

Study Identifies 17 Countries, Territories as World's Worst Human Rights Abusers

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A report by the Washington-based, Freedom House cites 17 countries and three territories as the World's Worst Human Rights Abusers. The report says citizens in these countries live in extremely oppressive environments. They have few basic rights and suffer persistent human rights violations.

The report identifies nine of the countries as the worst among the 20 countries and territories judged to be the world's worst human rights abusers.

Director of advocacy at Freedom House, Paula Schriefer, says it is no badge of honor to be included in this list.

"All eight countries from last year's report again made the list this year and these countries, unfortunately, were joined by Eritrea, which dropped a point in our civil liberties score to achieve the lowest possible ratings for both political rights and civil liberties," she said. "Eritrea, already a highly repressive country, went even lower in our ratings due to the government's increased repression of religious minorities and control over the judicial sector."

The other eight most abusive countries besides Eritrea include North Korea, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, Libya, Sudan, Burma, Equatorial Guinea, and Somalia. An additional eight nations on the list score just slightly above the worst ranked countries.

The report notes three of these countries, China, Cuba and Saudi Arabia, are members of the UN Human Rights Council, the body that monitors violations around the world.

The remaining five countries named in the report are Belarus, Chad, Laos, Syria, and for the first time, Guinea.

Schriefer says all these countries make Freedom House's abuse list because they are places where human beings suffer from some of the most severe and systemic human rights abuses in the world.

"These are issues that member states of the Council should be addressing, but all too often either are not addressing or are not adequately addressing," added Schriefer. "In fact, only a handful of these states-Burma, Guinea, Somalia, Sudan and North Korea-have been the focus of resolutions or

special sessions by the U.N. body and we praise the members of the U.N. for addressing the issues in these countries."

Schriefer says a resolution will be put forward at this Council session to renew the very important mandate of an independent expert on Sudan. She says her organization strongly urges the adoption of this resolution to help the victims of rape, violence and repression in that country.