



EVALUATION OF 2008-2011 UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL CANDIDATES
JOINT REPORT BY FREEDOM HOUSE AND UN WATCH
PRESENTED AT UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS, MAY 6, 2008

Background

On May 21, 2008, the UN General Assembly will elect 15 new Human Rights Council members. Twenty countries are candidates. However, each is not competing against all of the others, but rather only against the ones from the same UN regional group.

In this year's election, two regional groups have submitted the same amount of candidates as available seats. The African Group has 4 countries vying for 4 available seats, and the Latin American and Caribbean Group ("GRULAC") has 3 countries vying for 3 available seats. This does not mean that the candidate countries for these groups will automatically be elected; in order to become a Council member a country must receive the votes of at least 97 of the 192 General Assembly member states (an absolute majority).

In the three other regional groups there is competition between the candidates. The Asian Group has 6 countries vying for 4 available seats; the Eastern European Group has 4 countries vying for 2 available seats; and the Western Europe and Others Group ("WEOG") has 3 countries vying for 2 available seats.

Methodology

According to Resolution 60/251, General Assembly members are supposed to elect Council by "tak[ing] into account the candidates' contribution to the promotion and protection of human rights and their voluntary pledges and commitments made thereto." The resolution also provides that consideration ought to be given to whether the candidate can meet the obligations of Council membership, which include (a) "to uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights" and (b) to "fully cooperate with the Council."

Guided by these criteria, Freedom House and UN Watch evaluated each candidate's suitability for election to the Human Rights Council by examining its record of human rights protection at home and its record of human rights promotion at the UN, based on the following sources of information and analysis:

- Its rating in [Freedom in the World 2008](#), an annual survey by Freedom House that measures political rights and civil liberties worldwide, ranking countries as free, partly free, or not free;
- Its rating in [The Economist 2007 Democracy Index](#), which considers a country's electoral process and pluralism, civil liberties, government functioning, political participation, and political culture, and ranks it as a full democracy, a flawed democracy, a hybrid regime, or an authoritarian regime;
- Its rating in [Freedom of the Press 2008: A Global Survey of Media Independence](#), an annual survey by Freedom House that examines the legal, political and economic environments in which journalists work in order to assess the degree of print, broadcast, and internet freedom in every country in the world, ranking each as free, partly free, or not free;
- Its ranking in the [2007 Worldwide Press Freedom Index](#) by Reporters Sans Frontières, which measures the degree of freedom that journalists and news organizations enjoy in each country, and the efforts made by state authorities to respect and ensure respect for this freedom; and
- Its voting record on key human rights proposals, which are classified as positive, negative or mixed based on the following assessments:
 - UN Watch analysis of [2007-2008 votes at the Human Rights Council](#);
 - Democracy Coalition Project (DCP) analysis of [2007 votes at the Third Committee](#);
 - DCP analysis of [2006-2007 positions taken at the Human Rights Council](#); and
 - DCP analysis of [2006 votes at the Third Committee](#).

Ratings

Based on the above assessment of each country's record of human rights protection at home and of its UN voting record, we find that 12 candidate countries are qualified for election to the Human Rights Council; 5 candidates have poor records and are not qualified to be Council members; and 3 countries fall somewhere in between, with qualifications that are questionable.

Qualified: Argentina, Chile, Czech Republic, France, Ghana, Japan, Serbia, Slovakia, South Korea, Spain, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom.

Questionable: Brazil, East Timor, and Burkina Faso.

Not Qualified: Bahrain, Gabon, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Zambia.

For supporting information, see the charts below.

UN Watch and Freedom House are nongovernmental organizations that monitor human rights mechanisms at the UN and advocate for greater promotion of human rights worldwide.



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Candidates from the African Group (for 4 seats)

To replace Gabon, Ghana, Mali, Zambia

COUNTRY	FH RATING	FH PRESS FREEDOM	RSF RANKING	ECONOMIST RATING	UN VOTING RECORD	SUITABILITY FOR HRC MEMBERSHIP
Burkina Faso	Partly Free	Partly Free	68	Authoritarian Regime	Mixed	Questionable
Gabon	Partly Free	Not Free	102	Authoritarian regime	Negative	Not Qualified
Ghana	Free	Free	29	Hybrid Regime	Mixed	Qualified
Zambia	Partly Free	Not Free	68	Hybrid Regime	Negative	Not Qualified

Candidates from the Asian Group (for 4 seats)

To replace Japan, Pakistan, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka

COUNTRY	FH RATING	FH PRESS FREEDOM	RSF RANKING	ECONOMIST RATING	UN VOTING RECORD	SUITABILITY FOR HRC MEMBERSHIP
Bahrain	Partly Free	Not Free	118	Authoritarian Regime	Negative	Not Qualified
East Timor	Partly Free	Partly Free	94	Flawed Democracy	Positive	Questionable
Japan	Free	Free	37	Full Democracy	Positive	Qualified
Pakistan	Not Free	Not Free	152	Authoritarian Regime	Negative	Not Qualified
South Korea	Free	Free	39	Flawed Democracy	Positive	Qualified
Sri Lanka	Partly Free	Not Free	156	Flawed Democracy	Negative	Not Qualified

Candidates from Eastern European Group (for 2 seats)

To replace Romania, Ukraine

COUNTRY	FH RATING	FH PRESS FREEDOM	RSF RANKING	ECONOMIST RATING	UN VOTING RECORD	SUITABILITY FOR HRC MEMBERSHIP
Czech Republic	Free	Free	14	Full Democracy	Positive	Qualified
Serbia	Free	Partly Free	67	Flawed Democracy	Positive	Qualified
Slovakia	Free	Free	4	Flawed Democracy	Positive	Qualified
Ukraine	Free	Partly Free	92	Flawed Democracy	Positive	Qualified

Candidates from GRULAC (for 3 seats)

To replace Brazil, Guatemala, Peru

COUNTRY	FH RATING	FH PRESS FREEDOM	RSF RANKING	ECONOMIST RATING	UN VOTING RECORD	SUITABILITY FOR HRC MEMBERSHIP
Argentina	Free	Partly Free	82	Full Democracy	Positive	Qualified
Brazil	Free	Partly Free	84	Flawed Democracy	Mixed	Questionable
Chile	Free	Free	39	Flawed Democracy	Positive	Qualified

Candidates from WEOG (for 2 seats)

To replace France, United Kingdom

COUNTRY	FH RATING	FH PRESS FREEDOM	RSF RANKING	ECONOMIST RATING	UN VOTING RECORD	SUITABILITY FOR HRC MEMBERSHIP
France	Free	Free	31	Full Democracy	Positive	Qualified
Spain	Free	Free	33	Full Democracy	Positive	Qualified
United Kingdom	Free	Free	24	Full Democracy	Positive	Qualified