

[JOIN OUR MAILING LIST](#)
[About Us](#) | [DONATE](#) | [Blog](#) | [Contact Us](#)
[REGIONS](#) [ISSUES](#)

[Reports](#) [Programs](#) [Initiatives](#) [News](#) [Experts](#) [Events](#) [Donate](#)

FREEDOM IN THE WORLD

Mongolia

[Mongolia](#) | [Freedom in the World 2013](#) |

OVERVIEW:

Parliamentary elections held in June 2012 were deemed to have been free and fair, further confirming Mongolia's status as Asia's only post-socialist democracy. The election was won by a coalition of the Democratic Party, Justice Coalition, and Civil Will Green Party, led by Prime Minister Norovyn Altankhuyag. In August, former president Nambaryn Enkhbayar was convicted on corruption charges and sentenced to 2 1/2 years in jail. Pervasive corruption remained a problem in 2012, particularly in the country's mining sector.

Once the center of Genghis Khan's sprawling empire, Mongolia was ruled by China's Manchu Qing Empire for nearly 270 years. Mongolia declared its independence in 1911. After Chinese troops entered the country in 1919, Mongolia invited Russian Soviet forces to help secure control. Mongolia founded a people's republic in 1924, with the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP) governing the country as a one-party communist state. In response to persistent antigovernment protests, the MPRP legalized opposition parties in 1990, but easily won the first multiparty parliamentary elections that year and again in 1992.

The MPRP lost the 1996 parliamentary elections, and power was transferred peacefully to the opposition Democratic Union Coalition. After an economic downturn the following year, the MPRP won both the 1997 presidential election and the 2000 parliamentary vote. The 2004 parliamentary elections were marred by irregularities and gave neither side a majority. The MPRP consequently agreed to a power-sharing government with the opposition Motherland Democracy Coalition (MDC).

The MPRP's Nambaryn Enkhbayar, the parliament speaker and a former prime minister, won the 2005 presidential election. In January 2006, the MDC-MPRP coalition government collapsed, and the MPRP formed a new government with several small parties and MDC defectors led by MPRP prime minister Miyeeombo Enkhbold, who was replaced in November 2007 by Sanjaa Bayar after being accused of excessive political favoritism and corruption.

The initial results of the June 2008 parliamentary elections handed the MPRP a solid majority, but the opposition Democratic Party (DP) and others challenged the outcome. Small-scale protests escalated into large, violent demonstrations in the capital. Five people were killed, scores were injured, and over 700 others were arrested. The government declared a four-day state of emergency.

Former prime minister Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj of the DP was elected president in May 2009. In October of that year, Bayar resigned as prime minister for health reasons and was replaced by Foreign Minister Sukhbaatar Batbold, who governed in a "grand coalition" with the DP until January 2012, when the DP left the coalition in preparation for parliamentary elections in June. In 2010, the

2013 SCORES

STATUS

Free

FREEDOM RATING

1.5

CIVIL LIBERTIES

2

POLITICAL RIGHTS

1

MPRP renamed itself the Mongolian People's Party. In 2011, MPP members under the leadership of former president Enkhbayar broke off from the party and re-formed the MPRP.

In the parliamentary elections held on June 28, 2012, the DP won 33 seats in the elections, the MPP 25, and the Justice Coalition—which included the reformed MPRP—took 11, with the rest of the seats going to other parties. There were significantly fewer foreign election observers present for the elections, although the General Election Commission accredited domestic civil society observers for the first time. Observers, who were concentrated in Ulaanbaatar, generally deemed the election to have been free and fair. While there were some allegations of election fraud, they were relatively muted, though the victories of two MPP candidates in Övorkhangai province were invalidated by the courts.

Ulaanbaatar city elections were held in conjunction with the parliamentary elections for the first time. The MPP leadership in the capital was replaced with a DP majority under the leadership of charismatic democracy activist Erdene Bat-Uul.

Mongolia's economy continues to be shaped by the large gold and copper project in Oyu Tolgoi. In the summer of 2012, the government issued shares in the large Tavan Tolgoi coal project. After leases offered to international bidders were retracted, the government itself apparently plans to operate the mine.

POLITICAL RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES:

Mongolia is an electoral democracy. The prime minister, who holds most executive power, is nominated by the party or coalition with the most seats in the 76-member parliament (the State Great Hural) and approved by the parliament with the agreement of the president. The president is head of state and of the armed forces, and can veto legislation, subject to a two-thirds parliamentary override. Candidates running for president are nominated by parties but may not be party members. Both the president and the parliament are directly elected for four-year terms.

Parliamentary balloting has varied over the years between multimember and single-member districts. The 2012 elections contained further changes; under the new rules, 48 of the parliament's 76 seats were directly awarded in direct elections, while the remaining 28 were allocated through a proportional system according to parties' share of the national vote. Among the 26 electoral districts, 18 were represented by 2 parliamentarians, 6 elected a single representative, and 2 of the districts elected 3. The elections also included several procedural changes in the registration and voting process, including the introduction of biometric voter identification papers, vote-counting machines, a quota for female candidates, and a more stringent procedure by which the General Election Commission would check and approve party platforms based on their financial feasibility.

Corruption remains a serious problem in Mongolia and is viewed as pervasive. The Independent Authority Against Corruption (IAAC) has been actively investigating corruption allegations since 2007. In April 2012, the IAAC arrested former president and MPRP party leader Nambaryn Enkhbayar on corruption charges, banning him from taking part in the June elections. Although Enkhbayar claimed that the arrest was politically motivated, the ban on his participating in the elections was upheld by Mongolian courts, and many observers accepted the arrest as a consequence of the pervasive corruption that took place during his presidency. In August, Enkhbayar was convicted of relatively minor corruption and money laundering charges, and in November he was sentenced to 2 1/2 years in prison.

Although the government operates with limited transparency, the first Citizens' Hall was established in Ulaanbaatar in 2009 to encourage civic participation in the legislative processes. Citizens have the opportunity to provide feedback on draft laws and government services by attending such hearings or submitting their views via letter, fax, e-mail, or telephone. Mongolia was ranked 94 of 176 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2012 Corruption Perceptions

Index.

While the government generally respects press freedom, many journalists and independent publications practice a degree of self-censorship to avoid legal action under the State Secrets Law or libel laws that place the burden of proof on the defendant. Journalists have been charged in defamation suits by ministers of parliament and businesspeople; in many cases, the charges were dropped. Journalist Gantumur Uyanga, who was accused of libel by a former minister in November 2011, was elected to parliament herself in 2012. There are hundreds of privately owned print and broadcast outlets, but the main source of news in the vast countryside is the state-owned Mongolian National Broadcaster. Foreign content from satellite television and radio services like the British Broadcasting Corporation and Voice of America is also increasingly available. Some international media operations—including Bloomberg in the fall of 2012—have moved into the Mongolian market. The government does not interfere with internet access.

Freedom of religion is guaranteed by the constitution. The fall of communism led to an influx of Christian missionaries to Mongolia and a revival of Mongolia's traditional Buddhism and shamanism. Religious groups are required to register with the government and renew their status annually. The Kazakh Muslim minority generally enjoys freedom of religion. Academic freedom is respected.

Freedoms of assembly and association are observed in law and in practice. A number of environmental, human rights, and social welfare groups—while largely reliant on foreign donors—operate without government restriction. However, some journalists and nonprofit personnel have alleged government monitoring of e-mail accounts and wiretapping. Trade unions are independent and active, and the government has generally protected their rights in recent years, though the downsizing or sale of many state factories has contributed to a sharp drop in union membership. Collective bargaining is legal.

The judiciary is independent, but corruption among judges persists. The police force has been accused of making arbitrary arrests and traffic stops, holding detainees for long periods, and beating prisoners. Four senior police officers were tried for their roles in the death of rioters following the 2008 parliamentary election. Prison deaths continue to be reported, as insufficient nutrition, heat, and medical care remain problems. President Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj issued a moratorium on the death penalty in January 2010.

While women comprise 60 percent of all university students as well as 60 percent of all judges, they hold only 9 parliamentary seats. Spousal abuse is prohibited by law, but social and cultural norms continue to discourage victims from reporting such crimes. Mongolia is a source, transit, and destination country for men, women, and children who are subjected to sex trafficking and forced labor. The government has continued efforts to eliminate trafficking though funding for such efforts has been inadequate.

RATINGS CHANGE:

Mongolia's political rights rating improved from 2 to 1 due to significant progress in the conduct of parliamentary elections, which were regarded as free and fair.

[About us](#)

[Careers](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Credits](#)

[Subscribe](#)

Related websites:

[Democracy Web](#) | [Derecho a Voz](#) | [Family Law - Khaleej](#) |

[Peace in the Caucasus](#) | [Undermining Democracy](#) |

[Voice of Freedom](#)