

Afghanistan

Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

The law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials. The government did not implement the law effectively, and there were reports officials frequently engaged in corrupt practices with impunity. Some low-profile corruption cases were reportedly tried successfully at the provincial level. The government made several commitments to combat corruption, including a decree in 2012 by then president Karzai. In 2013 the Attorney General's Office created a monitoring department, as required by the decree, and it began accepting referred cases. No progress on the cases has been reported.

A 2013 law organizing the judiciary weakened the Control and Monitoring Department of the Supreme Court. The department had been considered effective in dealing with corruption within the judiciary in the districts and provinces. The new law eliminated some of the department's key positions and its authority to conduct investigations, make arrests, and prosecute violators.

Reports indicated corruption was endemic throughout society, and flows of money from the military, international donors, and the drug trade continued to exacerbate the problem. Reports indicated many citizens believed the government had not been effective in combating corruption. Corruption and uneven governance continued to play a significant role in allowing the Taliban to exert influence and control some areas in the southern, eastern, and some northern provinces, particularly in remote areas.

According to prisoners and local NGOs, corruption was widespread across the justice system, particularly in connection with the prosecution of criminal cases and arranging release from prison. There were also reports that officials were bribed or paid to reduce prison sentences, halt an investigation, or dismiss charges outright. The practice of filing criminal complaints in regard to civil matters was commonly used to settle business disputes or extort money from wealthy international investors.

During the year there were reports of "land grabbing" by both private and public actors. The most common type occurred when businesses illegally obtained property deeds from corrupt officials and sold the deeds to unsuspecting "homeowners," who would then be caught up in criminal prosecutions. Other reports indicated government officials grabbed land without compensation to exchange it for contracts or political favors. Occasionally provincial governments illegally confiscated land without due process or compensation to build public facilities.

Corruption: During the year there were significant developments in the case of Kabul Bank, which had been the country's largest private financial institution prior to its collapse in a bank-fraud scandal that began to unfold in 2010. Reportedly, nearly 57 billion Afghanis (\$983 million) of misappropriated funds were disbursed to politicians, ministers, and politically well-connected shareholders of the bank.

In October 2014 President Ghani issued a decree ordering that the appellate court decide pending appeals by former Kabul Bank officials Sherkhan Farnood and Khalilullah Ferozi's embezzling cases, that police arrest those who were convicted in the case but had not been incarcerated, and that the Supreme Court review the case and determine whether the scope of the case should be expanded. The decree also outlined steps to pursue the return of fraudulently acquired funds sent abroad. The decree resulted in the indictment of 17 individuals, and in November 2014 the appellate court tripled Farnood and Ferozi's

sentences to 15 years in prison. The Attorney General's Office subsequently froze the assets of 10 companies and eight individuals involved in the bank's collapse. In June President Ghani announced a one-week deadline for debtors to resolve unsettled debts or have their cases referred to the Attorney General's Office for prosecution. In July the Attorney General's Office announced a travel ban and asset freezes affecting 150 outstanding debtors. As of September the government stated that approximately \$440 million of assets had been recovered.

In November, Ferozi was reportedly allowed to leave prison on a temporary basis and signed a contract with the government to invest in and develop the "Smart City" housing project in Kabul, despite his criminal conviction and incarceration. Observers stated such a transaction between the government and a convicted criminal was against the law. The deal was quickly annulled, and Ferozi was returned to prison.

There were widespread reports of corrupt behavior in the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Urban Development. In June the Attorney General's Office announced investigations into three officials of the Ministry of Urban Development on suspicion of receiving bribes in exchange for development projects or housing assignments. In July President Ghani appointed a panel to investigate allegations of corruption in the Ministry of Education, including by officials accused of embezzling funds allocated to nonexistent schools.

There were reports the Attorney General's Office was unwilling or unable to pursue some corrupt officials and that high-level officials who were arrested on corruption-related charges and subsequently released due to political pressure. In addition there was anecdotal evidence that corrupt officials made accusations of corruption to undermine the reputations of their opponents or deflect attention from their own misdeeds. There were reports the Ministry of Finance sometimes compelled civil society organizations to pay fraudulent tax bills directly to corrupt officials.

Provincial police benefited financially from corruption at police checkpoints and from the narcotics industry. ANP officers reportedly paid higher-level Ministry of Interior officials for their positions and promotions. The justice system rarely pursued corruption cases, especially if they involved police, although authorities arrested and detained a provincial chief of police on drug-trafficking charges. The Ministry of Interior continued to be affected by widespread corruption, poor performance, and abuse of power by officers. Media reported in April that of nearly 2,000 complaints of misconduct to the Ministry of Interior's Inspector General's office, only nine were referred for legal action due to corruption within the ministry.

In addition to impunity, low salaries exacerbated corruption by officials. The international community worked with the national and provincial governance structures to address the problem of low salaries, but implementation of grade reform remained slow.

Credible sources reported local police in many areas extorted "taxes" at police checkpoints and behaved violently toward those who reluctant to pay. Truck drivers complained they had to bribe security forces, insurgents, and bandits to allow their trucks to pass.

Police reportedly demanded bribes from civilians to gain release from prison or avoid arrest. Citizens bribed corrections and detention officials to obtain release of prisoners who had not been discharged at the end of their sentences.

Governors with reported involvement in corruption, the drug trade, or records of human rights violations reportedly continued to receive executive appointments and served with relative impunity.

Financial Disclosure: The High Office of Oversight is responsible for collecting information from senior government officials on all sources and levels of personal income. The office verifies and publishes online and in mass media the personal asset

declarations of the most senior officials (those covered under Article 154 of the constitution) when they assume office and when they leave. While collection and publication occurred, there was only limited progress on the verification of such declarations by independent domestic and international experts. The absence of legal penalties for omissions or misrepresentations tended to undermine a key tool for identifying wrongdoing.

In June the Ministry of Interior announced an 18-month extension of the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan, a project that administers salary payments for the ANP in a more transparent and accountable process.

Public Access to Information: The constitution provides citizens the right to access government information, except when access might violate the rights of others. Access to information from official sources continued to be limited due to a lack of clarity regarding citizens' rights and a lack of transparency among government institutions. In December 2014 President Ghani signed the Access to Information Law, which provides an official mechanism to request previously unavailable information from the government. NGOs and human rights organizations said the law had not been fully implemented, and some government officials reportedly failed to disclose information of public interest in an adequate manner. Observers noted concern about some provisions of the law authorities can use to withhold information for national security reasons. Integrity Watch Afghanistan indicated that the lack of clear definitions for terms such as national security and national interest could seriously affect and limit access to information.

Bangladesh

Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

The law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials, but the government did not implement the law effectively. Officials frequently engaged in corrupt practices with impunity. Human rights groups, the media, the Anticorruption Commission (ACC), and other institutions reported government corruption.

Corruption: According to a 2010 World Bank report, the government undermined the ACC's work and hampered the prosecution of corruption. The report stated the government filed far fewer corruption cases than the previous caretaker government and that a government commission recommended the ACC drop thousands of corruption cases. TIB cited a statement in report by the UN Convention Against Corruption Civil Society Coalition that in 2011 the government asked the ACC to withdraw 10,536 cases. The 16th constitutional amendment extended parliament's power to impeach officials to include the ACC, Election Commission, National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), and other constitutional commissions. Some in civil society stated the government was not serious about fighting corruption and that it used the ACC for politically motivated prosecutions. TIB asserted that political interference in the ACC's operations had rendered it a "toothless tiger." A 2013 amendment to the ACC Law removed the ACC's authority to sue public servants without prior government permission.

The government took steps to address widespread police corruption. The inspector general of police continued to train police to address corruption and create a more responsive police force. No assessment of the training's effect on corruption within the police force was available.

According to media and rights groups, the election anniversary turmoil at times emboldened police corruption. A police subinspector shot businessman Fayez Ali in the hip on January 12. The subinspector claimed the shooting occurred during a scuffle at a

political protest. Ali's wife said the subinspector shot Ali after Ali refused to give him the more than 100,000 taka (\$1,250) Ali was carrying to pay construction wages and material bills.

The government subjected the judiciary to political pressure (see section 1.e.), and cases involving opposition leaders often proceeded in an irregular fashion.

Corruption remained a serious problem within the judiciary and was a factor in lengthy delays of trials, which facilitated witness tampering and intimidation of victims. Several reports by human rights groups and corruption watchdog groups indicated growing public dissatisfaction with the perceived politicization of the judiciary.

Financial Disclosure: Candidates for parliament file statements of personal wealth with the Election Commission. The ACC dropped investigations of some politicians for amassing wealth unexplained by known sources of income after the subject politicians stated they made mistakes on their wealth affidavits.

Public Access to Information: The law provides for public access to government information, but it was not effective. The Information Commission is responsible for implementing the law, which lists a few exceptions (e.g., national security) and establishes nominal processing fees. The commission has the authority to issue summonses compelling individuals who not comply with a request for information to give oral or written evidence under oath. Observers noted that the government filed few cases during the year due to citizens' limited understanding of the law and limited capacity to file and pursue requests for information. The commission conducted public outreach and training of public officials to encourage effective use of the law.

Bhutan

Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

The law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials, and the government generally implemented these laws effectively. There were isolated reports of government corruption during the year. The 2011 Anti-Corruption Act, which is based on the UN Convention against Corruption, expands the mandate of the ACC to cover the private sector and enhances the ACC's investigatory powers and functions.

Corruption: The government took an active role in addressing official corruption through the Public Accounts Committee in the National Assembly and the Royal Audit Authority, which monitored the use of government funds. The ACC is authorized to investigate cases of official corruption and allows citizens to post information on its website regarding corrupt practices. The ACC reportedly faced resource constraints. The constitution enables the ACC to act as an independent body, although its investigative staff was primarily civil servants answerable to the Royal Civil Service Commission. In July the prime minister removed the foreign minister from his post due to a corruption scandal related to a charge of embezzlement of public property during the foreign minister's past tenure as governor of Haa Province.

Financial Disclosure: The law requires public servants, and persons working for NGOs using public resources, their spouses, and dependents to declare their income, assets, and liabilities.

Public Access to Information: The constitution mandates a right to information; however, no law provides for public access to government information. Several ministries publish laws, regulations, budgets, and other relevant information on websites to enhance transparency.

India

Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

The law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials at all levels of government. Officials frequently engaged, however, in corrupt practices with impunity. There were numerous reports of government corruption during the year.

Corruption: Corruption was present at all levels of government. The CBI registered 583 cases of corruption between January and November. The commission operated a public hotline and a web portal. NGOs reported the payment of bribes to expedite services, such as police protection, school admission, water supply, or government assistance. Civil society organizations drew public attention to corruption throughout the year, including through demonstrations and websites that featured stories of corruption.

Media reports, NGOs, and activists reported links between contractors, militant groups, and security forces in infrastructure projects, narcotics trafficking, and timber smuggling in the northeastern states. These reports alleged ties among politicians, bureaucrats, security personnel, and insurgent groups. In Manipur and Nagaland, allegations of bribes paid to secure state government jobs were prevalent, especially in police and education departments.

Corruption sometimes hampered government programs to investigate allegations of government corruption. In July a Special Investigation Team alleged that officials from Lokayukta, an anticorruption statutory body, exchanged bribes for protection from potential corruption raids in Karnataka and arrested 10 individuals, including ombudsman Justice Bhaskar Rao's son Ashwin Rao and Lokayukta Public Relations Officer Syed Riyaz. In response the Karnataka government amended the Lokayukta Act to allow for the removal of anticorruption officials. The investigation was ongoing at year's end.

On July 13, the Supreme Court ordered the CBI to take over a Madhya Pradesh state government investigation of fraud within the Professional Examination Board (Vyapam), a state government body that conducts school entrance exams and tests for positions in the state government. Arrests in the case since the investigation began in 2013 have included more than 2,000 individuals. CBI was also investigating the deaths of 48 individuals over the span of five years, including a journalist who reported on the fraud.

On August 6, Goa police arrested former public works department minister Churchill Alemao along with three others on corruption charges. According to the charges, employees from a foreign firm paid bribes to win consultancy contracts for water and sewerage projects. On August 20, the district court in Goa granted anticipatory bail to former chief minister Digambar Kamat in the case.

Financial Disclosure: The law mandates asset declarations for all officers in the Indian Administrative Services. Both the Election Commission and the Supreme Court upheld mandatory disclosure of criminal and financial records for election candidates.

In May the Karnataka High Court overturned a 2014 corruption verdict against Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Jayalalithaa stemming from her 1991-96 tenure as chief minister. Following the 2014 conviction, authorities sentenced Chief Minister Jayalalithaa to a four-year prison term, requiring her resignation as chief minister. On May 23, the High Court determined that Jayalalithaa's unaccountable assets totaled less than the legal cap of 10 percent of her total assets, and authorities reinstated her as Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. On June 23, the Karnataka Government filed a Special Leave Petition before the Supreme Court of India disputing the calculation that led to the chief minister's acquittal.

Public Access to Information: The law provides for public access to information. Although the government was often slow to respond to requests, the public could access personal documentation, city plans, and other public records through the RTI online portal. RTI requests are limited to Indian citizens. The government charged a fee of 11 rupees (16 cents) per request. Citizens may appeal request denials to the Central Information Commission and then to the appropriate high court. Activists expressed concern that public authorities were sometimes unable to implement the RTI Act adequately and that rural inhabitants were not always aware of their rights under the act.

Many states also have right-to-information laws. Fee schedules and regulations for state-level RTI queries varied.

Kazakhstan

Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

The law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials. The government did not implement the law effectively, and officials frequently engaged in corrupt practices with impunity.

Corruption: Corruption was widespread in the executive branch, law enforcement agencies, local government administrations, the education system, and the judiciary, according to opposition leaders and human rights NGOs. The Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Agency on Civil Service Affairs and Combatting Corruption, the KNB, and the Disciplinary State Service Commission are responsible for combating corruption. The Prosecutor General's Office reported that in the first 10 months of the year, more than a thousand officials were convicted of corruption offenses, and it started investigations into 3,088 corruption-related offenses.

In June, Almaty District Court No. 2 of Astana issued an arrest warrant for Astana Chief Executive Talgat Yermegiyayev. He was placed under house arrest on charges of embezzling 4.2 billion tenge (\$15.6 million). The arrest warrant named an additional 23 persons, including other officials, most if not all of whom were in pretrial detention at year's end. The total amount allegedly embezzled was 10 billion tenge (\$37 million). Yermegiyayev's arrest was extended until November. The investigation has concluded, and defendants and their attorneys were reviewing case materials.

The new criminal code toughened criminal liability and punishment for crimes related to corruption. It does not allow probation for corruption crimes. There is also an additional penalty of a lifetime ban on employment in the civil service, as well as mandatory forfeiture of titles, ranks, grades, and state awards. The statute of limitation does not apply to persons charged with corruption.

Financial Disclosure: The law requires government officials, applicants for government positions, and those recently released from government service to declare their income and assets in the country and abroad to tax authorities annually. The same requirement applies to their spouses, dependents, and adult children. Similar regulations exist for members of parliament and judges.

Public Access to Information: Although the law mandates that the government, public associations, officials, and media outlets provide citizens with information that affects their rights and interests, citizen requests for information were not properly fulfilled. NGOs reported problems with access to information from government agencies, citing red tape, poor content on official websites, and poor quality of results. According to an assessment by the local branch of Transparency International in 2014, all governmental

ministries received poor transparency ratings except for the Ministry of Culture and Sport, evaluated as average.

In November the president signed a new Law on Access to Information. It broadens the range of entities that must provide information to the public: government bodies, national companies, quasi-government organizations, and monopolies. The law requires transparency of any information concerning the government's budget and its expenditures. The law toughens requirements for the composition of information on the websites of the institutions. Additionally, meetings of government bodies, local executive offices, and open meetings of the parliament are required to have live online broadcasting. The law calls for a list to be prepared of information that must be disclosed to the public.

Although parliament published several draft laws, some parliamentary debates, and occasionally its recorded votes, many parliamentary activities took place outside public view. Accredited journalists and representatives of public associations could observe some parliamentary sessions via video link from a separate room. Transcripts of parliamentary sessions were not available to the public. Parliament continued to prohibit public and media access to discussion of controversial legislation.

Kyrgyz Republic

Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

Corruption remained endemic at all levels of society. While the law provides criminal penalties for conviction of corruption by officials, the government did not implement the law effectively, and officials frequently engaged in corrupt practices with impunity. There were numerous reports of government corruption during the year. The payment of bribes to avoid investigation or prosecution was a major problem at all levels of law enforcement. Likewise, law enforcement officers, particularly in the southern part of the country, frequently employed arbitrary arrest, torture, and the threat of criminal prosecution as a means of extorting cash payments from citizens (see section 1.d.).

Corruption: The only government body empowered to investigate corruption was the anticorruption branch of the GKNB. It was not an independent government entity, and its budget remained within the operating budget of the GKNB. The agency's cooperation with civil society was limited, and its investigations led to very few cases going to trial.

On July 22, the GKNB detained the president's chief of staff, Daniyar Narymbaev, on suspicion of corruption, abuse of power, and extortion. Narymbaev was detained following the arrest of Member of Parliament Hadjimurat Korkmazov, who was caught receiving a bribe of approximately 7.5 million som (\$100,000) from the daughter of a former mayor of Bishkek, Nariman Tyuleev. Allegedly, Narymbaev, in collusion with Korkmazov, extorted this money from the former mayor's family in exchange for a favorable decision in a court case involving the former mayor.

Financial Disclosure: The law requires all public officials to publish their income and assets. The State Personnel Service is responsible for making this information public. Officials who do not disclose required information may be dismissed from office, although this punishment was not regularly enforced.

Public Access to Information: The law regulates public access to government information.

The law provides for access to government held information. All government bodies and local administrative organs are required to establish systems for the release of their operating information to the public. NGOs noted that a wide range of information was available; however, the government in many cases was slow in making it public.

Maldives

Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

Although the law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials, the government did not implement the law effectively, and officials frequently engaged in corrupt practices with impunity.

Corruption: An independent Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) has responsibility for investigating corruption charges involving senior government officials. According to the commission, a limited definition of corruption in the law and the lack of a provision to investigate and prosecute illicit enrichment limited the commission's work. As of June the ACC received 381 registered cases.

NGOs noted there was an uptick in corruption practices at all levels of society, although there were no official reports of companies belonging to ruling-party members or parliamentarians winning a disproportionate number of bids. Judges were commonly believed to take bribes, although the ACC reported it found no evidence of this. Members of parliament were accused of illicit enrichment. Vote buying in parliament reportedly affected key constitutional amendments and other legislation.

TM reported widespread corruption across the judiciary, legislature, and the executive branches and, in an April 5 statement, called on the executive branch to "refrain from arbitrarily providing any form of gratuities and privileges to State officials."

The ACC conducted an investigation against Police Sub-Inspector Mujthaba Zahir and a handful of other police officers on allegations they forced detainees to work for them and profited from their labor. They reportedly also showed favoritism to some prisoners, including the release of selected prisoners from detention to roam the prison island before police concluded their investigations. The ACC filed cases against the police officers on charges of abuse of authority of depriving the state of monetary resources; the PGO had not taken action by year's end.

Financial Disclosure: The constitution requires members of parliament to submit annually to the Secretary General of Parliament a statement of all property owned, money, business interests, and liabilities. The constitution also requires the president and each cabinet minister to submit a similar statement to the Auditor General, and for each judge to submit a similar statement to the Judicial Service Commission. It was unclear whether officials submitted these statements, which do not require public disclosure. The law does not stipulate criminal or administrative sanctions for noncompliance and does not require the vice president to disclose income and assets.

Public Access to Information: Under the Right to Information Act the public has access to government information. No data were available on the number of requests, if any, made to the Office of the Information Commissioner under this law.

Nepal

Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

Although the law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials, there continued to

be reports that officials engaged in corrupt practices with impunity.

Corruption: The Commission for the Investigation of the Abuse of Authority (CIAA), which is mandated to investigate official acts of corruption, requested the government to take action against the minister of energy and the minister of youth and sports for alleged corrupt acts. In response the minister of youth and sports resigned on October 1, and the Office of the Prime Minister terminated the minister of energy the following day. The CIAA also took high-profile action against officials of the Ministry of Urban Development for fraud in purchasing tarpaulins for the victims of the earthquake, and against licensed teachers accused of registering fake public schools to siphon off budgets and salaries.

The CIAA continued to investigate fraud in foreign labor migration. In June the CIAA arrested 12 Department of Foreign Employment (DFE) officials accused of issuing work permits based on fake documents in exchange for bribes from recruitment agencies. This followed the arrest in March 2014 of six DFE officials accused of accepting 3.27 million rupees (\$32,700) to allow 109 migrants with fraudulent documents to travel to Qatar, and another 1.89 million rupees (\$18,900) to allow 63 migrants with fraudulent documents to travel to Dubai. As of early October, both cases were pending.

There were numerous reports of corrupt actions by government officials, political parties, and party-affiliated organizations. As in previous years, student and labor groups associated with political parties demanded contributions from schools and businesses. Corruption and impunity remained general problems within the Nepal Police and Armed Police Force.

Financial Disclosure: Public officials are subject to financial disclosure laws. According to the National Vigilance Center, the body mandated to monitor financial disclosures and make them available to the public, in fiscal year 2013-14 23,859 civil servants had not submitted their annual financial statements as required by law, according to the latest data available. They may face a fine of up to 5,000 rupees (\$50). The CIAA publicly demanded that officials be more diligent in submitting financial disclosure reports. Ministers are required to submit their property details within two months of assuming office, and all 23 ministers did so.

Public Access to Information: Both the 2007 Interim Constitution and the new constitution adopted in September provide for the right to information on any matters of concern to oneself or the public, but they do not compel the government to provide information protected by law. In January the government formed the National Information Commission pursuant to the 2007 Right to Information Act. The commission is charged with adjudicating cases in which petitioners allege that they have been wrongly denied access to information, that information has been improperly classified, or that individuals were punished for whistle-blowing. The act also provides for punitive measures in cases of defiance.

Pakistan

Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

The law provides criminal penalties for official corruption, but the government did not implement the law effectively, and officials frequently engaged in corrupt practices. Corruption was pervasive in politics and government, and various politicians and public office holders faced allegations of corruption, including bribery, extortion, cronyism, nepotism, patronage, graft, and embezzlement.

Corruption: Corruption within the lower levels of police was common. An April 2014 report

by Transparency International asserted that the major causes of corruption were lack of accountability and low salaries. Some police charged fees to register genuine complaints and accepted bribes for registering false complaints. Bribes to avoid charges were commonplace.

Anecdotal reports persisted about corruption in the judicial system, including reports of small-scale facilitation payments requested by court staff. Lower courts reportedly remained corrupt, inefficient, and subject to pressure from higher-ranking judges as well as prominent, wealthy, religious, and political figures.

The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) serves as the highest-level anticorruption organization, with a mandate to eliminate corruption through awareness, prevention, and enforcement. The NAB launched a series of high-profile corruption inquiries against politicians and government officials. As of December, one of five cases against former president Zardari remained pending before the NAB, while four had been dismissed. Reports indicated that in December, authorities reinstated the NAB chair after he faced an investigation regarding his alleged involvement in a high-profile corruption scandal.

The 2007 National Reconciliation Ordinance provides an amnesty mechanism for public officials accused of corruption, embezzlement, money laundering, murder, and terrorism between 1986 and 1999. In 2009 the Supreme Court declared the ordinance null and void and reopened all 8,000 cases against those who received amnesty, including the president, ministers, and parliamentarians.

KP's accountability (ehtesab) commission, established in January 2014, became active during the year, investigating and arresting approximately 25 individuals on suspicion of corruption in the province. Authorities intended the 2013 Pakhtunkhwa Right to Public Services Act as a mechanism for oversight over the performance of public servants in the province. In line with this measure, authorities subjected a public servant who failed to provide public services expected of him within a stipulated period of time to disciplinary proceedings and punishment, including a fine.

Financial Disclosure: There are many laws regarding the disclosure of assets and liabilities of civil servants and elected officials. By law members of parliament, civil servants, and ministers, must declare their assets, as well as the assets and liabilities of their spouses and dependent children. Failure to disclose this information may lead to their disqualification from public office for 10 years. Heads of state, in contrast, are not required to declare their income and assets. The assets of judges, generals, and high-level officials were often concealed from the public.

Under the 1973 Efficiency and Disciplinary Rules, an official must face an inquiry if accused of corruption or financial irregularities. If the inquiry results in a derogatory finding, the accused official faces criminal charges under the National Accountability Ordinance. Under this ordinance a person convicted of corruption faces a prison term of up to 14 years, a fine, or both. The government may appropriate any money, property, or other assets obtained by corrupt means.

According to the Representation of People Act, political parties and politicians must file annual financial accounting reports declaring their assets and liabilities. This provision was not fully implemented and lawmakers often disregarded it. It is the duty of the ECP to verify that political parties and politicians make their financial information publicly available; the ECP posted the list of parliamentarians' assets in January.

Public Access to Information: The law allows any citizen access to public records held by a public body of the federal government, including ministries, departments, boards, councils, courts, and tribunals. It does not apply to government-owned corporations or provincial governments. Bodies subject to the law must respond to requests for access within 21 days. Regulations restrict certain records from public access, including classified documents, those deemed harmful to a law enforcement case or an individual,

or those that would cause grave and significant damage to the economy or the interests of the nation. NGOs criticized the ordinance for having too many exempt categories and for not encouraging proactive disclosure.

Sri Lanka

Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

The law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials, and the government began to implement the law effectively but remained constrained by a lack of technical expertise and resources. Officials in various branches of government engaged in corrupt practices, albeit under a heightened level of scrutiny.

The Presidential Commission on Fraud and Corruption investigated more than 900 reports of corruption, including some involving the former president and his family. The National Procurement Commission redesigned government procurement policies to remove opportunities for graft and theft. Separately, a new Financial Crimes Investigative Division investigated major instances of fraud.

Corruption: There were numerous reports of government corruption, with most cases pertaining to members of the previous Rajapaksa government for actions committed earlier. The Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery or Corruption (the “Bribery Commission”) was more active than in previous years in investigating complaints and taking legal action against persons accused of corruption. The Bribery Commission does not have the power to initiate corruption investigations, however, and must await a formal complaint before investigating reports of corruption. Members of the public often were reluctant to submit complaints because of a lack of whistleblower protections.

On April 22, police arrested former minister for economic development Basil Rajapaksa and three other officials. They were charged with alleged financial irregularities related to the Divi Neguma Development program, a government antipoverty and social welfare department of the previous government. The four were released on bail. Investigations into the alleged irregularities continued at year’s end.

The case of Avant Garde Maritime Services Ltd., a joint venture with Rakna Arakshaka Lanka Ltd. that operated a floating armory and offered protection against sea piracy, continued under investigation at year’s end. Former defense secretary Gotabaya Rajapaksa was implicated in the venture’s illegal operations. Days after the January presidential election, a weapons cache linked to the venture was uncovered in Colombo. The cache allegedly included unlicensed weapons, in addition to violating local and international laws through alleged gun-running, transactions with international terrorist outfits, and other illegal business conduct. The passports of both Rajapaksa and Avant Garde Chairman Nissanka Senathipathi were temporarily impounded. The attorney general later informed the court there was insufficient evidence to pursue the criminal elements of the investigation but recommended the Bribery Commission case into charges of money laundering continue.

On November 4, Minister for Justice Wijeyadasa Rajapakshe told parliament he intervened to prevent the arrest of the former defense secretary. On November 9, Minister of Law, Order, and Prison Reforms Tilak Marapana was compelled to resign following criticism for his speech in parliament in defense of Avant Garde, to which he provided legal services before being appointed a minister. Deputy Minister of Social Empowerment and Welfare Ranjan Ramanayake told parliament government members had been bribed to cover up the case. On November 11, following a special cabinet session, the president issued a directive revoking all agreements signed between the government and Avant Garde

Maritime Services with immediate effect and transferred handling of these agreements to the navy.

Financial Disclosure: By law members of the public may access records relating to the assets and liabilities of elected officials by paying a fee. The law requires all candidates for parliamentary, local government, provincial, and presidential elections to declare their assets and liabilities to the speaker of parliament. There was no follow-up to provide for compliance with this law. Some candidates who stood for parliamentary elections did opt to publish their financial reports.

Public Access to Information: There is no law providing for public access to government information.

Tajikistan

Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

The law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials, but the government did not implement the law effectively. Officials frequently engaged in corrupt practices with impunity. Corruption, nepotism, and regional hiring bias were pervasive at all levels of government.

Corruption: Corruption in the Education Ministry was systemic. Prospective students were required to pay thousands of somoni (hundreds of dollars) in bribes to enter the country's most prestigious universities, and provincial colleges required several hundred somoni. Students often paid additional bribes to receive good examination grades.

Many traffic police retained fines they collected for violations. Traffic police posted at regular intervals along roads arbitrarily stopped drivers to ask for bribes. The problem was systemic in part due to the low official wages paid to traffic police. Many traffic police reportedly paid for their jobs, an expense they tried to recoup by extracting bribes from motorists.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs, Anticorruption Agency, and Prosecutor General's Office are responsible for investigating, arresting, and prosecuting suspected corrupt officials. The government acknowledged a problem with corruption and took some steps to combat it, including putting lower-level officials on trial for taking bribes.

Both the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Anticorruption Agency submit cases to the Prosecutor General's Office at the conclusion of their investigations. In some instances, the agency collaborated with the Prosecutor General's Office throughout the entire process.

The prosecutor general investigated some cases of suspected corruption by government employees, but the bulk of the cases involved mid- or lower-level officials, and none involved large-scale abuses. There were instances of the Prosecutor General's Office suddenly dropping cases submitted by the Ministry of Internal Affairs or the Anticorruption Agency.

Financial Disclosure: Public officials are not subject to financial disclosure laws.

Public Access to Information: Public budgets, particularly those involving major state-owned enterprises, lacked transparency. Although parliament has oversight of the state budget, it passed annual budgets almost without comment despite large, unexplained, and undefined expenses. Each year the government releases a report on budget performance for the previous year that contains numerous details about education, health, and other social sector spending. A considerable amount of government spending, including that for

major buildings, parks, and other special projects such as summer residences for the president, occurred off budget.

Turkmenistan

Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

While the law provides criminal penalties for official corruption, the government did not implement the law effectively, and officials reportedly often engaged in corrupt practices with impunity. Corruption existed in the security forces and in all social and economic sectors. Factors encouraging corruption included the existence of patronage networks, lack of transparency and accountability, and fear that the government would retaliate against a citizen who chose to highlight a corrupt act. According to Freedom House and the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators, the country had a severe corruption problem.

Corruption: No government officials were reprimanded or dismissed from their positions over allegations of corruption. Government officials participated in three OSCE workshops on combating corruption and money laundering.

Financial Disclosure: The law does not require elected or appointed officials to disclose their incomes or assets. Financial disclosure requirements are neither transparent nor consistent with international norms. Government enterprises are not required to publicize financial statements, even to foreign partners. Local auditors, not internationally recognized firms, often conducted financial audits.

Public Access to Information: Although the Law on the Mass Media allows for public access to government information if requested through accredited mass media sources, the government did not provide such access. Authorities denied requests for specific information on the grounds that the information was a state secret. Most statistical data were state secrets. There was no public disclosure of demographic data, and officials published manipulated economic and financial data to justify state policies and expenditures.

Uzbekistan

Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

The law provides criminal penalties for official corruption, but the government did not implement the law effectively. The Ministry of Interior's Department for Combating Corruption, Extortion, and Racketeering and the Office of the Prosecutor General's Department for Combating Economic Crimes and Corruption are responsible for preventing, investigating, and prosecuting corruption cases. Despite some high-level corruption-related arrests, corruption remained endemic, and officials frequently engaged in corrupt practices with impunity. According to local observers, prosecutions often targeted potential competitors for resources who had lost support among local and national elites, and such prosecutions were not the result of a concerted effort to stamp out corruption.

Corruption: In January the Uzmtronom website reported that Ibrohim Dehqonboyev, the former head of the NSS department in Qashqadaryo Region who was arrested in August

2014, received a 15-year prison term for abuse of official position. The government confirmed his arrest and conviction, and noted that based on the results of the annual amnesty, his sentence had been reduced to 11 years, three months, and 19 days.

In July Radio Ozodlik reported on the arrest of high-ranking NSS officials Djavdat Sharikhodjaev and Khayot Sharifkhojaev (the latter a deputy chairman) on corruption charges.

Financial Disclosure: Government officials are required to disclose only income from outside employment, and such disclosures were not publicly available.

Public Access to Information: The public did not generally have access to government information. The government seldom reported information normally considered in the public domain, although many government ministries and bodies had an internet presence that offered some information.