

SURINAME

Republic of Suriname

Head of state and government: **Desiré Delano Bouterse**

The trial of President Bouterse and 24 others accused of the extrajudicial killing of 15 political opponents in 1982 failed to restart. Steps were taken towards the abolition of the death penalty.

IMPUNITY

Following a request by the accused, Edgar Ritfeld, in 2013 the Court of Justice ordered the resumption of Edgar Ritfeld's trial in a military court in January 2014. Edgar Ritfeld, who claims he is innocent, is one of 25 people accused of the extrajudicial executions of 15 opponents of the then military government in December 1982. The trial had been halted since 2012 following an amendment to the 1992 amnesty law granting immunity for the alleged torture and extrajudicial executions committed in December 1982. The 25 accused, including current President Desiré Delano "Dési" Bouterse, who was the country's military leader at the time of the killings, were put on trial before a military court in November 2007 for the killings.

Although the Court of Justice decided that the case of Edgar Ritfeld should resume, the military court decided in October not to resume the trial of the 24 others, including the trial of President Bouterse.

In August, families of the 15 people killed in December 1982 filed a case before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

DEATH PENALTY

In May, the Minister for Justice and Police announced an amendment, yet to be presented to Parliament, to the ongoing reform of the Criminal Code aiming to abolish

the death penalty and raise the maximum prison sentence from 20 to 30 years.

Suriname had not carried out any executions since 1982.

SWAZILAND

Kingdom of Swaziland

Head of state: **King Mswati III**

Head of government: **Barnabas Sibusiso Dlamini**

The crisis in the rule of law and judicial independence deepened. The rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly continued to be violated. Unfair trials resulted in imprisonment for reasons of opinion and conscience.

BACKGROUND

In November Swaziland lost its preferential trade agreement under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) with the USA after the government failed to take reform measures, which it had voluntarily undertaken to do in 2013, to address restrictions on freedoms of association, assembly and expression. The benchmarks included amending the Suppression of Terrorism Act, the Public Order Act and the Industrial Relations Act. The loss of preferential access to the US market for textiles led to almost immediate factory closures.

LEGAL DEVELOPMENTS

The rule of law, access to effective remedies and protection of human rights continued to deteriorate as a consequence of the further undermining of judicial independence.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

The Trade Union Congress of Swaziland (TUCOSWA) remained effectively banned for a third year, with arbitrary arrests conducted