

# Watchdog: Russia's Democracy Fell

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WASHINGTON — Russia is among 25 countries that showed significant declines in democracy in 2010 with little serious resistance from the democratic world, Freedom House said Thursday.

The report's survey of 194 countries and 14 territories found that Russia had shown "blatant disregard" for judicial independence in sentencing former Yukos CEO Mikhail Khodorkovsky.

Anti-Kremlin protesters were detained on New Year's Eve while calling for Khodorkovsky's release. Meanwhile, U.S. President Barack Obama's administration, while taking a public stand for human rights, has pursued better relations with Russia, the report said.

The number of electoral democracies dropped to 115, the lowest level since 1995, after reaching a high of 123 in 2005.

Ukraine fell from the "free" to the "partly free" category, while Kyrgyzstan moved from "not free" to "partly free" after holding comparatively free elections.

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