

THE WORLD'S MOST REPRESSIVE REGIMES 2002

A Special Report to the 58th Session of the United Nations
Commission on Human Rights, Geneva, 2002

Excerpted from:

Freedom in the World
The Annual Survey of Political Rights & Civil Liberties
2001--2002

FREEDOM HOUSE
New York · Washington
Belgrade · Bucharest · Budapest
Kiev · Warsaw

Freedom House

Board of Trustees

Bill Richardson, *Chairman*
Bette Bao Lord, *Chair Emeritus*
Max M. Kampelman, *Chair Emeritus*
Ned W. Bandler, *Vice Chairman*
Mark Palmer, *Vice Chairman*
Walter J. Schloss, *Treasurer*
Kenneth L. Adelman, *Secretary*

Peter Ackerman
J. Brian Atwood
Barbara Barrett
Zbigniew Brzezinski
Peter Collier
Alan Dye
Stuart Eizenstat
Sandra Feldman
Thomas S. Foley
Malcolm S. Forbes, Jr.
Theodore J. Forstmann
Norman Hill
Samuel P. Huntington
John T. Joyce
Kathryn Dickey Karol

Jeane J. Kirkpatrick
Anthony Lake
Mara Liasson
Jay Mazur
John Norton Moore
Diana Villiers Negroponte
P.J. O'Rourke
Orlando Patterson
Susan Kaufman Purcell
J. Danforth Quayle
Wendell L. Willkie, II
R. James Woolsey
Andrew Young
Richard Sauber, *Of Counsel*

Senior Staff

Adrian Karatnycky, *President* Jennifer L. Windsor, *Executive Director*

Carlyle Hooff, *Chief Operating Officer*
Arch Puddington, *Vice President for Research*
Leonard R. Sussman, *Senior Scholar*

Lisa Davis, *Director, RIGHTS Program*
Patrick Egan, *Director, Regional Networking Project*
Cristina Guseth, *Director, Romania Democratization Programs*
Jennifer Koliba, *Director of Finance*
John Kubiniec, *Director, PAUCI Program*
Amanda Schnetzer, *Director of Studies*
Paula Schriefer, *Director of Programs*
Nina Shea, *Director, Center for Religious Freedom*
Laryssa Tatarynova, *Director, PRU Program*

Freedom House Survey Team

Adrian Karatnycky, *General Editor*
Aili Piano, *Managing Editor*
Martin Edwin Andersen
Gordon N. Bardos
Michael Goldfarb
Charles Graybow
Kristen Guida
Karin Deutsch Karlekar
Edward R. McMahon
Arch Puddington
Amanda Schnetzer
Cindy Shiner
Leonard R. Sussman
Kendra Zaharescu
Linda Stern, *Copy Editor*
Mark Wolkenfeld, *Production Coordinator*

Survey of Freedom Advisory Board

Central and Eastern Europe, Former Soviet Union

Alexander J. Motyl, *Rutgers University*
Charles Gati, *Johns Hopkins University*

Asia

Arthur Waldron, *University of Pennsylvania*

Middle East

Daniel Brumberg, *Georgetown University*
Daniel Pipes, *Middle East Forum*

Africa

Thomas Lansner, *Columbia University*

Latin America

David Becker, *Dartmouth College*

Methodology

Larry Diamond, *Hoover Institution*
Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, *American Enterprise Institute*
Seymour Martin Lipset, *George Mason University*
Joshua Muravchik, *American Enterprise Institute*

Copyright © 2002 by Freedom House

Printed in the United States of America. All rights reserved. No part of this pamphlet may be used or reproduced in any manner without written permission except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews. For permission write to: Freedom House, 120 Wall Street, 26th Floor, New York, NY 10005, Fax: 212-514-8055.

First published in 1999.

Table of Contents

Introduction	<i>vii</i>
Afghanistan	11
Burma	18
Cuba	25
Iraq	32
Libya	38
North Korea	44
Saudi Arabia	50
Sudan	56
Syria	63
Turkmenistan	70
Chechnya	75
Tibet	83
Table of Independent Countries	90

INTRODUCTION

This year, as is the case each year, Freedom House appears before the United Nations Commission on Human Rights at its session in Geneva to present its findings on the state of political rights and civil liberties and to highlight areas of great urgency and concern. In this year's report, Freedom House again places its focus on the most repressive regimes in the world.

The "Most Repressive" reports that follow are excerpted from the 2001--2002 Freedom House survey *Freedom in the World*. The ratings and accompanying essays are based on information received through the end of December 2001. The countries judged to be the worst violators of basic political rights and civil liberties are: Afghanistan, Burma, Cuba, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, and Turkmenistan. They are joined by the territories of Chechnya and Tibet. These states and regions received the Freedom House survey's lowest rating: 7 for political rights and 7 for civil liberties. Within them, state control over daily life is pervasive and intrusive, independent organizations and political opposition are banned or suppressed, and fear of retribution is rooted in reality. In the case of Chechnya, the rating reflects the condition of a vicious conflict that has disrupted normal life and resulted in tens of thousands of victims within the civilian population. Because the report is based on events through December 2001, Afghanistan remains on the list. However, events in the first months of the new year suggest a modest improvement as a consequence of the fall of the Taliban, an end to hostilities, and the beginning of a process of national reconciliation based on the participation of broad segments of the country's civic, political, and military groupings.

The states on the list span a wide array of cultures, civilizations, regions, and levels of economic development. They include countries from the Americas, the Middle East, Central Asia, Africa, and East Asia. Many of the states in this report also share common characteristics. They violate basic human rights, suppress independent trade unions, censor or control the press, and restrict property rights. Some of these states deny the basic rights of women.

This year in Geneva, we direct our attention to the plight of the people of Chechnya, who are being subjected to an ever-mounting humanitarian catastrophe and a death toll that are the consequence of the brutal prosecution by Russia of a war against the territory's pro-independence insurgency. Amid ongoing reports of war atrocities committed against civilians, Russian authorities have shown little sign of interest in a peaceful solution to the conflict, a dialogue to which the leaders of the Chechen people are open. Regrettably, the Chechen people and their mainstream leaders are caught between elements of Russia's leadership that seek to crush the will of the Chechen people, and isolated groups of terrorist extremists who seek to hijack the cause of the Chechen people in the name of a violent jihad. While focusing attention on the ongoing rights abuses in Chechnya, Freedom House works to promote a dialogue between Russia and the Chechen people that can end the carnage.

Brutal human rights violations continue to take place in nearly every part of the world. Indeed, of the 192 countries in the world, only a minority, 86, are Free and can be said to respect a broad array of basic human rights and political freedoms; a further 57 are Partly Free, with some abridgments of basic rights and weak enforcement of the rule of law; and 49 countries (a quarter of the world total) are Not Free and suffer from systematic and pervasive human rights violations.

This report from Freedom House to the United Nations paints a picture of severe repression and unspeakable crimes against human dignity. But the grim reality depicted in this report stands in sharp contrast to the gradual expansion of human liberty that has been progressing for the last twenty-five years. Today, there are more Free countries than at any time in history. As significantly, there are 121 electoral democracies, representing 63 percent of the world's countries, up from 40 percent fifteen years ago. This progress is in no small measure the consequence of a growing global pro-democratic and pro-human rights movement. Increasingly, it is clear that countries that make the most measured and sustainable progress toward long-term economic development are those that are characterized by good governance and the absence of massive corruption and cronyism, conditions that are only possible in a climate of trans-

parency, civic control, and a vigorously independent media--all requisites of multiparty democracy.

It is the hope of Freedom House that by distributing information about the "Most Repressive" states and bringing these country reports to the attention of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, we will be aiding those inside these countries who are engaged in a struggle to win their human dignity and freedom. Through their courageous work, such activists are hastening the day when dictatorships will give way to genuine pluralism, democracy, and the rule of law—the bedrock not only of political rights and civil liberties, but also of true economic prosperity.

Additional information about Freedom House and its reports on the state of political rights and civil liberties around the world can be obtained on the Internet at www.freedomhouse.org.

Adrian Karatnycky
President, Freedom House
April 2002

Sudan

Political Rights: 7

Civil Liberties: 7

Status: Not Free

Overview:

Having effectively marginalized Islamic ideologue and former regime strongman Hassan al-Turabi, President Omar al-Bashir further consolidated his power during 2001 and continued to emerge from diplomatic isolation. On the latter front, al-Bashir took the opportunity following the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States to pledge cooperation in combating terrorism, and therefore to lay the foundation for improved relations with Washington. U.S.-Sudanese relations did improve somewhat during the year despite a lack of concrete evidence that Sudan has stopped harboring terrorists or their supporters.

The Sudanese civil war moved into its nineteenth year with no end in sight despite African- and Arab-sponsored peace initiatives. Such initiatives have taken on greater urgency since the 1999 inauguration of a Sudanese oil pipeline, which now finances Khartoum's war efforts. The government has intensified fighting around oil fields in an apparently new policy aimed at driving out or exterminating inhabitants who might pose a threat to its control of the fields.

Africa's largest country has been embroiled in civil wars for 35 of its 45 years as an independent state. It achieved independence in 1956 after nearly 80 years of British rule. The Anyanya movement, representing mainly Christian and animist black Africans in southern Sudan, battled Arab Muslim government forces from 1956 to 1972. The south gained extensive autonomy under a 1972 accord, and for the next decade, an uneasy peace prevailed. In 1983, General Jafar Numeiri, who had toppled an elected government in 1969, restricted southern autonomy and imposed Sharia (Islamic law). Opposition led again to civil war, and Numeiri was overthrown in 1985. Civilian rule was restored in 1986 with an election that resulted in a government led by Sadiq al-Mahdi of the moderate Islamic Ummah Party, but war continued. Lieutenant Gen-

eral Omar al-Bashir ousted al-Mahdi in a 1989 coup, and the latter spent seven years in prison or under house arrest before fleeing to Eritrea. Until 1999, al-Bashir ruled through a military-civilian regime backed by senior Muslim clerics including al-Turabi, who wielded considerable power as the ruling National Congress (NC) party leader and speaker of the 400-member national assembly.

Tensions between al-Bashir and al-Turabi came to a head in December 1999. On the eve of a parliamentary vote on a plan by al-Turabi to curb the president's power, al-Bashir dissolved parliament and declared a state of emergency. He introduced a law allowing the formation of political parties, fired al-Turabi as NC head, replaced the cabinet with his own supporters, and held deeply flawed presidential and parliamentary elections, which the NC won overwhelmingly, in December 2000. Al-Turabi formed his own party, the Popular National Congress (PNC), in June 2000, but was prohibited from participating in politics. In January 2001, the Ummah Party refused to join al-Bashir's new government despite the president's invitation, declaring that it refused to support totalitarianism. Al-Bashir renewed the state of emergency for another 12 months in January.

Al-Turabi and some 20 of his supporters were arrested in February 2001 after he called for a national uprising against the government and signed a memorandum of understanding in Geneva with the southern-based rebel Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA). Al-Turabi and four aides were charged with conspiracy to overthrow the government, and al-Turabi was placed under house arrest in May. He was released in October and the charges were dropped. No explanation was given, but al-Bashir promised to open up politics and promote democracy.

The current civil war broadly pits northern Arab Muslims against southern-based black African animists and Christians. Some pro-democracy northerners, however, have allied themselves with the SPLA-led southern rebels to form the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), while northern rebels of the Sudan Allied Forces have staged attacks in northeastern Sudan. Some southern groups have signed peace pacts with the government, and there is fighting among rival southern militias. A convoluted mix of historical, religious, ethnic, and cultural tensions makes peace elusive, while competition for economic resources fuels the conflict.

The government continued to bomb civilian as well as military targets, and to arm tribal militias as proxy fighting forces. International humanitarian relief efforts are hampered by ceasefire violations and are sometimes deliberately targeted by parties to the conflict. A Danish pilot was killed in May when the Red Cross plane he was flying came under fire over southern Sudan. It was unclear who was responsible. In March, pro-government militia abducted four aid workers but released them a week later. Several nongovernmental organizations reported intensified fighting and increasing numbers of displaced persons in oil-rich areas, and assert that oil interests are fueling an ethnic cleansing campaign that has uprooted more than 36,000 people.

A joint Libyan-Egyptian peace initiative calls for democracy within a unified state based on recognition of Sudan's ethnic and religious diversity. All major parties to the conflict have nominally approved the initiative, though many have expressed reservations, particularly about the lack of a provision for southern self-determination. Peace talks under the auspices of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) have focused on southern self-determination, borders, and the application of Sharia in the south. However, prospects for a settlement, or even for serious multilateral negotiations, appear dim; it seems unlikely that the government will halt the war until it has complete control of southern oil fields.

Al-Bashir has begun to lift Sudan out of its international isolation by sidelining al-Turabi, who was seen as the force behind Sudan's efforts to export Islamic extremism. Although new vice president Ali Osman Mohammed Taha, who replaced al-Turabi as Islamic ideologue, maintains a firm commitment to Sudan as an Islamic state and its jihad against non-Muslims, al-Bashir has managed to repair relations with several states, including Iran, Eritrea, Saudi Arabia, and even the United States. Following the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States, al-Bashir condemned terrorism, issued a statement rejecting violence, and offered to cooperate on combating terrorism. The U.S. State Department reported that Sudanese officials had arrested about 30 associates of Saudi-born terrorist-in-exile Osama bin Laden, who resided in Sudan for five years in the 1990s. Though the report was unconfirmed by Khartoum, the United States abstained from a late-September UN

Security Council vote, clearing the way for the UN to lift sanctions on Sudan, imposed in 1996 after suspects in an assassination attempt against Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak fled to Sudan. However, the United States renewed its own sanctions for a year in November, citing human rights abuses and Sudan's reputation for terrorism.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Sudanese cannot change their government democratically. December 2000 presidential and parliamentary elections cannot credibly be said to have reflected the will of the people. The major opposition parties, which are believed to have the support of most Sudanese, boycotted in protest of what they called an attempt by a totalitarian regime to impart the appearance of fairness. The European Union declined an invitation to monitor the polls to avoid bestowing legitimacy on the outcome. Omar al-Bashir, running against former president Jafar Numeiri and three relative unknowns, won 86 percent of the vote. NC candidates stood uncontested for nearly a third of parliamentary seats, and more than 100 seats are reserved for presidential appointees. Voting did not take place in some 17 rebel-held constituencies, and government claims of 66 percent voter turnout in some states were denounced as fictitious.

Serious human rights abuses by nearly every faction involved in the civil war have been reported. Secret police operate "ghost houses," or detention and torture centers, in several cities. Government armed forces routinely raid villages, burn homes, kill men, and abduct women and children to be used as slaves in the north. Relief agencies have liberated thousands of slaves by purchasing them from captors in the north and returning them to the south. The government continued to bomb civilian installations and relief sites. International aid workers have been abducted and killed.

Although there has been no organized effort to compile casualty statistics in southern Sudan since 1994, the total number of people killed by war, famine, and disease is believed to exceed two million. Distribution of food and medical relief is hampered by fighting and by the government's deliberate blockage of aid shipments. The World Health Organization reported

a case of polio in southern Sudan in July and expressed concern that many more people might be infected. In November, the government called a four-week ceasefire to allow for vaccinations and aid drops. More than four million people are internally displaced, and that number is growing as the government fights to clear black Africans from oil fields or potential oil drilling sites. The UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Sudan reported in July 2001 that the human rights situation in the country is worse than one year ago and was concerned that oil is fueling the government's war against civilians.

Soldiers continue to carry out a policy of "depopulating" the Nuba Mountains, a 30,000-square-mile area in the heart of Sudan. The black Africans native to the Nuba region numbered more than one million in 1985, and have been reduced to some 300,000 today. The government frequently bombs the region and enforces a blockade that prevents food, fuel, clothing, and medicine from entering.

The judiciary is not independent. The chief justice of the supreme court, who presides over the entire judiciary, is government-appointed. Regular courts provide some due process safeguards, but special security and military courts, used to punish political opponents of the government, do not. Criminal law is based on Sharia and provides for flogging, amputation, crucifixion, and execution. Ten southern, predominantly non-Muslim states are officially exempt from Sharia, although criminal law allows for its application in the future if the state assemblies choose to implement it. Arbitrary arrest, detention, and torture are widespread, and security forces act with impunity. Prison conditions do not meet international standards.

Six NDA leaders arrested in December 2000 went on trial in March 2001 for plotting an uprising with a U.S. diplomat. The diplomat was expelled shortly after meeting with the defendants. President al-Bashir announced in October that the case would be dropped, but gave no explanation. In November, Ahmed al-Mirghani, a leading opposition figure, returned to Sudan from 12 years of exile in Egypt. Al-Bashir welcomed the former head of the State Council, which represented political parties before al-Bashir's coup, in a move aimed at demonstrating the government's commitment to reconciliation.

Press freedom has improved since the government eased restrictions in 1997, but journalists practice self-censorship to avoid harassment, arrest, and the closure of their publications. There are reportedly nine daily newspapers and a wide variety of Arabic- and English-language publications. All of these are subject to censorship. Penalties apply to journalists who allegedly harm the nation or economy or violate national security. A 1999 law imposes penalties for "professional errors." The editor of a leftist paper was jailed in January 2001 after an article alleging financial mismanagement by courts. Two journalists were jailed in February for failing to pay fines incurred for libeling the local government in Khartoum. In February, al-Turabi's PNC began printing the first opposition paper to appear in Sudan for more than a decade, but the paper was banned later that month. A BBC correspondent was arrested in April when he went to cover an Easter event in Khartoum. He was released without charge after a week. The English-language *Khartoum Monitor* was suspended temporarily in September because of "inflammatory" articles. Twenty-two journalists from *al Watan* were arrested in November when they protested an official ban on a corruption story. The president controls the National Press and Publications Council, which may impose suspensions, bans, or fines at will.

Emergency law severely restricts freedom of assembly and association. Riot police used tear gas and batons to break up a demonstration in Khartoum by thousands of students protesting an increase in bus fares. PNC members have been arrested and detained at random during the year, including Hassan al-Turabi, who spent eight months of 2001 detained for conspiracy to overthrow the government.

Islam is the state religion, and the constitution claims Sharia as the source of its legislation. At least 75 percent of Sudanese are Muslim, though most southern Sudanese adhere to traditional indigenous beliefs or Christianity. The overwhelming majority of those displaced or killed by war and famine in Sudan have been non-Muslims, and many starve because of a policy under which food is withheld pending conversion to Islam. Officials have described their campaign against non-Muslims as a holy war. Under the 1994 Societies Registration Act, religious groups must register in order to gather legally. Registration is reportedly difficult to obtain. The government denies permission to build churches and destroys Christian

schools, centers, and churches. Catholic priests face random detention and interrogation by police. Fifty-three Christians protesting a government order to change the venue of an Easter ceremony were flogged in April, and 47 of them were sentenced to 20-day jail terms. Amnesty International reported that many people were injured when police fired bullets at the protesters.

Women face discrimination in family matters such as marriage, divorce, and inheritance, which are governed by Sharia. Public order police frequently harass women and monitor their dress for adherence to government standards of modesty. Human Rights Watch reported in July 2001 that three young women were beaten and verbally abused by police in such a case. Female genital mutilation occurs despite legal prohibition, and rape is reportedly routine in war zones. President al-Bashir announced in January 2001 that Sudan would not ratify the international Convention on Eradication of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women because it "contradicted Sudanese values and traditions." Children are used as soldiers by government and opposition forces in the civil war. The SPLA, which reportedly employs some 13,000 children, promised to demobilize at least 10,000 by the end of 2002.

There are no independent trade unions. The Sudan Workers Trade Unions Federation is the main labor organization, with about 800,000 members. Local union elections are rigged to ensure the election of government-approved candidates. A lack of labor legislation limits the freedom of workers to organize or bargain collectively.
