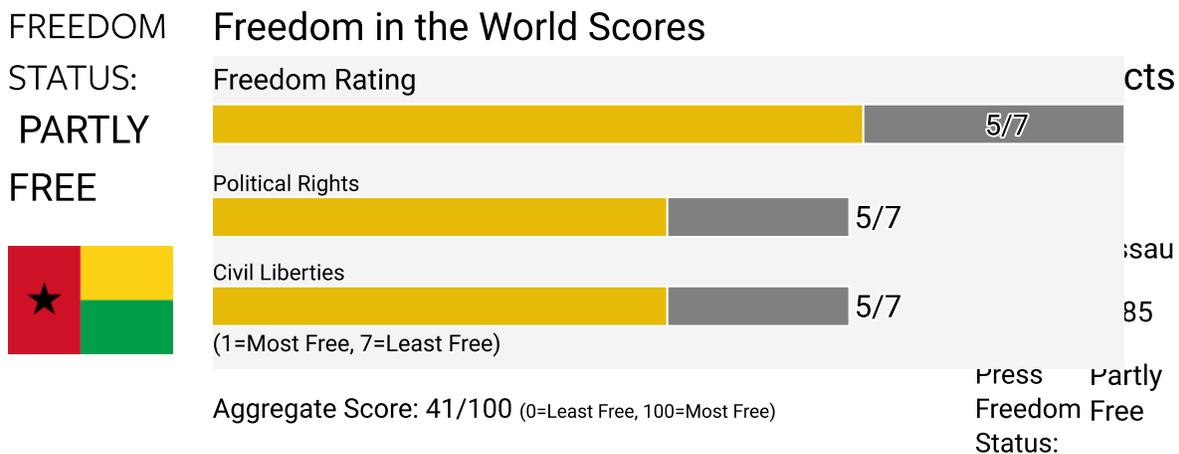




Freedom in the World 2018

Guinea-Bissau Profile



Overview:

Guinea-Bissau's 2014 elections moved the country back toward democratic governance after a 2012 military coup. Since then, however, the political system has been paralyzed by divisions between the president and the parliament, and within the ruling party. The crisis has contributed to restrictions on the media and freedom of assembly. Corruption is a major problem that has been exacerbated by the criminal activities of international drug traffickers.

Key Developments in 2017:

- Umaro Sissoco Embaló, the prime minister appointed by President José Mário Vaz in November 2016, remained in



Cabo Verde (PAIGC), which won a majority in the parliament in 2014. The ongoing rift prevented the legislature from convening and approving a budget.

- Demonstrators protesting against the political crisis assembled several times during the year, in some cases triggering clashes with police or government attempts to prohibit such gatherings.
- In June, the authorities suspended two Portuguese state broadcasters, citing noncompliance with a bilateral media cooperation agreement; observers raised suspicions that the government objected to the outlets' coverage of the political crisis. In September, employees at Guinea-Bissau's state-run television station complained of censorship.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 16 / 40

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 7 / 12

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4

The president is elected through a two-round voting system for a term of five years. The prime minister is appointed by the president “in accordance with the election results” after consulting



In the 2014 presidential election, José Mário Vaz of the PAIGC took 61.9 percent of the second-round vote, defeating independent Nuno Gomes Nabiam, who took 38.08 percent. The election was considered largely free and fair. However, Vaz's 2015 dismissal of PAIGC leader Domingos Simões Pereira as prime minister touched off a political crisis. A series of subsequent governments appointed by Vaz failed to secure parliamentary approval. Prime Minister Sissoco, appointed in November 2016, remained in office throughout 2017, but he had the support only of the minority Party for Social Renovation (PRS) and a group of 15 PAIGC dissidents. In September 2017, the UN Security Council urged Vaz and other leaders to implement the 2016 Conakry Agreement, which called for an inclusive government led by a consensus prime minister.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 3 / 4

Members of the 102-seat National People's Assembly are elected by popular vote for four-year terms. In the 2014 elections, the PAIGC took 55 seats and was allocated two additional seats for diaspora representation, bringing its total to 57. The PRS secured 41 seats, the Party for Democratic Convergence (PDC) took two seats, and the Party for a New Democracy (PND) and the Union for Change (UM) won one seat each.

Monitoring groups and local human rights organizations reported some instances of intimidation or beatings of election officials and candidates during the election period. One PRS candidate for the legislature was reportedly kidnapped by unknown armed assailants. Voting was otherwise relatively peaceful and transparent, and the legislative elections were considered largely free and fair by



A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 2 / 4

There are some problems with the country's electoral laws and framework, including weak controls on campaign spending and vote buying and a lack of legal provisions for domestic poll observers. The 2014 elections were delayed in part due to a lack of funding.

As a result of the continued political impasse in 2017, the parliament was unable to appoint new members of the National Electoral Commission, whose incumbents' mandates expired in June. Moreover, the president had yet to set a date for parliamentary elections due in 2018, and in December 2017 he suggested holding them in 2019 to coincide with the presidential vote.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 8 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 3 / 4

Dozens of political parties are active in Guinea-Bissau, and 15 of them competed in the 2014 legislative elections. The political crisis has led to some instances of violence and intimidation among partisan groups. In October 2017, clashes between supporters of the rival PAIGC factions broke out when the dissidents' group tried to submit a petition at the party's headquarters, resulting in a small



B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 2 / 4

Guinea-Bissau has a limited record of democratic power transfers between rival political parties, as the PAIGC or military rulers have governed for most of the period since independence. In 2014, Vaz succeeded an independent serving as acting president in the wake of the 2012 coup. Opposition forces had a realistic chance of increasing their representation in the 2018 legislative elections if the current political impasse could be resolved in time to allow them to go forward.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 1 / 4

The military has apparently refrained from interfering in politics under its current commander, Biaguê Nan Tan, but the threat of an intervention has not entirely receded. The choices of voters and politicians continue to be influenced by corruption and patronage networks. Organized crime linked to drug trafficking has contributed to the county's political instability in recent decades.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 2 / 4

Women enjoy equal political rights, but their participation is limited in practice by cultural obstacles, and they are underrepresented in leadership positions. Just 14 women won seats in the last parliamentary elections. Ethnicity plays a role in politics,



C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 1 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 1 / 4

Governance has been impaired by the political crisis that began in 2015. The constitutional legitimacy of the current prime minister and cabinet remained in doubt during 2017, and the legislature had not convened since January 2016. While the Permanent Commission of the National Assembly continued to meet, full sessions to vote on government proposals, including the budget, had not been held.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 0 / 4

Corruption is pervasive, including among senior government figures. Both military and civilian officials have been accused of involvement in the illegal drug trade. Critics of past corruption investigations targeting former high-ranking officials have argued that they were politically motivated.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 0 / 4

There are no effective legal provisions to facilitate public access to government information, and government officials do not disclose their personal financial information as required by law. The political impasse and related parliamentary dysfunction have further obstructed oversight of government spending in recent



CIVIL LIBERTIES: 25 / 60 (+1)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF:

10 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4

The constitution provides for freedom of the press, but it is often restricted in practice, with journalists regularly facing harassment and intimidation. In June 2017, Vaz asked journalists to avoid writing negative stories about the country. In the same month, Portugal's state radio and television outlets (RDP and RTP) were suspended from broadcasting in Guinea-Bissau; the government claimed that a bilateral agreement on media cooperation had not been followed, but critics of the move argued that it was motivated by the government's perception that the outlets had provided biased coverage of the political situation. In September, employees of Guinea-Bissau's state-run television station issued a letter denouncing censorship at the broadcaster.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4

Religious freedom is legally protected and usually respected in practice. Government licensing requirements are not onerous and often disregarded. Some Muslims have reportedly raised concerns about the influence of foreign imams who preach a more rigorous or austere form of Islam.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 3 / 4



resources.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4

Individuals are relatively free to express their views on political topics in the private and social sphere, though some more public figures have faced arrest or charges in retaliation for their remarks in recent years. In June 2017, prominent PAIGC member Manuel “Manecas” dos Santos was arrested and held for 24 hours without charges after stating in an interview in April that the political crisis might lead to a coup. In September, Prime Minister Sissoco declared that anyone who insults the president, prime minister, or leader of the parliament would be arrested.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 6 / 12 (+1)

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 1 / 4

Freedom of assembly is frequently restricted. The authorities repeatedly interfered with demonstrations by groups opposed to the political crisis or the president during 2017, either by attempting to ban planned events or by forcibly dispersing assemblies. In April 2017, for example, police used tear gas against peaceful protesters and detained several activists. In June, the government prohibited two civil society organizations from holding planned protests. Clashes between protesters and police in May and November led to a number of injuries and arrests.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations,



Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are generally able to operate, but they sometimes face intimidation and other obstacles. In July 2017, the offices of a human rights dialogue group (Casa dos Direitos) was surrounded by 100 police officers as it prepared to hold a press conference, drawing criticism from other human rights groups.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4 (+1)

Workers are allowed to form and join independent trade unions, but few work in the wage-earning formal sector. Private employers sometimes engage in improper interference with union organizing and other activities. The right to strike is protected, and government workers frequently exercise this right. Among other such actions during 2017, teachers' unions went on strike over pay and working conditions in May, and although an agreement with the government was reached in June, the unions mounted further strikes in the fall to ensure compliance with the June agreement and pressure the government to resolve outstanding issues.

Score Change: The score improved from 2 to 3 due to public-sector unions' ability to engage in vigorous negotiations and strike activity without major state interference.

F. RULE OF LAW: 4 / 16

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4

Judges are highly susceptible to corruption and political pressure, and the court system as a whole lacks the resources and capacity to



office's power to impose restrictions on suspects under investigation, in this case a former cabinet official.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 0 / 4

Corruption is common among police, and officers often fail to observe legal safeguards against arbitrary arrest and detention. Very few criminal cases are brought to trial or successfully prosecuted, partly due to the limited material and human resources available to investigators. Most of the population lacks access to the justice system in practice.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 1 / 4

Conditions in prisons and detention centers are often extremely poor, and law enforcement personnel generally enjoy impunity for abuses. A number of cases of torture and beatings by police have been reported in recent years. In January 2017, a man accused of theft died after police allegedly tortured him in custody.

Because of its weak institutions and porous borders, Guinea-Bissau has become a major transit point for cartels trafficking illegal narcotics to Europe. The armed forces and some other state entities have been linked to drug trafficking. Criminal violence and homicides continue to pose serious problems.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 2 / 4

Women face significant traditional and societal discrimination, despite some legal protections. They generally do not receive equal



There are virtually no effective legal protections against discrimination on other grounds, including ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender identity, though same-sex sexual activity is not specifically criminalized.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 5 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 2 / 4

There are few formal restrictions on freedom of movement, but widespread corruption among police and other public officials can limit this right in practice, as can criminal activity.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 1 / 4

Illegal economic activity, including logging, by organized groups remains a problem. The quality of enforcement of property rights is generally poor, and the formal procedures for establishing a business are relatively onerous. In October 2017, police and merchants reportedly clashed in Bissau after city officials ordered the expulsion of street vendors from a main avenue. Police were then accused of stealing goods from the merchants.

Women, particularly those from certain ethnic groups in rural areas, face restrictions on their ability to own and inherit property.



protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 1 / 4

Domestic violence is not specifically addressed by law, and it is reportedly common. Victims of rape and domestic abuse rarely report the crimes to authorities. The government, international organizations, and community leaders have worked to eliminate female genital mutilation, though nearly half of the country's women have undergone such traditional practices. Early and forced marriages remain common.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

Guinea-Bissau is one of the world's poorest countries, with most families relying on unstable employment in the informal economy or remittances from migrant workers abroad. Public services have deteriorated in recent years amid irregular payment of public-sector workers.

Boys are vulnerable to organized exploitation as beggars or forced labor in sectors including mining and agriculture. Girls are trafficked for sexual exploitation or domestic servitude.

Government officials have been accused of complicity in trafficking activity, including sex tourism schemes in the Bijagós islands.

Scoring Key: X / Y (Z)

X = Score Received

Y = Best Possible Score

Z = Change from Previous Year

Full Methodology



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