Country Advice Mongolia

Mongolia – MNG36273 – Democratic Party – Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party – Political violence – Pro-democracy activists

25 March 2010

1. **Please advise if since 2005 any difficulties have been faced by members of the Mongolian Democratic Party or their families at the hands of ex-Communist party members or anyone else for opposing the Communist Party MPRP (Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party) or because they were involved in the democratisation of Mongolia.**

No reports were found to suggest that members of the Mongolian Democratic Party (DP) or their families have faced difficulties since 2005 at the hands of former Communist party members or others for opposing the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP) or being involved in the democratisation of Mongolia.

That said, many DP and other opposition party supporters who protested the outcome of the June 2008 parliamentary elections – in which the MPRP won the majority of seats – encountered a strong government response when the protests turned into violent riots.[1] Hundreds of people were injured and/or arrested in the course of the riots.[2]

The crisis led to a political compromise in late August 2008, when the MPRP and DP agreed to form a coalition government.[3] Presidential elections in May 2009 went ahead peacefully and saw DP candidate Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj defeat incumbent Nambaryn Enkhbayar of the MPRP.[4]

The DP currently plays a major role in the government of Mongolia, together with the MPRP.

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[1] Amnesty International 2009, *Amnesty International Annual Report – Mongolia*, 28 May – Attachment 1; Freedom House 2009, *Freedom in the World 2009 - Mongolia*, 16 July – Attachment 2; "Mongolia" 2009, CQ Press Electronic Library, Political Handbook of the World Online Edition, phw2009_mongolia. Originally published *in Political Handbook of the World 2009*, eds A Banks, T Muller, W Overstreet & J Isacoff, Washington DC: CQ Press, 2009, http://library.cqpress.com/phw/document.php?id=phw2009_Mongolia&type=toc&num=122 - Accessed 15 March 2010 – Attachment 3.

[2] Amnesty International 2009, *Amnesty International Annual Report – Mongolia*, 28 May – Attachment 1; Freedom House 2009, *Freedom in the World 2009 - Mongolia*, 16 July – Attachment 2.

[3] "Mongolia" 2009, CQ Press Electronic Library, Political Handbook of the World Online Edition, phw2009_mongolia. Originally published *in Political Handbook of the World 2009*, eds A Banks, T Muller, W Overstreet & J Isacoff, Washington DC: CQ Press, 2009, http://library.cqpress.com/phw/document.php?id=phw2009_Mongolia&type=toc&num=122 - Accessed 15 March 2010 – Attachment 3; Bulag, U 2009, "Mongolia in 2008", *Asian Survey V49(1)*, pp 129-134 – Attachment 4.

[4] US State Department 2010, *2009 Human Rights Report: Mongolia*, 11 March – Attachment 5.

2008 post-election violence

Mongolia held parliamentary elections on 29 June 2008, and initial results showed the MPRP had won 44 of 76 seats and the DP 26.[5] (Final results were MPRP 46, DP 27; the remaining seats went to other parties.[6]) The US State Department reported that international observers considered the elections free and fair, but DP leaders claimed electoral fraud had occurred.[7] On 1 July supporters of opposition parties (not only the DP) took up the cause in a rally that began peacefully but escalated into violence after "an angry crowd of young men" pelted MPRP headquarters with rocks before storming the building.[8] That evening protesters set fire to it, and police deployed tear gas, rubber bullets and live ammunition against rioters.[9]

Five people died in the unrest and hundreds more were injured, including police officers.[10] Over 700 people were arrested, and the President declared a four-day state of emergency to quell the riots.[11] The majority of those arrested were released within days, but over 200 were charged with riot-related crimes and there were reports that some detainees were beaten while in custody.[12]

No reports were found of DP members or leaders being targeted by authorities during this period, though there was angry rhetoric against the DP from the ruling MPRP. For example, Prime Minister Sanjagiin Bayar accused DP leader Elbegdorj of "misleading people and inciting violence".[13] John Tsacik, a senior research fellow at conservative think tank the Heritage Foundation, said there was initially "some indication that the

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[5] Freedom House 2009, *Freedom in the World 2009 - Mongolia*, 16 July – Attachment 2.

[6] Freedom House 2009, *Freedom in the World 2009 - Mongolia*, 16 July – Attachment 2.

[7] US State Department 2009, *2008 Human Rights Report: Mongolia*, 25 February – Attachment 6; Economic Intelligence Unit 2008, *Country Report: Mongolia*, November – Attachment 7, see p 6; Wong, E 2008, "A challenge for Mongolia's democracy", *New York Times*, 8 July – Attachment 8.

[8] Economic Intelligence Unit 2008, *Country Report: Mongolia*, November –Attachment 7, see p 6; US State Department 2009, *2008 Human Rights Report: Mongolia*, 25 February – Attachment 6; Wong, E 2008, "A challenge for Mongolia's democracy", *New York Times*, 8 July – Attachment 8; "Mongolia" 2009, CQ Press Electronic Library, Political Handbook of the World Online Edition, phw2009_mongolia. Originally published *in Political Handbook of the World 2009*, eds A Banks, T Muller, W Overstreet & J Isacoff, Washington DC: CQ Press, 2009, http://library.cqpress.com/phw/document.php?id=phw2009_Mongolia&type=toc&num=122 - Accessed 15 March 2010 – Attachment 3; see also Redl, N 2008, "Mongolian rioters burn ruling party headquarters", *ABC News*, 2 July – Attachment 9.

[9] Wong, E 2008, "A challenge for Mongolia's democracy", *New York Times*, 8 July – Attachment 8; "Mongolia" 2009, CQ Press Electronic Library, Political Handbook of the World Online Edition, phw2009_mongolia. Originally published *in Political Handbook of the World 2009*, eds A Banks, T Muller, W Overstreet & J Isacoff, Washington DC: CQ Press, 2009, http://library.cqpress.com/phw/document.php?id=phw2009_Mongolia&type=toc&num=122 - Accessed 15 March 2010 – Attachment 3; Redl, N 2008, "Mongolian rioters burn ruling party headquarters", *ABC News*, 2 July – Attachment 9; Amnesty International 2009, *Amnesty International Annual Report – Mongolia*, 28 May – Attachment 1.

[10] Amnesty International 2009, *Amnesty International Annual Report – Mongolia*, 28 May – Attachment 1; Freedom House 2009, *Freedom in the World 2009 - Mongolia*, 16 July – Attarchment 2.

[11] Amnesty International 2009, *Amnesty International Annual Report – Mongolia*, 28 May – Attachment 1; "Riots, curfew follow Mongolian election results" 2008, *MSNBC*, 1 July – Attachment 10; Redl, N 2008, "Mongolian rioters burn ruling party headquarters", *ABC News*, 2 July – Attachment 9; "Mongolia calls state of emergency" 2008, *BBC News*, 1 July – Attachment 11; "Riots spark Mongolian state of emergency" 2008, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 July, source: AFP – Attachment 12.

[12] Wong, E 2008, "A challenge for Mongolia's democracy", *New York Times*, 8 July – Attachment 8; Amnesty International 2009, *Amnesty International Annual Report – Mongolia*, 28 May – Attachment 1.

[13] "Mongolia calls state of emergency" 2008, *BBC News*, 1 July – Attachment 11.

MPRP intended to blame the riot on…top Democratic coalition leaders…and have them arrested as well", but "cooler heads prevailed" and that did not happen.[14]

Two leaders of a smaller political party that had run in the elections and participated in the rally on 1 July were arrested on suspicion of "instigating the riots".[15] These were Jalbasuren Batzandan, Chairperson of the Civil Movement Party (CMP), and Otgonjargal Magnai, Vice-Chair CMP, who had given speeches at the demonstrations.[16] Both were released on bail and the latest source to be found on their case cites Batzandan's lawyer as saying he expected charges to be dropped.[17] While no reports were found to confirm that this occurred, Batzandan's appearance in an unrelated news story from August 2009 indicates that he remains politically active in Mongolia.[18]

Formation of a coalition government

The DP refused to budge on the election results, and held up the swearing in of new parliament members by boycotting the opening session of parliament, preventing a quorum from being formed.[19] The political crisis lasted for weeks until the MPRP and DP agreed to form a coalition government in late August 2008.[20]

This compromise reportedly came as a surprise; the *Eurasia Daily Monitor* went so far as to call it "remarkable".[21] According to *Asian Survey*, it was "the first time that a clear winner" had given up "the constitutional right to form a single-party government since 1992".[22] Thus, while the Mongolian parliament continues to be "dominated by an MPRP majority", it is now "managed under a unity government with the Democratic Party".[23]

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[14] Tkacik, J Jnr 2008, "Mongolia's Current Political Situation: Implications for the OSCE" (lecture), Website of the Heritage Foundation, 15 September, http://www.heritage.org/Research/Lecture/Mongolias-Current-Political-Situation-Implications-for-the-OSCE – Accessed 22 March 2010 – Attachment 13.

[15] Amnesty International 2009, *Amnesty International Annual Report – Mongolia*, 28 May – Attachment 1; Togoo, O 2008, "Civil Movement Leaders Ally with DP", *UB Post*, 3 October – Attachment 14.

[16] Amnesty International 2009, *Amnesty International Annual Report – Mongolia*, 28 May – Attachment 1.

[17] Togoo, O 2008, "Civil Movement Leaders Ally with DP", *UB Post*, 3 October – Attachment 14.

[18] Kucera, J 2009, "Mongolia: Canadian mining firm inks blockbuster deal with Ulaanbaatar", *Eurasianet*, http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insightb/articles/eav100809c.shtml - Accessed 23 March 2010 – Attachment 15.

[19] "Mongolia's democracy fighter wins presidency" 2009, *ABC News*, 25 May – Attachment 16; "Mongolia" 2009, CQ Press Electronic Library, Political Handbook of the World Online Edition, phw2009_mongolia. Originally published *in Political Handbook of the World 2009*, eds A Banks, T Muller, W Overstreet & J Isacoff, Washington DC: CQ Press, 2009, http://library.cqpress.com/phw/document.php?id=phw2009_Mongolia&type=toc&num=122 - Accessed 15 March 2010 – Attachment 3; Economic Intelligence Unit 2008, *Country Report: Mongolia*, November – Attachment 7, see p 6.

[20] "Mongolia" 2009, CQ Press Electronic Library, Political Handbook of the World Online Edition, phw2009_mongolia. Originally published *in Political Handbook of the World 2009*, eds A Banks, T Muller, W Overstreet & J Isacoff, Washington DC: CQ Press, 2009, http://library.cqpress.com/phw/document.php?id=phw2009_Mongolia&type=toc&num=122 - Accessed 15 March 2010 – Attachment 3; Daly, J 2008, "Mongolia's political leaders compromise, resume cooperation", *Eurasia Daily Monitor V5*(170), http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=33921&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=166&no_cache=1 - Accessed 22 March 2010 – Attachment 17.

[21] Bulag, U 2009, "Mongolia in 2008", *Asian Survey V49(1)*, pp 129-134 – Attachment 4; Daly, J 2008, "Mongolia's political leaders compromise, resume cooperation", *Eurasia Daily Monitor V5*(170), http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=33921&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=166&no_cache=1 - Accessed 22 March 2010 – Attachment 17.

[22] Bulag, U 2009, "Mongolia in 2008", *Asian Survey V49(1)*, pp 129-134 – Attachment 4.

[23] US State Department 2009, *2008 Human Rights Report: Mongolia*, 25 February – Attachment 6.

2009 presidential election

The DP gained more political ground in May 2009, when long-term leader Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj won the presidential election against incumbent Nambaryn Enkhbayar of the MPRP.[24] The US State Department reported that the election was "considered largely free and fair"; in addition, it proceeded peacefully, with Enkhbayar quick to acknowledge defeat.[25] The *Globe & Mail* described the result as delivering a "milestone" in that "a candidate other than the leader of the [MPRP] won".[26]

Though some of the President's roles are ceremonial, the position does hold real political clout: as President, Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj possesses "veto power" over the "MPRP-controlled parliament".[27] Following the establishment of the MPRP-DP coalition government and the latest presidential elections, then, it would be hard to deny that the DP is an influential player in contemporary Mongolian politics.

2. Deleted.

Attachments

1. Amnesty International 2009, *Amnesty International Annual Report – Mongolia*, 28 May.

2. Freedom House 2009, *Freedom in the World 2009 - Mongolia*, 16 July.

3. "Mongolia" 2009, CQ Press Electronic Library, Political Handbook of the World Online Edition, phw2009_mongolia. Originally published *in Political Handbook of the World 2009*, eds A Banks, T Muller, W Overstreet & J Isacoff, Washington DC: CQ Press, 2009, http://library.cqpress.com/phw/document.php?id=phw2009_Mongolia&type=toc&num=122 - Accessed 15 March 2010.

4. Bulag, U 2009, "Mongolia in 2008", *Asian Survey V49(1)*, pp 129-134.

5. US State Department 2010, *2009 Human Rights Report: Mongolia*, 11 March.

6. US State Department 2009, *2008 Human Rights Report: Mongolia*, 25 February.

7. Economic Intelligence Unit 2008, *Country Report: Mongolia*, November.

8. Wong, E 2008, "A challenge for Mongolia's democracy", *New York Times*, 8 July.

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[24] MacKinnon, M 2009, "Mongolia takes a giant democratic step forward", *Points East* (blog) – *Globe & Mail*, 1 June, http://www.theglobeandmail.com/blogs/points-east/mongolia-takes-a-giant-democratic-step-forward/article1162614/ - Accessed 15 March 2010 – Attachment 18; "Mongolia's democracy fighter wins presidency" 2009, *ABC News*, 25 May – Attachment 16; Levin, D 2009, "Opposition Wins Presidency in Mongolia", *New York Times*, 25 May – Attachment 19.
[25] US State Department 2009, *2008 Human Rights Report: Mongolia*, 25 February – Attachment 6; MacKinnon, M 2009, "Mongolia takes a giant democratic step forward", *Points East* (blog) – *Globe & Mail*, 1 June, http://www.theglobeandmail.com/blogs/points-east/mongolia-takes-a-giant-democratic-step-forward/article1162614/ - Accessed 15 March 2010 – Attachment 18; Levin, D 2009, "Opposition Wins Presidency in Mongolia", *New York Times*, 25 May – Attachment 19.
[26] MacKinnon, M 2009, "Mongolia takes a giant democratic step forward", *Points East* (blog) – *Globe & Mail*, 1 June, http://www.theglobeandmail.com/blogs/points-east/mongolia-takes-a-giant-democratic-step-forward/article1162614/ - Accessed 15 March 2010 – Attachment 18.
[27] MacKinnon, M 2009, "Mongolia takes a giant democratic step forward", *Points East* (blog) – *Globe & Mail*, 1 June, http://www.theglobeandmail.com/blogs/points-east/mongolia-takes-a-giant-democratic-step-forward/article1162614/ - Accessed 15 March 2010 – Attachment 18; Freedom House 2009, *Freedom in the World 2009 - Mongolia*, 16 July – Attachment 2.

9. Redl, N 2008, "Mongolian rioters burn ruling party headquarters", *ABC News*, 2 July.

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11. "Mongolia calls state of emergency" 2008, *BBC News*, 1 July.

12. "Riots spark Mongolian state of emergency" 2008, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 July, source: AFP.

13. Tkacik, J Jnr 2008, "Mongolia's Current Political Situation: Implications for the OSCE" (lecture), Website of the Heritage Foundation, 15 September, http://www.heritage.org/Research/Lecture/Mongolias-Current-Political-Situation-Implications-for-the-OSCE – Accessed 22 March 2010.

14. Togoo, O 2008, "Civil Movement Leaders Ally with DP", *UB Post*, 3 October.

15. Kucera, J 2009, "Mongolia: Canadian mining firm inks blockbuster deal with Ulaanbaatar", *Eurasianet*, http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insightb/articles/eav100809c.shtml - Accessed 23 March 2010.

16. "Mongolia's democracy fighter wins presidency" 2009, *ABC News*, 25 May.

17. Daly, J 2008, "Mongolia's political leaders compromise, resume cooperation", *Eurasia Daily Monitor V5*(170), http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=33921&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=166&no_cache=1 - Accessed 22 March 2010.

18. MacKinnon, M 2009, "Mongolia takes a giant democratic step forward", *Points East* (blog) – *Globe & Mail*, 1 June, http://www.theglobeandmail.com/blogs/points-east/mongolia-takes-a-giant-democratic-step-forward/article1162614/ - Accessed 15 March 2010.

19. Levin, D 2009, "Opposition Wins Presidency in Mongolia", *New York Times*, 25 May.

20. Deleted.

21. Deleted.

22. Deleted.