

In 2014, Seychelles took steps to increase national unity, including by removing a controversial statue linked to a 1977 coup.

Following an address by President James Michel to the UN Climate Summit, the World Bank approved funding of \$7 million of aid to assist the country with natural disasters associated with climate change. Corruption, drug trafficking, and extensive money laundering remain problems in the country.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Political Rights: 25 / 40 [Key]

A. Electoral Process: 8 / 12

The president and the unicameral National Assembly are elected by universal adult suffrage for five-year terms. The head of government is the president, and the president appoints the cabinet. President Michel, running for the People's Party (PL), won a third term in 2011 with 55 percent of the vote. The opposition Seychelles National Party (SNP) boycotted parliamentary elections also held in 2011, citing alleged misconduct by the PL in the presidential vote and Michel's failure to implement electoral reforms. Of the National Assembly's 32 members, 25 are directly elected and 7 are allocated on a proportional basis to parties gaining at least 10 percent of the vote. The PL holds all the elected seats and 6 of 7 allocated seats. The seventh allocated seat is held by the Popular Democratic Movement, formed by a dissident SNP member who disagreed with the boycott. Despite the boycott, both the 2011 presidential and parliamentary elections were generally regarded as having met basic international norms.

The Forum for Electoral Reform, comprised of representatives from every registered political party, was established by the Electoral Commission (EC) following the 2011 parliamentary elections to review existing electoral registration. In 2013, the Forum completed these reviews and made recommendations to the EC, which subsequently published them.

B. Political Pluralism and Participation: 10 / 16

The ruling PL—formerly the Seychelles People's Progressive Front (SPPF)—remains the dominant party, having held continuous power since 1977. The leftist SPPF was the only legal party until a 1992 constitutional amendment legalized opposition parties. The centrist opposition SNP has claimed that its sympathizers face job discrimination in the public sector and harassment by police. The conservative Democratic Party has endured reduced support in recent elections.

C. Functioning of Government: 7 / 12

Concerns over government corruption have focused on a lack of transparency in the privatization and allocation of government-owned land. A 2011 report released by the auditor-general revealed nearly two decades of dysfunction in government finances, including unprofessional record-keeping, illegal

procedures, and embezzlement. Seychelles was ranked 43 out of 175 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2014 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Civil Liberties: 42 / 60

D. Freedom of Expression and Belief: 11 / 16

The government controls much of the nation's print and broadcast media, including the daily *Seychelles Nation* newspaper. Strict libel laws are sometimes used to harass journalists, leading to self-censorship. In 2013, the first private commercial radio station, Pure FM, began broadcasting. The government can restrict the broadcast of material considered to be objectionable. The board of directors of the officially nonpartisan Seychelles Broadcasting Corporation includes several non-PL members, though coverage is biased in favor of the ruling party. There have been reports that authorities monitor electronic communications and blogs, and opposition activists claim that the government blocks access to opposition party websites.

Religious freedom is constitutionally guaranteed and respected in practice. Churches in this predominantly Roman Catholic country have been strong voices for human rights and democratization, and they generally function without government interference. Academic freedom is also respected, though PL loyalists are reportedly favored in high-level academic appointments.

E. Associational and Organizational Rights: 9 / 12

Despite constitutional protections, the freedoms of assembly and association are restricted in practice. The government occasionally impedes opposition gatherings. In 2012, the Electoral Commission submitted a proposal to President Michel for the modernization of outdated legislation regarding freedoms of speech and assembly. When the act passed in December 2013, it contained none of the original recommended provisions and instead reinforced restrictions on public assembly and protest. Under the act, authorities continue to have wide discretion to ban public gatherings and prosecute demonstrators.

Human rights groups and other nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operate in the country. Workers have the right to strike, but only if all other arbitration procedures have been exhausted. Collective bargaining is rare.

F. Rule of Law: 11 / 16

The judiciary is generally independent, but judges sometimes face interference in cases involving major commercial or political interests. The majority of the members of the judiciary are naturalized citizens or foreign nationals from other Commonwealth countries, and contract renewal has the potential to compromise the impartiality of the non-Seychellois magistrates.

Security forces have at times been accused of using excessive force, including torture and arbitrary detention. Prolonged pretrial detention and overcrowding in prisons are common. Pretrial detainees account for approximately 15 percent of the prison population, in large part due to inefficiencies in the judicial process.

In 2011, the country modified its laws to allow pirates captured anywhere in the world to be prosecuted in Seychelles. For several years, the European Union (EU) has transferred suspected Somali pirates to the country for prosecution, leading to a number of high profile sentences. This process continued in 2014, although not all cases resulted in conviction. Somali pirates make up approximately 20 percent of the prison population in Seychelles.

Islanders of Creole extraction face discrimination.

Sexual relations between men are illegal. However, a 2006 amendment to the Employment Act prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation, and Seychelles pledged in 2011 that it would decriminalize same-sex sexual activity. Existing laws concerning the issue remained under judicial review in 2014.

G. Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights: 11 / 16

The government does not restrict domestic travel but may deny passports for unspecified reasons based on “national interest.”

The country’s political and economic life is dominated by people of European and South Asian origin. Prejudice against foreign workers has been reported.

Seychelles, which has no gender quota system, has one of the world’s highest percentages of female parliamentarians: 14 women were elected to the legislature in 2011. Gender discrimination in employment is illegal, but most women are engaged in subsistence agriculture. Inheritance laws do not discriminate against women. Despite a 2008 National Strategy on Domestic Violence, rape and domestic violence remain widespread.

Scoring Key: X / Y (Z)

X = Score Received

Y = Best Possible Score

Z = Change from Previous Year

[Full Methodology](#)