

Rwanda - Human Rights Scorecard ¹

Rwanda is a landlocked East African country known for its green, mountainous landscape. Rwanda went through a horrific genocide in 1994, and the country has been slowly recovering since, both economically and socially. Rwanda's economy is largely based on subsistence agriculture, and tea and coffee are the major exports. Enviro-tourism is a growing economic sector and the most important source of foreign exchange. ²

Official languages: French, English, Kinyarwanda

Ethnic groups: 85% Hutus; 14% Tutsis; 1% Twa

Government: Unitary semi-presidential republic

- President: Paul Kagame

- Prime Minister: Anastase Murekezi

Death penalty: Abolitionist for all crimes

Population: 12.8 millions

Life expectancy: 63.4 years

Under-5 mortality: 55 per 1000

Adult literacy: 70.5 percent



Section 1: Respect for the Integrity of the Person

Respect for the integrity of the individual is the most fundamental of human rights groupings. It guarantees protection of the person to ensure the right to life, and freedom from torture. It also prevents arbitrary detention, and disappearances, and ensures the right to a free and fair trial when accused.

Freedom from arbitrary or unlawful deprivation of life



Largely disrespected ³

There have been several reports that the government committed arbitrary or unlawful killings. Prevailing attitudes are reflected in the president's statement, "[...] we will continue to arrest more suspects and if possible shoot in broad daylight those who intend to destabilize our country."

Freedom from disappearance



Largely disrespected ⁴

There were more reports of disappearances and politically motivated abductions than in previous years. State Security Forces are allegedly involved in reported disappearances. Local human rights organizations have received threats from government officials to stop investigating.

Freedom from torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment



Largely disrespected ⁵

The constitution and law prohibit such practices, and there were fewer reports of abuse of detainees and prisoners by military and NISS officials than in 2012. However, there were still many reports of abuse and torture by Rwandan authorities.

Freedom from arbitrary arrest or detention



Largely disrespected ⁶

The constitution and law prohibit arbitrary arrest and detention, but State Security Forces (SSF) regularly arrest and detain persons arbitrarily and without due process. Unregistered opposition political parties reported their supporters were frequently arrested.

Freedom from denial of fair public trial



Partially respected ⁷

The constitution and law provide for an independent judiciary, and the judiciary generally operates without government interference. However, there were constraints on judicial independence, and government officials sometimes attempt to influence individual cases.

Freedom from arbitrary interference with privacy, family, home or correspondence



Largely disrespected ⁸

Although the constitution and law prohibit intrusions into individual privacy, there were numerous reports that the government monitored homes, phone calls, e-mail, other private communications, movements, and personal and institutional data.

Section 2: Respect for Civil Liberties

Civil liberties are a basic category of internationally recognized human rights. They include the freedoms of expression, assembly, association, education, and religion. These are inalienable rights which should not be breached by government, and should ensure the rights of all, including women and minority groups.

Freedom of speech and press (*Reporters Without Borders Press Freedom Index*)⁹



Score: 55.46, Rank: 161 / 179 – Highly controlled, limited or intimidated¹⁰

The constitution provides for freedom of speech and press “in conditions prescribed by the law,” but the government at times restricts these rights. The government intimidates and arrests journalists who express views it deems critical on sensitive topics.

Freedom from academic censorship



Partially respected¹¹

The government generally did not restrict academic freedom or cultural events, but authorities frequently suspend secondary and university students for on vague charges of divisionism or engaging in genocide ideology. Such intervention leads to self-censorship.

Freedom of peaceful assembly and association



Largely disrespected¹²

The constitution provides for freedom of assembly and association that are, however, subject to restrictions. Private organizations are required to register, and the government has impeded the formation of new political parties and restricted political party activities.

Freedom of religion



Largely disrespected¹³

The constitution provides for freedom of religion. However, the government occasionally interferes with religious organizations, sometimes forcibly changing their leadership. The government may also detain groups for organising breakaway groups from existing churches.

Protection of refugees and stateless persons



Partially respected¹⁴

The law provides for the granting of asylum or refugee status, and the government has established a system for providing protection to refugees. However, refugee camp thugs sometimes act with impunity by intimidating both police and other refugees.

Overall protection of civil liberties (*FreedomHouse Civil Liberties Index*)^{15 16}



6 / 7 – Not free¹⁷

Rwanda’s civil liberties rating recently declined from 5 to 6 due to the reduced ability to express and discuss views that are critical of the government, particularly on the internet. There are also increased suspicions of government surveillance of private communications.

Section 3: Respect for Political Rights

Political rights ensure all members of society are able to influence the political process. The assessment of political rights includes an examination of the electoral process and the selection of representatives, the political empowerment of the general public, the tolerance of dissent, the accountability of government, etc..

Overall protection of political rights (*FreedomHouse Political Rights Index*)¹⁸



6 / 7 – Not free¹⁹

Rwanda’s constitution grants broad powers to the president, who can serve up to two seven-year terms and has the authority to appoint the PM. Parliament generally lacks independence. With no serious challengers, Kagame won reelection with 93% of the votes in 2010.

Section 4: Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

The civil, political, economic and social rights exercised within a country are often modulated by the degree of transparency and freedom from corruption. Various international metrics assess transparency and corruption, including the OECD anti-bribery convention, the Bribe Payers Index, and the Open Budget Index.

Transparency and freedom from corruption (*Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index*)²⁰



Score: 49%, Rank: 55 / 175 – Some corruption²¹

The law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials and private persons transacting business with the government. The law also allows citizens who report requests for bribes by government officials to receive financial rewards. However, corruption remains a problem.

Section 5: Governmental Response to Criticism

This section deals specifically with the response heads of state have to civil society or international human rights reports.

Governmental attitudes vis-à-vis independent investigations of alleged human rights violations



Largely disrespected²²

There were reports that human rights NGOs are fearful of the government and self-censor their analyses. An international NGO for human rights experienced delays during its annual registration process that it attributed to government opposition to its work.

Section 6: Discrimination and Societal Abuses

Legal and social discriminatory practices related to sex, race, creed or sexual orientation, are violations of human rights. Countries with strong civil liberty traditions should have a fair legal system that ensures the rule of law, allows free economic activity, and ensures equality of opportunity for all.

Rights of women (World Economic Forum Gender Gap Index)²³



Score: 78.5%, Rank: 7 / 142 – Partially unequal rights²⁴

Women have the same legal status and rights as men. The law provides for imprisonment for threatening, harassing, or beating one's spouse. However, domestic violence against women remains common. The government handles rape cases, including spousal rape, as a judicial priority.

Rights of Children (KidsRights Index Overall Score)²⁵



Score: 62%, Rank: 116 / 165 – Somewhat protected²⁶

Citizenship is derived from the parents. However, children born in the country to unknown or stateless parents are automatically citizens. There are many street children throughout the country. There has been an increase in child sexual abuse and exploitation in recent years.

Rights of persons with disabilities



Partially respected²⁷

The law prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities in employment, education, access to health care, etc., and these provisions are generally enforced. However, disability is often seen as a curse, which often results in social exclusion and abandonment or the hiding of children.

Rights of national/racial/ethnic minorities (e.g. discrimination, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism etc.)



Largely disrespected²⁸

Since the 1994 Genocide, the government has called for national reconciliation, removed all references to ethnicity in official discourse and eliminated ethnic quotas. Some individuals continue to accuse the government of favouring Tutsis in government employment and other matters.

Freedom from abuse and discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity



Largely disrespected²⁹

There are no laws that criminalize same sex sexual activity, and cabinet-level government officials express support for LGBT rights. However, there have been reports of societal discrimination and abuse, and LGBT rights groups reported occasional harassment by neighbours and police.

Section 7: Workers' Rights

Workers' rights are a group of legal rights relating to labour relations between workers and their employers. At their core are things like the ability to negotiate pay, benefits, terms of employment, and safe working conditions. These rights often devolve from the right to unionize and access to collective bargaining.

Rights to freedom of association and to collective bargaining



Partially respected³⁰

The law provides most salaried formal sector workers the right to form and join independent unions, conduct legal strikes, and bargain collectively, but collective bargaining is restricted by various measures. The law generally doesn't protect family businesses or informal sector workers.

Freedom from forced or compulsory labour



Largely disrespected³¹

Rwanda is a source and, to a lesser extent, transit and destination country for women and children subjected to forced labour and sex trafficking. The Government does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; but is working to improve.

Freedom from forced labour for children, and a minimum age of employment



Largely disrespected³²

The minimum age for full-time employment is 16. The law prohibits children under 18 from participating in hazardous work. However, the law does not apply to noncontractual employment, and thus leaves most working children unprotected.

Right to acceptable conditions of work



Largely disrespected³³

The national minimum wage has not been updated since 1974, when it was set at 100 Rwandan francs (\$0.15) per day. According to the World Bank, 45 percent of the population lived below the national poverty line in 2011.

Right to employment



0.6% - Reasonable unemployment³⁴

The unemployment rate in Rwanda is very low, although underemployment (when one does work that is below their skills set) is widespread. Low unemployment figures are debated by some who argue that many activities such as subsistence farming may not constitute employment.³⁵

¹ A hybrid human rights and freedoms model, leveraging both legal principles and intuitive classifications, has been used for this human rights assessment. The CJPME Foundation has sought to integrate as many independent sources and metrics into its summary analysis as possible. In many cases, for qualitative material pertaining to the respect for a particular right in a country, the CJPME Foundation has drawn on material from Human Rights Watch and the US State Department country reports. Human Rights Watch (HRW) publishes a World Report which assesses the respect for human rights in each country. HRW uses a methodology of local reporting and interviewing, combined with research and analysis to assess the level of respect of human rights. The U.S State Department keeps an updated publication on the state of human rights internationally. Their system of research and accountability draws from the research of official US State Department officials, as well as local civil-society and international human rights organizations.

² Commonly-known information on the country is drawn from various Internet sources, including Google country pages, and Amnesty International. For death penalty see: "Death sentences and executions in 2013." Amnesty International. March 24, 2014. Accessed May 15, 2015.

³ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/act50/001/2014/en/>.

³ "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014 Rwanda." U.S Department of State. June 25, 2015. Accessed January 22, 2016.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/#wrapper>.

⁴ Ibid. U.S Department of State. For purposes of the present analysis, a "disappearance" is different than simple arbitrary detention because a "disappearance" is considered permanent.

⁵ Ibid. U.S Department of State.

⁶ Ibid. U.S Department of State.

⁷ Ibid. U.S Department of State.

⁸ Ibid. U.S Department of State.

⁹ The Press Freedom Index published by Reporters Without Borders ranks the level of freedom of information in 179 countries. This is determined through the polling of local NGOs and freedom of expression civil society organizations across the globe. This index is also determined by local correspondents and follow-up work done on reports of infringement to press freedom where ever it takes place. Their methodology looks at six different indicators: 1) Media pluralism, 2) Media independence, 3) Media atmosphere and self-censorship, 4) the Law around media, 5) Media transparency, and 6) Media infrastructure. The score from these six indicators is combined with a rating for the violence against journalists in the country to create an overall score. The CJPME Foundation classifies the Press Freedom Index as follows: 0 – 14.99 (25 countries), Largely free, diverse and independent; 15 – 24.99 (29 countries), Mostly free, diverse and independent; 25 – 29.99 (32 countries), Partially free, diverse and independent; 30 – 39.99 (49 countries), Partially controlled, limited or intimidated; 40 & higher (42 countries), Highly controlled, limited or intimidated.

¹⁰ "World Press Freedom Index." Reporters Without Borders: For Freedom of Information. January 1, 2014. Accessed January 22, 2016.

<http://rsf.org/index2014/en-index2014.php>.

¹¹ "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014 Rwanda." U.S Department of State. June 25, 2015. Accessed January 22, 2016.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/#wrapper>.

¹² Ibid. U.S Department of State.

¹³ "2014 Report on International Religious Freedom -Rwanda." U.S Department of State. October 14, 2015. Accessed January 22, 2016.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2014/af/238250.htm>

¹⁴ "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014 Rwanda." U.S Department of State. June 25, 2015. Accessed January 22, 2016.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/#wrapper>.

¹⁵ Freedom House is an internationally recognized NGO based in the U.S which documents and rates the quality of democratic practice in a given country. Freedom House splits its grading system between the two areas of civil and political rights in a country. On each scale, the Freedom House rating is 1-2.5 (free), 3-5.5 (partly free) and 6-7 (not free).

¹⁶ Freedom House's Civil Liberties index measures things such as a) freedom of expression and belief, b) associational and organizational rights, c) the rule of law, and d) personal autonomy and individual rights. Freedom House rates countries as 1-2.5 (free), 3-5.5 (partly free) and 6-7 (not free). Accessed Dec. 9, 2014

<https://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2014/methodology#.VldwWzHF98F>

¹⁷ "Rwanda." Freedom in the World 2015: Rwanda. January 1, 2016. Accessed January 26, 2016.

<https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2015/rwanda>.

¹⁸ See footnote about the Freedom House organization above. The Freedom House Political Rights assessment looks at a) the electoral process, b) political pluralism and participation, and c) the functioning of government. Accessed Dec. 9, 2014 <https://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2014/methodology#.VldwWzHF98F>

¹⁹ "Rwanda." Freedom in the World 2015: Rwanda. January 1, 2016. Accessed January 26, 2016.

<https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2015/rwanda>.

²⁰ Transparency International (TI) publishes a “Corruption Perceptions Index” annually, which is based on independent research and polling. The main categories of corruption are broken down within the index to provide particulars on issues including things such as perceptions of corruption, control of corruption, and financial secrecy. A country receives a score on 100; the higher the score, the less corrupt the society. The CJPME foundation has classified them into categories as follows: 80-100 (11 countries): Very limited corruption; 60-79 (27 countries): Limited corruption; 40-59 (41 countries): Some corruption; 20-39 (80 countries): Highly corrupt; 0-19 (15 countries): Extremely corrupt

²¹ "Rwanda." Corruption by Country. January 1, 2015. Accessed January 26, 2016. <http://www.transparency.org/country#RWA>.

²² "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014 Rwanda." U.S Department of State. June 25, 2015. Accessed January 22, 2016.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/#wrapper>.

²³ This metric is based on the World Economic Forum’s Gender Gap Index. 0.00 denotes inequality between the sexes, and 1.00 denotes fully equality between the sexes. This index looks at four subdomains: economic participation and opportunity; educational attainment; health and survival; and political empowerment. Each country is given a percentage score; the higher the percentage, the better the protections. The CJPME Foundation classed the percentages as follows: 80-100% (5 countries): Almost equal rights; 70-79% (60 countries): Somewhat unequal rights; 0-69% (77 countries): Very unequal rights

²⁴ "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014 Rwanda." U.S Department of State. June 25, 2015. Accessed January 22, 2016.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/#wrapper>.

²⁵ This metric is based on the KidsRights Index Overall Score. This index has five subdomains: life expectancy and maternal mortality; health; education; protection; and child rights environment. Each country is given a percentage score; the higher the percentage, the better the protections. KidsRights classes the countries according to these percentages, and the CJPME Foundation has given each class a term as follows: 70-100% (77 countries): Protected; 60-70% (29 countries): Somewhat protected; 45-50% (33 countries): Slightly vulnerable; 30-45% (12 countries): Highly vulnerable; Lower than 30% (11 countries): Extremely vulnerable

²⁶ "The KidsRights Index: Overall Score." The KidsRights Index. January 1, 2014. Accessed November 25, 2014.

<http://www.kidsrightsindex.org/Index/Overallscore.aspx>

²⁷ "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014 Rwanda." U.S Department of State. June 25, 2015. Accessed January 22, 2016.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/#wrapper>.

²⁸ Ibid. U.S Department of State.

²⁹ Ibid. U.S Department of State.

³⁰ Ibid. U.S Department of State.

³¹ "Trafficking in Persons Report 2015." U.S Department of State, 2015. Accessed January 26, 2016.

<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/243561.pdf>

³² "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014 Rwanda." U.S Department of State. June 25, 2015. Accessed January 22, 2016.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/#wrapper>.

³³ Ibid. U.S Department of State. See also a well-done Wikipedia comparison of wage, income and work week metrics across countries at

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_minimum_wages_by_country

³⁴ "Global Employment Trends." International Labour Organization. January 1, 2013. Accessed January 26, 2016.

http://www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/global-employment-trends/2014/WCMS_233936/lang--en/index.htm.

³⁵ "Understanding the 3.4% unemployment rate", The New Times. August 1, 2015. Accessed January 26, 2016.

<http://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/article/2015-08-18/191656/>