

the Islamic militants and their campaign of violence. Restrictions have been maintained on political activity of elements associated with the Islamic fundamentalist movement.

In Tunisia, the government banned the circulation for foreign newspapers and expelled two foreign journalists in 1995. The government refused to accredit a democratic political party and intervened in a seminar examining the independence of magistrates. Municipal elections saw the party of president Ben Ali win 4,084 of 4,090 seats contested, taking firm control of Tunisian political life.

Elsewhere, Jordan, which joined the peace process, saw some signs of progress in the entrenchment of democratic values with the exercise by the judiciary of a greater degree of independence in overturning verdicts issued by military courts without interference from the government. In November, the mandate of the President of Lebanon was extended for three years through a constitutional amendment over the (muted) objections of some members of the National Assembly.

In Egypt, the government passed a law in May prescribing strict prison terms for journalists convicted of libel or inaccurate reporting damaging to society. Objections by Egyptian journalists to the legal penalties in the law, however, led to the establishment of a joint government-media committee to review the law. Elections in December were marked by an intense and lively electoral campaign with the ruling National Democratic Party capturing 93% of the vote and 430 of 444 seats in the legislature. There have been numerous allegations of election fraud. The Egyptian government has committed itself to investigate these allegations.

EUROPE

Democratic development in Central and Eastern Europe continues to be uneven. Central Europe and the Baltics continued the process of democratic consolidation throughout 1995, with democratic principles and institutions increasingly firmly entrenched. The picture was decidedly less clear further east. Western Europe also saw the implementation of important democratic reforms, reflecting the continuing evolution of democratic institutions in even established democracies.

Elections in Hungary in May and Poland in November, which saw a relatively smooth transition to the former communists, reflected a growing political maturity. In addition, a high level of judicial independence was in evidence in Hungary when, in the spring, the constitutional court overturned elements of the governments economic austerity package.