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St. Lucia

Country:

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Year:

2015

FIW Status:

F

PR Rating:

1

CL Rating:

1

Aggregate Score:

92

Combined Freedom Score:

1.0

Overview:

Slow economic growth remained a challenge to Saint Lucia's development in 2014. Public debt continued to rise, surpassing 78 percent of gross domestic product (GDP). The unemployment rate was estimated to be 20 percent in 2014, a reduction from 23.3 percent last year. Despite domestic opposition, the government continued to attempt to reduce the deficit by cutting expenditure.

In 2013, Jack Grynberg, the president of the U.S.-based RSM Production Company, filed an arbitration claim against the Saint Lucian government after the country abandoned a contract for offshore oil exploration amid territorial disputes with neighboring islands. In 2014, the case was proceeding through arbitration, though no resolution had been reached by year's end.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Political Rights: 39 / 40 [Key]

A. Electoral Process: 12 / 12

Under the 1979 constitution, the bicameral Parliament consists of the 17-member House of Assembly, elected for five years, and an appointed 11-member Senate. The prime minister is

chosen by the majority party in the House of Assembly. The prime minister chooses six members of the Senate, the opposition leader selects three, and two are chosen in consultation with civic and religious organizations. A governor general represents the British monarch as head of state. The island is divided into 11 quarters (districts), each with its own elected council and administrative services.

The Saint Lucia Labour Party (SLP) unseated the United Workers Party (UWP) in 2011 general elections with an 11-to-6 seat majority in the House of Assembly. Kenny Anthony, who served as SLP prime minister from 1997 to 2006, was sworn in for a third term.

In April 2013, the Constitutional Reform Commission presented a final report to Parliament, which was to consider the recommendations in 2014. However, parliamentary debate on the measures was postponed in August 2014, and had not been rescheduled at year's end.

B. Political Pluralism and Participation: 16 / 16

Political parties are free to organize, but the conservative UWP and the social-democratic SLP dominate politics. Five parties competed in the last general election, but no others gained representation. The Lucian People's Movement (LPM), launched before the 2011 elections, is especially active on the political scene.

C. Functioning of Government: 11 / 12

Saint Lucia has one of the lowest levels of corruption in the West Indies. Access to information is legally guaranteed, and government officials are required by law to present their financial assets annually to the Integrity Commission.

Civil Liberties: 53 / 60

D. Freedom of Expression and Belief: 15 / 16

The constitution of Saint Lucia guarantees freedom of speech. There are a number of privately owned and independent news outlets that discuss a wide spectrum of issues. Internet access is not restricted.

Libel offenses were removed from the criminal code in 2006. However, in 2013, radio journalist Timothy Poleon and his employer, Radio Caribbean International (RCI), were threatened with defamation lawsuits by several government officials, including the national security minister, over critical remarks that Poleon had made on the air. He was forced to apologize in order to avoid legal action.

The constitution guarantees freedom of religion, and that right is respected in practice. Academic freedom is generally honored as well.

E. Associational and Organizational Rights: 12 / 12

Constitutional guarantees regarding freedoms of assembly and association are largely upheld. Civic groups are well organized and politically active, as are labor unions, which represent the majority of wage earners. In September 2014, the Saint Lucia Fire Service Association went on strike for nearly two weeks demanding an improvement in working conditions.

F. Rule of Law: 12 / 16

The judicial system is independent and includes a high court under the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court (ECSC). Saint Lucia announced in May 2014 that it will adopt the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) as its final court of appeal, replacing the London-based Privy Council.

Police brutality is a significant problem. In 2013, the United States cut aid to the Royal Saint Lucia Police Force (RSLPF) due to credible allegations of gross human rights violations related to 12 extrajudicial killings that took place in 2010 and 2011. The government responded by inviting an international investigation of the killings and enlisting the Jamaican police to investigate the RSLPF. In June 2014, a mentally ill man was shot and killed for allegedly threatening police officers with rocks. In August, a man was assaulted during a police raid on his home. The Deputy Police Commissioner had advised officers earlier in the year to exercise restraint, but no meaningful reform efforts were adopted.

Rising crime rates have been attributed to gang violence. In June 2014, the government criminalized membership in gangs, passing the Anti-Gang Act No. 4. If convicted, individuals may face up to 10 years in prison. Overcrowding in prisons remains a problem. Bordelais prison, for example, has a capacity of 500 inmates but holds more than 600.

Same-sex sexual relations are illegal and punishable by up to 10 years in prison, but civil society voices have begun to demand changes in legislation in recent years.

G. Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights: 14 / 16

Women are underrepresented in politics and other professions; there are currently five women serving in Parliament. Domestic violence is a serious concern and often goes unreported. The Saint Lucia Fire Service Association strike in September 2014 resulted in an agreement to create a legal mechanism to respond to matters of sexual harassment in the workplace. Saint Lucia is still a destination country for human trafficking and for forced labor and prostitution, but significant progress has been reported.

Scoring Key: X / Y (Z)

X = Score Received

Y = Best Possible Score

Z = Change from Previous Year

Full Methodology

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