

# A Coalition of Weakness

By Erik Leaver and Sara Johnson | updated April 2003

As U.S. officials look for political cover after losing the drive for a second UN Security Council resolution, the recently renamed “Coalition to Disarm Iraq” is the Bush administration’s only opportunity to salvage a semblance of international legitimacy for war. A closer look at the countries involved reveals that claims to multilateral action in the name of democracy are grossly exaggerated. In reality, the U.S. is isolated internationally, and a few of the countries signing on to “liberate” Iraq have human rights records that rival Saddam Hussein’s.

On Tuesday, March 18th, the State Department released a list of 30 countries willing to be named as part of the coalition, while President Bush raised the count to 35 in his speech on March 19th and this list was raised to 45 by March 21st. While the list keeps growing in number it has not increased the fighting strength of the coalition—only two countries have committed forces in any number: Great Britain (40,000) and Australia (2,000). The Czech Republic and Bulgaria have sent chemical and biological defense units of about 150 personnel each. Poland and Romania also have sent a handful of troops.

Furthermore, the coalition has not added any diplomatic strength to the mission. These 45 countries make up less than 20% of the world’s population and do not make up the moral equivalent of the United Nations. Despite joining the coalition, the level of support for the U.S. in many of these countries is extremely weak—in only two countries in the world, the U.S. and Israel, is popular support greater than 50%. Support is no greater in the global multilateral institutions. Only three members of the United Nations Security Council and slightly more than one-half of all NATO members support the United States’ mission.

Finally, the coalition brings little economic strength to the effort. The first Gulf War cost roughly \$60 billion of which the coalition members paid almost the entire costs of the war. No nation to date has offered any sort of economic assistance to the U.S. to pay for the escalating costs estimated between \$100 and \$200 billion.

It is also unclear how one becomes a member of the coalition. Some countries were apparently drafted.

According to the *Washington Post*, officials of at least one of these countries, Colombia, were apparently unaware that they had been designated as a coalition partner. It is not known how many other governments first learned of their membership in the coalition through the media. Other support is lukewarm at best. For example, a spokesman for the Eritrean Foreign Ministry said to AFP, “We are not having any kind of involvement.”

The lack of democratic credentials in the coalition is also startling. Human rights, democracy, and corruption ratings by Freedom House, Transparency International, and the U.S. State Department illustrate the disconnect between pro-democracy rhetoric and the undemocratic reality of some of the coalition partners. Seventeen of the countries were measured to have “not free” or “partially free” democracies; twenty-four were found to have significant levels of corruption, and the U.S. State Department concluded that in nine nations, “The overall human rights situation remained extremely poor.”

Before the American public starts applauding the administration’s newfound commitment to assembling an international coalition to attack Iraq, it should put the partners’ participation in perspective. The coalition that Bush claims has more relevance than the UN is not a large group of democratic allies providing substantial military support and backed by public opinion at home. To the contrary, the assembled coalition is evidence of the international community’s opposition to war and the administration’s lack of commitment to democracy and human rights.

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# Human Rights Records of Coalition Countries

COUNTRY <sup>1</sup>	FREEDOM HOUSE RATING 2001-2002 <sup>2</sup>	TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS INDEX 2002 <sup>3</sup>	QUOTES FROM STATE DEPARTMENT HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT ISSUED IN MARCH 2003 <sup>4</sup>
<b>Afghanistan<sup>5</sup></b>	Not Free (7,7)	Not rated	The Government made significant progress in establishing democracy and good governance during its first full year after prolonged civil war and political instability; however, numerous problems remained.... Members of the security forces committed arbitrary, unlawful, and some extrajudicial killings, and officials used torture in jails and prisons.... There were approximately 500,000 displaced persons.... Violence and societal discrimination against women and minorities were problems.
<b>Albania</b>	Partly Free (3,4)	2.5	The Government's human rights record remained poor in many areas; although there were some improvements in a few areas, serious problems remain. Police beat and otherwise abused suspects, detainees, and prisoners. Prison conditions remained poor.
<b>Australia</b>	Free (1,1)	8.6	The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens, and the law and judiciary provide effective means of dealing with individual instances of abuse.
<b>Azerbaijan</b>	Partly Free (6,5)	2.0	The Government's human rights record remained poor. The Government continued to restrict citizens' ability to change their government peacefully. Police tortured and beat persons in custody and used excessive force to extract confessions. Arbitrary arrest and detention continued to be a problem.
<b>Bulgaria</b>	Free (1,3)	4.0	The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, there were problems in several areas.... Security forces commonly beat suspects and inmates and beat and mistreated minorities. Arbitrary arrest and detention were problems.
<b>Colombia</b>	Partly Free (4,4)	3.6	The Government's human rights record remained poor. Some members of the security forces collaborated with paramilitary groups that committed serious abuses. Impunity remained at the core of the country's human rights problems.
<b>Costa Rica</b>	Free (1,1)	4.5	The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens, and the law and judiciary provided effective means of dealing with individual instances of abuse.
<b>Czech Republic</b>	Free (1,2)	3.7	The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; although there were a few problems in some areas, the law and judiciary provided effective means of dealing with individual instances of abuse. Occasional police violence and use of excessive force remained a problem.
<b>Denmark</b>	Free (1,1)	9.5	The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens, and the law and judiciary provided effective means of dealing with individual instances of abuse.

<b>Dominican Republic</b>	Free (1,1)	3.5	The Government's human rights record remained poor.... The police and--to a lesser degree--the military tortured, beat, or otherwise abused detainees and prisoners.... Prison conditions ranged from poor to harsh. Some prisoners died in custody due to negligence. Police arbitrarily arrested and detained suspects and suspects' relatives.
<b>El Salvador</b>	Free (2,3)	3.4	The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, there were serious problems in some areas. There were no politically motivated killings or disappearances; however, some police officers committed killings. Some police officers used excessive force and mistreated detainees.
<b>Eritrea</b>	Not Free (7,6)	Not rated	The Government's poor human rights record worsened, and it continued to commit serious abuses. Citizens did not have the ability to change their government, which was controlled completely by the PFDJ.
<b>Estonia</b>	Free (1,2)	5.6	The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens and the large ethnic Russian noncitizen community; however, there were problems in some areas. Police continued to mistreat prisoners and detainees and used excessive force.
<b>Ethiopia</b>	Partly Free (5,5)	3.5	The Government's human rights record remained poor; although there were some improvements in a few areas, serious problems remained. Security forces committed a number of unlawful killings and at times beat and mistreated detainees.
<b>Georgia</b>	Partly Free (4,4)	2.4	The Government's human rights record remained poor; although there were a few improvements, serious problems remain.... Security forces continued to torture, beat, and otherwise abuse detainees.
<b>Honduras</b>	Partly Free (3,3)	2.7	The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, there were serious problems in some areas. Members of the police committed extrajudicial killings. Well-organized private and vigilante security forces were believed to have committed a number of arbitrary and summary executions.... Security force personnel beat and otherwise abused detainees and other persons.
<b>Hungary</b>	Free (1,2)	4.9	The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, there were problems in some areas. There were reports that some police used excessive force, beat, and harassed suspects.
<b>Iceland</b>	Free (1,1)	9.4	The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens, and the law and judiciary provided effective means of dealing with individual instances of abuse.
<b>Italy</b>	Free (1,2)	5.2	The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; although there were some problems, the law and judiciary provide effective means of dealing with individual instances of abuse. There were some reports of police abuse of detainees, and use of excessive force against ethnic minorities.
<b>Japan</b>	Free (1,2)	7.1	The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, there were problems in some areas. There continued to be credible reports that police and prison officials physically and psychologically abused prisoners and detainees.

<b>Kuwait</b>	Partly Free (4,5)	Not rated	The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens in many areas, and there were some improvements during the year; however, its record was poor in some significant areas. Some police and members of the security forces abused detainees during interrogation. The judiciary was subject to government influence, and a pattern of bias against foreign residents existed.
<b>Latvia</b>	Free (1,2)	3.7	The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens and the large resident noncitizen community; however, there were problems in some areas. Members of the security forces, including the police and other Interior Ministry personnel, sometimes used excessive force and mistreated persons.
<b>Lithuania</b>	Free (1,2)	4.8	The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, there were problems in some areas. Police at times beat or otherwise physically mistreated detainees and misused detention laws.
<b>Macedonia</b>	Partly Free (4,4)	Not rated	The Government's human rights record remained poor; although there were some improvements in a few areas, serious problems remained. The government that assumed power on October 31, 2002 demonstrated a commitment to improving the country's human rights observance through concrete actions.
<b>Marshall Islands</b>	Free (1,1)	Not rated	The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens, and the law and the judiciary provide effective means of dealing with individual instances of abuse.
<b>Micronesia</b>	Free (1,2)	Not rated	The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens, and the law and judiciary provide effective means of dealing with individual instances of abuse.
<b>Mongolia</b>	Free (2,3)	Not rated	The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, problems remained in some areas. Members of the police at times beat prisoners and detainees.... Arbitrary arrest and detention were problems, as was corruption.
<b>Netherlands</b>	Free (1,1)	9.0	The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens, and the law and judiciary provided effective means of dealing with individual instances of abuse.
<b>Nicaragua</b>	Partly Free (3,3)	2.5	The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, serious problems remain in some areas. There were ongoing investigations of those members of the security forces who were accused of having committed unlawful killings. Police continued to beat and otherwise abuse detainees. Some detainees credibly alleged that they were tortured.
<b>Panama</b>	Free (1,2)	3.0	The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, there continued to be serious problems in several areas. Abuse by prison guards was a recurrent problem of the prison system.... The judiciary was subject to political manipulation, and the criminal justice system was inefficient and often corrupt.
<b>Palau</b>	Free (1,2)	Not rated	The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens.

<b>Philippines</b>	Free (2,3)	2.6	The Government generally respected the human rights of citizens; however, there were serious problems in some areas. Some elements of the security services were responsible for arbitrary and unlawful and in some cases extrajudicial killings, disappearances, torture, and arbitrary arrest and detention. Other physical abuse of suspects and detainees as well as police, prosecutorial, and judicial corruption remained problems.
<b>Poland</b>	Free (1,2)	4.0	The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, there were problems in some areas. There were reports that police mistreated persons in refugee camps.
<b>Portugal</b>	Free (1,1)	6.3	The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, there were problems in some areas. Police killed five persons, all Portuguese citizens, during the year. Credible reports continued that security personnel occasionally beat and otherwise abused detainees and prisoners.
<b>Romania</b>	Free (2,2)	2.6	The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, there were problems in some areas. Police use of excessive force resulted in three deaths. Police officers continued to beat detainees and reportedly harassed and used excessive force against Roma.
<b>Rwanda</b>	Not Free (7,6)	Not rated	The Government's human rights record remained poor; although there were some improvements in a few areas, serious problems remained.... Citizens do not have the right to change their government.... Prison conditions remained life threatening, and prisoners died of disease and the cumulative effects of severe overcrowding. Arbitrary arrest and detention, and prolonged pretrial detention, remained serious problems.
<b>Singapore</b>	Partly Free (5,5)	9.3	The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, there were significant problems in some areas. The Government had wide powers to limit citizens' rights and to handicap political opposition.... The Government continued to rely on preventive detention to deal with espionage, terrorism, organized crime, and narcotics.
<b>Slovakia</b>	Free (1,2)	3.7	The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, there were problems in some areas. Police officers allegedly on occasion beat and abused persons, particularly Roma.
<b>Solomon Islands</b>	Partly Free (4,4)	Not rated	The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, there were serious problems in some areas. Basic individual rights are provided for in the Constitution, but the armed conflict between Malaitan and Guadalcanalese militants in 2000 led to a serious deterioration in the human rights situation. Police and militants from both sides committed numerous human rights abuses in 2000, including killings, abductions, torture, rape, forced displacement, looting, and the burning of homes.
<b>South Korea</b>	Free (2,2)	4.5	The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, there were problems in some areas.
<b>Spain</b>	Free (1,2)	7.1	The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens, although there were a few problems in some areas; the law and judiciary provide effective means of dealing with cases of individual abuse. There were reports that at times security forces abused detainees and mistreated foreigners and illegal immigrants.

<b>Turkey</b>	Partly Free (4,5)	3.2	The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; although there were improvements in a number of areas, several serious problems remained. Security forces continued to commit unlawful killings, including deaths due to excessive use of force and torture. Torture, beatings, and other abuses by security forces remained widespread.
<b>Uganda</b>	Partly Free (6,5)	2.1	The Government's human rights record remained poor, and there continued to be numerous, serious problems. The right of citizens to change their government was limited. Security forces used excessive force, at times resulting in death, and committed or failed to prevent extrajudicial killings of suspected rebels and civilians.
<b>United Kingdom</b>	Free (1,2)	8.7	The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; although there were some problems, the law and judiciary provided effective means of dealing with individual instances of abuse.
<b>Uzbekistan</b>	Not Free (7,6)	2.9	The Government's human rights record remained very poor; although there were some notable improvements, it continued to commit numerous serious abuses. Citizens could not exercise the right to change their government peacefully.... Security force mistreatment resulted in the deaths of several citizens in custody. Police and security forces tortured, beat, and harassed persons.

*Erik Leaver <erik@ips-dc.org> is an Associate at Foreign Policy in Focus (online at [www.fpif.org](http://www.fpif.org)) and Sara Johnson is a researcher at the Institute for Policy Studies (online at [www.ips-dc.org](http://www.ips-dc.org)).*

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> The 45 countries listed are those identified by the U.S. State Department.
- <sup>2</sup> *Annual Freedom in the World Country Scores 2001-2002* by Freedom House (online at [www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org)). The two numbers listed correspond to political rights and civil liberties, respectively. Both are measured on a one-to-seven scale, with one representing the highest degree and seven the lowest.
- <sup>3</sup> Corruption Perceptions Index calculated by Transparency International (online at [www.transparency.org](http://www.transparency.org)) ranges from 10 (highly clean) to 0 (highly corrupt).
- <sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices," (available online at <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2002/>).
- <sup>5</sup> Information on Afghanistan is taken from 2001-2002 reports and is not indicative of the current regime.

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