



HUMAN RIGHTS: A Cornerstone of U.S. Foreign Policy

“Freedom is the non-negotiable demand of human dignity.” – President George W. Bush

Promoting human rights and democracy is a cornerstone of American foreign policy. The Department of State integrates democracy and human rights promotion into all aspects of U.S. foreign policy by supporting freedom-loving people around the world in their efforts to protect human rights.

The U.S. aims to:

- Promote democracy with its partners around the world as a means to achieve security, stability and prosperity for the world
- Assist newly formed democracies in implementing democratic principles and developing democratic institutions
- Speak out against regimes that deny their citizens fundamental freedoms

In promoting human rights and democracy, the U.S. employs: Diplomacy

American officials engage other governments, multilateral institutions, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and individuals around the world to encourage improved human rights practices and transition to democracy.

Human Rights Reports

The State Department’s *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, the *International Religious Freedom Report*, the *Trafficking in Persons Report*, and *Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record* measure the human rights performances of countries worldwide and U.S. assistance in building democracy. These annual reports receive serious attention in the United States and around the world and have helped bring about democratic and human rights change.

Democracy and Governance Programs

The State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development provide technical assistance to help governments and civil societies around the world strengthen their democratic skills. Programs are organized around the core concepts of accountable government, human rights, rule of law, fair elections, free media, civil society, and citizen participation.

Assistance Based on Performance

For governments that show the will to reform, the United States offers financial, technical and political assistance. For

governments lacking the will to reform, the United States can withhold support. In either case, the United States provides assistance to those people within a society who are working peacefully for democratic change.

Supporting Human Rights

- **Sudan:** Through diplomatic pressure, media interviews, and multilateral engagement with the Sudanese government and militia leaders, the United States has denounced genocide and called for perpetrators of violence against women and children to be held accountable.
- **Burma:** The United States presses the Burmese junta to allow workers’ rights and urges unions to stop the use of forced labor. It speaks out against the imprisonment of Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi and other courageous advocates for democracy.
- **Iran:** U.S. human rights and democracy programs support freedom of association and speech, and free participation in the political process. Projects focus on influential democratic actors and groups, including labor, women, and students.
- **Cuba:** The United States has helped universities and NGOs build solidarity with Cuba’s human rights activists, give voice to independent journalists, and defend the rights of workers. The U.S. continues to speak out against the treatment of political prisoners.
- **North Korea:** The newly appointed U.S. Special Envoy for Human Rights in North Korea is working with the international community and NGOs to raise awareness about human rights and religious freedom abuses in North Korea.

Promoting Democracy

- **Iraq:** The United States trained over 12,000 poll watchers, funded a national “Get Out the Vote” effort, and helped incorporate women into the political process. The U.S. also is supporting human rights education and rule of law programs.
- **Afghanistan:** The State Department provided assistance in drafting the new constitution that ensures protection of human rights, especially for women, and freedom of religion.
- **Middle East Partnership Initiative:** The U.S. has designated \$300 million for grants to support democratic reform in the region through some 140 democracy building projects in 14 countries and the Palestinian territories.