

The Syrian Foreign Ministry protested the violation of territorial integrity and summoned the United States envoy in Damascus for an explanation. The Syrian government also issued a statement, which read: "Syria condemns this aggressive act and holds American forces responsible for this aggression and all of its repercussions."

For its part, the United States did not confirm any such action. A spokesperson for the United States military said only, "It's a developing situation." Should this raid prove to be true, it would be the first incursion of United States forces inside Syria. The United States has repeatedly accused Syria of not doing enough to prevent militants from crossing the border into Iraq. As such, the rationale for this -- still unconfirmed -- action has been that the United States may have been chasing after a high-level militant target, as it sought to secure the border between Iraq and Syria.

On the other side of the equation, while the Syrian government has condemned the possible violation of its territorial integrity, it was not expected to take strong retaliatory action. Principally, this is because the Syrian government, led by secular Ba'athists, has not looked favorably on Islamist militants.

In August 2009, Iraq and Syria respectively recalled their ambassadors, as a diplomatic row deepened over Baghdad's claim that Damascus was giving safe haven to militants responsible for attacks on Baghdad. At issue were a wave of particularly brutal bombings in Iraq, which targeted the foreign and finance ministries in Baghdad that left close to 100 people dead. Iraq recalled its envoy from Syria after a taped confession was broadcast, indicating that recent violent attacks in Baghdad had been ordered by Syria-based Iraqi Baathists. In retaliation for the move, Syria said it was also recalling its envoy from Iraq. Syria also rejected any involvement in the violence. Syria's declaration of innocence was somewhat bolstered by a claim of responsibility by al-Qaida wing called Islamic States of Iraq. Turkey was set to mediate the dispute.

-- August, 2009

© Copyright 2010 CountryWatch, Inc. All Rights Reserved. For permission to cite CountryWatch, please email editor@countrywatch.com. For the full CountryWatch offering, please visit www.countrywatch.com.

Freedom Rankings

Freedom in the World

Editor's Note: This ranking by Freedom House quantifies political freedom and civil liberties into a single combined index on each sovereign country's level of freedom and liberty. The initials "PR" and "CL" stand for Political Rights and Civil Liberties, respectively. The number 1 represents the most free

countries and the number 7 represents the least free. Several countries fall in the continuum in between. The freedom ratings reflect an overall judgment based on survey results.

Country	PR	CL	Freedom Rating
Afghanistan	5	5	Partly Free
Albania	3	3	Partly Free
Algeria	6	5	Not Free
Andorra	1	1	Free
Angola	6	5	Not Free
Antigua and Barbuda	2	2	Free
Argentina	2	2	Free
Armenia	5	4	Partly Free
Australia	1	1	Free
Austria	1	1	Free
Azerbaijan	6	5	Not Free
Bahamas	1	1	Free
Bahrain	5	5	Partly Free
Bangladesh	5	4	Partly Free
Barbados	1	1	Free
Belarus	7	6	Not Free
Belgium	1	1	Free
Belize	1	2	Free
Benin	2	2	Free
Bhutan	6	5	Not Free
Bolivia	3	3	Partly Free
Bosnia-Herzegovina	4	3	Partly Free
Botswana	2	2	Free
Brazil	2	2	Free
Brunei	6	5	Not Free
Bulgaria	1	2	Free
Burkina Faso	5	3	Partly Free
Burma	7	7	Not Free
Burundi	4	5	Partly Free
Cambodia	6	5	Not Free

Cameroon	6	6	Not Free
Canada	1	1	Free
Cape Verde	1	1	Free
Central African Republic	5	5	Partly Free
Chad	7	6	Not Free
Chile	1	1	Free
China	7	6	Not Free
Colombia	3	3	Partly Free
Comoros	4	4	Partly Free
Congo (Brazzaville)	6	5	Partly Free
Congo (Kinshasa)	5	6	Not Free
Costa Rica	1	1	Free
Cote d'Ivoire	7	5	Not Free
Croatia	2	2	Free
Cuba	7	7	Not Free
Cyprus (G)	1	1	Free
Czech Republic	1	1	Free
Denmark	1	1	Free
Djibouti	5	5	Partly Free
Dominica	1	1	Free
Dominican Republic	2	2	Free
East Timor	3	4	Partly Free
Ecuador	3	3	Partly Free
Egypt	6	5	Not Free
El Salvador	2	3	Free
Equatorial Guinea	7	6	Not Free
Eritrea	7	6	Not Free
Estonia	1	1	Free
Ethiopia	5	5	Partly Free
Fiji	6	4	Partly Free
Finland	1	1	Free
France	1	1	Free

Gabon	6	4	Partly Free
The Gambia	5	4	Partly Free
Georgia	4	4	Partly Free
Germany	1	1	Free
Ghana	1	2	Free
Greece	1	2	Free
Grenada	1	2	Free
Guatemala	3	4	Partly Free
Guinea	6	5	Not Free
Guinea-Bissau	4	4	Partly Free
Guyana	2	3	Free
Haiti	4	5	Partly Free
Honduras	3	3	Partly Free
Hungary	1	1	Free
Iceland	1	1	Free
India	2	3	Free
Indonesia	2	3	Free
Iran	6	6	Not Free
Iraq	6	6	Not Free
Ireland	1	1	Free
Israel	1	2	Free
Italy	1	1	Free
Jamaica	2	3	Free
Japan	1	2	Free
Jordan	5	4	Partly Free
Kazakhstan	6	5	Not Free
Kenya	4	3	Partly Free
Kiribati	1	1	Free
Kuwait	4	4	Partly Free
Kyrgyzstan	5	4	Partly Free
Laos	7	6	Not Free
Latvia	2	1	Free

Lebanon	5	4	Partly Free
Lesotho	2	3	Free
Liberia	3	4	Partly Free
Libya	7	7	Not Free
Liechtenstein	1	1	Free
Lithuania	1	1	Free
Luxembourg	1	1	Free
(FYR of) Macedonia	3	3	Partly Free
Madagascar	4	3	Partly Free
Malawi	4	4	Partly Free
Malaysia	4	4	Partly Free
Maldives	6	5	Not Free
Mali	2	3	Free
Malta	1	1	Free
Marshall Islands	1	1	Free
Mauritania	4	4	Partly Free
Mauritius	1	2	Free
Mexico	2	3	Free
Micronesia	1	1	Free
Moldova	3	4	Partly Free
Monaco	2	1	Free
Mongolia	2	2	Free
Morocco	5	4	Partly Free
Mozambique	3	3	Partly Free
Namibia	2	2	Free
Nauru	1	1	Free
Nepal	5	4	Not Free
Netherlands	1	1	Free
New Zealand	1	1	Free
Nicaragua	3	3	Partly Free
Niger	3	4	Partly Free
Nigeria	4	4	Partly Free

North Korea	7	7	Not Free
Norway	1	1	Free
Oman	6	5	Not Free
Pakistan	6	5	Not Free
Palau	1	1	Free
Panama	1	2	Free
Papua New Guinea	3	3	Partly Free
Paraguay	3	3	Partly Free
Peru	2	3	Free
Philippines	4	3	Partly Free
Poland	1	1	Free
Portugal	1	1	Free
Qatar	6	5	Not Free
Romania	2	2	Free
Russia	6	5	Not Free
Rwanda	6	5	Not Free
Saint Kitts and Nevis	1	1	Free
Saint Lucia	1	1	Free
Saint Vincent and Grenadines	2	1	Free
Samoa	2	2	Free
San Marino	1	1	Free
Sao Tome and Principe	2	2	Free
Saudi Arabia	7	6	Not Free
Senegal	2	3	Free
Serbia*	3	2	Free
Seychelles	3	3	Partly Free
Sierra Leone	3	3	Partly Free
Singapore	5	4	Partly Free
Slovakia	1	1	Free
Slovenia	1	1	Free
Solomon Islands	4	3	Partly Free
Somalia	7	7	Not Free

South Africa	2	2	Free
South Korea	1	2	Free
Spain	1	1	Free
Sri Lanka	4	4	Partly Free

Sudan	7	7	Not Free
Suriname	2	2	Free
Swaziland	7	5	Not Free
Sweden	1	1	Free
Switzerland	1	1	Free
Syria	7	6	Not Free
Taiwan*	1	1	Free
Tajikistan	6	5	Not Free
Tanzania	4	3	Partly Free
Thailand	6	4	Partly Free
Togo	5	5	Not Free
Tonga	5	3	Partly Free
Trinidad and Tobago	2	2	Free
Tunisia	7	5	Not Free
Turkey	3	3	Partly Free
Turkmenistan	7	7	Not Free
Tuvalu	1	1	Free
Uganda	5	4	Partly Free
Ukraine	3	2	Free
United Arab Emirates	6	6	Not Free
United Kingdom	1	1	Free
United States	1	1	Free
Uruguay	1	1	Free
Uzbekistan	7	7	Not Free
Vanuatu	2	2	Free
Venezuela	4	4	Partly Free
Vietnam	7	5	Not Free
Yemen	5	5	Partly Free
Zambia	3	4	Partly Free
Zimbabwe	7	6	Not Free

* Due to the separation of Montenegro from Serbia, Montenegro is now treated as a sovereign country. Although it is not listed above, according to Freedom House, Montenegro has a PL rating of 3 and a CL rating of, 3, thusly classifying one of the world's newest countries as "partly free." Along a similar vein, Kosovo, which also separated from the Yugoslav successor state of Serbia, is not listed above. No calculation is available for Kosovo at this time, however, a future Freedom House ranking may include the world's newest country in its tally. Taiwan has been listed above despite its contested status; while Taiwan claims sovereign status, China claims ultimate jurisdiction over Taiwan.

Source:

This data is derived from the latest edition of Freedom House's Freedom in the World 2008 edition.

-- as of 2009

© Copyright 2010 CountryWatch, Inc. All Rights Reserved. For permission to cite CountryWatch, please email editor@countrywatch.com. For the full CountryWatch offering, please visit www.countrywatch.com.

Human Rights

Human Rights in Syria

Overview

The Syrian Arab Republic has a poor human rights record. There is widespread government corruption and a lack of transparency. Rule of law is also limited. As well, citizens of Syria have no right or ability to change the government.

In 1963, the Syrian government imposed emergency rule which continues today. Emergency rule has allowed the government to detain thousands of suspected political opponents without charge or trial, to arrest and detain human rights activists for "carrying out acts which could incite factional conflict in the nation." The London-based Syrian Human Rights Committee (SHRC) estimates 4,000 political prisoners are being held. The State of Emergency also allows the government to restrict freedoms of religion, speech, expression, press, assembly, association, and movement.

In recent years, numerous people with suspected ties to Islamist groups are often harassed, arrested, detained and tortured for extended periods of time.

Hundreds of prisoners of conscience remain in prolonged incommunicado detention without trial.

Many more are serving sentences imposed following unfair trials.

Other criminal detainees are subjected to torture and beatings. The security forces who perpetrate these actions do so with impunity. In the last year, several people died at the hands of security forces in questionable circumstances.

Copyright of Syria Country Review is the property of CountryWatch Incorporated and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.