### Somaliland*

**PARTLY FREE**

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Global freedom statuses are calculated on a weighted scale. See the methodology.

* Indicates a territory as opposed to an independent country.
Overview

While past elections in Somaliland have been generally free and fair, scheduled polls are frequently postponed, and clan politics dominate the political landscape. Journalists face pressure from authorities, and police occasionally employ excessive force or detain suspects for longer than permitted under the law. Violence against women remains a problem.

Key Developments in 2016

- Parliamentary and presidential elections were delayed once again, undermining Somaliland's credibility as an advancing democracy. The last presidential election was held in 2010, and the last parliamentary polls in 2005.
- Registration for fresh voter rolls began in January and was completed in September.
- The Somaliland-based Human Rights Centre (HRC) documented an increase in the number of journalists detained.

Executive Summary

Despite ongoing preparations for long-delayed elections, in September 2016 President Ahmed Mohamed Mohamoud Silanyo’s administration announced that both presidential and parliamentary polls would be postponed once again, with the parliamentary polls to be held in October 2017 and the presidential election the following month. Officials cited among other reasons an imbalance in regional allocation of parliamentary seats, and the absence of promised international aid. Under a previous agreement, the elections had been set to take place in March 2017, and would be preceded by voter registration for a new voter roll.

The voter registration process began in January 2016, and the process was completed in September, though the registry had yet to be finalized at year’s end. A 2016 amendment to the voter registration law allowed the final voter register to be
produced “within” six months of the election rather than six months prior, as had been mandated previously. The amendment drew some criticism for leaving a vague deadline.

Meanwhile, the government continued to suppress critical media coverage. According to the Somaliland-based Human Rights Centre (HRC), 28 journalists were detained between December 2015 and December 2016, up from 19 in the previous year’s reporting period. Among the detentions reported by HRC was that of Abdirahman Ahmed Elser, who was detained in January at the request of the Ministry of Environment over a story on the environmental impact of charcoal production. Several other journalists faced charges or were detained in connection with stories critical of authorities. Separately, no progress has been made on a promised broadcast law that could introduce independent radio to Somaliland.

The judiciary is underfunded and lacks independence, and the Supreme Court in the past has been largely ineffective. However, a new chief justice appointed in 2015, Adan H. Ali Ahmed, enjoys strong support from civil society, and in 2016 he made some progress on a mandate to harmonize and modernize judicial structures.

Political Rights

A. Electoral Process

B. Political Pluralism and Participation

C. Functioning of Government

Civil Liberties
D. Freedom of Expression and Belief

E. Associational and Organizational Rights

F. Rule of Law

G. Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights

This country report has been abridged for Freedom in the World 2017. For background information on political rights and civil liberties in Somaliland, see Freedom in the World 2016.

On Somaliland
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Country Facts

Global Freedom Score
41/100  Partly Free

Other Years

2020
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