

Geographic locations malawi

Geography - note landlocked; Lake Nyasa, some 580 km long, is the country's most prominent physical feature; it contains more fish species than any other lake on earth

Malawi is one of the world's least-developed countries. The economy is heavily based on agriculture, and it has a largely rural and growing population. Key indicators of progress in the economy, education, and healthcare were seen in 2007 and 2008.

Malawi has a low life expectancy and high infant mortality. HIV/AIDS is highly prevalent, which both reduces the labour force and requires increased government expenditures. The country has a diverse population that includes native peoples, Asians, and Europeans. Several languages are spoken, and there is an array of religious beliefs. Although in the past there was a periodic regional conflict fuelled in part by ethnic divisions, by 2008 this internal conflict had considerably diminished, and the idea of identifying with one's Malawian nationality had reemerged.

In 1961, Banda's Malawi Congress Party (MCP) gained a majority in the Legislative Council elections, and Banda became Prime Minister in 1963. The Federation was dissolved in 1963, and on 6 July 1964, Nyasaland became independent from British rule and renamed itself Malawi, and that is commemorated as the nation's Independence Day, a public holiday. Under a new constitution, Malawi became a republic with Banda as its first president. The new document also formally made Malawi a one-party state with the MCP as the only legal party.

President Mutharika was seen by some as increasingly autocratic and dismissive of human rights; and in July 2011 protests over high costs of living, devolving foreign relations, poor governance and a lack of foreign exchange reserves erupted. The protests left 18 people dead and at least 44 others suffering from gunshot wounds.

The Malawian flag was modified in 2010, altering three colored stripes with the white sun. It existed for a short while until 2012 when the colors of black-red-green of the old flag were restored.

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