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## Cape Verde

**Country:**

Cape Verde

**Year:**

2015

**FIW Status:**

F

**PR Rating:**

1

**CL Rating:**

1

**Aggregate Score:**

90

**Combined Freedom Score:**

1.0

**Overview:**

Cape Verde is a Sub-Saharan nation noted for its political and economic stability, despite unique natural and economic disadvantages that include the threat of volcanic eruption, a lack of natural resources, and a severe shortage of water and arable land. The ten-island nation continued to rely heavily on international aid, agricultural imports, and foreign loans in 2014. Although Cape Verde is considered one of the least corrupt countries in Africa, the government was criticized by opposition members in 2014 for financial misconduct in public construction and infrastructure projects.

### Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

**Political Rights:** 37 / 40 [Key]

#### A. Electoral Process: 12 / 12

Cape Verde's president (head of state) and members of the 72-seat National Assembly are elected by universal suffrage for five-year terms. The prime minister is nominated by the National Assembly and appointed by the president.

In the 2011 presidential election, former foreign minister Jorge Carlos Fonseca claimed 54

percent of the vote in a second-round runoff. In legislative elections also held in 2011, the African Party for the Independence of Cape Verde (PAICV) secured a majority with 38 seats, President Jorge Carlos Fonseca's Movement for Democracy (MpD) won 32 seats, and the Democratic and Independent Cape Verdean Union (UCID) took 2. International observers declared the elections to be free and fair.

## **B. Political Pluralism and Participation: 15 / 16**

Political parties are free to form and operate. Since a multiparty political system was introduced in 1991, the PAICV and the center-right MpD have dominated politics.

Throughout the year 2014, parliamentary parties engaged in heated debate about perceived pro-PAICV bias in the speaker of the National Assembly. In September 2014, four new cabinet ministers were sworn in, including three women, bringing the composition of the cabinet to eleven women and eight men.

## **C. Functioning of Government: 10 / 12**

There are relatively high levels of transparency and low levels of corruption in Cape Verde as compared to other African nations. Cape Verde was ranked 42 out of 175 countries and territories in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index. Bribery and nepotism are common at municipal and national levels. In July 2014, an MpD deputy cited cases of embezzlement through various public works projects, including the Sal-Rei Port, the Vale dos Cavaleiros Port, and the Fogo ring highway. The highway, the length of which had been set at 80 kilometers during planning, was unveiled in July 2014, measuring less than 31 kilometers at a cost of \$1.7 million per kilometer.

Reform of mechanisms for ensuring transparency and ethical behavior in public office was ongoing in 2014.

Civil Liberties: 53 / 60

## **D. Freedom of Expression and Belief: 15 / 16**

Freedom of the press is guaranteed by law and generally respected in practice, but government authorization is required to publish newspapers and other periodicals. The presence of independent media is small but vigorous, and there are several private and community-run radio stations. State-run media include radio and television stations. The government does not impede or monitor internet access.

The constitution requires separation of church and state. The majority of Cape Verdeans belong to the Roman Catholic Church, which enjoys a somewhat privileged status. In April 2014, the parliament voted to enhance existing legislation to ensure that members of all religions are granted equal treatment.

Academic freedom is respected, and opportunities for higher education have expanded

rapidly in recent years.

### **E. Associational and Organizational Rights: 11 / 12**

Freedoms of assembly and association are legally guaranteed and observed in practice. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operate freely. The constitution also protects the right to unionize, and workers may form and join unions.

In January 2014, thousands of workers demonstrated peacefully on the island of Sal against proposed changes to the Labor Code. The protesters also demanded unemployment benefits and higher wages. The two largest labor unions, National Union of Cape Verdean Workers (UNTC-CS) and the Cape Verdean Confederation of Free Labor Unions (CCSL), called for a two-day national strike in April. The government responded by calling a meeting of the Council for Social Agreement, which brings together representatives of unions, the private sector, and the government, in order to address the strikers' concerns.

### **F. Rule of Law: 14 / 16**

Cape Verde's judiciary is independent. However, the capacity and efficiency of the courts are limited. According to the Judicial Superior Council, the court system's backlog significantly decreased in 2014, partly due to the use of more modern equipment. Authorities made steps in April 2014 to establish courts of appeal in the country. Courts on the islands of Praia and Mindelo have yet to be established.

Violent crime remains a serious problem in Cape Verde. Armed robberies are common, and cases of sexual violence have increased in recent years. Public security and criminal justice are impeded by poor coordination among relevant government entities, as well as by weak criminal investigation training and lack of resources for security forces.

Ethnic divisions are not a salient problem in Cape Verde. Same-sex sexual activity is legal.

### **G. Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights: 13 / 16**

The National Assembly approved new legislation in 2014 to regulate the entry, stay, departure, and expulsion of foreigners. The law gave all illegal immigrants in Cape Verde who entered the country before November 17, 2011, a period have 90 days, beginning on November 17, 2014, to request a permit for temporary residency. Beyond the deadline, all illegal immigrants who remain in the country will face expulsion.

While discrimination based on gender is prohibited by law, wage discrimination and unequal access to education persist. Violence against women is also a major problem. In June 2014, a group of female officials established the Association of Democratic Women to improve female participation in Cape Verdean politics. There are 15 women in the National Assembly, holding approximately 21 percent of all seats.

Cape Verde's economy continues to face challenges in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis.

While the tourism industry was stable in 2014, remittances and the flow of private capital were in decline. Domestic confidence in the economy remains low amid high unemployment.

**Scoring Key: X / Y (Z)****X = Score Received****Y = Best Possible Score****Z = Change from Previous Year****Full Methodology****Source URL:** <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2015/cape-verde>