

Samoa

Country:

Samoa

Year:

2016

Freedom Status:

Free

Political Rights:

2

Civil Liberties:

2

Aggregate Score:

80

Freedom Rating:

2.0

Overview:

Political Rights: 31 / 40 (-1) [Key]

Civil Liberties: 49 / 60

During 2015, the legislature considered various updates to the electoral law ahead of parliamentary elections scheduled for March 2016. Those elections would be the first to apply a 2013 constitutional amendment requiring at least 10 percent of the seats in Parliament to be held by women.

Lawmakers also passed the Citizenship Investment Act, which allows foreign nationals to obtain permanent residency or citizenship in exchange for a large investment in the country. Opponents argued that citizenship should not be sold, and some expressed fear that the law would expand Chinese domination of the economy, which was already a source of social tension.

Official corruption is a major cause of public discontent. In January, an associate minister was found guilty of forgery and later resigned from Parliament. A 2014 parliamentary report found instances of corruption and mismanagement in government agencies, but in early 2015 the government dismissed the majority of its findings and recommendations.

In June, Parliament passed legislation that establishes a Media Council to enforce a code of media ethics and investigate public complaints. Journalist groups and the community will select representatives to sit on the council. Journalists and media outlets were divided on the law, with some opposing it and others arguing that it could improve the profession.

In August, the Ombudsman's Office submitted its first human rights report to Parliament, calling for better safeguards for equality and respect for women, children, persons with disabilities, and prisoners. Domestic violence against women and children is a serious problem. The Crimes Act of 2013 made spousal rape a crime, and the Family Safety Act of 2013 empowers the police, public health officials, and educators to assist victims and families. Nevertheless, some women still do not report abuses due to social stigma and fear of reprisal. Women also face discrimination in employment and other aspects of life. The first woman was appointed to the Supreme Court in 2015.

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

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