

Quick Facts

Population: 1,200,000

Capital: Nicosia

GDP/capita: \$23,234

Press Freedom Status: Free

OVERVIEW

The Republic of [Cyprus](#) is a parliamentary democracy that has de jure sovereignty over the entire island. In practice, however, the government controls only the southern, largely Greek-speaking part of the island, as the northern area is ruled by the self-declared Turkish Republic of Northern [Cyprus](#), recognized only by Turkey. The two sections are separated by a UN buffer zone. Political rights and civil liberties are generally respected in the Republic of [Cyprus](#). Ongoing concerns include societal discrimination against minority groups and flaws in the asylum system that lead to prolonged detention and premature deportations.

Key Developments in 2016:

- In March, after years of austerity, [Cyprus](#) was able to exit a 2013 financial bailout agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the European Union (EU) that had enabled it to survive a banking crisis.
- The center-right Democratic Rally (DISY) won the most seats in parliamentary elections in May, though it lost ground compared with 2011 as three new parties entered the parliament.
- The government continued UN-sponsored reunification talks with representatives of Northern [Cyprus](#) during the year, and a breakdown over territorial issues in November was followed by pledges to resume negotiations in early 2017.

Executive Summary:

As the country's economy, banking system, and fiscal position continued to recover in 2016, [Cyprus](#) in March was able to formally exit the bailout agreement that it entered into with the IMF and the EU in 2013. In spite of this progress, the economy still faced many challenges, most notably a high level of nonperforming loans in the banking sector and a relatively large public debt.

The economic hardship that Cypriots have experienced in recent years continued to unsettle the political landscape. Parliamentary elections in May resulted in three new parties entering the parliament, including the far-right National Popular Front (ELAM), which secured 2 of the 56 seats at stake. The center-right DISY of President Nicos Anastasiades led the voting with 18 seats, down slightly from 2011, followed by the left-wing Progressive Party of the Working People (AKEL) with 16, also a decline. The Democratic Party (DIKO) received 9 seats, the Movement for Social Democracy (EDEK) took 3, and the Green Party secured 2. Aside from ELAM, the other two parties entering for the first time were the center-left Citizens' Alliance (SYPOL), which won 3 seats, and the right-wing Solidarity, an offshoot of DISY that also received 3 seats. Turnout was the second-lowest ever recorded at 66.7 percent, reflecting voter disillusionment.

Although only small numbers of irregular migrants and refugees have arrived in [Cyprus](#) in recent years, due in part to the difficulty of traveling on from [Cyprus](#) to more desirable locations in

Northern Europe, the government continued to face criticism during 2016 for its slow processing of asylum applications, restrictive conditions for granting asylum, and long-term detention of asylum seekers in prison-like conditions.

Since the 2015 election of a new, pro-reunification president in Northern [Cyprus](#), Mustafa Akıncı, talks between the two sides have raised hopes for a lasting solution to the island's partition, which resulted from a 1974 Turkish invasion of the north following a coup aimed at union with Greece. The talks broke down in November 2016 amid disagreement on the territorial divisions of a new federal state, among other issues, but representatives quickly agreed to resume the negotiations in January 2017.

Explanatory Note:

This country report has been abridged for *Freedom in the World 2017*. For background information on political rights and civil liberties in [Cyprus](#), see [Freedom in the World 2016](#).