

Kiribati

Country:

[Kiribati](#)

Year:

2016

Freedom Status:

Free

Political Rights:

1

Civil Liberties:

1

Aggregate Score:

91

Freedom Rating:

1.0

Overview:

Political Rights: 36 / 40 [Key]

Civil Liberties: 55 / 60

On December 30, 2015, voters headed to the polls for the first round of national legislative elections. A second round was scheduled for January 7, 2016, and would be followed by a presidential election.

Kiribati, which consists of 33 atolls scattered across 811 square kilometers, continued to contend with limited opportunities for development, which is constrained by the country's size, remote location, and lack of resources. The economy largely depends on interest from a trust fund built on royalties from phosphate mining, remittances from workers overseas, and foreign assistance.

As with other Pacific island states, rising sea levels and other effects of climate change threaten Kiribati. A cyclone that struck in March 2015 caused severe damage on three southern islands, and high spring tides were also reported. President Anote Tong has been vocal in calling on the international community to curb global warming and assist with local mitigation efforts.

In January, a quadrennial UN human rights review found some progress, including the creation of a human rights task force and a ministry for women and youth, and new legislation to protect women and children. However, the review also noted that more needed to be done to fully address domestic violence, combat sex trafficking, and improve access to primary education, and that Kiribati had yet to ratify several key human rights conventions. In September, the parliament passed

a law that created a separate court for juvenile offenders and set standards designed to prevent juveniles from being diverted to adult prisons.

Although freedom of speech is generally respected, journalists at state-owned outlets have been disciplined for coverage that displeases the government. Radio Kiribati editor Aneta Moote was fired in April for rebroadcasting a story from Radio New Zealand International that highlighted President Tong's initial backing for a controversial bill to introduce the death penalty. Strong public opposition to the proposal had forced the government to withdraw support.

This country report has been abridged for Freedom in the World 2016. For background information on political rights and civil liberties in Kiribati, see Freedom in the World 2015.

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/2016/kiribati>