

São Tomé and Príncipe

Country:

São Tomé and Príncipe

Year:

2016

Freedom Status:

Free

Political Rights:

2

Civil Liberties:

2

Aggregate Score:

81

Freedom Rating:

2.0

Overview:

Political Rights: 34 / 40 [Key]

Civil Liberties: 47 / 60

São Tomé and Príncipe remained stable in 2015 after the Independent Democratic Action party (ADI) defeated the governing Movement for the Liberation of São Tomé and Príncipe–Social Democratic Party (MLSTP-PSD) in last year's parliamentary elections. In anticipation of the 2016 presidential election, officials began work on a new voter registration system in 2015. In March, the government declared that all Cape Verdean emigrants who were living in São Tomé and Príncipe at the time of its 1975 independence would be able to secure São Toméan nationality at no cost through the end of 2015; those who take advantage will have the opportunity to participate in future elections.

Government corruption remains a problem. In May 2015, the Court of Auditors announced that it had found numerous irregularities in public contracts awarded in 2014, adding that it had discovered similar issues in previous years and that the country lacked mechanisms to hold offenders accountable. Investigators in late 2015 were probing corruption allegations against former members of the Cantagalo municipal government, pertaining to illegal land sales and the issuing of fake documents, including passports. Separately, in a May session of the National Assembly, the opposition MLSTP-PSD claimed that Prime Minister Patrice Trovoada had been involved in a corrupt real estate deal involving the public acquisition of a new Supreme Court building. In August, MLSTP-PSD members accused Trovoada of politicizing the central bank after he dismissed three of its directors, two of whom were MLSTP-PSD members.

Members of the security forces have been known to commit violent acts against civilians. Justino Lima, head of the armed forces, was dismissed in early 2015 after the emergence of a video clip that apparently depicted him and other military officials beating a man suspected of theft. A new military chief was appointed in July, a few weeks after a military patrol had killed a young man accused of illegally extracting sand.

São Tomé and Príncipe remains heavily dependent on international aid, with the majority of its budget financed by donors. The trafficking of people and narcotics on ships in São Toméan waters continued in 2015. The government has actively sought international assistance to address the problem, and in December inaugurated a new maritime surveillance system.

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