely go to the police with complaints about violence. There is only limited legal recourse for women whose husbands rape them. Most Macedonians do not seem to view violence against women as a serious problem, although women's groups are active in trying to raise public awareness. Women do not have equal access to business or political employment. Women are paid less than men for the same work.

The government is committed to the welfare of children. Children are supposed to receive an education through at least age twelve. Discrimination against the disabled is illegal. The government, however, does not require all buildings to provide access to the disabled.

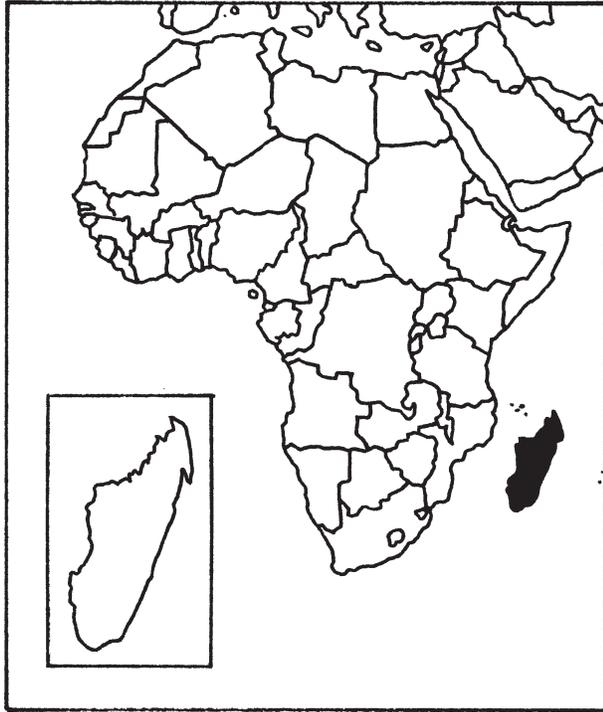
The Macedonian government allows local and international human rights organizations to operate freely in the country, and it is generally responsive to their complaints.

*Carl Skutsch*

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# Madagascar



The Republic of Madagascar is an island in the Indian Ocean. It is located off southern Africa, east of Mozambique. Antananarivo is the capital city. Madagascar's population of approximately 14.8 million is predominantly of mixed Asian and African origins. There are also small groups of French, Comorans, Indians, Chinese, and Creoles. French and Malagasy are the two official languages. About 52 percent of the population hold indigenous beliefs, while 41 percent are Christians (Roman Catholic and Protestant) and 7 percent are Muslims.

## BACKGROUND

French control over Madagascar was established in 1896. Madagascar achieved full independence from France on June 26, 1960. A period of political unrest and tur-

moil followed, concluding with the creation of a socialist-oriented constitution with a highly centralized government. Only limited political opposition was tolerated, and no direct criticism of the president was allowed in the press.

After 1990, an easing of political and economic restrictions led to a multiparty government and a free press in Madagascar. In August 1992, Malagasy voters approved a democratic constitution. Under the new constitution, the president is elected by direct universal suffrage for a five-year term and is responsible for defense and foreign policy. The National Assembly consists of 138 representatives elected by direct vote every four years. The prime minister executes legislation. The legal system is based on French civil law and traditional Malagasy law.

Madagascar actively participates in many international organizations, such as the UN, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. It is also a member of the Organization of African Unity.

Agriculture, including fishing and forestry, are the mainstays of the economy, accounting for 34 percent of the national gross domestic product and determining more than 70 percent of export earnings. Historically, Madagascar's main export crops have been coffee, vanilla, rice, and cloves, but they have dropped in value since the late 1980s. Despite the considerable growth potential in the tourism, clothing, manufacturing, fishing, commercial agriculture, and mining sectors, the government has not shown any commitment to economic reform and still depends heavily on international financial aid.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

The respect for human rights in Madagascar is poor. The new constitution provides for an autonomous judiciary; however, a lack of internal control and low salaries encourage corruption. A large backlog of cases remains. Trials are public and defendants have the right to an attorney.

Although the constitution provides for freedom of speech and freedom of the press, the government restricts these rights and journalists practice self-censorship. Authorities use torture to gain confessions and arbitrarily arrest and detain persons for up to four years. There is freedom of movement within the country, but fear of crime restricts travel to certain places.

Women experience physical abuse in prison, and prisoners are used as forced labor. Lengthy pretrial detention is a problem. The security forces' failure to provide adequate food and medical treatment in prison continues to cause a number of deaths. Children are often imprisoned with adults.

Women are discriminated against, both in government and politics. However, violence against women is not widespread. While in urban areas there is little discrimination against professional women, in rural areas it is an issue. Some non-governmental organizations (NGOs) deal with this problem and ensure that rights and legal protection for women are fully understood.

The government provides education for children up to the secondary level, but in practice the percentage of children attending primary school in urban areas is about 65 percent. In rural areas where children usually drop out to work on farms or as domestic laborers, the attendance rate is only 29 percent.

Eighteen distinct ethnic groups make up the Malagasy people, and often caste and

origin are factors in hiring practices. Indo-Pakistanis have been widely targeted for discrimination. In past years, their shops have been looted during civil disturbances.

People with disabilities do not benefit from constitutional provisions mandating accessibility to public buildings.

There are various trade union federations and the government usually respects workers' rights. The International Labor Organization has identified some cases in which the government failed to apply labor law and regulations. The Labor Code forbids forced labor, but in practice there are cases of prisoners and detainees being used as personal servants or manual laborers.

Madagascar does not have a law protecting refugees' status. However, the government works closely with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to provide asylum to the small number of refugees coming to the country.

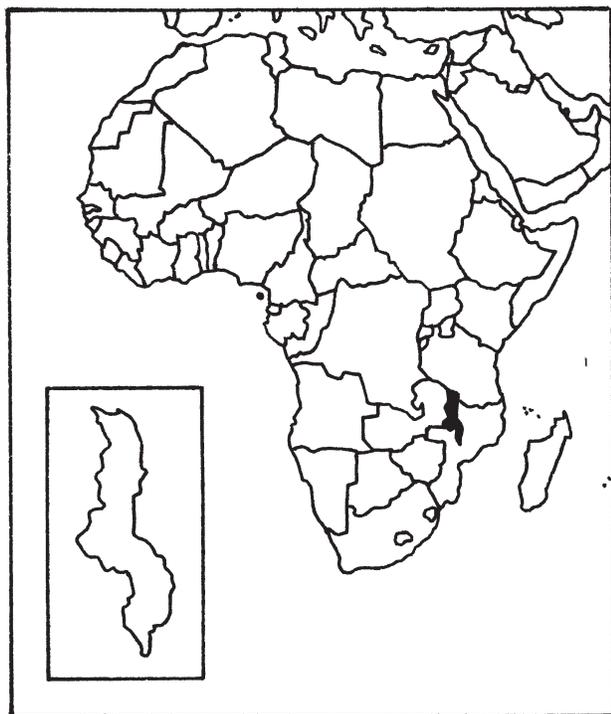
Various human rights organizations are active and are not restricted by the government. Authorities are cooperative with international human rights groups and with domestic and international election observers. The constitution provides for an independent office to monitor human rights. This office publishes annual reports on its activities and campaigns.

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# Malawi



The Republic of Malawi is located in southern Africa. It is bordered on the north by Tanzania, on the southeast by Mozambique, and on the west by Zambia. The capital city is Lilongwe. The population is estimated to be around 10 million, and is made up of a variety of ethnic groups, including Chewa, Nyanja, Tumbuko, Yao, Lomwe, Sena, Tonga, Ngoni, Ngonde, as well as some Asians and Europeans. Although English and Chichewa are the official languages, other languages are spoken regionally. About half (55 percent) of the population is Protestant, while the rest is Roman Catholic (20 percent), Muslim (20 percent), or practices traditional religious beliefs.

## BACKGROUND

Malawi became independent from the United Kingdom on July 6, 1964, but it did not hold its first democratic multiparty elections until 1994, following thirty years of one-party rule. A new constitution was signed in 1995, in which the president is both the head of state and head of government. However, constitutional power is shared between the president and the 193-member National Assembly. The legal system is based on English common law and Malawi customary law. The judiciary is independent, but it is inefficient and lacks financial resources.

Malawi participates in many international organizations, including the United Nations and UNESCO.

Malawi is a very poor country. Annual per capita gross domestic product is estimated at \$940. The economy is primarily agricultural, with 90 percent of the population living in rural areas. It is characterized by a small and concentrated industrial sector. Tobacco, tea, and sugar generate export revenues. The economy depends heavily on international financial assistance from the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and individual donor nations. There is little industry, and transport costs for goods are very high. Wealth remains in the hands of a small elite.

The government is currently trying to invest more resources in education and health facilities, as well as to deal with environmental and deforestation problems.

Poor villagers working in governmental food-for-work program. Men sign up for these programs, but women do most of the work.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

The government usually respects the human rights of its citizens, but serious problems remain in some areas. The constitution protects its citizens from torture and inhumane treatment, but prison conditions remain very harsh and the use of police violence to force confessions is common.

The judiciary is independent and the government respects this in practice. However, due to the shortage of personnel, lack of funds, and a heavy backlog, the judicial system is seriously handicapped. Juvenile detainees have special rights under the constitution, but often they are imprisoned with adults.

The government generally respects freedom of speech and freedom of the press, even though periodically media representatives receive verbal and sometimes physical threats from government officials. Malawi has two state-owned pro-government radio stations and four private ones, but political parties and opposition groups are largely denied access to the broadcast media. The freedoms of assembly and association are recognized by the constitution. However, the police still sometimes prevent groups from holding open meetings.

Women are often discriminated against, even though they are protected constitutionally. Spousal abuse is common, and women from rural areas rarely complete their pri-

mary school education. Recently, however, Malawian society has begun to take women's issues seriously. Still, women face high maternal mortality rates, and HIV infection is a major problem.

The government provides free primary education for all children and invests a great amount of money in children's health and welfare. Despite this, infant mortality and poverty are high. Workers have a legal right to form and join trade unions, but because of a lack of awareness of worker's rights, there are few union members. Unions technically have the right to strike, but only after all dispute-settlement procedures established in a collective agreement and conciliation procedures have failed.

Malawi's government generally cooperates with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. It has hosted more than 1,400 refugees, most of whom come from Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the Great Lake region. The gov-

ernment offers refugee status but not resettlement.

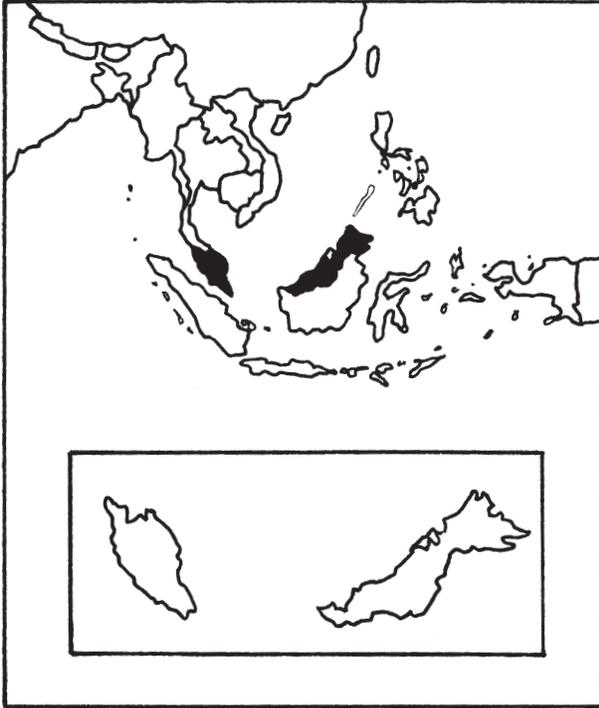
A number of local and international human rights organizations operate without government restrictions, and officials are usually cooperative. However, in 1998, Amnesty International expressed concern to the president about legislation limiting the Malawian ombudsman's activities.

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# Malaysia



Malaysia is a country in Southeast Asia. The western part of the country is located on a peninsula south of Thailand. The other portion is located on the northern part of the island of Borneo in the South China Sea. The population of approximately 22 million includes Malays (47 percent), Chinese (26 percent), indigenous peoples (11 percent), Indians (7 percent), and others (9 percent). The official language is Bahasa Melayu, but English and Chinese dialects are also spoken, along with Tamil, Telugu, Malalam, Panjabi, Thai, Iban, and Kadazan. Sunni Islam is the dominant faith, but Buddhism, Taoism, Hinduism, Christianity, Sikhism, and Shamanism are also practiced.

## BACKGROUND

In the sixteenth century, Malacca was a very important regional port, attracting Chinese, Arab, Malay, and Indian merchants. In 1511, the Portuguese conquered the territory, beginning the European expansion in Southeast Asia. The Dutch followed, and finally, in 1826, the British settled in Malacca, Penang, and Singapore, forming the Colony of the Straits Settlements. The British control over the territory lasted until the Japanese invasion during World War II.

In 1948, the Federation of Malaysia was established, and in 1957, it started to negotiate its independence from British control under the leadership of Tunku Abdul Rahman, the first prime minister. The British colonies of Singapore, Sarawak, and Sabah joined the Federation to form Malaysia on September 16, 1963. Singapore withdrew and became independent on August 9, 1965. After World War II, Malaysia experienced a state of emergency due to the insurgency provoked by local Chinese communists.

Malaysia is a constitutional monarchy, power is shared by the paramount ruler (the king), who is elected for a five-year term from among the nine sultans of the peninsular Malaysian states, and a bicameral Parliament. The king is also the head of the Islamic faith in Malaysia. The prime minister holds the executive power. According to the constitution, the prime minister must be a member of the lower house of the Parliament. The bicameral Parliament is composed of the Senate (sixty-nine members elected for six-year terms) and the House

of Representatives (192 members elected for five-year terms). Federal and state legislatures share the legislative power. The Malaysian legal system is based on English common law.

Malaysia is a founding member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and maintains close relationships with the United States, the European Union, and Japan. Malaysia is an active member of the Commonwealth, the United Nations (UN), many of the UN's specialized agencies, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Organization of Islamic Conference, and the Non-aligned Movement.

After a decade of economic growth (8.7 percent per year), Malaysia went through a period of economic crisis in 1997–1998. It is now recovering slowly. The per capita gross domestic product is approximately \$10,300. Malaysia continues to seek funding from domestic and international sources to fight its budget deficit. Malaysia maintains important commercial relations with the United States. Two commodities dominate its economy: rubber and tin.

Malaysia has a parliamentary system that requires periodic multiparty elections. Opposition parties actively contest elections but face official obstacles during election campaigns. According to the constitution, the judiciary is independent, but its impartiality continues to be questioned.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights in Malaysia are weakly protected. The police regularly commit serious human rights abuses and extrajudicial killings. Some human rights activists have accused the police of abusive behavior, but the government has dismissed these statements as grossly unfair. Members of the police routinely torture detainees during

interrogation and imprisonment. Furthermore, police often break up many peaceful demonstrations in support of political reform, making hundreds of arrests in the process.

Prison conditions are poor and overcrowding is a serious problem. Prison guards have been accused and convicted of various crimes. Inadequate food and health conditions have caused the deaths of many imprisoned illegal aliens.

The judiciary is ineffective due to crowded, understaffed courts. Consequently, pre-trial detentions are usually very long. In addition, the government continues to use long-term detention in cases involving national security, as well as in narcotics trafficking and other cases. Some trials are not fairly conducted.

Immigration laws are used to imprison illegal aliens without trial or hearing. They are released only after their employer has verified their legal status.

There are laws against arbitrary interference with privacy, family, home, or correspondence. However, the police are still allowed to conduct home and office searches, to monitor conversations, and to take people into custody without a warrant.

Although the constitution provides for freedom of speech and freedom of the press, there are increasing limitations on these rights. Mass media are usually uncritical of the government and give limited coverage to political opponents and rivals. Newspapers tend to reflect government positions on domestic and international issues. The government often expresses its dissatisfaction with press coverage directly to the newspaper's board of directors. In addition, leading political figures own most newspapers and TV and radio stations. The foreign press is also harshly criticized for biased reporting—in the eyes of the Malaysian gov-

ernment, any reporting critical of the government is considered biased reporting. The government censors films and books containing sex, nudity, or certain political or religious content, particularly content that is insulting to Islam.

The government generally respects academic freedom, even though career advancement requires the government's approval. The government prohibits students from engaging in some political activities.

There are many restrictions of the right to peaceably assemble. The police rarely grant permits to government critics but easily issue permits to supporters of the government and the ruling coalition. Also the right to freely associate is limited.

Freedom of religion is protected in the constitution, but it is not respected in practice. The official religion is Sunni Islam, and adherence to it is considered intrinsic to Malay ethnic identity. Islamic religious law influences state law.

In principle, citizens are free to travel and move freely within the country, but the government restricts this right by sometimes asking citizens to present passports or identity cards.

Malaysia has not ratified the 1957 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and often does not allow United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other humanitarian organizations to communicate with detained aliens. The government has not allowed Amnesty International to set up an office in Malaysia.

Cultural traditions lead to social discrimination against women. Women are underrepresented in government and politics. Reports of rape and domestic violence are common in the press, but a lack of sympathy from the police leads many victims to not report abuses. Malaysia is also a place where trafficking in women for sexual exploitation is common. The government tries to assist women who are victimized in this way, but there is no consistent reaction to these crimes on the part of the police. Many police do little or nothing to stop prostitution in Malaysia. Women are often victims of legal discrimination, and child abuse and prostitution are also serious problems.

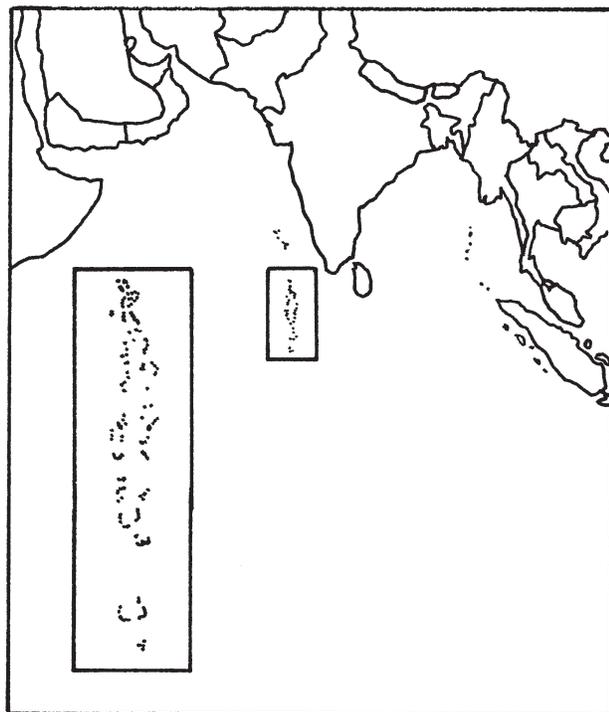
Although workers' rights are usually respected, there are some restrictions, including the right to strike. Moreover, child labor is common in certain parts of the country.

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# Maldives



The Republic of Maldives is a group of about 1,200 islands situated in the northern Indian Ocean, about 400 miles southwest of Sri Lanka. Malé is the capital city. The Maldives' population of approximately 300,000 includes Dravidians, Sinhalese, and Arabs. The official language is Dhivehi; however, English is widely spoken as well. Islam is the state religion, with the majority of the population being Sunni Muslim.

The Maldives was a sultanate and a British protectorate until July 26, 1965. The sultanate ended on November 11, 1968 when the Republic of Maldives was proclaimed. On November 8, 1988, Sri Lankan Tamil mercenaries attempted a coup aimed at overthrowing the government. President Gayoom requested the Indian army's in-

tervention, which succeeded in suppressing the coup in twenty-five hours.

The president and the cabinet hold executive power; the president appoints the cabinet and one-sixth of the Parliament. The unicameral Parliament (the Majlis) is vested with legislative power. The judicial branch is represented by the High Court. There are no formal political parties in the Maldives.

Tourism is the dominant economical activity in the Republic of Maldives. The taxes collected on the tourism industry are used to develop manufacturing and agriculture. Fishing and agriculture employ about 25 percent of the total labor force. Industry, which accounts for about 6 percent of the labor force, is mainly focused on boatbuilding, handicrafts, and garment production.

Although the constitution provides for all basic human rights, the government has committed violations in several areas.

Maldivians' ability to change their government is limited by the law. In fact, the law provides for only one presidential candidate to be chosen by the Majlis. In addition, the president and the elected members of the Majlis must be Muslim.

Flogging is still allowed by the Islamic law, and it continues to occur. The law expressly forbids arbitrary arrest and detention. However, the police have arbitrarily arrested, detained, and expelled foreigners for evangelizing Christianity. In addition, the authorities detained some citizens suspected of having converted to Christianity. The law does not provide for legal counseling during police interrogation. The law grants no bail.

The constitution does not provide for an independent judiciary. The courts are subject to the executive's pressure. The president has the power to appoint and dismiss judges at his discretion. The judiciary interpretation of the law must conform to Islamic law.

The law expressly forbids the media from making statements that are against the Islamic tradition. The activity of journalists is monitored by the Press Council, which is made up of state officials, lawyers, and government and private media representatives. The government still controls the only television station and radio stations. However, there is no interference with foreign broadcasts by satellite, which are shown uncensored. In addition, cable television and the Internet are also available. Newspapers and magazines operate freely and are allowed to criticize governmental policies.

Islam is designated as the official religion of the Maldives, and all citizens are required to be Muslim. The law expressly forbids any other religion, but foreign residents are allowed to practice their own religions privately.

The government generally does not restrict movement within the country. However, foreign workers are not allowed to mix with the general population and are confined to their work places.

There is extensive discrimination against women. A woman cannot become president, but women can hold governmental

posts. However, very few women pursue political careers. In recent years, the government has launched a campaign to promote women's rights in the islands. Traditionally, Islamic law and education have discriminated against women. Nevertheless, the number of women participating in public life is growing as a result of government encouragement. Most women go no further than the seventh grade in their education.

There are no special provisions addressing children's welfare. There are no specific laws for the disabled; however, the government has established a program that provides services to the disabled.

Workers' unions in the Republic of Maldives are non-existent, although the law does not prohibit unions from forming.

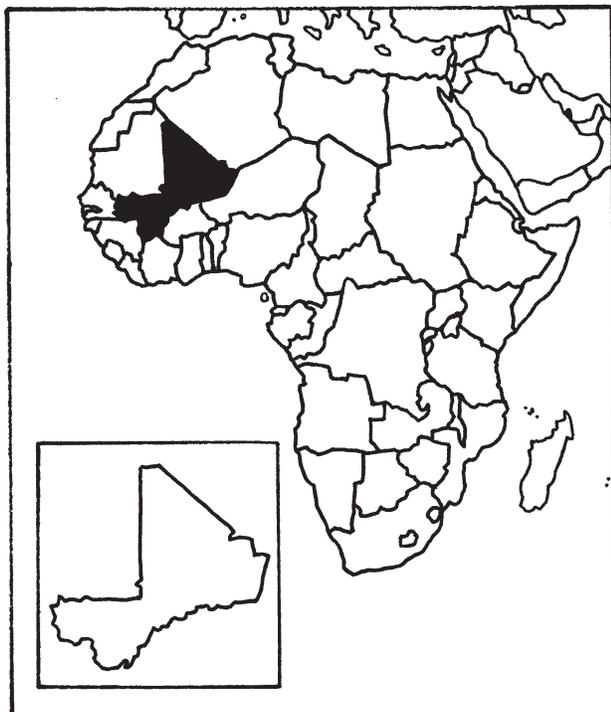
There are no local human rights associations in the Maldives. However, the government has permitted visits by international human rights organizations.

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# Mali



The Republic of Mali is located in northwestern Africa, bounded on the northeast by Algeria, the east by Niger, the southeast by Burkina-Faso, the south by Ivory Coast, the southwest by Senegal and Guinea, and the west and north by Mauritania. Bamako is the capital city. The population of approximately 10 million includes Mandes (about 50 percent), Peul (about 17 percent), Voltaics (about 12 percent), and Tuaregs and Moors (about 5 percent). Although French is the official language, a local language, Bambara, is widely spoken as well. About 90 percent of the population is Muslim, while the remainder is Christian or practices traditional beliefs.

## BACKGROUND

A French colony, Mali achieved independence on September 22, 1960, becoming a socialist republic led by a single political party. The next decades were characterized by coups and military control of the government. On March 26, 1991, a group of officers succeeded in transferring the government to civilians. On January 12, 1992, a new constitution was put in effect after it was approved by a national referendum. Between January and April 1992, free multiparty elections were held. On June 8, 1992, the first president of the republic, Alpha Oumar Konare, was elected.

Mali is now a democratic republic. The executive branch consists of the prime minister, who is appointed by the president of the republic, and the Council of Ministers. The National Assembly makes up the legislative power. Parliamentary and presidential elections are held every five years. The Supreme Court makes up the judiciary.

Mali is a poor country with a market-based economy. The majority of the workforce is employed in the agricultural sector, especially in farming and animal husbandry. Mali's main export commodities are cotton, livestock, and gold. The industrial sector is very small and is based on the manufacture of textiles, beverages, and processed food products. Per capita gross domestic product is approximately \$251, resulting in an exceedingly low standard of living.

Young Malian boy applying mortar to building under construction.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

The constitution provides for all basic human rights, and the government generally respects those rights in practice. However, a few violations of human rights are still reported annually.

A recent report released by Amnesty International cites allegations of abuses committed by members of the security forces, who tortured detainees in order to obtain confessions. In addition, prison conditions are still reported to be very poor. There have been reports of juveniles sharing the same cells with adults. The Malian Association of Human Rights, the Malian Association of Women Jurists, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and other non-governmental organizations continue to visit prisoners and are working to improve detention facilities.

The law provides for a period of forty-eight hours in which a suspect has to be charged with a crime. However, there are many reports of suspects being detained for several years. Pretrial detention is a problem. In addition, it is difficult to obtain bail. The constitution provides for the independence of the judiciary, but in practice the courts are subject to executive influence. The Ministry of Justice has the power to nominate and dismiss judges.

Freedoms of peaceful assembly and association are granted by the constitution, although it is necessary to obtain government permission for public meetings. Occasionally the authorities deny permission to opposition parties to hold public rallies.

The government cooperates with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other humanitarian organi-

zations. The law provides first asylum for refugees.

Although the constitution prohibits discrimination based on sex, race, and religion, men continue to play a dominant role in Mali's society. Spousal abuse is quite common but is often unreported for cultural and social reasons. In addition, women's access to jobs, government, and education is still limited. Female genital mutilation is still practiced. Recent statistics show that 93.7 percent of women were victims of this practice. Women represent 15 percent of the workforce, mostly in rural areas, and often labor under extremely harsh conditions. There are several local groups operating to improve women's lives. The same groups are committed to children's rights.

The condition of children is still poor. Approximately 50 percent of children do not complete their primary education because of a shortage of personnel and infrastructure, especially in rural areas.

The law does not protect people with disabilities. Although there is no formal discrimination against the disabled, the high rate of unemployment makes it almost impossible for them to find jobs.

Independent human rights organizations, including the Malian Association for Human Rights, a smaller Malian League of Human Rights, and a local chapter of Amnesty International operate freely and without interference throughout the country.

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# Malta



The Republic of Malta is situated in the Mediterranean Sea, south of Sicily, east of Tunisia, and north of Libya. Valletta is the capital city. Malta's population is approximately 380,000. Maltese and English are the official languages. The major religious denomination is Roman Catholic (98 percent).

Malta became part of the British Empire in 1814. Malta was an important fortress and naval base for the British, especially during World War II. On September 21, 1964, the island became an independent republic. The constitution was issued in 1964 and revised in 1974.

Malta is a constitutional republic. The president of the republic is the head of state. He appoints the prime minister, who

is the head of government. The unicameral Parliament represents the legislative power. Presidential and parliamentary elections are held every five years. The judiciary is independent.

The economy of the Republic of Malta is a mixture of private and government enterprises. Tourism and light manufacturing are the most prominent sectors of the economy. Malta is in the ranks of the less-affluent European countries.

The constitution provides for all basic human rights, and the government respects those provisions in practice. Freedoms of speech and the press are widely respected in Malta. Several independent newspapers express different political views.

The government cooperates with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The government grants first asylum and asylum status for political reasons. However, neither permanent status, nor asylum are granted to those who file for asylum for economic reasons.

Women are still underrepresented in Malta's political life. Violence against women, especially domestic violence, remains a problem. A special police unit and several volunteer organizations support battered women. The government also provides for shelters and a national fund for women in distress. The government is committed to children's rights and welfare. It provides free and compulsory universal education and health care for children through the age of sixteen.

The law protects the rights of the disabled, and the government is attempting to

enforce those rights and to enhance the status of the disabled.

The government cooperates with all the local and international human rights organizations.

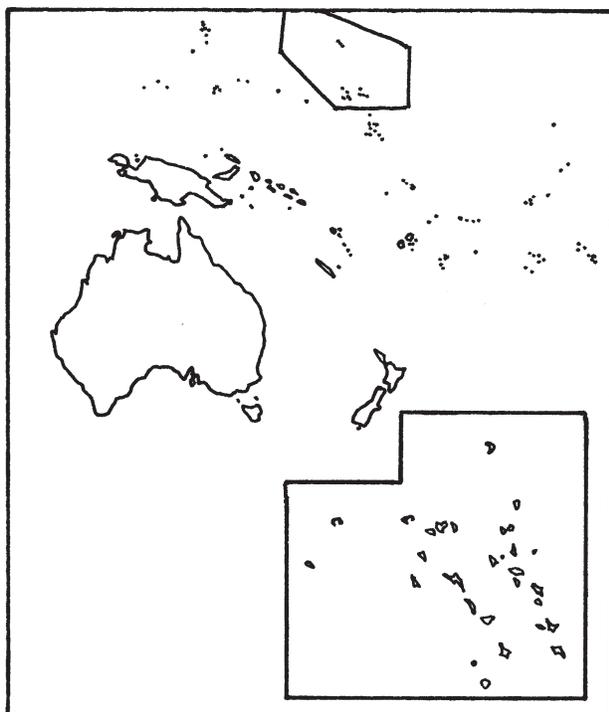
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# Marshall Islands



The Republic of the Marshall Islands is a group of about 1,100 islands scattered in the western Pacific. Majuro is the capital city. The population of approximately 65,000 is composed almost entirely of Marshallese (about 90 percent). Americans, Filipinos, Chinese, New Zealanders, and Koreans make up the remaining 10 percent. The official language is English, but two local dialects are widely spoken. The major religious denomination is Protestant.

Under U.S. administration since 1947, the Republic of the Marshall Islands became independent on May 1, 1979, and on the same day the constitution was put

into effect. The republic is a parliamentary democracy. The president and the cabinet represent the executive power. The unicameral Nitijela and the advisory Council of Iroij (traditional leaders) hold the legislative power. The Supreme Court represents the judiciary. There are no formal political parties. Presidential and parliamentary elections are held every four years.

The United States provides \$65 million in foreign aid every year, about 70 percent of the gross domestic product. Banking, insurance, restaurants, and tourism are the major activities in the urban areas, while in the smaller islands production of copra (used in making coconut oil) and handicrafts, agriculture, and fishing are prevalent.

The constitution grants all fundamental human rights, and the government respects these provisions in practice. However, human rights abuses are still reported in a few areas.

Arbitrary arrest and detention by the police occur. Although the constitution mandates for an independent judiciary, in practice the government tries to influence the courts in many ways.

The government occasionally attempts to influence the media, and journalists practice self-censorship in reports on political and cultural issues.

There are no regulations concerning refugees, asylum, and asylum status.

Spousal abuse is widespread. The authorities provide counseling for spousal and

child abuse; however, the majority of cases go unreported. The government supports children's welfare, providing health care and free education, but an estimated 20 percent of children do not attend school regularly.

The government allows the formation of local human rights organizations and visits by international organizations. However, no local organizations have been formed and no international organizations have ex-

pressed interest in visiting the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

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# Mauritania



The Islamic Republic of Mauritania is located in northwestern Africa and shares borders with Senegal to the south, Mali to the east, Algeria to the north, and the Atlantic Ocean and Western Sahara to the west. Its capital is Nouakchott, on the Atlantic coast.

Its population of approximately 2.5 million people is almost exclusively Muslim. Within this population are three distinct groups: the *beydane*, a ruling class of Arab-Berber ancestry; *haratines*, black escaped slaves or descendants of escaped slaves who have retained their former masters' Arab identity; black slaves; and never-enslaved Africans. The never-enslaved group consists of several distinct tribes, including the Hal Pulaar, which is the largest of these groups, as well as the Soninke, Wolof, and Bambara. Though the *beydane*-run government

claims that Arab-Berbers constitute 70 percent of the population, many blacks contend that, including *haratines*, black groups represent two-thirds of the population. Because of the government's refusal to release the results of a 1988 census, these statistics remain a matter of debate.

## BACKGROUND

In 1960, Mauritania achieved independence from France, its colonial ruler since 1920. The government today consists of the president, the executive branch, the legislative branch (the Senate and the National Assembly), and the judicial branch (the Supreme Court). Political parties were legalized by the constitution, which was passed on July 12, 1991, and suffrage is universal at the age of eighteen. The legal system is based on *shari'ah*, or Islamic religious law, and the national holiday is Independence Day on November 28.

Mauritania forms a geographical bridge between Arab North Africa and black sub-Saharan Africa; the north is mainly Arab and nomadic, while the south is primarily settled and black. This ethnic distribution is largely the result of the Arab-Berber (*beydane*) conquest in the fourteenth century.

During their conquests, the *beydane* Arab-Berbers captured many blacks and used them as slaves. Prior to the fourteenth century, only blacks inhabited the land area that is now Mauritania. As they invaded from the north, the Arab-Berbers pushed the local blacks further south, capturing tens of thousands as slaves along the way. This began a long tradition of

A young boy with his camel. Much of the Mauritanian population is nomadic.

black enslavement by the *beydane*, a tradition that continued into modern times and persists even today.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

The most critical human rights problem in Mauritania is the continued existence of a form of slavery.

Although the present-day form of black chattel slavery in Mauritania is more camouflaged than in the past, it has remained similar in both form and function. The U.S. State Department estimated in 1980 that more than 90,000 blacks were the property of *beydanes*, while 300,000 blacks, because of either psychological or economic dependence, continued to serve their Arab masters. Today, slavery is much less prevalent, but still occurs in some parts of Mauritania.

Slavery in Mauritania currently functions in two ways. First, there are the outright slaves, whose numbers are unknown but are believed to number at least in the thousands, who live as the property of their Arab-Berber masters. Second, there are “slaves in practice.” These are black Africans who work for Arab-Berber masters for free, either because they know no other life or else because they fear for their economic well-being if left on their own. These dependent black Africans are not technically slaves, but psychological coercion, government apathy, and lack of economic opportunity all conspire to create a class of people who are afraid to leave their “masters.”

Mauritanian chattel slavery is deeply ingrained in the culture. With a history that stretches back 700 years, slavery there was found in virtually every *beydane* family and at every economic level. Because it was considered shameful to perform any sort of physical labor, many Arabs actually gave slaves as charity, so it was common for even beggars to own slaves. Slavery thus became an integral part of Mauritanian culture.

Slavery and the brutal practices that accompany it persist, despite its abolition by the colonial French government (which was then the administrative power in Mauritania) in 1905 and by the Mauritanian government in 1961 and 1980. Unfortunately, these legal measures have not been enforced with practical educative or economic measures to inform slaves, and the larger group of pseudoslaves, of their legal status or to help them support themselves financially. Additionally, the legal system is not always supportive of anti-slavery laws.

The *beydanes* have also dominated and oppressed Mauritania’s free black population, which includes the *haratines* and black ethnic groups of Hal Pulaar, Soninke, Wolof, and Bambara. Following Maurita-

nia's declaration of independence from France, the *beydanes* were left holding the reins of government and quickly began to Arabize the country—this despite the fact that most educated Mauritians were both black and French-speaking. Because the *beydanes* saw French language and culture as an affront to Islam's cultural and religious heritage, they discouraged the teaching of French in schools in favor of Arabic. This was done through a variety of measures, including mandating in 1966 that students learn Arabic in school, as well as removing French teachers to non-teaching bureaucratic posts in the Ministry of Education or transferring them to distant, mainly Arab-speaking, regions.

The Mauritanian government also began to distance the country from French influence by asking Arab countries, such as Iraq, Egypt, and Kuwait, to provide financial support. Mauritania was one of the first of the French-speaking African countries to review the cooperation agreements signed with France at independence. Additionally, it joined the Arab League in 1973 and began sending students, generally *beydanes*, for education and training in Arab countries.

Arabization has been accompanied by a concerted government campaign against Mauritania's black citizens. Forcible expulsions and land expropriations from black Africans were practiced by the Mauritanian government, reaching their height in the early 1990s. This campaign against blacks arose out of a 1989 conflict between Mauritania and Senegal that brought the two nations to the brink of war. The tension between the two countries resulted in an explosion of ethnic violence, with tens of thousands of black Mauritians being expelled to Senegal. Part of the reason for the expulsions was the equating, in *beydane* eyes, of black Mauritians with the

black Senegalese involved in the dispute. Because of their viewpoint, the *beydane* saw retaliation against its own black ethnic populations as equivalent to retaliation against black Senegalese. The *beydanes* also often seized the property of the black Mauritians they expelled, much of which was valuable fertile land in the Senegal River Valley. Tensions between the *beydane* and black ethnic groups were heightened after an alleged coup attempt by black army officers in October 1987. In 1990–1991, the government arrested 3,000 of its black citizens in connection with the coup, torturing to death or executing over 500 political prisoners.

Black activist groups have spoken out about the ongoing human rights violations in Mauritania. The government has conducted waves of mass arrests in an effort to silence these activists, particularly during the second half of the 1980s and the early 1990s. It has also outlawed El Hor (the Free), a major pressure group formed by *heratines* in the 1970s to advance the interests of blacks in Mauritania.

The international response to Mauritanian human rights violations has been minimal. Mauritania's obscurity on the international scene has significantly limited the amount of international publicity given to human rights violations there. The 1989 conflict between Mauritania and Senegal drew international attention in the form of mediation efforts by the Organization of African Unity and the European Union. The 1991 arrests and executions of thousands of blacks also attracted some international attention. The United States ended all bilateral aid to Mauritania in 1991, while the Bush administration issued a strong public condemnation of violations there. U.S. aid was, however, reinstated in the post-Gulf War period following Mauritania's involvement in the Middle East peace

process and its reversal of its previous support of Saddam Hussein. This reinstatement of aid was followed by a U.S. State Department representative's assertion that in 1996, slavery in Mauritania was only minimal. In addition, France, which wields more influence in Mauritania than any other Western country, the European Union, and the World Bank—all major donors—have all been reluctant to condemn human rights violations in Mauritania.

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# Mauritius



The Republic of Mauritius is situated in the Indian Ocean, east of Madagascar. Port Luis is the capital city. Indo-Mauritians (68 percent), Creoles (27 percent), Sino-Mauritians (3 percent), and Franco-Mauritians (2 percent) comprise the population of approximately 1 million. The official language is English, but French and Creole are widely spoken as well. The major religions are Hinduism, Roman Catholic, and Islam.

A British colony, Mauritius gained its independence on March 12, 1968. The Republic of Mauritius is a constitutional democracy. The president and the Council of Ministers represent the executive power. The president, as the head of state, appoints the prime minister, and the Nation-

al Assembly, is the legislative body. The judiciary is independent.

The economy of Mauritius is mainly based on tourism, sugar plantations, and textiles. This economy allows a quite high standard of living to the residents of the republic. The government has recently promoted development in the areas of information technology and financial services.

The constitution grants all the basic human rights, and the government respects most of these provisions in practice. However, the security forces continue to commit some human right abuses. Police officers are allegedly responsible for the excessive use of force during interrogations. In addition, they occasionally deny access to legal counseling to defendants. However, the National Assembly has recently passed a Human Rights Act and has established a Human Rights Commission, which is investigating police abuse and prison conditions.

Freedoms of speech and the press are respected in Mauritius; more than a dozen newspapers operate freely in the country. News broadcasting stations are government-controlled, but recently a private station began broadcasting in the Internet.

Spousal abuse is widespread in Mauritius, but the judiciary punishes these crimes very severely, and has been given greater power to do so by the National Assembly in recent years. The government is very committed to children's welfare and health. The National Assembly has recently passed the Protection of the Child Act, which considers it a crime to commit any violation of children's rights.

The law grants workers the right to form unions, and there are many small unions representing over 125,000 workers.

The government allows visits by international human rights organizations, a number of which are operating actively in the country without restriction.

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# Mexico



Mexico is located in North America, bordered on the north by the United States and on the south by Belize and Guatemala. The population is approximately 100 million, made up of a mix of Amerindians (Indians), whites, and Mestizos (those with mixed ancestry). Statistics vary regarding Mexico's ethnic composition, depending upon the surveying organization, partly because many people are defined differently depending on who is taking the survey, but Mestizos make up about 60 percent of the population, Amerindians about 30 percent, and whites about 10 percent. The capital is Mexico City. Spanish is the main language, although Mayan dialects are also spoken. The government is a federal republic.

## BACKGROUND

Mexico was conquered by the Spanish in the early sixteenth century. It gained its independence in 1821, and established itself as a republic in 1823. Mexico's government over the next century was dominated by military strong men and racked by constant revolt and internal turmoil.

In 1929, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) took power and remained the dominant force in Mexican politics until 2000. The PRI was an umbrella organization with a theoretically socialist approach to politics. In practice, the PRI increasingly operated as a corrupt party machine existing primarily to benefit its members. The party controlled the media, the unions, and the educational system. Political opposition was overwhelmed by the PRI's campaign machine; if it seemed possible that the opposition might win, the PRI rigged election results. The PRI maintained the appearance of democracy by allowing some opposition parties to gain a few seats in Congress, but kept its "perfect dictatorship" in power by maintaining its own overwhelming majorities.

The PRI's dominance began to fall apart in the late 1990s. Internal unrest, particularly among the Amerindians of the province of Chiapas, and growing opposition among Mexico's middle-class professionals led to the rise of opposition parties. The two most successful of these were the Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD) and the National Action Party (PAN).

On July 2, 2000, the PRI finally lost its stranglehold on government with the victo-

ry of Vicente Fox in the national presidential election. The election of Fox, the leader of PAN, is likely to inaugurate a new era in Mexican politics.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

The Mexican government does a fair job of protecting human rights. While the government is not overly abusive of its citizens, problems remain.

The most significant gain in Mexican human rights was the election of Vincente Fox as president. For the first time in seventy years, Mexico appears to have developed a functioning democracy. The PRI's long dominance over Mexican politics, which made Mexican democracy a sham, seems to have ended.

The Mexican judiciary has problems with corruption. While judges are theoretically independent, in practice they often bow to pressures by political bosses. There is also extensive corruption in Mexico's northern states as a result of the flow of drugs from Mexico into the United States. Drug lords buy the loyalty of judges, politicians, and police officials. Despite these problems, many judges remain honest and the right to a fair trial is usually respected.

The military and police in Mexico are prone to violating the human rights of Mexican citizens. The ongoing insurgency of Amerindian guerrillas in southern Mexico has led some police and military units to use extrajudicial methods in their attempts to suppress the rebels. Extrajudicial killings occur occasionally, and military units have been accused of attacking peasant villages that they suspect are sympathetic to the Amerindian guerrillas. Some of those encouraging these attacks include officials high in the government, including state governors.

UN officials and human rights advocates have strongly criticized the excessive use of force by the military in their struggles against Amerindian guerrillas. Methods used by the military include torture, assassinations, and massacres. The government seems to have made some limited efforts to eliminate this kind of activity.

In general, Mexico's police are prone to using violence in the apprehension and interrogation of suspects. The use of torture by police is also common. Although torture is illegal, judges still allow evidence obtained by torture to be used in trials, thereby encouraging the police to continue to torture suspects during interrogations. Sometimes prisoners die in custody under suspicious circumstances.

Violence connected to the drug trade is a serious problem, particularly in northern Mexico. Rival drug gangs fight for control of the drug traffic, and sometimes use corrupt police and officials in their attempts to eliminate their rivals. Civilians who resist the drug traffickers often are killed, and officials who have been sent to fight against the drug traffic have been assassinated.

Another serious human rights problem is the smuggling of human beings across the Mexico-United States border. Mexicans, eager to enter the United States and find better-paying jobs, pay gangs of smugglers to help them across the border. These smugglers, sometimes called coyotes, charge extortionate amounts and then sometimes leave their clients stranded in the desert. Many people have died trying to get into the United States.

Many of Mexico's human rights problems stemmed from the PRI's long tenure in office and the corruption which naturally resulted. Other problems, however, are the result of inherent Mexican difficulties, such as widespread poverty, the vast disparity

between rich and poor, and the ongoing drug trade. As much as Vincente Fox's government provides a welcome move toward greater respect for human rights, these problems will not disappear quickly.

Mexican prisons do not meet international standards. Prisons are staffed by underpaid guards who accept bribes to give favored prisoners privileges and who ignore the needs of poor prisoners. Prisons are overcrowded; some cells designed to hold two prisoners actually hold eight. Prisoners are not given enough food and must supplement their rations with food brought by family members. Drug use in prison is common, with most of the drugs being smuggled in by prison guards. Female inmates are often the target of sexual assaults by guards.

The government generally protects the rights of free speech and freedom of the press. Newspapers opposing the government operate freely and can be fierce critics of government corruption. Some newspapermen have been attacked because of their critical articles, and this may lead to some degree of self-censorship. Television journalists have become more open and honest in their reports during the last few years. The government respects academic freedom.

The government generally respects religious freedom, although some local officials have been responsible for restricting the activities of foreign missionaries.

Amerindians are often the victims of human rights abuses. Many Amerindians live in extreme poverty, with little access to clean water, fresh food, or free education. Some Amerindian villages are almost completely disconnected from the mainstream of Mexican life. The resultant feelings of alienation have led to the rise of a number

of guerrilla movements which demand more rights for native Mexicans. While these movements have attracted outside attention, they have also attracted the attention of the military, who have violated the human rights of villagers in their attempts to catch the guerrillas.

Violence against women is common. Women suffer from both domestic violence and sexual assaults. The police are poorly trained in combating rape, and in a culture that values women's purity, many women, ashamed of what has happened to them, are reluctant to report rapes. Sexual harassment is also common in the work place. Women do not have equal access to business or political jobs.

The government has a number of programs designed to safeguard the rights of children, but inadequate financing and the widespread poverty of many Mexicans mean that many children are not being helped. Children are often forced to work, and poor children often have only limited access to primary education. Many poor children are abandoned to live on city streets. Street children often become drug or alcohol abusers. Many street children work as prostitutes.

There remains widespread discrimination against the disabled in Mexico. Outside observers have pointed out that Mexico's treatment of its mentally ill is particularly inhumane. Some mental patients are allowed to wander around unclothed, or to be soiled by their own feces.

The government allows local human rights groups to operate without restriction. International groups are forbidden to engage in political activities, and the government occasionally uses this as an excuse for interfering in their activities. Human rights activists have been threatened and

assaulted by both supporters and opponents of the government. These attacks have not stopped their operations, but human rights advocates have accused the government of not working hard enough to find and punish those responsible.

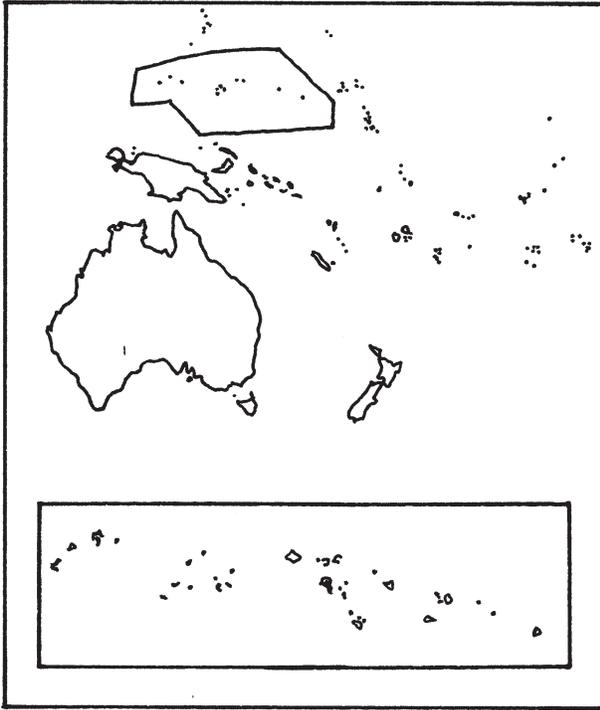
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# Micronesia



Micronesia, also known as Federated States of Micronesia, is a group of 607 small islands extending over a large area in the Pacific Ocean, north of New Guinea. Some of the islands that make up Micronesia are Pohnpei (Ponape), Truk (Chuuk) Islands, Yap Islands, and Kosrae. The capital city of Micronesia is Palikir. Micronesia's population is around 131,500, divided between nine ethnic Micronesian and Polynesian groups. The most commonly used language is English, although Trukese, Pohnpeian, Yapese, and Korsrean are also spoken. There are two common religions practiced by Micronesians: Roman Catholicism (50 percent) and Protestantism (47 percent), while 3 percent practice some other religion or no religion at all.

## BACKGROUND

President Jacob Nena has been acting as Micronesia's chief of state and head of government since July 1996, when former-President Bailey Olter suffered a stroke and was declared incapacitated in November 1996. Olter was still unable to resume his duties 180 days later, and Nena was sworn in as the new president. Nena served the remaining two years of Olter's term then was reelected in May 1999 for a second term. He still serves as president of Micronesia.

The government is a constitutional republic connected with the United States. The Compact of Free Association gave the people of Micronesia their independence on November 3, 1986. Under the terms of this compact, the United States agreed to provide \$1.3 billion in grant aid to the islands from 1986 to 2001. Micronesia has no security forces of its own, with the exception of their national police, leaving them totally dependent on the United States for defense. The judicial branch is the Supreme Court, and the legislative branch is a unicameral Congress. There are no formal political parties.

Financial assistance from the United States is Micronesia's primary source of revenue. The economy consists primarily of fishing, tourism, and subsistence agriculture. The tourism industry is small because of the island's location and a lack of adequate facilities. The islands have very few mineral deposits worth exploiting, with the exception of high-grade phosphate. The major exports of the islands are fish, clothing, bananas, and black pepper. Microne-

sia's communications and transportation systems are very limited.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

There are no local organizations concerning themselves solely with human rights, which makes human rights evaluations difficult. There are no reports of political or extrajudicial killings or politically motivated disappearances. Substantial cash settlements were received by victims who were mistreated by police in some incidents; the officers involved in the incidents were removed from the police force.

Prison conditions meet minimum international standards. The legal procedures provide for due process, as they are based on U.S. law. An independent judiciary is provided for by the constitution and is independent in practice. The Bill of Rights provides for public trials and most trials are conducted fairly. There are no reports of political prisoners, and the law prohibits arbitrary interference with privacy, family, home, or correspondence, and none of these violations exist in practice.

The constitution provides for freedom of speech and freedom of the press, and a positive development in support of these rights came with the establishment of the now-defunct biweekly newspaper, the *Island Tribune*, which reported on island events and explored and addressed controversial issues. There is one private radio station operated by a religious group. The other four radio stations are controlled by each of the four local state governments, broadcasting primarily in the local language. Pohnpei is the only state that has a television receiver station with access to live satellite-televized information from around the world, and taped broadcasts of the major U.S. net-

works. The Internet has provided an increasing level of open public discussion of social and governmental issues.

Women's representation in government and politics is very limited at all levels because of Micronesia's male-dominated society. The constitution provides protection against discrimination based on race, sex, language, religion and, but there is extensive societal discrimination, especially discrimination and violence against women. Spousal abuse, reported and unreported, is widespread. Effective prosecution of these offenses is rare. Most victims are pressured by family members into staying silent, or else do not come forward because they feel that the police will not involve themselves in what is seen as a private family problem. There are no laws against domestic abuse and no government or private facilities to support or shelter these women. Women have equal rights under the law, however, and are active and successful in business.

Children in Micronesia are not normally employed for wages, although they do assist families in subsistence farming activities. All children must begin school at the age of six, but they may leave school at the age of fourteen or after completing the eighth grade, whichever comes first. There is some evidence of child neglect, and government agencies usually ignore these problems.

Working conditions in the four state governments provide limited protection of workers' rights. The minimum wage ranges from \$0.80 to \$2.00 an hour, which is sufficient to provide a decent standard of living under local conditions. There are no laws regulating hours of work or any standards of safety and health. Employers are required by a federal regulation to provide a safe work place, but the Department of

Health provides no enforcement. Workers are not protected from dangerous work situations without jeopardy to their continued employment. There are no regulations guaranteeing access to public buildings or services for disabled persons.

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# Moldova



The Republic of Moldova gained its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. It is a land locked country situated in between Romania to the west and Ukraine to the east. Its population is 4.5 million people, with some 800,000 living in the capital Chisinau (earlier officially named Kishinev). According to a 1989 census, the ethnic breakdown was 64.5 percent ethnic Moldavians (Romanians), 13.8 percent ethnic Ukrainians, 13 percent Russians, 3.5 percent Turkic-speaking Gagauz, and 2.7 percent Bulgarians. The two last groups are concentrated in the south of Moldova. The demographic situation of the left bank (eastern Moldova—Transnistria) of the Dniester River is that out of about 750,000 people—of whom 230,000 live in the region's largest city, Tiraspol—the ethnic makeup is 41 per-

cent Moldavians (Romanians), 23 percent Russians, and 18 percent Ukrainians.

## BACKGROUND

Moldova is a party to the International Bill of Human Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights, and other treaties. In 1994, Moldova adopted its constitution, establishing a republic and providing for a multiparty representative government with power divided between a president, cabinet, Parliament, and judiciary. The second Moldavian Parliament ratified the accession to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in 1994. Ratification paved the way for bilateral framework agreement with Russia on the withdrawal of the 14th Army from Tiraspol and the Transnistria region, which was signed in Chisinau in 1995 and ratified by the Moldavian Parliament, with the Russian Duma not yet ratifying it.

The Transnistrian separatists' movement, with the logistical support of the powerful 4th Russian Army, proclaimed its independence from Moldova in August 1990. (The population of the Transnistria, or trans-Dniester, region had a higher percentage of Slavs than the rest of Moldova, and many of them were reluctant to leave the Russian sphere of influence.) Fighting between constitutional forces and separatists of the Transnistrian Republic ensued, resulting in some 200 killed and 500 injured. A cease-fire was brought about in July 1992, with the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), the Russian Federation, and Ukraine acting as mediators. Since then, the country has re-

mained “de facto” divided, with the internationally unrecognized “Transnistrian Moldavian Republic” still in control of the east bank of the Dniester River.

The situation between Moldova and the breakaway Transnistria region remains tense, with the potential for human rights abuses to occur if fighting should resume. The internal human rights situation in the two halves of Moldova are also very different. In general, there is much less freedom and respect for human rights in the Transnistrian republic than in the Moldavian republic.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

Moldova does not provide all the respect for human rights that it should, but has made real efforts in the past few years to improve its human rights situation.

Moldova recorded significant improvements since 1992 with respect to human rights and fundamental freedoms, ratifying international human rights treaties, becoming a member of the United Nations (UN) and the Council of Europe, guaranteeing free multiparty elections, constitutionalizing the separation of powers, and establishing the Constitutional Court and Ombudsman Institute. Transnistria remains out of the government’s actual control. In Transnistria, an emergency law declared by the local regime, on economic grounds, outlaws political parties and enables severe restrictions on civil and political rights. Human rights in Transnistria are in much greater jeopardy than in Moldova proper.

The 1996 and 1998 elections in Moldova were considered free and fair by international observers. Some limits were placed on free speech, as the Central Election Commission (CEC) ordered that both pub-

lic and private broadcasting stations refrain from airing information which could “undermine public order,” “pose a threat to the security of persons and property,” or “degrade human dignity.” It was forbidden to depict important national monuments and buildings in campaign materials or to use documents “touching upon the interests of public persons” without their written consent. These restrictions did not adversely affect the freedom of the electoral process to a great degree.

Some favoritism was shown to the ruling political coalition. Moldavian public television allocated two-and-a-half times more free airtime for the coalition than for its opponents. Also, the government-owned newspaper *Moldova Suverana* gave the coalition as much space as it gave to all the other parties combined. The CEC ignored these violations of regulations. A Supreme Court judge ruled that these disproportionate allocation of airtime by the CEC was legal. The majority of press and media are highly politicized.

The situation was much worse on the east side of the Dniester. The authorities of Transnistria banned elections there, and less than 10 percent of the region participated in the parliamentary elections. Also, the local government canceled bus service to hamper people who wished to vote. No political party other than the Communist Party was allowed to campaign.

Free speech in Moldova is protected but with limitations. The Moldavian constitution prohibits “expression that may harm the honor, dignity or the rights of other people” and criminalizes “defamation of the State and people.” The political majority of the Parliament appoints the director of public television and radio. Access of journalists to hearings in the parliament and governmental meetings was frequently restricted.

In Transnistria, a local paper of the city of Rabnita faced charges of defamation of a public officer and was forced to shut down. Local Transnistrian authorities have a monopoly on setting up mass media institutions.

Moldavian legislation remains restrictive of religious activities, maintains control over religious liberties, and does not clearly stipulate the separation of church and state. According to the Moldavian law, religious organizations must register with the government. Some Moldavian newspapers print hate speech directed toward non-orthodox religions.

There are two orthodox churches functioning in Moldova: the Moldavian Mitropolia (Mitropolia Basarabiei), which is subordinated canonically to Moscow, and the Besarabian Orthodox Church (Mitropolia Basarabiei), which is subordinated canonically to Bucharest. The Moldavian government refuses to officially recognize the Besarabian Orthodox Church because "its activity is in contradiction with canonical order [i.e., that of the Moldovan Orthodox Church] and its recognition by the government would ignore the existence of a canonical order in the Orthodox Church in Moldova." The Besarabian Orthodox Church remains, in effect, an outlawed religious organization.

Transnistrian authorities refuse registration of Jehovah's Witnesses, citing their refusal to serve in the army, their rejection of blood transfusion, and their "destructive," "non-traditional," and "intolerant and aggressive" attitude toward other religions. These community members were harassed by local militias, attacked with hate speech in local media, and had their literature seized.

As Moldova is a party to the European Convention on Human Rights, the death penalty was abolished in 1995. The situa-

tion of prisoners remains serious, however. Due to extremely poor physical conditions, the poor quality of food, and inadequate medical treatment, inmates suffer from overall physical weakness and illnesses. Contagious diseases such as tuberculosis were widespread. Minors were sometimes held with adult inmates, and pretrial detainees were often incarcerated with convicted criminals. In Balti police headquarters, the 100-square-foot cells held four or five persons each. Often these prisoners were forced to sleep without mattresses. Toilet facilities were limited, as was running water. There are many cases of police beatings in pretrial detention, along with the use of electric shock. Prisoners' correspondence is read by the authorities.

In Transnistria, the condition of prisoners is far worse. Torture of suspects and prisoners is commonplace, and fair trials are impossible. In December 1999, the detainees of Hlinaia detention facility near the city of Grigoriopol in the region of Transnistria declared a hunger strike to protest poor detention conditions, systematic beatings, and other abuses. Six detainees committed suicide.

Secrecy of correspondence and telecommunications reportedly has been violated by the Moldavian Ministry of National Security and the Department for Combating Organized Crime and Corruption.

In 1995, the Moldavian Penal Code was amended, eliminating punishment for homosexuality, overturning previous laws which had provided for up to five years of imprisonment. There remains a discriminatory attitude toward homosexuals. In Transnistria, homosexual behavior is outlawed.

Moldova has not adhered to international treaties designed to protect refugees and the displaced nor has it developed internal legislation for this problem.

Minorities rights are protected better in Moldavia than in Transnistria. In Transnistria, local authorities banned public education in languages using anything but the Cyrillic alphabet. Private schools, which continued to use the Latin alphabet, faced financial discrimination and some of them were stripped of their licenses. Teachers in the Grigoriopol private schools were harassed by paramilitary groups of Cossacks because of their use of the Latin alphabet. Some 500 parents of pupils attending a Romanian/Moldavian school in another city of Transnistria accused the authorities

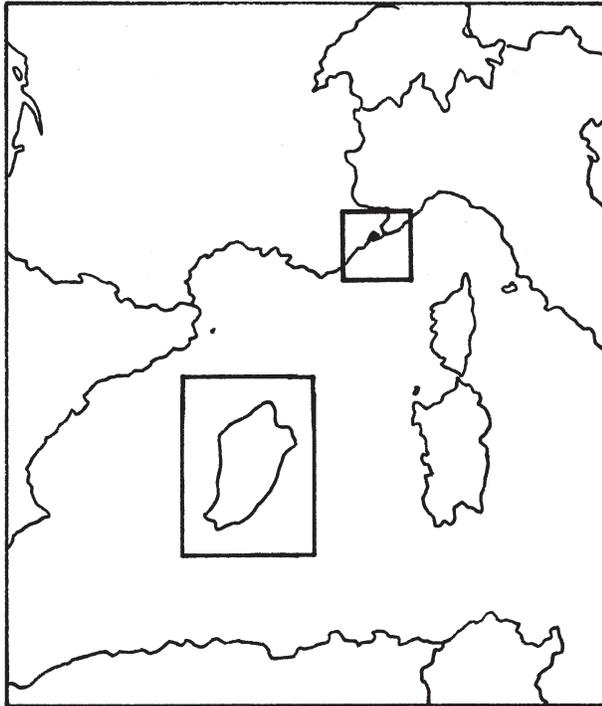
of practicing “cultural genocide” on their children.

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# Monaco



The Principality of Monaco is a small state forming an enclave in southern France, bounded on the south by the Mediterranean Sea. Monaco is the capital city. Three major ethnic groups that comprise the population, estimated at around 32,000, are Monegasque (16.7 percent), French (47 percent), and Italian (16 percent). French is the official language; however, English, Italian, and Monegasque (a blend of French and Italian) are widely spoken as well. About 95 percent of the population is Roman Catholic; the remaining 5 percent practice other religions.

In 1861, the Principality of Monaco became an independent state under French Protection. In 1911, a constitutional monarchy was established. In 1962, a new constitution was promulgated, which abolished capital punishment, approved female suffrage, and established a Supreme Court to guarantee

fundamental liberties. In 1993, the Principality of Monaco became an official member of the United Nations with full voting rights.

Prince Rainier III is the chief of state. The minister of state, who is always a French citizen, is appointed by the prince. The prime minister and three other ministers make up the Council of Government, which remains in power for three years. Legislative power is shared between the prince and the National Council, which is formed by eighteen members and elected by universal suffrage.

Monaco's economy is mainly based on banking, light manufacturing, services, and tourism, which supports the population with a high standard of living.

The constitution provides for all the fundamental human rights, and the government respects them in practice. In addition, the government encourages the formation of human rights monitoring groups and welcomes visits by international human rights monitors.

The Principality of Monaco respects the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, but it does not guarantee asylum or refugee status unless the request meets the requirements of French law. So far, the number of requests has been very limited.

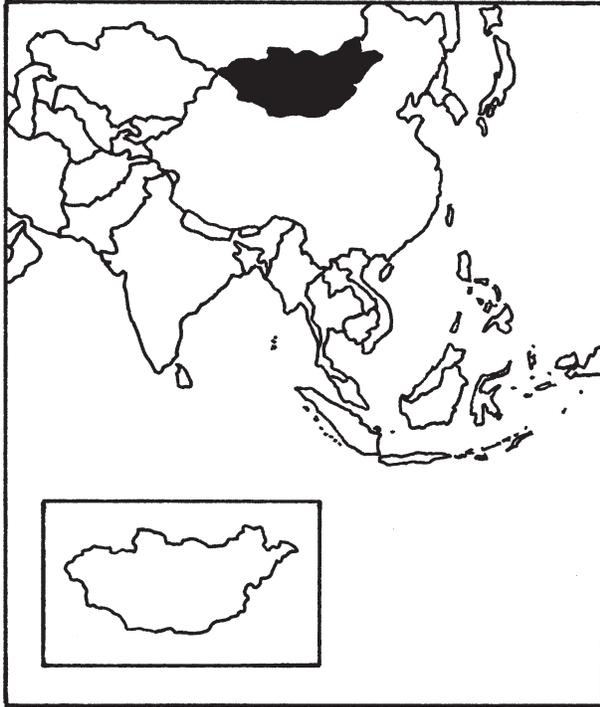
The government is very committed to women's and children's rights. Regulations supporting the disabled have been widely implemented.

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# Mongolia



Mongolia is a country in northern Asia, between Russia and China. Ulan Bator is the capital city. The population, which was estimated at 2.6 million in 1999, comprises Mongols (90 percent), Kazakhs (4 percent), Chinese (2 percent), Russians (2 percent), and others (2 percent). Nearly half of the population lives in the capital, Ulaanbaatar, and in other provincial centers. About 4 million Mongols live outside Mongolia, and about 3.4 million live in China, mainly in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. Some 500,000 live in Russia. Over ninety percent of the population speaks Khalkha Mongol; minor languages include Kazakh, Chinese, and Russian. Tibetan Buddhism, which was suppressed under the communist regime until 1990, is the dominant religion. Islam and Shamanism are also practiced by minorities.

## BACKGROUND

Mongolia has a parliamentary form of government. The executive branch of the government consists of a president and a prime minister. The legislature is called the State Great Hural, with seventy-six deputies. The president is second in authority to the State Great Hural. The Supreme Court represents the judicial branch.

The origins of Mongolia date back to 1203, when Genghis Khan established a single Mongolian state based on nomadic tribal groupings. China gained control of Mongolia in the 1600s. The region became known as Outer Mongolia, and was a Chinese province from 1691 until 1911. In 1912, with the collapse of the Chinese empire, Outer Mongolia became an autonomous state under Russian protection. The Mongolian People's Republic was proclaimed on November 25, 1924, after which Moscow again became the major outside influence on Mongolia. Independence from the former Soviet Union was not achieved until 1990, when the constitution was amended to provide for a multiparty system and the first democratic elections were held. The election of the first non-communist government was held on June 30, 1996.

Mongolia is a very poor country. Traditionally, Mongolia's economic activity was based on agriculture and the breeding of livestock. Mongolia has made efforts to develop a free-market economy by freezing spending, easing price controls, privatizing

Two men sit on a curb outside a newly built housing project in Ulan Bator.

large state enterprises, and liberalizing domestic and international trade. Such efforts, however, have been complicated by the deterioration of the economy of the former Soviet Union, which had served as the primary market for Mongolian industry, as well as by Mongolia's severe climate, scattered population, and wide expanses of unproductive land. In 1997, Mongolia joined the World Trade Organization.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

Although the government generally respects the human rights of its citizens, problems remain in some areas.

Prisoners and detainees, especially in the countryside, are occasionally the victims of beatings by members of the security forces.

Prison conditions are generally very poor. Food and heat are insufficient, threatening the health of inmates who often enter prison already infected with tuberculosis. Prisons and detention facilities are also very crowded, and restrictions on due process for prisoners are common.

Although the constitution provides for the rights of freedom of speech, press, and expression, both state-controlled and independent media are manipulated occasionally by the state in order to promote government policy.

Furthermore, despite the constitutional provisions defending the right both to worship and not to worship, and the recognition of the separation of church and state, official harassment occurs of some religious groups seeking to register with the

government.

The constitution also states that discrimination based on ethnic origin, language, race, age, sex, social origin, or status is forbidden, and that men and women are equal in political, economic, social, cultural fields, and family. In practice, discrimination still occurs. Women generally enjoy equal rights in most areas. They receive equal pay for equal work and have equal access to education. Nevertheless, women are often victims of violence, including rape and spousal abuse. Furthermore, the number of single-parent families—most of which are headed by women—has been increasing over the years.

Several human rights groups operate

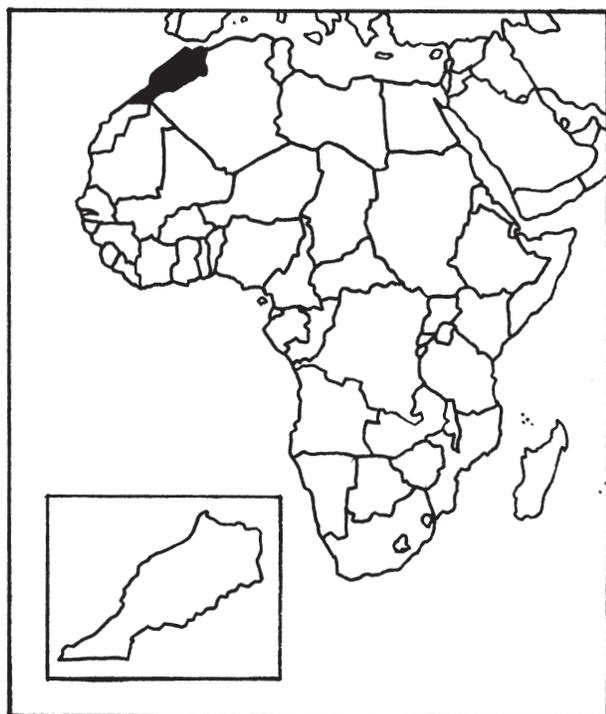
without government restriction, investigating and publishing their findings on human rights cases.

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# Morocco



Morocco is a country in northwest Africa, bounded on the north and northwest by the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean, on the east and southeast by Algeria, and on the south by Western Sahara. Mostly Sunni Muslims of Arab, Berber, or Arab-Berber origin make up its population of about 30 million. Arabic is the official language, although French is spoken in both the government and in business. Rabat is the capital city; Casablanca is the center of commerce and industry.

## BACKGROUND

Formerly a protectorate of France, Morocco recovered its political independence in 1956. The reformed 1996 constitution provides for a constitutional monarchy, with a bicamer-

al legislature consisting of a lower house elected through universal suffrage, and an upper house whose members are elected by local councils. In March 1998, the king approved the first coalition government of opposition parties in decades, led by Socialist Prime Minister Youssoufi. The decision was made in response to criticism of the November 1997 parliamentary elections, which were considered fraudulent by most independent observers, and it marked an important step toward democratization.

Morocco's diversified economy is based primarily on agriculture, services, light industry, mining, and tourism, but illegal growing of cannabis represents a significant portion of Morocco's economic activities. Considerable monetary inflows also come from Moroccans working abroad. The unemployment rate has been rising in the past few years, despite generally strong economic growth.

Morocco is a member of the United Nations and some of its related agencies, including the International Monetary Fund. It is also member of the Arab League and continues to play a significant role in the search for peace in the Middle East.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

The human rights situation has been improving. The prime minister has established an interministerial commission on human rights. Furthermore, in recent years the government has made efforts to disclose as much information as possible on the forced disappearances that occurred after the attempts to overthrow the government in

A crowd of young children getting immunized by UNICEF.

1971 and 1972. However, problems persist in several areas.

Citizens do not have the full right to change their government. The king is the head of state and has the power to replace any minister at his own discretion. Moreover, the Parliament's ability to effect changes in the government remains mostly theoretical.

The constitution provides for the independence of the judiciary; however, it is corrupt and subject to the influence of the government.

The security forces continue to commit human rights abuses in the form of torture and the mistreatment of detainees. In addition, recent reports document that the police charged into crowds of demonstrators, indiscriminately beating participants and journalists.

The authorities sometimes ignore legal provisions regarding arrest, pretrial detention, and due process. Prison conditions are harsh, with overcrowding, lack of sanitation, and poor medical care being the major problems, often resulting in unnecessary deaths.

The government security services monitor persons, organizations, and university campuses. Freedoms of speech and the press are restricted in certain areas. Local and foreign publications are indirectly subject to governmental control to prevent perceived dangers to state security. The media practice self-censorship. A government-appointed committee monitors broadcasts.

Although granted by the constitution, freedoms of assembly and association continue to be limited in practice. Union activities are subject to governmental interference.

Although the constitution states that all citizens are equal, traditional practices do not protect women and their right to be considered equal with men. In particular, spousal abuse and domestic violence are common and often go unreported. Women also suffer various forms of legal and cultural discrimination. The female illiteracy rate is reported to be 67 percent in urban areas and 89 percent in rural areas. Young girls are exploited as domestic servants, despite the constitutional provision prohibiting child labor. The government does not regulate adoptive servitude, in which children are adopted to become domestic servants, and it is known to occur. In addition, the exploitation of children on the streets and the problem of child drug addiction are common.

The constitution provides for freedom of religion. Until recently, only Islam, Christianity, and Judaism were tolerated. Bahais are subject to discrimination, and converts from Islam to other religions experience social ostracism. Foreign missionaries are limited in their proselytizing to non-Muslims. The Ministry of Islamic Affairs strictly controls mosque sermons and the teaching of the approved Koranic doctrine in Muslim schools.

Citizens are restricted in their freedom of movement. The security forces maintain

checkpoints throughout the country, and the Ministry of Interior occasionally limits freedom to travel outside Morocco, especially for suspected Islamic extremists. Civil servants and military personnel must obtain permission from their ministries.

Morocco generally cooperates with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in providing assistance to refugees. The government also cooperates with domestic and international human rights groups, and the prime minister recently announced his commitment to review cases of past and current human rights issues.

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# Mozambique



Mozambique is a country in southeastern Africa, bounded on the north by Zambia, Malawi, and Tanzania; on the east and south by the Indian Ocean; on the southwest by South Africa and Swaziland; and on the west by Zimbabwe. Maputo is the capital city. Its population includes ten major ethnic groups and numerous subgroups with diverse languages, dialects, cultures, and histories. In addition to African ethnic groups, about 10,000 people in Mozambique are Europeans, 35,000 are Euro-Africans, and 15,000 are Indians within a total population of approximately 19 million. About 30 percent are Christian; 20 to 30 percent are Muslim, with the remainder mostly holding traditional beliefs. Portuguese is the official language.

## BACKGROUND

A Portuguese colony, Mozambique achieved its independence in 1975. A civil war began in 1976 between the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO) and the Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO), the latter supported by the South African government. In 1984, however, Mozambique and South Africa signed the Nkomati Accords, opening a new era of economic cooperation and a cessation of hostilities. However, the government was unable to control insurgents affiliated with RENAMO. Not until 1990, thanks to the negotiations held under the auspices of Italy and the Catholic Church, did the two parties agree to a partial cease-fire. A new constitution was created, providing for a multiparty political system, a market-based economy, and free elections. Before then, Mozambique was a socialist, one-party state ruled by FRELIMO. In 1992, with the intervention of the United States, the General Peace Accord was signed. In 1994, the first multiparty elections were held under the supervision of an independent National Election Commission and other international observers, and they were declared free and fair.

The constitution provides for the independence of the judiciary. However, it is heavily subject to the influence of the executive.

Mozambique is a very poor country, with 70 percent of the population living at or below the poverty level. The country's economy is based primarily on subsistence agri-

culture, which employs about 80 percent of the population. Mozambique exports shrimp, cotton, sugar, and cashew nuts. The transition toward a market economy has resulted in the successful privatization of about 1,000 previously state-owned enterprises. However, unemployment in the formal sector remains a serious problem. In addition, corruption is widely spread throughout both the public and the private sectors. Overall, the economy remains largely dependent on foreign aid programs.

Mozambique is a member of the Non-Aligned Movement and of the African Bloc in the United Nations. It also belongs to the Organization for African Unity and the Southern African Development Community.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

The government's human rights record continues to be poor in several areas. The police and the security forces continue to commit human rights abuses in the form of torture, mistreatment, beating, illegal arrests or detentions, and extrajudicial killings. There were reports of many deaths under police custody. In addition, corruption extends to all ranks of the police forces. Newspapers continue to report that the police extort money from street vendors and travelers. There were also reports of police officers abusing street children.

Prison conditions are life-threatening. Food is insufficient; cells are overcrowded,

The under-five mortality rate is 282 per 1,000. This baby was two years old.

and latrine facilities are primitive. Minors are often incarcerated with adults. The lack of sanitation and inadequate medical care resulted in documented reports of prison deaths from cholera, tuberculosis, and AIDS-related diseases. Furthermore, other reports allege extortion and physical and sexual abuse by guards.

Pretrial detentions can be extremely lengthy, due to the shortage of administrative personnel, trained judges and lawyers, and intentional neglect. Although the Penal Code prohibits the incarceration of minors, there are many reports of minors incarcerated without trial. In addition to the formal court system, local customary courts handle minor offenses and are staffed with local arbiters who have no formal training, but have a strong influence.

The government restricts freedom of the press and continues to own the greater part of the country's media, including newspapers and radio and television stations, which generally reflect the views of the ruling party. Journalists still practice self-censorship in fear of losing their position or upon being intimidated by governmental officials. However, the number of independent media has been increasing, and its criticism of the government is largely tolerated.

The government generally respects the freedom of assembly, although some exceptions were reported in the past few years when the government intervened forcefully in labor demonstrations. In addition, the law imposes some limitations on freedom of association, with onerous and expensive registration procedures applying to certain

groups, including political parties and local non-governmental organizations.

Although the constitution prohibits any discrimination based on sex, women are still not protected in all aspects of political, economic, social, and cultural life. Family laws discriminate against women in employment and property issues. Women continue to receive lower pay than men in the same positions. In addition, customary laws and traditional practices further aggravate women's opportunities in terms of education and economic independence. Moreover, violence against women, including domestic violence and spousal abuse, is widespread, especially in rural areas. The civil law does not define domestic violence as a crime, and cultural pressure discourages women from reporting abusive spouses.

Primary education is not compulsory. In general, the education system is overcrowded and corrupt, with parents bribing teachers and girls exchanging sex for passing grades. Major violations of children's rights are committed every day at different levels, including child sex abuse, child prostitution, child labor, and criminal exploitation of street children.

Freedom of movement within the country is limited both for citizens and foreign-

ers. There are numerous police checkpoints throughout the country. In urban areas, police officers routinely stop foreign pedestrians to verify their passports and fine those who do not provide proper documents. Furthermore, local citizens are often detained because they failed to carry identity papers.

The government generally cooperates with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in dealing with asylum seekers and refugees. It also cooperates with local and international human rights organizations by responding to human rights-related inquiries.

*Barbara and Michela Zonta*

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