

Freedom in the World Methodology

The reports from “The Worst of the Worst: The World’s Most Repressive Societies” were excerpted from the forthcoming 2006 edition of *Freedom in the World*, an annual Freedom House survey that monitors the progress and decline of political rights and civil liberties in 192 countries and 14 select related and disputed territories. The survey rates each country and territory on a seven-point scale for both political rights and civil liberties, with 1 representing the most free and 7 the least free, and then assigns each country and territory a broad category status of Free (for countries whose ratings average 1.0 to 2.5), Partly Free (3.0 to 5.0), or Not Free (5.5 to 7.0). Those countries and territories which received scores of 6 for political rights and 7 for civil liberties, 7 for political rights and 6 for civil liberties, and 7 for both political rights and civil liberties are included in the group of “the worst of the worst.” Within these groups are gradations of freedom that make some more repressive than others.

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

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

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

For a more detailed analysis of last year’s survey methodology, please consult the methodology chapter from *Freedom in the World 2005*. The methodology for the forthcoming survey edition will be published in *Freedom in the World 2006*.