

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE



SUPPORTING HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY:

DERECHOS HUMANOS Y DEMOCRACIA 人权与民主 HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY حقوق الإنسان والديمقراطية



DROITS DE L'HOMME ET DÉMOCRATIE DIREITOS HUMANOS E DEMOCRACIA Права человека и демократия

THE U.S. RECORD 2006

“Peace and justice prevail when people are free to speak, assemble, and worship, when their rights are protected, and when governments are accountable to their citizens.”

President George W. Bush

2006 Proclamation for Human Rights Day, Bill of Rights Day, and Human Rights Week



SUPPORTING HUMAN
RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY:
THE U.S. RECORD 2006

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“...progress is seldom without great challenge and those who press for change often meet with resistance and indeed harsh repression. Whenever NGOs and other human rights defenders are under siege, freedom and democracy are undermined. The world’s democracies must push back. We must defend the defenders.”

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice

December 14, 2006

Commemoration of International Human Rights Day

PREFACE

This report documents the many ways the United States worked in 2006 to foster respect for human rights and promote democracy worldwide.

President Bush has committed us to conduct a foreign policy rooted in freedom, and he has identified the advancement of human rights and democracy as an essential element of our national security strategy. As the President stated: “What every terrorist fears most is human freedom – societies where men and women make their own choices, answer to their own conscience, and live by their hopes instead of their resentments.”



Throughout 2006, in every region of the world, we sought to promote and defend international human rights standards and democratic principles. We helped fellow democracies establish and sustain accountable institutions of government and the rule of law. We fostered free and fair election processes and encouraged the full participation of all citizens, including women and minorities, in the life of their countries. We worked to strengthen civil societies and promote media freedom. Furthermore, where human rights and democratic principles were under siege, we stood in solidarity with those who pressed for peaceful change.

Defending human dignity and supporting the growth of effective democracies across the globe is a long term effort, and it requires strong partnerships with other governments, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector. There will be setbacks, and progress may at times come slowly, but we and our partners will persevere – for it is right and wise to invest in the dreams of men and women of every culture and color, every background and belief, who yearn to secure the blessings of liberty for themselves, for their children, and for the futures of their countries.

With these thoughts, I hereby transmit the Department of State’s *Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2006* to the United States Congress.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Condoleezza Rice".

Condoleezza Rice
Secretary of State

U.S. HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY STRATEGY

Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2006 describes the wide range of diplomatic tools we applied last year to support indigenous reform efforts across the globe.

There is no single formula for advancing personal and democratic freedoms. Our efforts focused on the three core components of a working democracy that must be present if human rights are to be effectively exercised and protected: One -- a free and fair elections process, with a level playing field to ensure genuine competition; Two -- good governance, with representative, transparent and accountable institutions operating under the rule of law, including independent legislatures and judiciaries; and Three -- a robust civil society and independent media that can keep government honest, keep citizens engaged, and keep reforms on track. Where these three essential elements of democracy were weak, we worked to strengthen them; where they were under siege, we sought to defend them, and where they were non-existent due to government repression, we spoke out for those who live in fear yet dream of freedom.

As these reports indicate, we tailored our support for human rights and democracy to the challenges particular to each country and region. In the Western Hemisphere, for example, the principal challenge is democratic development -- helping democracies improve their capacity to deliver on the demands of their citizens for a better life. For many countries in Africa, ending violence remains central to improving human rights conditions and advancing governmental reforms. The challenges for human rights and democracy across South, Central and East Asia and the Pacific are as diverse as the countries in that vast expanse. In many cases, we helped democracies better address issues of governance to deepen the progress that they have made. In other cases, where leaders maintain control at the expense of the rights of their citizens, we spotlighted abuses and worked to expose populations to the global flow of ideas and information. In Europe, we continued to cooperate with our European partners to fulfill the vision of a continent that finally is whole, free and at peace. And in the broader Middle East and North Africa region, we responded to the growing demand for political, economic and educational reform through innovative multilateral and bilateral efforts such as the Forum for the Future and the Middle East Partnership Initiative.

Also in 2006, Secretary of State Rice announced two important initiatives in support of human rights and democracy defenders: a Human Rights Defenders Fund; and ten guiding NGO Principles regarding the treatment by governments of nongovernmental organizations.

The Human Rights Defenders Fund will enable the State Department to quickly disburse small grants to human rights defenders facing extraordinary needs as a result of government repression. This funding, which will begin at \$1.5 million and will be replenished each year as needed, could go to cover legal defense or medical costs, or short-term support to meet the pressing needs of activists' families.

The ten guiding NGO Principles (<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/77771.htm>) will guide our own treatment of NGOs, and we also will use them to assess the actions of other governments. The Principles are meant to complement lengthier, more detailed, UN and other international documents addressing NGOs and other human rights defenders. We hope that our contribution of the ten NGO Principles will help to rally worldwide support for embattled NGOs by serving as a handy resource for governments, international organizations, civil society groups and journalists.

Advances for human rights and democracy depend first and foremost on the courage and the commitment of men and women working for reform in their own countries. Progress also will require sustained and concerted efforts by the United States and fellow democracies in every region of the world. The path forward rarely will be linear. Fragile democracies can founder. Countries whose leaders are not fully committed to democracy can backslide. Those pressing for reform inevitably encounter push back from those who do not welcome change. These are sobering realities. At the same time, we believe that our work for freedom's cause can help to create new, hopeful realities for men and women across the globe.

PURPOSE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2006

This report is submitted to the Congress by the Department of State in compliance with Section 665 of P.L. 107-228, the Fiscal Year 2003 Foreign Relations Authorization Act, which requires the Department to report on actions taken by the U.S. Government to encourage respect for human rights. This fifth annual submission complements the Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2006, and takes the next step, moving from highlighting abuses to reporting the actions and programs the United States has employed to end those abuses.

Unlike the Country Reports, *Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2006* highlights United States efforts to promote human rights and democracy in only selected countries and entities – those facing the most serious human rights challenges. References to Tibet have been incorporated into the China report, and the Serbia report has a separate section on Kosovo. To make the report consistent with the criteria in the legislation, this year's report deletes a number of countries: Guinea-Bissau, Hong Kong from the China report, Malaysia, Solomon Islands, Bhutan, Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Peru, and Suriname, and adds Fiji.

Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2006 reflects the dedicated effort of hundreds of officials from the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development, as well as the employees of numerous non-governmental organizations. US embassies and consulates prepared the initial drafts of the reports. After the posts completed their drafts, the texts were sent to Washington for review by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, in cooperation with other State Department bureaus and offices and other US departments and agencies. As they worked to analyze and edit the reports, the State Department officers drew on their own knowledge of US government programs and activities.

Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2006 will be used as a resource for shaping policy, conducting diplomacy and making assistance, training and other resource allocations. It will also serve as a basis for the US Government's cooperation with private groups to promote the observance of internationally recognized human rights and democracy. As United States officials consider how best to advance the President's foreign policy goals, they adhere to relevant legislation. A list of significant legislation can be found at www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/42314.htm.

Within the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, the editorial staff of the report consists of: Editor in Chief – Stephen Eisenbraun; Senior Editorial Advisors – Barry F. Lowenkron, Jonathan Farrar, Erica Barks-Ruggles, Jeffrey Krilla, Nicole Bibbins Sedaca, Lynne Davidson; Senior Producer – Eva Weigold; Deputy Editors in Chief – Kari Johnstone and Amy Schmisser; Deputy Producer – Paul Skoczylas; Senior Editors– Jonathan Bemis, Kari Johnstone, Greg Maggio, Sandra Murphy, Susan O’Sullivan; Editors – Kulsum Ali, Joseph Barghout, Kate Bergland, Sarah Buckley, Laura Carey, Elise Carlson, Cheryl Clayton, Ryan Casteel, Sharon Cooke, Susan Corke, Stuart Crampton, Tamara Crouse, Mollie Davis, Cortney Dell, Saba Ghorri, Karen Gilbride, Lisa Heller, Sami Jiries, Simone Joseph, Hope Karmo, Anne Knight, Catherine Kuchta-Helbling, Michael Michener, Jennie Munoz, Daniel L. Nadel, Catherine Newling, Michael Orona, Sarah Fox Ozkan, Lindsay Robinson, Sonam Shah, Wendy B. Silverman, Jim Todd, Terry Tracy, Julie Turner, Nicole Wilett, Suzanne Yountchi; Editorial Assistants – Elyse Bauer, Adrienne Bory, Karen Chen, Carol Finerty, Eliot Gillerman, Noel Hartley, Jerome Hoganson, Eunice Johnson, Hope Karmo, David Perez, Lindsey Robinson, Patricia Meeks Schnell, James Todd, Nora Vacariu, Emily Weaver; Publication and Technical Officer – Roberta Mather and Steve Horrocks; and from the Bureau of Public Affairs - Monica Roll.

2006 INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS WEEK INITIATIVES

“Defending the Defenders”

The United States maintains its strong commitment to support those courageous individuals who are fighting for freedom and liberty around the world.

In commemoration of President Bush’s proclamation of December 10, 2006 as Human Rights Day and in recognition of Human Rights Week, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice announced three new initiatives on December 10, 2006 advancing U.S. Government efforts on democracy and human rights, and responding to a global trend of government crackdowns on non-governmental organizations and human rights defenders.

1. Human Rights Defenders Fund

In countries where tyranny persists, and even in states with some semblance of democratic institutions, human rights defenders are frequently put in jeopardy by the nature of their work. They are harassed, physically threatened or harmed, and many times detained and imprisoned. The creation of a global Human Rights Defenders Fund will enable the U.S. government to respond to human rights defenders’ emergency needs quickly by providing assistance to activists who are facing extraordinary financial, legal or medical needs as a result of government repression. The Fund will begin with \$1.5 million and will be replenished as needed.

2. NGO Principles

When non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are under siege, freedom and democracy are undermined. The U.S. Government is advancing ten core NGO Principles which guide our own treatment of NGOs and which we use to assess the actions of other governments. The Principles distill and complement lengthier United Nations and other international documents. We hope they will also be a useful tool for rallying worldwide support for embattled NGOs, by serving as a handy resource for governments, international organizations, civil society groups, and the media.

3. Freedom Awards

Beginning in December 2007, the Secretary of State will present two awards annually to recognize those striving to advance human dignity. The Freedom Defenders Award will be awarded to a foreign activist or NGO which has demonstrated outstanding commitment to advancing liberty and courage in the face of adversity. The Diplomacy for Freedom Award will honor the U.S. Ambassador who best advances the President's Freedom Agenda by working to end tyranny and promote democracy using the full array of political, economic, diplomatic, and other tools. The Ambassador will be recognized not only for individual achievement, but for his or her leadership in engaging the entire Embassy on implementing the Freedom Agenda.

In order to strengthen the impact of these three initiatives and other policies supporting those that work for freedom and liberty, the United States will take additional steps, including strengthening our partnership with other like-minded governments, to further strengthen and institutionalize the Freedom Agenda.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES ON NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Recognizing that non-governmental organizations (NGOs)* are essential to the development and success of free societies and that they play a vital role in ensuring accountable, democratic government,

And recalling the right to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association enshrined in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders,

We hereby pledge our commitment to the following principles and our determination to work for their full implementation throughout the world:

1. Individuals should be permitted to form, join and participate in NGOs of their choosing in the exercise of the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association.
2. Any restrictions which may be placed on the exercise by members of NGOs of the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association must be consistent with international legal obligations.
3. NGOs should be permitted to carry out their peaceful work in a hospitable environment free from fear of harassment, reprisal, intimidation and discrimination.
4. Acknowledging governments' authority to regulate entities within their territory to promote the public welfare, such laws and administrative measures should protect--not impede--the peaceful operation of NGOs and be enforced in an apolitical, fair, transparent and consistent manner.
5. Criminal and civil legal actions brought by governments against NGOs, like those brought against all individuals and organizations, should be based on tenets of due process and equality before the law.
6. NGOs should be permitted to seek, receive, manage and administer for their peaceful activities financial support from domestic, foreign and international entities.
7. NGOs should be free to seek, receive and impart information and ideas, including advocating their opinions to governments and the public within and outside the countries in which they are based.
8. Governments should not interfere with NGOs' access to domestic- and foreign-based media.

9. NGOs should be free to maintain contact and cooperate with their own members and other elements of civil society within and outside the countries in which they are based, as well as with governments and international bodies.

10. Whenever the aforementioned NGO principles are violated, it is imperative that democratic nations act in their defense.

*As used here, the term NGOs includes independent public policy advocacy organizations, non-profit organizations that defend human rights and promote democracy, humanitarian organizations, private foundations and funds, charitable trusts, societies, associations and non-profit corporations. It does not include political parties.

AFRICA





“If they think they can stop me from speaking against injustice, corruption and misgovernment . . . , then they are mistaken. It will not stop me.”

Trevor Ncube
*Zimbabwe journalist harassed by
government*

A woman casts her vote for president at a polling station in Goma, Congo.
(AP photo)

AFRICA

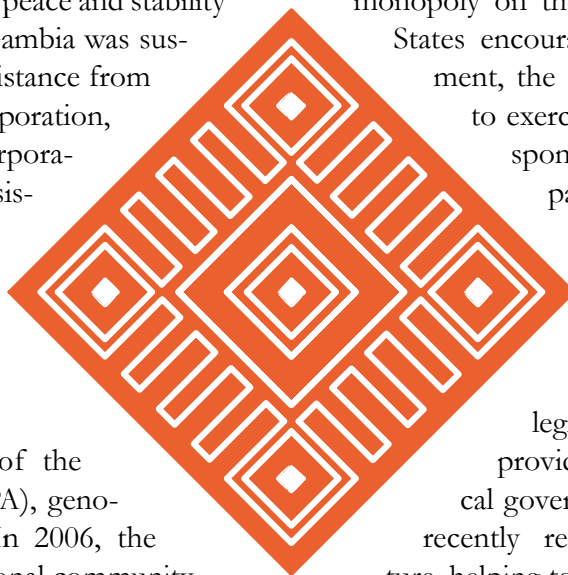
Many countries in Africa made significant headway along the road to democracy, bringing new hope to the region. The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) held its first democratic and credible presidential and legislative elections in more than 40 years, and democratic elections in Benin, Madagascar, and Mauritania brought renewed optimism to the region. As countries moved toward greater democratic governance, US assistance focused on building political plurality, ensuring voter registration, and providing election monitoring. In Uganda, the United States supported Ugandans' decision to adopt a multiparty political system by funding programs to enhance voter participation and political pluralism, and improve the administration of presidential and parliamentary elections. Nonetheless, institutionalizing democratic reforms across the continent continued to be a major challenge.

Key human rights problems, principally armed conflict, remained throughout Africa. In Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, the Central African Republic (CAR), DRC, Somalia, Sudan, and Uganda, US priorities included ending the violence that threatens so many lives and livelihoods, protecting vulnerable populations from further suffering, and bringing peace and stability to the region. In June, The Gambia was suspended from eligibility for assistance from the Millennium Challenge Corporation, a US Government-owned corporation that delivers targeted assistance to developing countries, after restricting civil liberties and press freedom in the wake of a springtime failed coup.

Despite the May 5th signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA), genocide continued in Darfur. In 2006, the United States led the international community in diplomatic and humanitarian efforts to stop the violence and protect the lives of millions of innocent civilians through peace negotiations, action at the UN

Security Council, and aggressive promotion and support of a robust, international peacekeeping force in Darfur. The US continued its role as the world's largest donor of humanitarian assistance to Sudan.

In Zimbabwe, where the ruling party maintained its monopoly on the executive branch, the United States encouraged the efforts of the Parliament, the judiciary, and local government to exercise some independence. A US-sponsored program to strengthen parliamentary committees helped increase debate from both opposition and reform-minded ruling party members and encouraged greater transparency through public hearings on legislation. US programming also provided much-needed training for local government leaders in Sierra Leone's recently reconstructed public infrastructure, helping town and district councils take on greater responsibilities for local governance issues, including health and agricultural services, as the central government continued to develop.





A vibrant and involved civil society is one of the best long-term guarantees of democratic stability. Throughout Africa, the United States worked to strengthen civic education in communities, support the development of civil society, including nascent nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and labor movements, and diversify the sources of information available to communities. For example, US-funded grants supported local NGOs who educated communities on human rights, HIV/AIDS, reconciliation, and peace building throughout Liberia.

US programs promoted free, economically stable, and socially-responsible media in the region. African journalists participated in professional exchange program visits to the United States. In the DRC, the United States held twelve workshops and an internet training course to help nearly 500 journalists improve their political reporting. US-sponsored programs also helped promote the free flow of independent and objective information in Zimbabwe, Chad, Burundi, Mauritania, Liberia, The Gambia, Sierra Leone, and Ethiopia.

In response to the corruption that continued to plague many countries in the region, the United States made the development of modern, efficient, and transparent legal systems an assistance priority for Africa. In Chad, the United States provided technical assistance to the Oil Revenue Management College to promote accountability in projects financed by oil revenues, and funded a budget-training workshop for parliamentarians. The United States also financially supported anticorruption efforts in Zambia, Chad, Liberia, and The Gambia.

United States support for human rights protections, including the rights of women, minorities, and the disabled, mirrored the growing demands for personal and political freedoms in the region. Swaziland passed its first constitution in 32 years that provided for an independent judiciary and gave equal legal rights to women, although the citizens of the country wait for its full implementation. The United States

worked throughout the region to improve awareness of human rights principles among military and law enforcement agencies, to ameliorate conditions in prisons, educate women and minorities of their legal rights, and build linkages among human rights organizations. In Uganda, the United States supported an extensive project to improve the rights and status of women that included mentoring sessions between female members of Parliament and more than 300 prospective female candidates for local and national office.

The variety of religious expression in Africa provides a unique showcase for interfaith and interethnic tolerance. In many countries with sizable Muslim populations, an interfaith gathering to mark the end of the holy month of Ramadan has become an annual embassy event. The United States promoted religious freedom through speeches and by gathering for occasions such as Iftar dinners to engage in dialogue with Muslim leaders in various African countries. The United States has worked extensively in Nigeria on the problems of interreligious violence and constraints on religious freedom, meeting with political and religious leaders at both the national and local levels to gain a better understanding of existing tensions.

Throughout Africa, the United States devoted substantial resources to prevent trafficking in persons and a range of labor rights abuses. These programs provided educational opportunities and job training for at-risk youth, expanded cooperation among law enforcement bodies, and helped victims reintegrate into their home communities. For example, the United States funded a cross-border antitrafficking awareness program in Liberia and Sierra Leone, and continued to expand educational opportunities for nearly 10,000 children either employed or at risk of being employed in the worst forms of child labor. Kenya, Angola, DRC, Zimbabwe, and Guinea, among others, also received US support for human rights protection programs, including initiatives to combat sexual violence and abuse of women.



AFRICA

Countries with accountable governments, political and economic freedoms, and respect for individual human rights enjoy a strong advantage in building prosperous, healthy, and educated populations. It is no coincidence that conflict, chaos, corrupt and oppressive governments, and humanitarian crisis often co-exist. The United States will continue to promote democracy and advance human rights in Africa to help the countries of the continent further develop the groundwork for peace, security, and stability.



Representatives from the international community meet with election officials from Cote d'Ivoire to prepare for upcoming elections. (IFES photo)

Strengthening the Electoral Process in Cote d'Ivoire Before the 2007 Presidential Elections

The upcoming presidential elections in Cote d'Ivoire offer its people a critical opportunity to work together to reinvigorate the political process and develop a common vision for the country's future. The US-funded NGO IFES is working in Cote d'Ivoire to provide timely election assistance in the lead up to the October 2007 presidential elections. With the goal to establish a solid foundation for peace and stability in the country, and thereby bring greater stability to the region, the project is creating a framework for credible elections by increasing the capacity of relevant stakeholders to conduct legitimate elections and building public confidence in the electoral process. Holding free and fair elections will mark a milestone on Cote d'Ivoire's path toward national unity and strong democratic institutions.

The IFES program is providing crucial electoral assistance through a range of activities to support free and fair elections in Cote d'Ivoire. The national-level commissioners of the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) are receiving training and materials in fundamental election administration skills to enhance their capacity to effectively conduct elections. The IFES project is also promoting dialogue among key national and international electoral stakeholders through roundtables focused on identifying priorities for the upcoming election, including establishing an electoral timetable, registering voters, and building public awareness among potential voters of the critical role played by credible elections in promoting a sustainable democratic process. Additional efforts to strengthen the electoral process include working with key stakeholders to establish a coordinated strategy for electoral assistance, and formulating public information campaigns to improve civic participation in elections.

Angola

Angola is a constitutional republic in transition since its 27-year civil war ended in 2002. Legislation provides for decentralization; however, the government remained highly centralized and dominated by the presidency. UN observers considered the 1992 presidential and legislative elections to have been generally free and fair; however, the government's continued delay of elections since then has undermined citizens' rights to elect officials. The government's human rights record remained poor, and serious problems remained, although there were improvements in a few areas. Other human rights abuses included unlawful killings by police, military, and private security forces; torture, beatings, and harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; corruption and impunity; arbitrary arrest and lengthy pretrial detention; an inefficient and overburdened judiciary, resulting in a lack of due process; restrictions on freedoms of speech, press, and assembly; forced evictions without compensation; and discrimination and abuse against women and children.

The US strategy for improving human rights and democratic governance in the country focused on preparing citizens for free and fair national elections, promoting good governance, strengthening civil society and political parties, supporting a vibrant, independent media, advocating for human and civil rights, promoting transparency, and supporting the rule of law. To reach these goals, the United States partnered with the government, international and local NGOs, faith-based organizations, and private corporations.

The establishment of strong democratic norms and institutions is a critical component of US policy in Angola. In late December the presidentially-appointed Council of the Republic recommended scheduling legislative elections for 2008 and presidential elections in 2009. During the year the United States supported projects that helped prepare the electorate, civil society, and political parties for participation in the electoral process. US Government funds supported programs that increased political tolerance and strengthened national reconciliation, such as hundreds of town hall meetings that brought together

er over 70,000 citizens and political leaders to discuss concerns in their respective communities. The United States also supported training and technical assistance for political parties at the national and provincial levels on platform development, message delivery, and constituency relations. Political parties received training in their roles during the pre-election period and in supervising the voter registration process. US funds also supported the expansion and consolidation of various national election networks to broaden citizen involvement in the election process. These networks trained election advocates, hosted community debates, and opened small information centers that provided election information to more than 19,000 potential voters. The United States supported projects that helped train civil society and political parties to observe and monitor the registration process and strengthen the national networks coordinating the observation of voter registration throughout the country's 18 provinces.

The United States focused on supporting independent media and developing journalistic professionalism during the year. In coordination with the Syndicate of Angolan Journalists and the Inter-Ecclesiastical Committee for Peace in Angola, the US Government funded workshops that trained journalists on election coverage, news writing and reporting, ethics, and professional conduct. Three senior journalists who participated in the International Visitors Leadership Program in the United States shared their experiences with colleagues on economic reporting, conflict resolution, and ethics. The US Government also donated books on journalism to the Ministry of Mass Communication and the two independent media associations in the country. The United States facilitated a UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization grant for the Syndicate of Angolan Journalists to continue its work on professional development and capacity building. The United States also supported the independent media organization MultiPress, which produced more than 3,000 news broadcasts, information spots, debates, and interviews on key democratic governance issues such as press freedom, rights to education, freedom of information and transparency, political and electoral processes, and civic education. The Voice of America



broadcast news and information from MultiPress, which had stringers in all 18 provinces.

The United States also facilitated debates on the new press law for journalists, government officials, and visiting senior US officials. In Benguela and Bengo provinces, US officials hosted roundtable discussions with local journalists, including the provincial directors of mass communications, about the state of the media, election reporting, and civic education. In discussions with high-level government officials and the Ministry of Social Communications during the year, the US Government continued its advocacy for the expansion of independent radio broadcasts to the provinces, including those of the largest nongovernmental radio network, Radio Ecclesia.

To support civil society, the US Government funded a small grants program that supported local projects and strengthened the technical and management capacity of local NGOs. The United States also continued to fund conflict mitigation and peace-building activities at the local level. These programs helped create and train community development groups that worked in partnership with local government administrations, police, and political parties to define and address their specific needs and priorities. These US Government-funded programs conducted 58 radio programs, 16 civil society organizational meetings, and 24 dialogue sessions. The US Government also funded a civil society capacity-building program, which developed and implemented over 500 conflict and reconciliation programs and directly impacted over 13,000 participants, including 3,500 women.

To combat corruption and foster transparency, the US Government continued to work with the Ministry of Finance to strengthen its management of the government's budgeting process through the Fiscal Programming Unit. Staff from the unit and senior technical officers from other government ministries received two weeks of intensive training in macroeconomic and fiscal programming techniques followed with continuous on-the-job training. According to the 2006 Fiscal Balance Report, the program reduced discrepancies in fiscal accounts. The program also supported the development of management tools for

standardizing budget statistics into quarterly and annual reports that adhered to international reporting standards.

To strengthen the rule of law, the United States funded the Commercial Law Development Program, which provided training and consultative services to judges and court clerks. Over the past five years, the program has assisted the Ministry of Justice by training court clerks to improve court administration in the provincial and municipal courts of Benguela, Lobito, Huila, Cabinda, and Luanda. This training provided technical skills to ensure random assignment of judges and helped establish a system for the tracking of cases and the continuous accountability of documents. The US Government, the Ministry of Justice, and the Portuguese Government worked during the year to provide the hardware, software, and training necessary to computerize the case management system in Luanda's provincial courts. By the end of the year, the system was functioning successfully in the Palacio Dona Ana Joaquina Criminal Court building.

Throughout the year the US Government continued to focus on human rights, consistently underscoring the important connection between support for human rights and strong, transparent government institutions. The US Government regularly discussed human rights issues with government officials at all levels, as well as with the international community and local NGOs. US officials frequently traveled throughout the country to discuss human rights issues. The US Government continued to monitor the human rights situation throughout the country, focusing on Cabinda, Lunda Norte, and Lunda Sul provinces, and encouraged human rights training for police, military, and other government representatives. The US Government sent 25 police officers to International Law Enforcement Academy training and assisted returning officers to conduct in-service training for colleagues. US Government funds supported international organizations and local NGOs that provided human rights and professional training to the police and military. The US Government also funded local partners who worked on more than 400 cases of illegal detention and secured the release of approximately 30 persons.

To address trafficking of persons in the country, the US Government worked to raise awareness of the issue through dialogue with government officials and the international community and also participated in several roundtable discussions on trafficking.

Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso is a parliamentary republic. In November 2005 President Blaise Compaore was elected to a third term with 80 percent of the vote in elections characterized by observers as generally free despite minor irregularities but not entirely fair due to the ruling party's control of official resources. Some in the opposition also contested the legality of the president's candidacy. The government's human rights record remained poor, but there were improvements in some areas. The following human rights problems were reported: use of excessive force against civilians, criminal suspects, and detainees by security forces, resulting in deaths and injuries; societal violence; abuse of prisoners and harsh prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention; official impunity; occasional restrictions on freedom of the press and freedom of assembly; violence and discrimination against women and children, including female genital mutilation; trafficking in persons, including children; discrimination against persons with disabilities; and child labor.

The United States focused its strategy to promote democracy and human rights in the country on diplomatic and programmatic measures to support free and fair elections of municipal leaders in April and on preparations for legislative elections scheduled for May 2007. The US Government also acted to promote the government's compliance with international human rights norms, emphasize accountability and transparency in governance, increase the efficacy of political parties, and advocate further easing of political tensions.

The US Government extended its efforts to promote democracy in multiple areas. To support the smooth performance of political processes, it conducted two seminars that addressed the electoral law and procedures for challenging questionable election

results. The seminars were attended by political parties and civic associations that promote democracy. The United States also funded a program to increase the efficacy of political parties and promote interparty dialogue with a view to maximizing the ability of opposition parties to compete in the April municipal elections and the legislative elections scheduled for 2007 by upgrading their political and organizational skills. The program generated good will among civil society groups and political parties while garnering respect from the government and the ruling party, the Congress for Democracy and Progress. The program involved participants from the entire political spectrum, including members of the ruling party as well as both the moderate and radical opposition.

The US government also promoted democracy through programs to expand public participation in elections, including the production of television commercials that encouraged voting and explained the electoral process. In preparation for the 2007 elections, US officials visited Bobo-Dioulasso, the second largest city in the country, to meet with political parties and civil society organizations to build support for free and fair elections and encourage greater participation by women. The US Government also funded several educational workshops for children on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

To make the April municipal elections as transparent as possible, the US Government allocated funds to conduct polling. The United States also provided funding to three organizations to monitor the municipal and 2007 legislative elections; the organizations presented their reports to the public on the municipal elections.

To promote media freedom and freedom of speech, the US Government provided media professionals with opportunities to exchange ideas with their international counterparts. As part of the International Visitor Leadership Program, the US Government sent three journalists and a number of professionals in the areas of democracy, good governance, conflict resolution, and civic education to the United States to meet with Americans and others in their respective professions. The US Government also funded a proj-



ect to promote female journalists and citizens' rights to government information.

The US Government worked to expand respect for the rule of law by encouraging professionalism in the country's armed forces. The United States provided training to military personnel and civilians on maintaining civilian control over the military in a democracy and the legal implications of the war on terror.

One of the US Government's main priorities was to ensure that major human rights abuses be prevented and eradicated. To achieve this goal, the United States allocated funds to produce radio programs on human rights and to translate a human rights declaration into local languages. The United States fostered respect for women's rights by encouraging the development of the judicial system to include the rights of women, funding several workshops to instruct women on their rights and the importance of obtaining personal legal documents, such as national identification cards. The United States also provided funding to a local organization to strengthen efforts to eradicate female genital mutilation.

The US Government sponsored a number of workshops and discussions on religious differences and the importance of encouraging religious tolerance and sponsored a summer camp for Koranic school students to promote interfaith understanding. US officials regularly met with the Muslim community for discussions and exchanges. During the month of Ramadan, US officials in the country hosted three Iftar dinners, during which a Muslim US official shared experiences as a follower of Islam in the United States. The US Government also selected Muslim participants for the International Visitor Leadership Program to learn about the functioning of Islam in a democratic society. During the year the president of the Muslim Students Association was chosen for the program. This association includes the universities of Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso as well as the teachers' college in Koudougou and all secondary and primary schools in the country.

The US Government worked to combat child labor and trafficking in persons. It funded a program to

combat child labor in the mining sector with the International Labor Organization as an implementing partner. In addition, the US Government funded several projects in the fight against human trafficking. An NGO rehabilitated and reintegrated 1,043 repatriated children in two US-funded centers. The same NGO is also producing a documentary on local antitrafficking laws. The US Government funded the translation of French-language antitrafficking films into local languages and sponsored a targeted trafficking awareness campaign in vulnerable areas. During the year the US Government reached the midway point in a multiyear project to reduce child trafficking by creating locally relevant curricula in rural schools. For the 2006-07 school year, approximately 2,016 students were enrolled in the program in five provinces where trafficking is prevalent.

Burundi

During the year Burundi continued its political transition from minority rule to democratic, majority rule via negotiations and elections. In 2005 it adopted a new constitution and conducted local and legislative elections, which resulted in the inauguration of Pierre Nkurunziza as the first democratically elected president since 1993. Throughout the year conflicts continued between government forces and the PALIPEHUTU-FNL, the sole remaining rebel group, although the overall security situation improved. On September 7, the government concluded a cease-fire agreement with the PALIPEHUTU-FNL, but the two sides continued to negotiate provisions for implementation of the agreement at the end of the year. The government's treatment of refugees and asylum seekers improved, and it fulfilled its obligations with international organizations involved in refugee issues. However, the government's human rights record remained poor. Despite improvements in some areas, security forces continued to commit numerous serious human rights abuses, including: summary executions, torture, and beatings of civilians and detainees, some of which were politically motivated; harsh and life-threatening prison and detention center conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention, including of political prisoners and detainees; prolonged pretrial de-

attention; lack of judicial independence and efficiency; restrictions on freedoms of the press, assembly, and association; official corruption and impunity; societal violence and discrimination against women; trafficking in persons; and child labor.

US human rights and democracy goals included helping to build a just and lasting peace based on democratic principles, protecting human rights, and relieving human suffering. These goals were supported by US efforts to strengthen newly created and newly elected governing bodies, decrease corruption, strengthen civil society, promote media and speech freedoms, support ethnic, political, and regional reconciliation, support victims of torture, and reintegrate ex-combatants and former child soldiers.

The US Government supported democracy building in the country. It funded training for parliamentarians and political party leaders through the Woodrow Wilson Center's Burundi Leadership Training Program, which gathered together 95 key leaders from across an ethnically diverse group of several organizations and eight political parties. The program focused on: rebuilding the personal relationships between ethnic groups that had broken down during the war years; restoring a firm consensus on power sharing; and improving communication and negotiation skills among the elite. The program also worked to develop leadership techniques and decision making, communication, and negotiation skills. The US Government also facilitated the production and broadcast of programs to promote democracy by funding five independent radio stations and the government's radio and television conglomerate. Additionally, the US Government funded the NGO Development Assistance, Inc. to assist newly elected governing bodies and officials to govern in an effective and transparent manner.



The US Government promoted a free media and funded seminars for the media. The United States sponsored a visit by an American journalist who conducted seminars on press freedom, journalistic ethics, and media-government relations for approximately 30 local journalists, 150 students from a private university, and government officials.

US efforts included the promotion of civil society. The US Government promoted a constructive relationship between elected government officials and civil society by improving understanding of their respective roles and responsibilities. The United States also funded programs that supported community associations and local civil society organizations in forwarding democracy, human rights, women's rights, the return of war victims and former combatants to civilian life, and the training of local officials and citizens in conflict prevention, mitigation, and mediation techniques. The US Government also funded the NGO Global Rights, which worked to strengthen civil society to manage and mitigate land conflict, and encouraged the participation of civil society organizations in legislative reform and the peace process.

US officials stressed to senior government officials the importance of due process and respect for human rights, particularly following the high-profile arrests of a former president, vice president, and senior leaders of media and opposition parties charged with threatening state security.

The US Government worked to reduce the number and effects of serious human rights abuses. In the provinces of Gitega, Ruyigi, and Karuzi, US assistance to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Federation of Red Cross/Crescent Societies, VOA, and four NGOs aided thousands of returning refugees and internally displaced persons to reintegrate into their commu-



nities. The US Government also financed a variety of smaller projects that promoted human rights in general and advanced the interests of women and children. The United States funded programs that supported human rights monitoring and advocacy on issues related to torture and provided medical, legal, and psychological support to approximately 1,700 victims of torture and rape. The United States financial and material support to independent and government radio and television stations allowed them to produce programs focused on human rights issues, community reconciliation, and conflict mitigation. The US Government regularly raised the government's poor human rights record in meetings with government officials and continued to advocate for increased respect of internationally recognized human rights on the part of the government and security forces.

The US Government worked to combat the practice of child soldiering. The United States funded the third year of a three-year regional initiative to demobilize and rehabilitate child soldiers and reintegrate them into their former communities. The program focused on drafting legislation, instituting appropriate procedures, and monitoring mechanisms, as well as strengthening government institutions that dealt with child soldiering. The program facilitated and supported the economic reintegration of 800 child soldiers through education, training, financial support, and community strengthening. It also aimed to enhance information sharing on child soldiers in the region. During the year the US Government also funded a local NGO to assist child soldiers and human trafficking victims. The organization focused its assistance to child soldiers on the provision of vocational training and psycho-social counseling.

The US Government promoted religious freedom as part of its overall policy to promote human rights. US officials maintained regular contact with leaders and members of various religious communities.

Cameroon

Cameroon is a republic dominated by a strong presidency. Despite the country's multiparty system of

government, the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement has remained in power since it was created in 1985. In 2004 ruling party leader Paul Biya won re-election as president. The election was flawed by irregularities, particularly in the voter registration process, but observers believed the election results represented the will of voters. The government's human rights record remained poor, and the government continued to commit numerous human rights abuses. Security forces committed numerous unlawful killings and regularly engaged in torture, beatings, and other abuses, particularly of detainees and prisoners. Prison conditions were harsh and life threatening. Authorities arbitrarily arrested and detained anglophone citizens advocating secession, local human rights monitors and activists, and other citizens. The law provides for the arrest of homosexuals and persons not carrying identification cards. There were reports of prolonged and sometimes incommunicado pretrial detention and infringement on citizens' privacy rights. The government restricted citizens' freedoms of speech, press, assembly, association, and movement. Official corruption and impunity were problems. Societal violence and discrimination against women; trafficking in persons, primarily children; discrimination against indigenous Pygmies and ethnic minorities; and discrimination against homosexuals also were problems. The government restricted labor rights. Child labor, slavery, and forced labor, including forced child labor, were reported to be problems.

The government took significant steps during the year to improve citizens' understanding of their specific human rights and protections through publication of its own human rights report. The government also conducted training sessions throughout the country on the provisions of the penal code scheduled for implementation in 2007.

The United States promoted its goal of strengthening democratic institutions and improving respect for human rights by actively engaging officials from all levels of government, local and international NGOs, and members of civil society and the media.

The United States worked to support democratic processes in the country. In preparation for the mu-

nicipal and legislative elections slated for June 2007, the US Government continued to work with key officials to ensure the timely and effective implementation of the independent electoral commission. US officials met repeatedly with high-level members of the government, including President Biya, to urge that concrete action be taken to reach the government's stated objective of holding free and fair legislative and municipal elections in 2007. The United States worked with donors and the government to reform the electoral process, especially the effort to register voters and develop a new electoral code by 2007. US officials attended high-level working-group meetings, whose participants included members of the UN Development Program and European Union, to coordinate policy on finance, governance, and assistance expenditures in support of the election. The United States provided support for an October meeting of a parliamentary caucus on environmental protection, which brought together lawmakers, NGOs, and citizen groups to address good governance and environmental issues. In November politicians attended a two-day event sponsored by the US Government on midterm elections in the United States, which included a pre-election watch, post-election wrap-up, and a discussion of the issues with the ambassador and other US officials.

The United States promoted citizen involvement in the democratic process. In a November address the ambassador stressed the need for science-based decision-making in government and the public's right to know the reasoning behind policy decisions. The US Government funded local NGOs working to promote civic education in electoral law and to train student leaders in advocacy, lobbying, and nonviolent strategies to effect change.

The US Government promoted continued media development by providing grants to two nationwide media associations for extended training with a journalism expert. The United States cosponsored training for journalists on investigative reporting, ethics, and news reporting, as well as two workshops on editing with a journalism expert. During each training session, the role of the media and corruption was discussed. The US Government also gave several grants

to media organizations to discuss issues including the environment, women, and political involvement.

Following the 2000 law authorizing the creation of private radio and television stations, the US Government continued to press the government to issue licenses during the year. The United States also supported completion of the development of a labor standard agreement for journalists.

The United States supported civil society by awarding grants to support local NGOs implementing projects promoting good governance and the rights of women and children.

To promote due process and respect for the law, the US Government funded a local NGO that helped to disseminate the new criminal procedure code. One of the major US priorities was to push for the elimination of corruption in all aspects of life. To this end, the ambassador held press conferences and frequently raised the issue with government and civil society actors. In a December speech delivered before the prime minister and cabinet, the ambassador praised the early ratification of the UN Convention against Corruption as a strong indicator of the government's commitment to making progress against corruption and called for additional progress.

The United States worked with the military and police to curb human rights abuses. To foster more professionalism in the security forces, the US Government sent members of the armed forces to military schools in the United States, where they studied civil-military relations, military peacekeeping operations, military subordination to civilian authorities, and a broad range of other legal and human rights topics. The program included additional opportunities for engagement in outside programs. The United States also funded the International Law Enforcement Academy, which provided law enforcement instruction to local law enforcement authorities.

The US Government funded several local NGOs involved in human rights issues, including one that provided an education program on the eradication of female genital mutilation to the Arabe Choa tribe of



the Far North Province. US Government support for the World Food Program's food assistance to primary schools in the extreme north and Adamaoua Province allowed 82,500 students from underprivileged households to attend school, in particular girls during the last three grades of primary school. The US Government also provided aid to refugees, estimated to number 30,000. The United States provided a grant for assistance to a center to rehabilitate refugees who were victims of torture.

To support religious tolerance, the ambassador continued the annual tradition of hosting an Iftar dinner at his residence.

The United States sponsored several efforts to eliminate child labor. The US Government continued to fund the West Africa Cocoa/Agriculture Project to eliminate child labor. At the end of the three-year project, the program had withdrawn 1,600 children from hazardous work in cocoa farms and prevented another 379 children from entering the workforce. In addition, the program provided education to more than 800 parents to enable them to seek income-generating activities and provided direct assistance to start such activities. The program also created a common initiative group of small-holder tea farmers who produced and labeled their tea "Child Labor Free." Approximately 35,000 people have been directly sensitized about child labor in various project sites. On June 16, to raise awareness of the issue of child labor, the US Government organized a high-profile fashion show, the screening of a labor documentary, and a handicrafts fair to demonstrate the value of teaching youth useful, viable skills. During the fashion show, rescued youth modeled apparel created by former child labor victims.

The United States worked to combat trafficking in persons. It implemented an antitrafficking program from April through March 2006 through Nkumu Fed Fed, a network of women's associations that fights against child labor, child violence, and child trafficking. The project addressed traditional practices that disadvantage young women and children, particularly in rural communities where employment and female literacy are low and poverty is rampant.

Central African Republic

The Central African Republic is a constitutional republic governed by a strong executive branch and weak legislative and judicial branches. In 2005 the country held presidential and legislative elections that resulted in the election of General Francois Bozize, the country's former armed forces chief of staff, as president; in 2003 Bozize seized power in a military coup. National and international observers judged the elections to be generally free and fair. Fighting between rebels and government security forces resulted in numerous civilian killings and, along with widespread banditry and kidnappings by unidentified groups, caused the displacement during the year of approximately 185,000 persons. Analysts estimated that only 2 percent of the country's territory was under state authority. The government's human rights record remained poor; although there were improvements in some areas, the government's respect for human rights deteriorated overall, and serious problems remained. Human rights abuses reported during the year involved the following: unlawful killings, torture, beatings, rape, and other abuses of suspects and prisoners by security forces; military impunity; harsh and life-threatening prison and detention center conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention by security forces; prolonged pretrial detention and denial of a fair trial; restrictions on freedom of the press and movement; official corruption; societal violence, including female genital mutilation and discrimination against women and indigenous people (Pygmies); restrictions on workers' rights; and forced labor, including by children.

The US strategy to promote democracy and human rights focused on supporting democratic institutions and practices, encouraging transparency and accountability in government actions and policies, endorsing respect for the rule of law, and advancing a more active role for civil society in the political process. After two and a half years of suspended operations due to security concerns, the US embassy in Bangui, the capital, resumed operations in January 2005, but it continued to operate with a very limited permanent American staff during the year.

To strengthen the political process and promote democracy, the United States promoted good governance and transparency, increased civic education, and made efforts to strengthen the parliament, which was composed of largely inexperienced legislators and was susceptible to pressure from the executive branch. To support the parliament and help educate voters, the US government funded a targeted radio series explaining the role of elected deputies. Under this program, a private radio station organized a series of live broadcasts called Your Seat in Parliament to promote open dialog among citizens from rural areas and their elected deputies in the National Assembly. The broadcasts, aired during a two-week period by Bangui-based and regional radio stations, explained the role of an elected deputy, how to get services from a deputy, and how to contact and visit the parliament. For the second straight year, the public diplomacy radio program proved to be a significant success in reinforcing democracy and helping newly elected deputies better understand their roles.

To help build an independent and professional media, the United States supported the country's association of journalists and newspaper owners. The United States supported this association by funding a five-day workshop for 15 provincial journalists. The workshop emphasized the value of creating articles of national interest from local stories; explained how to edit articles to conform to the norms of national newspapers; trained aspiring journalists in provincial towns to identify, write, and self-edit quality news stories; and allowed journalists to discuss professional ethics and freedom of the press. Furthermore, US officials discussed press freedom concerns with local newspaper editors, radio broadcasters, and other journalists and raised these concerns, including reports of security forces threatening members of the media, with government officials. Government officials were receptive to US concerns about press freedom, there were fewer reports of security forces intimidating journalists than in the previous year, and several journalists said press freedom had improved.

To support civil society US officials met often with NGO leaders during the year, exchanged information about human rights abuses committed by security

forces, and echoed NGO concerns in meetings with government officials. The US embassy also evaluated the capacity and needs of domestic human rights NGOs to determine where US embassy resources would have the greatest impact in strengthening civil society.

To promote respect for the rule of law, the United States supported the government's efforts to address the country's deteriorating security situation and impunity--particularly military impunity--through regular meetings with high-level officials.

To assist the government in addressing human rights abuses, US officials worked closely with the government, local human rights NGOs, and other stakeholders to raise awareness of abuses committed by security forces and societal discrimination and violence. US officials visited prisons and detention centers in the capital to monitor the treatment of several political detainees and then raised concerns about harsh detention conditions and the need for due process with the prosecutor general, the minister of justice, and other government officials. In addition the US government provided resources to organizations assisting displaced persons in the country. Furthermore, the US embassy worked with ministers, parliamentarians, local NGOs, and domestic media to disseminate a French translation of the US Government's annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices. Following a roundtable involving US officials and approximately 40 domestic journalists, two local newspapers published the report in installments over the course of several weeks.

To promote respect for labor rights, the United States encouraged the government to allow trade unions to function independently and continued to monitor child labor. Through a dialogue with high-ranking officials, the US embassy helped raise the government's awareness of trafficking in persons and aided the government in creating a strategy to combat it. By year's end the government had prepared a national action plan to combat trafficking in persons. The US embassy also made efforts to increase awareness of child labor and the problems faced by street children



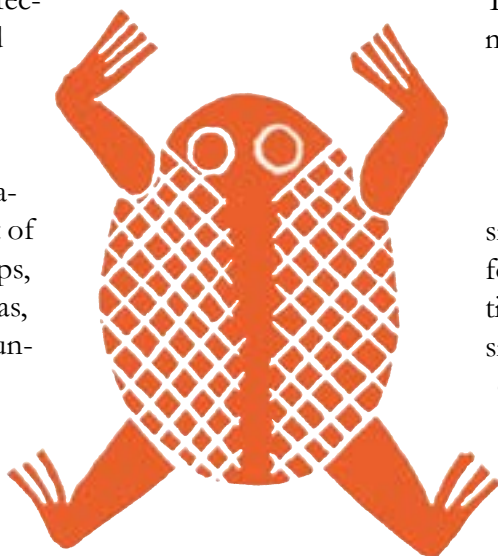
by discussing the issue with labor unions, the UN Children's Fund, and government officials.

Chad

Chad is a centralized republic; on May 3, President Deby was reelected to a third term in a seriously flawed election that was boycotted by the opposition. A referendum manipulated by the ruling party removed presidential term limits in 2005. Deby has ruled the country since taking power in a 1990 rebellion. Political power remained concentrated in the hands of a northern oligarchy composed of the president's Zaghawa ethnic group and its allies. The executive branch effectively dominated the legislature and judiciary, thereby eliminating potential challenges to a culture of impunity for the ruling minority. During the year the security situation sharply deteriorated as a result of fighting that involved rebel groups, government forces, armed militias, and civilians, mostly near the country's borders with Sudan and the Central African Republic. By year's end hundreds of persons had been killed and injured, almost 50,000 refugees from the Central African Republic and more than 230,000 Sudanese refugees from Darfur had sought refuge in the country, an estimated 110,000 citizens had been displaced by a security vacuum in the east, and numerous villages in the east and southeast of the country had been destroyed.

The government's poor human rights record deteriorated further during the year. Security forces committed numerous serious human rights abuses. The following human rights abuses were reported: limitation of citizens' right to change their government; extrajudicial killings, torture, beatings, and rapes by security forces; impunity for human rights abuses committed by members of the security forces; politically motivated disappearances; arbitrary arrest and detention

by security forces; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions and lengthy pretrial and post-sentence detention; executive interference in the judiciary and lack of judicial effectiveness; official infringement of privacy rights including illegal searches, confiscation, and wiretaps; limits on freedom of speech and the press and freedom of assembly, including harassment and detention of journalists; widespread official corruption; violence and societal discrimination against women, including the widespread practice of female genital mutilation; child abuse; slavery; trafficking in persons; and forced labor, including the use of child soldiers and other types of forced and abusive child labor.



The US strategy for promoting democracy and human rights in the country focused on strengthening the institutions necessary for a stable democracy, such as civil society and a free, fair, and professional press. The US Government focused on government institutions by promoting a more professional military, promoting transparency in governance, strengthening the National Assembly, engaging directly with key government officials, and improving interaction between the government and human rights groups. Efforts were also made to

strengthen the credibility and capacity of civil society groups and governmental institutions in addressing human rights abuses, including involving them in visits of high-level US Government officials. The US Government encouraged human rights groups and other civil society organizations to become a resource for both the government and citizens on human rights issues.

The support of free and fair elections and civic education were an important part of the US strategy for democracy promotion. US officials met throughout the year with members of the political opposition to encourage active political dialogue and raised the need for such dialogue and credible elections at the high-

est levels within the government and ruling political party. The ambassador's Independence Day speech stressed the importance of free and fair elections as key to building a viable democracy. The US Government implemented a program to improve the teaching of civic education in schools by funding the printing of 35,000 locally edited civic education textbooks. It also facilitated dialogue by creating opportunities for activists and government officials to interact in professional and social settings to discuss, among other things, the importance of democratic governance. In addition, approximately 25 US officials and Chadian employees of the US embassy monitored polls in N'Djamena during the May 3 presidential election. Strengthening press freedoms and the media's ability to promote human rights and good governance was a high priority. The ambassador regularly continued to highlight press freedom and other human rights issues with government and civil society officials and during public ceremonies. The US Government provided equipment and training to print and broadcast journalists. Thirty private and public press organizations received material support, including computers, generators, and motorbikes, to enhance their ability to cover key events. The US Government also financed the creation of a private radio station in the far north, which has been broadcasting since February 2005, and actively supported the Arabic media, including three radio stations, six newspapers, and a nightly television news show.

The US Government also highlighted the importance of professional collaboration for media. Journalists benefited from three training programs held in the country as well as in Nigeria and Cameroon. In addition, a prominent journalist participated in the Edward R. Murrow International Visitor Leadership Program on investigative journalism and ethics.

The US Government worked to support the growth of civil society. It provided self-help grants to a number of civil society organizations throughout the year to support community initiatives.

The US Government worked to promote the rule of law in the country. US support for fiscal transparency included technical assistance to the Oil Revenue Man-

agement College, the mechanism that reviews projects financed by oil revenues to promote accountability. To promote transparency in other aspects of government budget management, a budget-training workshop was held October 17-20 for 80 parliamentarians, and computers and office equipment were provided to improve the National Assembly's ability to control and monitor the government's budget operations.

The continuing humanitarian crisis in Sudan deeply affected the country. The United States, which is the largest donor to humanitarian efforts, contributed personnel to the Inter-Sudanese Peace Talks on Darfur and participated actively in the implementation of the Darfur Humanitarian Cease-fire Agreement, which includes regular meetings of a joint commission. The US Government remained a key interlocutor between the government, Sudanese rebel groups, and the African Union on the Darfur peace process. The US Government facilitated the work of human rights organizations and NGOs working to protect refugees. The US Government also supported legal assistance for victims of human rights abuses through local human rights NGOs and selected a leading human rights activist, the president of the Chadian Human Rights League, for the International Visitor Leadership Program on human rights and good governance.

The US Government used direct contact with soldiers, including training and visits by US officials and the sharing of information on human rights violations with high-level government officials, to emphasize the importance of working together on human rights. The annual US publication of the Country Reports on Human Rights Practices was used as a basis for collaboration. To date, government officials have been candid and responsive. Visiting congressional and military delegations supported the US human rights agenda. The professionalization of the security forces was a key component of US strategy for improving the country's human rights record. The US Government funded International Military Education and Training and Counter Terrorism Fellowship programs at US military facilities, where training on human rights is incorporated into the courses. The US Special Forces trained 170 members of the military



during the year and provided follow-up training to an additional 170 members initially trained in 2004.

The US government continued to provide support for the rights of women and children and worked to eliminate female genital mutilation. US support to a local NGO resulted in the drafting and enactment of a law that criminalized the practice. In 2004 the US government funded an education program to publicize and distribute copies of the law; the program was completed in 2006. In addition, US officers hosted a child protection network that brought together concerned government officials, police, and NGOs on a range of issues affecting children. Congressional visitors also met with the key officials and NGOs on women's issues.

The US Government encouraged public awareness of human rights. It promoted civil rights and civil liberties through civil rights education and a radio broadcast on human rights issues and civil liberties. This program was shared with other radio stations and translated into several local languages to help increase public awareness of basic human rights.

US-Muslim outreach continued with a program for bilingual education with a respected local organization that promotes cross-cultural understanding. Two members of the High Islamic Council attended an international visitor program on leadership in the Muslim community. The program exposed Muslim leaders to Islam in the United States and focused on religious tolerance and interfaith cooperation.

The US Government supported the government's efforts to combat trafficking in persons and child labor, bolstering the government's efforts to protect victims of trafficking and enhance law enforcement's capacity to respond to trafficking cases. During the year the US Government funded a UN Children's Fund project to create a child protection network to rescue and rehabilitate child herders, child domestics, and victims of commercial sexual exploitation. The US government also covered the production costs of a locally made film that depicted the plight of child herders in the country.

Congo, The Republic of the

The Republic of the Congo is ruled by a government in which most of the decision-making authority is vested in the president, Denis Sassou-Nguesso, who was elected in 2002. Independent monitors determined that the 2002 presidential elections and parliamentary elections for the Senate and the National Assembly did not "contradict the will of the people," although there were irregularities. While the civilian authorities generally maintained effective control of security forces, uncontrolled and unidentified armed elements remained active in the Pool region, despite an ongoing demobilization and reintegration program.

The government's human rights record remained poor; although there were some improvements, serious problems remained. There were reports that security forces were responsible for extrajudicial killings, rapes, beatings, physical abuse of detainees and citizens, arbitrary arrest and detention, looting, solicitation of bribes, and theft. Mob violence, including the killing of suspected criminals, was a problem. Prison conditions were poor. The judiciary continued to be overburdened, underfunded, and subject to political influence, bribery, and corruption. Interference with personal privacy, as well as limits on freedoms of movement and the press, continued. Discrimination and violence against women; trafficking in persons; ethnic discrimination, particularly against Pygmies; and child labor also were problems.

The US strategy for promoting democracy in the country focused on strengthening and building democratic institutions with the government, press, NGOs, and international organizations. The US strategy for promoting human rights included US support for numerous programs to reduce discrimination against indigenous persons, repatriate refugees, and provide medical care in the war-torn Pool region.

The United States continued to train community members to be more active, informed, and engaged in democratic decision making at the local, provincial,

and national levels. In addition, efforts were underway to prepare for elections in 2007 and 2009.

Through demarches, discussions with the government, and cooperation with the international community, US officials continued to stress the need for the government to increase transparency in accounting for oil revenues and other public funds. The US Government partnered with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to promote anticorruption programs and fiscal transparency. The United States criticized systematic violations in the trial proceedings of anticorruption activists Christian Mounzeo and Brice Mackosso, who were arrested because of their investigation into the lack of transparency in the petroleum sector. US officials delivered demarches at every level of government to encourage due process and discourage political interference in the trial.

The United States supported ongoing programs to better track and promote understanding of human rights. To build general awareness the US Government focused its efforts on youth, women, minorities, and persons with disabilities. Other US grants supported human rights education for the minority Pygmy population and protection of their environment and way of life.

Through civil-military dialogue and military training exchanges, the United States encouraged greater military discipline, professionalism, and respect for human rights. During the year programs continued to reintegrate rebel militia members into civil society and to disarm combatants who remained active in the Pool region, although progress was slow. The US Government continued to support an English-language training program for military officers to provide the basis for other types of military training. The United States also sponsored the training of 12 law enforcement officials in midlevel leadership, cyber crime, and investigation.

To promote worker rights, the United States funded the third year of a three-year regional initiative by the International Labor Organization to demobilize, rehabilitate, and reintegrate child soldiers into their for-

mer communities. The program involved education, training, financial support, and community strengthening. The initiative focused on legislation, procedures, monitoring mechanisms, and expertise of government institutions to address child soldiering. The program continued to facilitate and support the economic reintegration of former child combatants.

Congo, The Democratic Republic of the

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is a nominally centralized republic. Following five years of devastating civil war, the three-year transitional period drew to a close with multiparty presidential and National Assembly elections on July 30 and presidential runoff and provincial assembly elections October 29. The elections, which international observers considered credible, were the first democratic elections in more than 40 years and involved the participation of more than 17 million voters (out of 25 million registered). The transitional government continued to make moderate progress in unifying and stabilizing the country, but several armed groups continued to operate outside government control, primarily in the east, despite government efforts to disarm, detain, or integrate them.

In all areas of the country, the human rights record remained poor, and numerous serious abuses were committed. Unlawful killings, disappearances, torture, rape, and arbitrary arrest and detention by security forces increased during the year, and the transitional government took few actions to punish violators. Other serious problems were harsh and life-threatening conditions in prison and detention facilities; prolonged pretrial detention; lack of an independent and effective judiciary; and arbitrary interference with privacy, family, and home. Security forces continued to recruit and retain child soldiers and to compel forced labor by adults and children. They also continued to abuse press freedom, particularly during the election campaign. The transitional government continued to restrict freedom of assembly and movement, government corruption remained pervasive, and security forces restricted NGOs. In addition, societal discrim-



Election official in Congo gives orders at a UN depot being used to process ballots. (AP photo)

ination against women and ethnic minorities, trafficking in persons, child labor, and lack of protection for workers' rights continued to be pervasive.

The US Government employed a multifold strategy to promote human rights and democracy. The US Government provided technical, logistical, and material support to the transitional government and the Independent Electoral Commission to promote free and fair elections. The strategy also advanced accountability for human rights abuses through support for legislation against trafficking in persons and sexual violence and for the development of a legal framework to end impunity. It worked to build government capacity to consolidate peace, deter conflict, and prepare for the transition to democratic governance. The US government also provided assistance to victims of human rights violations and training and education programs to combat the pervasive culture of impunity.

The United States undertook several efforts to strengthen the political process and promote democracy. The US Government continued to partici-

pate in the International Committee to Accompany the Transition and several multidonor commissions that guided the electoral process. The electoral law, drafted with assistance from US technical experts and adopted by the transitional parliament, established a legal framework for universal suffrage, vote secrecy, and the direct election of the president and members of the national and provincial assemblies.

The United States supported several initiatives to raise voter awareness of the democratic process. US programs reached more than two million voters nationwide through community seminars, workshops, and other civic education activities. More than 650,000 citizens benefited from a two-month voter outreach and training campaign conducted through riverboat stops along the Congo River.

US funding supported the electoral commission's organization of nationwide elections in July and October. US assistance provided the commission with security surveillance systems, communications equipment, voter education materials, ballot boxes, and voting booths, in addition to facilitating transporta-

tion of materials to various locations in the country. US programs also helped train more than 40,000 local NGO election observers and more than 100,000 political party poll-watchers. Furthermore, the United States provided funding to many prominent international election observation missions that fielded more than 200 election monitors. During the July elections, 40 US officials served as observers around the country, and 20 US officials monitored polls in Kinshasa during the October vote.

To promote media freedom and independence, the United States held a series of workshops throughout the country to help journalists improve their political reporting. Twelve workshops in Kinshasa, as well as a computer/Internet training course in the interior, assisted nearly 500 journalists. The United States provided funding to the High Media Authority--the country's quasi-governmental media watchdog--that enabled the organization to reconstitute archives that were destroyed after its headquarters was looted in July. One journalist traveled to the United States to attend the Edward R. Murrow International Visitor Leadership Program.

The United States assisted several local NGOs to promote the culture of democracy and human rights. One US-funded, Kinshasa-based organization produced educational skits on democratic principles for television broadcasts. Other groups supported by the United States developed radio broadcasts and other printed materials highlighting voter rights and the role of women and youth in society.

During the year an additional Democracy Resource Center opened in the central Kasais Region, bringing the number of such US-funded centers to six throughout the country. The centers became hubs for local NGOs to gain access to electoral information otherwise unavailable to them. In addition, US-supported NGOs mobilized civil society leaders to work toward reducing political tensions prior to national elections, encourage voter participation, and disregard messages of so-called election "spoilers" inciting hatred and violence.

The United States took several steps to facilitate strengthening the rule of law. US-sponsored technical experts contributed to the drafting of several key pieces of legislation ultimately passed by the transitional parliament. In addition to the Electoral Law, legislators passed the Law on Sexual Violence and the Law on the Independence of the Judiciary. These laws increase human rights protections, identify crimes of sexual violence punishable by law, and codify judicial independence. Other legislation drafted during the year with the help of US assistance included laws on the rights of the political opposition, the creation of the High Magistrates Council, and further legislation on the development of new court systems. These bills were expected to be introduced in the new parliament in 2007.

The United States supported training that provided logistical and technical assistance to local anticorruption committees that engaged civilian, judicial, religious, and military authorities in the anticorruption effort. Activities in this sector continued to reduce economic barriers to transport and commerce along the Congo River and sought to end the misuse of public resources and the culture of criminal impunity.

The United States focused much of its efforts on assisting the government and NGOs in addressing human rights abuses and aiding victims of those abuses. The United States participated in several multidonor commissions that addressed human rights abuses by the military. In addition, multiple US-funded NGOs provided legal support and other services for survivors of gender-based violence. US grantees expanded support to more than 10,000 female survivors of torture, rape, and abduction, particularly to assist victims in pursuing legal and judicial strategies. Other activities by US grantees included strengthening technical capacity among prosecutors, building public and official awareness of such crimes, and advocating an end to sexual and gender-based violence through policy reform. In Maniema Province, one US-funded NGO helped torture victims receive legal assistance during the year and organized workshops to disseminate copies of legislation and international agreements on human, women's, and children's rights. Another



US-funded NGO in South Kivu Province aided 246 victims of sexual violence by providing medical help, trauma counseling, and training in human rights advocacy and education.

A variety of national and international NGOs received US technical assistance and training to deal with the growing problem of separated and abandoned children. Many of these youths were stigmatized and unable to reintegrate into their communities because they were once child soldiers, gang members, internally displaced, child laborers, accused of witchcraft, or have disabilities. The United States worked to prevent child abandonment by establishing Child Protection Networks, assisting economic development in at-risk areas, and rehabilitating schools.

The United States funded a regional initiative to demobilize and rehabilitate child soldiers and reintegrate them into their communities. During the year approximately 7,000 former child combatants were demobilized, in part through this initiative. This program addressed the many needs of child soldiers through legislation and monitoring mechanisms and by strengthening the capacity of government institutions to help former child combatants. It also supported the economic reintegration of former child combatants through education, training, financial support, and community-strengthening.

Activities to enhance labor rights received support through US funding of initiatives that promoted industrial harmony and conflict resolution. One program worked with employers, the government, and unions to settle differences and disputes.

Cote d'Ivoire

Cote d'Ivoire is a democratic republic. In 2000 Laurent Gbagbo, candidate of the Ivorian People's Front, became the country's third elected president. The election, which excluded two major parties, was marred by significant violence and irregularities. The country remained divided between the government-controlled south and the rebel New Forces-held north. The government's human rights record remained poor. The

following human rights abuses were reported: restriction of citizens' right to change their government; arbitrary killings, including summary executions, by security forces, progovernment militias, and student groups; disappearances; torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment and punishment by security forces, progovernment militias, and a student group; deplorable prison and detention center conditions; security force impunity; arbitrary arrest and detention; denial of fair public trial; arbitrary interference with privacy; police harassment and abuse of noncitizen Africans; restrictions on freedoms of speech, press, peaceful assembly, association, and movement; official corruption; discrimination and violence against women; female genital mutilation; child abuse and exploitation; trafficking in persons; forced labor, including by children, and child labor. Rebels were responsible for arbitrary killings, disappearances, arbitrary arrest and detention, rape, and ad hoc justice.

The US strategy to promote human rights and democracy included support for national reconciliation, strengthening of the democratic process and civil society, and combating trafficking in persons and child labor. The ambassador regularly engaged the president, all political parties, and rebels to advance the political process, reconcile the country, and support free and fair elections scheduled for October 2007.

To promote democracy, the United States supported UN efforts to extend the mandates of the president and prime minister for another year and to enhance the authority of the UN high representative for elections. The United States funded a program in the troubled western region to promote reconciliation and alternative dispute resolution and continued to sponsor an NGO's efforts to strengthen the electoral commission and to provide technical advice on reforming voter registration.

To promote media freedom and freedom of speech, US officials cosponsored digital video conferences, book discussions, and roundtables for reporters and editors on the responsibilities of a free press. The ambassador frequently met with the press to discuss media freedom and human rights, met with winners of

the nation's top journalism award, and underscored US support for a free press. The United States sponsored a roundtable with leaders of local press and media monitoring organizations to discuss a code of conduct for the media and political parties and to ensure that media coverage of elections was balanced and did not generate political violence, press intimidation, or social instability. The US Government continued to fund a training program for editors and journalists to encourage professionalism and to help depoliticize an often vitriolic press. US officials hosted a gathering that resulted in the creation of a local NGO, which promoted training and professional development for a new network of female journalists. The US Government provided extensive training on HIV/AIDS reporting for radio stations.

To help public and private sector leaders strengthen civil society, the US Government utilized the international visitors program to send two members of the National Assembly to the United States on an exchange program that focused on legislative duties and the protection of minorities. During the year NGO activists, community leaders, and professionals participated in a variety of US outreach programs on conflict resolution, civic education, transparency and good governance, and women and development. The programs involved the distribution of articles and books on human rights and democracy to key contacts throughout the country. The United States sponsored the activities of a local NGO and funded training seminars on leadership development for 60 female community leaders in Korhogo and Abengourou who sought electoral office. The United States also supported a group of civil society leaders in the creation of a local NGO that promotes democratic citizenship, volunteerism, and community development at the grassroots level.

Combating corruption in the judicial system is a key criterion for restoring the country's eligibility for preferential US trade benefits. Senior US officials have repeatedly stressed concern over corruption to high-level government representatives, including the president. After a case of judicial misconduct was resolved during the year, US officials stressed that resolving cases was insufficient and that the climate of corrup-

tion at all levels of the government and the judiciary must end. The US Government also worked closely with a local export promotion agency to underscore US concerns about corruption and child labor in the cocoa-producing sector.

To promote human rights, the US Government supported a sensitization and training program for community educators to combat female genital mutilation in the Abidjan region and in Korhogo in the north. The United States sponsored a program to provide training in health care and basic business management and education for young girls in Bouake who were forced to drop out of school because of the war. It also funded a project to open a new counseling center in Abidjan to provide rape victims, students, orphans, and displaced persons with medical, psychological, and legal assistance. US officials led a round-table discussion on the rights of disabled persons with disabled activists, municipal authorities, and community leaders.

After the 2002 rebellion, the government targeted persons perceived to be supporters, who often were Muslim, for reprisals. Strong efforts by religious and civil society groups have helped prevent the crisis from becoming a religious conflict. US officials hosted an interfaith roundtable with 50 women on ways to promote peace, reconciliation, and religious and political tolerance. The US Government sent three religious leaders – a Muslim imam, Catholic priest, and Protestant minister – to the United States on an immersion program on religious tolerance in America, with emphasis on the separation of religion and state.

To combat child labor and trafficking, the United States funded a local NGO that provided literacy and vocational training to 40 young girls in Youpougon who were trafficked into prostitution. The US Government continued to fund a child labor monitoring system that required the government to certify that cocoa beans and their products have been grown or processed without any of the worst forms of child labor. The ambassador and other US officials frequently spoke out against child labor and trafficking in conversations with government officials and rebel leaders. The US Government also continued to fund



programs to end child labor in the cocoa and fishing industries and a project to help remove children from the worst forms of child labor and to enroll them in school. The US Government also supported a local NGO that promoted school enrollment and prevented child labor in a village in Oume district in the south-central region.

Equatorial Guinea

Equatorial Guinea is nominally a multiparty constitutional republic. All branches of government are dominated by President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo and his inner circle, largely comprised of members of a sub-clan of the Fang ethnic group. The 2002 presidential election was marred by extensive fraud and intimidation, and the international community widely criticized the 2004 parliamentary elections as seriously flawed. During the year a law criminalizing torture was passed, reports of abuse decreased, and mid-level police officers received their first training on human rights; nevertheless, the government's human rights record remained poor, and the government continued to commit and condone serious abuses. The following human rights problems were reported: abridgement of citizens' right to change their government; torture, beating, and other physical abuse of prisoners and detainees by security forces; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; impunity; arbitrary arrest, detention, and incommunicado detention; harassment and deportation of foreign residents; judicial corruption and lack of due process; restrictions on the right to privacy; severe restrictions on freedom of speech and of the press; restrictions on the right of assembly, association, and movement; government corruption; violence and discrimination against women; trafficking in persons; discrimination against ethnic minorities; restrictions on labor rights and child labor; and forced child labor.

The first resident US ambassador in more than a decade arrived in the country in November as a tangible symbol of increased US interests in the country, including promoting respect for human rights and democratic reform. Increased engagement was fostered during the year through visits by other high-level US

diplomatic officials, including the assistant secretary of state for Africa, and senior US military officers.

The US strategy to promote democracy and human rights aimed to strengthen the key government and civil institutions necessary for democratic progress. The strategy focused on addressing social needs, supporting anticorruption efforts, and promoting fiscal transparency in government ministries. In addition, the United States worked with opposition parties, civil society, and the press to strengthen their ability to contribute to the expansion of democracy and the promotion of human rights in the country. The United States pursued these objectives through active engagement with the government, opposition parties, the media, and community representatives.

To promote democracy, US officials met with senior officials of all political parties and attended the national party congresses of the ruling party and opposition groups. US officials urged the president and cabinet ministers to broaden political participation in the next election, and the US Government awarded a grant to support an NGO's planned programs to promote electoral reform. US officials also discussed the democratic process with diverse student groups and distributed election-related materials.

US efforts to encourage press freedom occurred in an environment of tight government restrictions on the press and widespread self-censorship of journalists. Privately owned and independent media continued to be nearly nonexistent in the country, and there were no daily newspapers, bookstores, newsstands, or public lending libraries, except for the Spanish Cultural Center libraries in Malabo and Bata. US officials met frequently with press association members, encouraged networking with international journalists' associations, distributed supporting materials, hosted workshops, and utilized public speaking opportunities to convey the importance of the media's role in building a democratic society. The US Government hosted a two-day media workshop on topics including improving writing skills, generating a societal demand for news, and the effects of self-censorship. At a seminar at the National University, the ambassador spoke on the role of the media in developing democ-

racias. A biweekly journal sponsored by the government began to include some articles that were more balanced and included constructive criticism of government practices for the first time.

There were no human rights NGOs in the country, and the process to register an NGO remained difficult. During the year US officials underscored the importance of a vigorous civil society in public statements and in conversations with government officials. The United States engaged actively with UN organizations to promote human rights and with the government's Center for Human Rights and Democracy and the Interministerial Commission on Human Rights. The US Government also facilitated the work of other bilateral and multilateral partners to enhance the capacity of civil society to ensure that activities were complementary and not duplicative or contradictory in message.

In support of the rule of law, two prominent US judges visited the country and met with the president of the Supreme Court, the justice minister, and others to discuss judicial training needs and possible areas of cooperation and exchange. To curb corruption, US officials regularly stressed the importance of transparency in public finance and the management of the oil sector at the highest levels of government. US officials obtained government support for and participation in a two-day workshop on transparency and antibribery conventions and laws. National officials at the highest levels were present, and for many it was their first introduction to the country's own ethics law for public officials. US officials distributed publications on good governance and engaged officials at all levels on the long-term economic benefits of a just application of the rule of law, particularly benefits related to the growth of a business environment.

US officials also advocated on behalf of companies, organizations, and individuals subject to harassment, illegal seizure of property, and extrajudicial detention. In one case, such intervention resulted in a US company recovering vehicles that had been seized illegally. Separate interventions also resulted in the release of citizens illegally detained for either political or personal vendettas.

The US Embassy provided an outlet for vigorous and continuous on-the-ground promotion of respect for human rights, addressing violations such as torture, allegations of killings by security forces, and women's and minority rights. The ambassador regularly communicated US concerns to government officials regarding individual cases of reported abuse of human rights. The interventions contributed to the president's June release of over 40 prisoners, many of whom were "prisoners of conscience" (political prisoners), in connection with his birthday celebration. Intervention by the US Embassy -- and subsequently Amnesty International -- also influenced the release of four political activists detained illegally in October and reportedly abused in an attempt to extract confessions. According to credible international sources, the total number of political prisoners was between 50 and 100 at the end of the year. The government continued to refuse prison access to US officials; however, the US Government's known interest and communication with friends and relatives of prisoners reportedly helped maintain improved conditions for most prisoners, especially in the new facility at Black Beach prison.

During the year police began taking human rights training and classes that introduced them to the concept of community service for the first time, facilitated by the US Government and conducted by a US firm. The United States also helped the government to acquire and manage technical assistance with the goal of ensuring that social projects were planned, funded, and implemented in a manner that was transparent, efficient, and accountable to the citizens and government. This program, slated to last until 2008, was funded by the government and focused on accelerating investment in health, education, women's issues, and sanitation.

To promote religious freedom, US efforts were focused on encouraging separation of church and state in private discussions. Unlike in previous years, churches were not compelled to display ruling party posters in places of worship.

During the year the government requested US assistance in training security officers to implement the



national antitrafficking strategy. The United States coordinated an assessment visit by a US trafficking expert and awarded a small grant to the UN Children's Fund to assist the government's efforts to quantify the problem.

Eritrea

Eritrea is a one-party state that became independent in 1993 when citizens voted for independence from Ethiopia. The People's Front for Democracy and Justice, previously known as the Eritrean People's Liberation Front, is the sole political party and has controlled the country since 1991. The country's president, Isaias Afwerki, heads the party, the national legislature, and the military. The government continuously postponed presidential and national legislative elections; national elections have never been held. Despite international efforts to resolve the situation, an ongoing border dispute with Ethiopia seriously hindered international trade, affected the government's external relations, and was used by the government to justify severe restrictions on civil liberties.

The government's human rights record worsened, and the United States designated it as a Country of Particular Concern for the third consecutive year. The government continued to commit numerous serious abuses, including: abridgement of citizens' rights to change their government through a democratic process; unlawful killings by security forces; torture and beatings of prisoners, some resulting in death; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention; executive interference in the judiciary and the use of a special court system to limit due process; government infringement on privacy rights; government roundups of young men and women for national service; arrest, incarceration, and torture of family members of national service evaders, some of whom reportedly died of unknown causes while in detention; severe restrictions on basic civil liberties, including freedoms of speech, press, assembly, association, and religion, particularly for religious groups not approved by the government; restrictions on freedom of movement and travel for diplomats, humanitarian and development agencies, and UN Mission to

Eritrea and Ethiopia personnel; government circumscription of NGO activities; insufficient resources devoted to countering violence and societal discrimination against women and the widespread practice of female genital mutilation; governmental and societal discrimination against members of the Kunama ethnic group and homosexuals; and limitations on workers' rights.

The US strategy to promote respect for human rights and democracy included increasing access to information, providing opportunities for dialogue, and increasing understanding of human rights. The government, however, actively resisted US efforts, ordered two US-funded NGOs to cease operations during the year, and tightened restrictions on movement by foreigners, which prevented US officials from working outside the capital. The government maintained there would be little or no change in its human rights practices until the country's border dispute with Ethiopia was resolved.

The US Government sought to increase citizens' political and economic participation. It funded four NGOs to support community development programs that extended opportunities for grassroots participation by working with parent-teacher associations, water associations, and local health committees. In an effort to build support for democratic reform and human rights among citizen leaders, US officials held regular functions for alumni of US exchange programs to promote discussion of US culture, democracy, human rights, and other issues. The US Government arranged speaking engagements featuring US speakers and broadcasts of the Africa Journal. The US government recruited government officials and others for the International Visitor Leadership Program, although the government insisted on pre-approving all selections for the program.

In a country with no independent media, the US Government worked to provide citizens with access to information. Through the American Center and three American Corners in Dekemhare, Keren, and Masawa, the US Government provided access to materials on US values, policies, and culture, as well as daily press releases and free access to the Internet.

The United States also provided media materials to embassy contacts.

In conversations with officials at all levels, US officials repeatedly stressed that addressing the government's human rights abuses--particularly widespread arbitrary arrests and restrictions on basic liberties--was vital to improving bilateral ties. However, following the July 2005 government request that the United States terminate all development activities in the country, US development operations were phased out, and only a small humanitarian liaison office remained. The termination of US development activities, many of which directly or indirectly supported the US human rights strategy, resulted in fewer resources and opportunities to address human rights through programmatic means. Nonetheless, the US Government increased its outreach by adding a new American Corner in Dekemhare, extending Internet access hours at the American Center, and focusing resources more closely on women, youth, minorities, and Muslim majority communities in Asmara. The United States funded programs to support the education of women and children, including funding a library for the deaf and a program through the NGO Self Help that provided training for indigent women.

US officials worked to engage a wide range of government officials and members of minority religious groups to promote greater respect for religious freedom. The US Government maintained sanctions in response to the government's continuing severe violation of religious freedom. US officials consistently emphasized the importance of religious liberty for all faiths, including religious minorities.

Ethiopia

Ethiopia is a federal republic under the leadership of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi and the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front coalition. In the May 2005 parliamentary elections, the ruling party won a third consecutive five-year majority, but opposition parties gained a large number of seats yielding the most pluralistic federal and regional parliaments in Ethiopian history. Post-election violence,

however, led to the detention of a large number of opposition political figures and to charges of treason against some of their leaders. The country made notable strides during 2006 in increasing participation by opposition political parties in the federal parliament and in advancing political reforms through dialogue. At the same time, the government's human rights record remained poor in many areas. Human rights abuses reported during the year included the following: unlawful killings; beating, abuse, and mistreatment of detainees and opposition supporters by security forces; poor prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention, particularly of those suspected of sympathizing with or being members of the opposition; detention of thousands without charge and lengthy pretrial detention; infringement on citizens' privacy rights; restrictions on freedom of the press; arrest, detention, and harassment of journalists for publishing articles critical of the government; restrictions on freedom of assembly and of association; violence and societal discrimination against women and abuse of children; female genital mutilation; exploitation of children for economic and sexual purposes; trafficking in persons; societal discrimination against persons with disabilities and against religious and ethnic minorities; and government interference in union activities.

US strategy focused on several key goals: 1) strengthening democratic institutions by encouraging opposition leaders to participate in them, rather than boycotting; 2) advancing political reform and reconciliation by fostering dialogue between government and opposition representatives; 3) working with other donors to provide long-term assistance to strengthen the country's democratic institutions; and 4) obtaining the release of the thousands of detainees rounded up in late 2005 and during the year.

The US Government played an active role in encouraging greater participation by opposition political parties in the federal parliament and in advancing political reforms through dialogue. US officials also conducted mediation efforts between the government and opposition leaders to encourage a reopening of the political dialogue that had begun prior to the November 2005 violence. In part due to the diplomatic



efforts of US officials, most of the elected opposition members were seated in parliament by year's end, and an active interparty dialogue on key democratic reforms took place. The United States funded studies that provided a sound empirical basis for negotiations with government officials.

The United States and other donors began a coordinated program to support the House of Peoples' Representatives. The United States provided orientation training to all new members of parliament and specialized training to leadership, female members, and support staff. The training focused on improving the body's representational, legislative, and oversight functions, as well as developing good working relations between the ruling and opposition parties. The United States and other donors conducted a series of assessments and consultations to develop a five-year program of multilateral support to the house and the nine regional state councils. The United States also contributed to multi-donor assessments of the National Electoral Board, proposing both an initial program of reforms to improve the conduct of local elections and longer-term activities designed to bring the board's capacity up to international standards by the 2010 national elections.

The US Government used the full range of diplomatic and programmatic support to promote media freedom and freedom of speech. In conjunction with the interparty dialogue on democratic reform, the United States funded studies leading to guidelines for a draft press law/ freedom of information act consistent with international legal and regulatory standards. The US Government facilitated dialogue among media stakeholders on the draft press law, the proposed formation of a national press council, and a media code of conduct. The United States provided training in investigative reporting for professionals working for state media outlets in the Amhara Region and provided an English language fellow to teach at Addis Ababa University's graduate school of journalism. Public diplomacy funds allowed journalists, academics, religious leaders, and other opinion leaders to participate in international visitor exchanges. During the November visit of the head of the Voice of America's Horn of Africa Service, US officials hosted

a discussion on the journalistic profession and freedom of speech with local journalism students.

The United States sought to strengthen civil society's capacity to engage local government institutions effectively to improve the planning, implementation, transparency, and accountability of development projects and service delivery. For example, the establishment of the Community-Government Partnership Program enabled over 45,000 Parent Teacher Association members and education officials to receive training in school management, including rehabilitation of schools. The US Government funded democracy and human rights projects that reached an audience of more than 10 million in seven of the country's 11 administrative regions. The United States provided funds to various local NGOs whose goals included human rights education, public dialogue, building sustainable government-civil society conflict management partnerships, accountability, and good governance.

To support the rule of law, US officials issued public statements and lobbied the government for the release of political detainees, an effort that resulted in the release during the year of thousands of protesters and political activists and most opposition leaders detained after the 2005 elections, with the exception of nearly 200 senior opposition party leaders, media, and NGO representatives charged with treason and other serious crimes. The US Government encouraged a group of local elders to open talks with the government to promote reconciliation and to obtain the release of the remaining prisoners. The United States called for a fair and speedy trial for high profile opposition leaders charged with treason, and a US official attended nearly every trial session. The US Government also funded a contract with an international NGO to monitor and evaluate the trial. US officials visited the detainees and on one occasion intervened to obtain emergency medical care for one of them.

The United States assisted the government in developing the capacity to provide professional law enforcement services based on democratic principles and respect for human rights. The US Government continued to fund a training and assistance program

to enhance professional investigative and forensic capabilities, assist in the development of academic instruction for law enforcement personnel, improve the administrative and management capabilities of law enforcement agencies, improve police-community relations, and strengthen the capability to respond to new crime and criminal justice issues. In collaboration with a local NGO, the US Government sponsored a historic countrywide meeting in Addis Ababa of all justice and security bureau officials, as well as prison administrators of the federal government from the nine regional states to discuss the granting of pardons. As a result of this effort, over 10,000 prisoners had been granted pardons by year's end.

The United States worked to address the serious problems of societal discrimination against persons with disabilities, violence against women, abuse of children, and trafficking in persons. A US-funded project implemented by a local NGO began airing a 26-week radio series that advanced the rights of persons with disabilities. Another project by a local partner NGO supported the country's first-ever hot line to assist women facing discrimination and abuse. The US Government also implemented three projects that addressed gender-based violence and sought to improve women's social and economic status. One successful project increased awareness of the dangers to women's and girls' health associated with female genital mutilation. The project results were significant: several hundred community members were persuaded of the ill effects of the practice and spoke out against the harmful traditional practice. Six Muslim leaders have committed to incorporate messages against female genital mutilation in their Friday sermons.

The US Government promoted religious freedom and tolerance. Public diplomacy outreach to the Muslim community included a series of seminars at local universities to promote religious tolerance, a conference for university administrators to discuss rising religious violence on university campuses, and work with student leaders and faculty on the causes of religious and ethnic-based student violence.

The United States continued to fund a program focused on the large numbers of trafficking victims in

country. The program included antitrafficking campaigns for the general population and government officials and included components on prevention, prosecution, and protection. The program strengthened the institutional capacity of concerned government authorities, local NGOs, and civil society to develop a labor migration policy and antitrafficking law for the prevention of trafficking, protection of victims, and prosecution of traffickers. Shelter, medical care, counseling, clothing, and hygiene items were provided in Addis Ababa to support the return and reintegration of trafficked victims.

Gabon

Gabon is a republic dominated by a strong presidency led by President El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba and the Gabonese Democratic Party (PDG). Legislative elections in December resulted in continued dominance by the PDG, which won two-thirds of the seats and another 16 seats for allies in a generally free and fair election. All parties participated in the election after the government met several opposition demands for electoral reform. In November 2005, Bongo, president since 1967, was reelected for a seven-year term in an election marred by irregularities. The government's human rights record remained poor, although there were improvements in several areas. The following human rights problems were reported: limited ability of citizens to change their government; use of excessive force, including torture, on prisoners and detainees; harsh prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention; an inefficient judiciary susceptible to government influence; restrictions on the right of privacy; restrictions on freedom of the press, association, and movement; harassment of refugees by security forces; widespread government corruption; violence and societal discrimination against women and noncitizen Africans; trafficking in persons, particularly children; and forced labor and child labor.

To promote human rights, US strategy focused in part on diplomatic engagement regarding the legislative elections. The strategy also emphasized making the media more independent, fair, and professional and professionalizing the military. The strategy included



advocacy and programs to combat trafficking in persons, especially of children.

To advance the political process and democracy, the ambassador met regularly with donor country counterparts to formulate a common strategy to encourage democratic reform. Prior to the legislative elections, US officials discussed the importance of free and fair elections with national and local election officials, ruling party and opposition leaders and supporters, and other diplomatic missions.

To promote good governance, US officials participated in monthly meetings with the official donor community and worked to ensure that support for good governance was a priority. In advancing media freedom and freedom of speech, US officials met frequently with members of the National Communications Council and other officials to discourage the closure of media outlets and to promote freedom of speech and of the press. The US Government also helped fund a local media association's workshop on the management of a free and independent press.

To support freedom of association, US officials attended labor conferences and met with labor representatives. To strengthen rule of law, US officials cooperated with other donor countries and international financial institutions to help combat corruption and promote transparency.

The US Government worked with local officials to reduce human rights abuses. These efforts targeted law enforcement and military personnel. The US Government maintained regular contact with the National Police and gendarmerie and sent officials from both organizations to the International Law Enforcement Academy to participate in an executive development program that included courses on human dignity and trafficking in persons. To increase respect for human rights within the military, the United States worked to foster professionalism by sending members of the armed forces and other government representatives to military courses in the United States and seminars sponsored by the African Center for Strategic Studies. These courses addressed civil-military relations, military peacekeeping operations, military subordination

to civilian authorities, and a broad range of other legal and human rights topics. The United States continued its African Contingency Operations Training and Assistance program to train a third local army battalion designated to serve in peacekeeping missions. Training included a special focus on human rights issues, civil-military relations, and the rule of law.

US officials regularly discussed human rights with government officials and NGOs at all levels, and attended seminars and conferences promoting human rights and democracy. The US Government worked with a new NGO dedicated to eliminating the practice of ritual child killing and funded a conference to raise awareness and develop a plan of action to fight the practice. The US Government supported women's rights by funding an NGO that lobbies to protect widows from being evicted from their homes. The United States sponsored scholarships to help girls in needy families from both urban and rural areas complete primary education, with some resources specifically allocated to students in remote regions. During the year a pilot program was begun to reach out to marginalized Baka (Pygmy) children, who are often prevented from attending school.

The US Government worked to promote respect for religious freedom. It maintained regular contact with all major religious groups, including Muslim organizations and US missionary groups, to help reinforce the already tolerant religious environment.

Labor unions were among the strongest NGOs, and US Government representatives met with union leaders and regularly attended labor conferences to promote free association and the importance of unions in a democratic society. The US Government made combating trafficking in persons a high priority. The ambassador and other US officials approached government officials at all levels, including parliamentary leaders, ministers, and the president, to discuss the need for further concrete measures to combat trafficking. Recognizing the logistical difficulties faced by law enforcement agencies in housing, feeding, and eventually repatriating trafficked victims, the US Government, in collaboration with the UN Children's Fund, helped the government to set up centers for



Women in Guinea take part in a women's rights ceremony, part of a US-funded women's program that resulted in a December 2006 declaration by 150 communities in the Fouta region to end female genital mutilation and early/forced marriages. (Tostan Photo)

trafficked children and provide training for new social workers. The US Government also launched a successful media campaign, including television commercials, T-shirts, and billboards, to sensitize the population to the plight of trafficked children; maintained close contact with activists and NGOs working on the issue; and sponsored the creation of a national network of NGOs to combat child trafficking.

Guinea

Guinea is a constitutional republic in which effective power is concentrated in a strong presidency. President Conte won reelection in 2003 in an election boycotted by the opposition and criticized by international observers as neither free nor fair. The government continued to implement certain political and macro-economic reforms begun in 2004, but serious human

rights abuses occurred during the year. There were restrictions on the right of citizens to change their government. Security forces unlawfully killed, beat, and abused civilians, particularly detainees. Prison conditions were inhumane and life threatening. Impunity of alleged perpetrators of killings and abuse remained a problem. There were arbitrary arrests, prolonged pretrial detentions, and incommunicado detentions. The judiciary was subject to corruption and executive influence. The government infringed on citizens' privacy rights and restricted freedoms of speech, press, assembly, association, and movement. Violence and societal discrimination against women, prostitution of young girls, and female genital mutilation were problems. Progress was made in combating trafficking of persons, but the practice continued, as did ethnic discrimination, antiunion discrimination, and child labor. Authorities took significant steps to improve freedom of the press by implement-



ing a 2005 media liberalization decree and granting broadcast licenses to eight private radio stations, five of which are now operating. The government also agreed to some electoral reforms proposed by political parties and lifted some restrictions on freedom of movement.

The US strategy to promote democracy and human rights focused on laying a foundation for a peaceful, democratic political transformation through support for constitutional processes, expanding national dialogue, strengthening local government, and decentralization. US assistance programs increased citizen awareness of and demand for government transparency, accountability, and effectiveness by strengthening civil society's capacity to participate more actively in governance and public affairs. Through heightened military and diplomatic engagement, the United States encouraged constitutional civilian-led power transfer and succession. The US Government also sought to encourage the potential stabilizing role of the military through engagement with civilian leaders and to promote civil-military relations, including political discussions and social exchanges, between the military and civilian groups. This dialogue strengthened consensus-building processes at the national, regional, and local levels. A comprehensive US communication and public diplomacy strategy ensured that messages to advance freedom and democracy were included in all activities. The United States also expanded its outreach to youth, women, and Muslim religious leaders.

Promotion of democracy and human rights were the cornerstones of US policy during the year. US officials highlighted these priorities in speeches and meetings. The US Government supported democracy by training citizens, locally elected officials, and representatives of government; by facilitating political dialogue; and by building a better-informed media and electorate. US assistance sought to encourage citizen participation in local governance, supported improved political processes, including efforts to increase transparency in the electoral process, and encouraged NGOs to provide civic education and advocacy for citizen interests. The local governance program and civil society activities increased under-

standing of the electoral process by generating public interest, informing citizens of their voting rights, and equipping civil society organizations to act as formal election monitors for the upcoming legislative elections. Responding to the coordinated efforts of the United States and other international donors, the government agreed to a process to identify voters and ensure more transparent participation in legislative elections. US funding supported projects that assisted the development of an inclusive voter registry, provided assistance and training to women's groups to increase women's participation in the electoral process, and provided technical assistance to initiate a new electoral commission. Support of civilian-military relations was a major component of US-Guinean security cooperation and contributed to the development of democracy and protection of human rights. In June the US Government sponsored a five-day seminar that brought together 45 high-ranking military officers and civilians from the parliament, political parties, and various government ministries to discuss the role of the military in a democratic society. The participants drafted an action plan to improve coordination between the military and civil society nationwide and formed a joint civilian-military follow-up committee that was extremely active in dialogues on political participation and in mediation between government, civil society, and trade unions. Ongoing US military-to-military programs emphasized appreciation for rule of law and human rights.

US, UN, and European Union diplomatic efforts and program support contributed to the implementation of a presidential decree to open radio and television to private ownership, as well as to promote media freedom and freedom of speech in general. Through various training and capacity-building programs for media organizations, the United States worked to speed implementation of the decree. During the year the government granted licenses that enabled five private radio stations to begin broadcasting; by year's end, these stations were playing an influential role in informing the public. Public diplomacy programs encouraged individuals to express their views freely; to utilize their right to public information, especially information about government actions, policies, and programs; and to understand and utilize their right

to change the government. These programs encouraged open discussion on all topics relating to bilateral relations and particularly international concepts of democracy and human rights. The US Government sponsored the participation of NGO activists and government representatives in international visitor programs with human rights and democracy agendas.

In May, to celebrate International Press Freedom Day, the United States hosted a forum on the role of free press in a developing democracy. In conjunction with the Guinean Association of Independent Editors, over 100 journalists from the public and private electronic and print media collaborated to strengthen their capacity to promote democratic reforms. To promote civil-military understanding, the US Government sponsored a workshop for journalists to improve the quality of media coverage of issues related to security and military affairs.

To strengthen civil society, the United States implemented a wide-ranging program involving a nationwide civic education campaign that included a series of town hall meetings, training in election procedures for political party officials in the country's interior, legal training for professional associations, and training on internal democratic governance and advocacy techniques for media professionals. All US activities supported working with and strengthening local organizations. During the year the US Government trained and strengthened over 748 community-based organizations. In addition, the United States worked with seven national civil society and other nongovernmental groups to help implement US programs. Other donors and the government acknowledged that the organizations had increased their capacity as a result.

US-sponsored local governance initiatives provided technical assistance, leadership development, and training to foster active citizen participation and improve performance of community management committees of local service institutions and rural organizations, resulting in increased institutional capacity at various levels of government and increased civil society advocacy capacity. US involvement also

produced a capable and registered local NGO and a national association of professional organizations that engaged civil society groups and reached nearly 175,000 persons.

The US Government focus on strengthening the rule of law addressed one of the country's most serious problems: corruption. In November the United States funded a high-ranking 10-member delegation to the Transparency International Anticorruption Conference, which included senior members of government, civil society, and the media. Additional US support enabled two government officials to attend a conference on the UN Convention Against Corruption held in Amman, Jordan. As a result of a US-funded program, a national association of professional organizations was created to review and revise the laws regulating professional organizations. The US Government also trained civil society groups in watchdog and advocacy skills aimed at demanding more accountability and responsiveness on the part of government. One successful result was a parent-teacher association reporting a case of the fraudulent use of education funds. The government official was sanctioned and forced to return the funds to the community for their intended use.

To combat torture and other human rights abuses in prisons, the United States funded a program that focused on the judicial process for approximately 70 percent of Conakry's prison population in preventive detention. Many of these persons remained in prison for years without being charged with a crime or having the opportunity to appear before a judge. During the year the United States worked with an international NGO on the Open Doors at the Central Prison initiative to bring attention to the plight of individuals in this prison and develop partnerships between the Ministry of Justice, prosecutors, attorneys, and judges to improve administration of case loads and speed up adjudication of specific cases of individuals held in pretrial detention.

The US Government also funded projects promoting the rights of women, students, teachers, and victims of HIV/AIDS; combating female genital mutilation; and providing training in conflict resolution and re-



sponsible media. During the year one US project focused on women in Fria, a mining town in the Lower Guinea region with the objective of preventing them from becoming victims of violence and provided seed money to establish a clearinghouse for information on issues such as marital abuse, female genital mutilation, forced and underage marriage, sexual harassment, safe sex, and family planning. The United States also financed the Committee for Entente and Conflict Prevention in N'Zerekore, one of the most conflict-prone areas of the country. The committee launched a grassroots training program to encourage the population to exercise citizenship and practice democracy as they developed sustainable solutions to conflict.

To promote the rights of women and minorities, the United States funded a program to reduce female genital mutilation in the Fouta region by employing an innovative approach to provide basic education on human rights and responsibilities, including democratic governance. The program resulted in the December declaration of 150 communities supporting an immediate end to the practice as well as an end to early and forced marriages. With an estimated population of 150,000, these communities were empowered to make the bold statement supporting the abandonment of old practices in favor of new, collectively agreed behaviors. In March the US-sponsored program for Women's History Month, "Building Communities Through Transformational Diplomacy," brought together young women from the Muslim Youth Association and leading women in politics and business. As a result of the program, participants created a women's club dedicated to advancing women's human rights and political participation.

To promote religious tolerance, the US Government continued its partnership with the General Secretariat of the National Islamic League, with which it met regularly to discuss issues and develop programs of mutual interest. The United States funded a project to involve religious leaders in conflict prevention and resolution. Participants in the project relaunched the activities of the Interreligious Council of Guinea and were working to create a self-sustaining Islamic-Christian Institute. In September US officials hosted

an interdenominational Iftar, the first of its kind in the country. With prayers led by prominent members of Muslim and Christian communities, the guests celebrated common themes of tolerance, dialogue, and interreligious and interethnic understanding.

The US Government supported projects to help develop the country's labor movement and combat trafficking. A US-funded project brought together the largest inter-union coalition to implement a joint training and capacity-building program in all regions of the country to educate the coalition's base concerning union rights and freedoms and grassroots organizing. The United States continued its support for the Preventive Activities and Training that Work for at Risk Youth program that provided work and life skills training for 5,000 youths who were at risk of militia recruitment in violence-prone regions, as well as conflict mitigation training for village leaders in the forest region. The Child Labor Education Initiative Technical Assistance Program continued to provide formal and informal life-skills education, enroll children in school, and raise family member awareness to reduce vulnerability of children who were at risk of being exploited for labor.

During the year the United States supported the government's efforts to improve its record on trafficking in persons. US officials continued to work closely on projects, funded in 2005, that focused on preventing trafficking through a national public awareness campaign and protecting street children and other potential victims. To complement these projects, during the year the United States awarded a grant to launch the Strengthening Communities against Trafficking and Exploitation Initiative. In accordance with an action plan developed in partnership with government officials, the initiative was aimed at reducing the number of children trafficked from rural communities to urban centers in Guinea and Mali through a prevention program carried out in both rural and urban areas.

Kenya

Kenya is a republic dominated by a strong presidency. The president is both chief of state and head of government. In 2002 citizens elected Mwai Kibaki of the opposition National Rainbow Coalition as the country's third president. Observers concluded that the elections reflected the popular will and were free and fair. The government in many areas respected the human rights of its citizens or attempted to institute reforms to address deficiencies. However, serious problems remained, particularly with regard to abuses by the police. The following human rights problems were reported: unlawful killings, torture and use of excessive force by police; police impunity; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention; prolonged pretrial detention; executive influence on the judiciary; incidents of disrespect for freedom of speech and the press; government corruption; abuse of and discrimination against women; female genital mutilation; child prostitution and labor; trafficking in persons; vigilante justice; interethnic violence; and lack of enforcement of workers' rights.

The US human rights and democracy strategy focused on strengthening the government's efforts to increase the effectiveness of parliament, promote a competitive and fair electoral process in the run-up to and during the 2007 general election, expand media freedoms, address and prosecute corruption, reduce trafficking in persons, train police and prosecutors, and mitigate regional conflicts.

The US Government worked to build sustainable democratic principles and behaviors in the country. Building on the successful administration of the November 2005 constitutional referendum, the United States continued to engage with political leaders and government officials, encouraging them to ensure that campaigning and polling were peaceful, lawful, transparent, and fair. In public statements the ambassador urged citizens to reject narrow regional and ethnic political agendas in favor of a national political agenda in the upcoming election. The United States continued to provide assistance to improve electoral administration, including improving the administra-

tive capacity of the electoral commission to increase, among other things, the use of appropriate information technology to strengthen transparency, competition, and accountability in electoral processes. US efforts were particularly strong during and after July's by-elections in five constituencies in which US officials observed the polling. US observers collaborated with other diplomatic observers to submit a report of their findings to the electoral commission and to release a public statement.

The US Government sent a member of parliament to participate in the International Visitors Program in the United States to observe the US mid-term election. Government officials also participated a US-sponsored peer-to-peer democracy program. Through the program, members of parliament received a delegation of US members of Congress in July and traveled to the United States in September for a reciprocal visit. The United States also provided funding to a local NGO for a project to encourage youth participation in electoral politics. Support to parliament included strengthening the committee system, especially the key oversight committees. US assistance was instrumental in passage of legislation to create the budget committee, and the United States also provided technical assistance to the new office of fiscal analysis, which oversees the national budget.

The United States supported a strong and free media through outreach to journalists. In May the United States organized the largest conference on press freedom that it had ever held in east Africa. The conference came at a particularly relevant time, as the entire region grappled with media issues, including proposed legislation that would restrict press freedoms. The US Government also trained nearly 60 journalists to report more effectively on human rights and HIV/AIDS. The ambassador released a strongly worded statement against a March government raid on the independent Standard Group, the country's second largest media company. The US Government also organized a highly publicized visit by Senator Barack Obama to the Standard Media offices in August to show solidarity for press freedoms.



The United States worked to highlight the importance of civil society. US officials engaged frequently with members of civil society organizations and assisted organizations that focused on conflict management, peace building, and violence against women and children. The ambassador hosted an event for civil society leaders in September to raise their profile. During a November speech, he applauded the dynamism and vibrancy of civil society.

Curbing corruption continued to be a key US objective. In the aftermath of the official release of information implicating high-level officials in corrupt government procurement scams, the US Government coordinated closely with other donors to convey to President Kibaki the need for aggressive prosecutions and greater legal and political accountability in these cases. Public and international pressure subsequently led to the resignation of three ministers, although two were reinstated in November. In May the US Government revoked the visa privileges of four individuals in connection with multiple corruption scandals. After credible allegations emerged in April that one or more local banks were involved in major money laundering operations, the ambassador and other US officials called on authorities to crack down on the problem and to enact effective antilaundering legislation.

The United States continued to work with the government's specialized unit on anticorruption, economic crimes, serious fraud, and asset recovery. It also supported efforts to enhance the criminal justice sector's consistency and efficiency, with a special focus on the public prosecution department. In July the United States undertook a nationwide assessment of the public prosecutor's department to create a strategy for the development of training programs. In July and August the US Government participated in a peer review of the department, assisting in the development of a code of ethics and a policy manual that is binding upon all prosecutors. The United States also provided small grants to local NGOs for projects to increase citizen participation in the management of government funds.

The United States worked to decrease the instances of serious human rights violations in the country and provided a small grant to a local NGO for a project to raise awareness of respect for human rights through a nationwide art and essay competition.

The ambassador and other US officials frequently engaged with religious leaders for frank exchanges on issues of mutual concern. US officials met regularly with Muslim leaders on the coast, in the northeast, and in Nairobi to discuss their sense of marginalization among Muslim communities and to respond to questions about US policy. In addition US officials have shared Iftar meals with the Muslim community to enhance cross cultural exchanges, and funded computer support for academic exchanges at a Muslim college.

The United States worked to promote acceptable labor practices, including the elimination of child labor. It continued to fund a labor rights organization that promoted independence and good governance of trade unions, national and regional democracy and anticorruption efforts, improvement of industrial relations, HIV/AIDS workplace programs, and implementation of international labor standards. The United States also continued to support a multiyear international project to reduce the incidence of the worst forms of child labor. A total of 20,000 children were targeted for withdrawal and prevention services, and the project aimed to provide access to technical and vocational training for 30,600 HIV/AIDS-affected children working, or at-risk of working, in the worst forms of child labor.

The US Government also worked to combat trafficking in persons. The United States established a forum for donors to coordinate better antitrafficking assistance and supported efforts to strengthen a network for collaborative antitrafficking efforts by the government and civil society. The United States also awarded small grants to two local NGOs for projects which include victims' assistance programs and public awareness of human trafficking among the vulnerable refugee populations.

Liberia

Liberia is a constitutional republic, and in November 2005 Unity Party candidate Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was declared the winner of multiparty presidential elections, which domestic and international observers considered free and fair. The government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, problems persisted in some areas. Deaths from mob violence increased. Police abused, harassed, and intimidated detainees and citizens. Prison conditions remained harsh and incidents of arbitrary arrest and detention occurred. Lengthy pretrial detention, denial of due process, and fair public trial were problems. Liberian National Police officers on several occasions assaulted journalists and a human rights worker. Some incidences of trial-by-ordeal were reported. Corruption and impunity continued in many levels of the government. There was violence against women, especially reports of rape. The practice of female genital mutilation remained widespread. Child abuse, trafficking in persons, and racial and ethnic discrimination were problems. Instances of child labor were reported, especially in the informal sector. Child neglect and child abuse continued to be problems. There were some instances of ethnic tensions during the year, but none that resulted in violence.

During the year the US strategy to promote human rights in the country focused on supporting programs to consolidate peace, promote economic recovery, and foster respect for human rights while working to combat corruption and strengthen a weak rule of law that undermined peace and security. Through various programs, the United States helped improve police and judicial professionalism, prison conditions, anti-corruption and good governance efforts, voter and civic education, child protection, capabilities for combating trafficking in persons, religious freedom and tolerance, and respect for the rule of law. The United States also supported human rights organizations involved in public outreach and promoted human rights education. US officials routinely and publicly highlighted the need for transparency and accountability in all branches of government and worked privately with officials, NGOs, and international organizations

to identify areas of concern and encourage systemic reforms.

In support of democracy and the political process, the United States sponsored programs designed to educate citizens, strengthen political parties, advise elected officials and political party leaders as well as the National Elections Commission and supported legislative by-elections throughout the year. US programs strengthened the election process through increased assistance to local political parties, civil society, and the National Elections Commission and supported a consultative workshop that reached 80 percent of the legislature's political parties. Legislators received US Government assistance through training sessions designed to increase knowledge of constituent outreach and long-term strategic planning. The United States supported a strategic planning seminar for the National Elections Commission that included post-election refocusing, commission rightsizing, and planning for local elections that brought together members of the commission, legislators, executive branch members, and political party representatives. The US Government also assisted the Elections Commission audit department in effectively auditing party and candidate campaign finance reports. The United States supported post-election civic education outreach in five counties as well as voter education efforts for the Margibi and River Cess county by-elections, and US officials observed all by-elections during the year. A US Government official spoke at the results of the Margibi county by-election and commended election officials and the political parties on a free and fair election. In January Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and First Lady Laura Bush attended the inauguration of President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf in support of democratic presidential elections.

During the year the United States promoted media freedom and freedom of speech in the country. In collaboration with the Press Union of Liberia, the United States funded media training, which included education and training for reporters to deepen their substantive knowledge on human rights-related issues as well as improve accurate reporting. For example the United States provided budgetary support for the UN Mission in Liberia radio program that broadcast



news and educational campaigns related to the peace and development process nationwide. US officials also promoted human rights and democracy messages through taped or live UN radio programming and interviews on anticorruption and human rights. In addition the United States assisted the leading independent station, Star Radio, in establishing ties with three community radio stations outside the capital to broadcast in local languages, giving rural communities access to public service messages on human rights and rule of law. To disseminate information about government policies, the United States supported the establishment of an executive mansion press corps chosen from accredited journalists from major media outlets. The United States funded a program through the University of Massachusetts, Boston to strengthen media institution management and business planning. The United States utilized the US International Visitor and Leadership Program, and internet research training to strengthen media capacity.

The United States supported civil society organizations that promoted human rights, peace, and government transparency, and contributed to peace building efforts through community development, literacy, rural radio programs, and peace councils. For example the United States supported the Liberia Community Peace Building and Development Program, which has mobilized 200 war-affected villages for peace-building, infrastructure, agriculture, and income-generating activities. The Locally Initiated Networks for Community Strengthening Program, also supported by the United States, facilitated grassroots reconciliation and peace constituencies in 70 villages in Lofa County. US officials spoke at a number of civil society workshops and discussed the importance of civil society in a flourishing democracy. The United States supported a program to strengthen non-elite Muslim women's advocacy and civic participation skills to better meet basic needs in their communities. The United States also supported the Liberia Community Infrastructure Program, which seeks to create jobs and provide vocational training and psychosocial counseling for former combatants and other war-affected persons. Through a number of small grants, the US Government supported local NGOs that

educated communities on human rights, HIV/AIDS, reconciliation, and peace building.

Following the peace agreement in 2003, the United States, in coordination with UN mission and other implementing partners and donors, allocated significant resources to fund relief and reconstruction and to support police and judicial reform as well as rule of law programs. During the year these programs included a prison infrastructure project, a 10-person US contingent to the UN police, and support for judicial sector reform. The United States supported five justice sector advisors who worked closely with the minister of justice, the chief justice, and the courts within the Ministry of Justice. Through these efforts the newly formed Public Defenders Office was instrumental in obtaining the dismissal of approximately 50 cases from 2004 and 2005 of prisoners held in pretrial detention beyond the legal limit. The United States also encouraged due process by sponsoring and participating in the launch of a youth-oriented campaign to assist the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which is responsible for determining the root causes of the civil war.

Corruption remained endemic at middle and lower levels of government due to low civil servant salaries, a culture of impunity, and long delays in payment of wages. The governance and economic management assistance program placed internationally recruited financial controllers and management experts in the Ministry of Finance, the Central Bank, other ministries, and state-owned enterprises to encourage transparency and accountability. This contributed to a 50 percent increase in government revenue during the year, allowing the government to improve on timely payment of salaries, pensions, and back wages. The United States worked with the Forestry Development Authority to ensure basic minimum labor standards for the industry, financial transparency, and conditions necessary for lifting UN sanctions on timber exports. The US Government encouraged passage of the national forestry law, a precondition for full lifting of timber sanctions. The United States also assisted the Ministry of Lands, Mines, and Energy by funding a technical advisor to help the country comply with the Kimberly Process, an international certifica-

tion program designed to prevent trade of “conflict diamonds.” Compliance with the Kimberley Process is an important benchmark for lifting UN sanctions on export of Liberian diamonds. The US sponsored programs to establish a legal aid clinic which included development of a training curriculum. In addition the US Government provided subgrants to local NGOs to carry out legal assistance and advocacy for indigent persons and victims of human rights violations, including civic education and public awareness campaigns on national accountability, stability, and human rights. US sponsored programs also supported the distribution of the Liberia Law Reports and Revised Liberia Codes to various organizations, and enlisted a pro bono mediation specialist who developed training materials, a manual, and conducted mediation training and law workshops. US Government assistance helped rehabilitate several overcrowded and dilapidated prisons.

The United States created a vetting database to register prospective recruits for the country’s newly formed armed forces. The vetting process was used to thoroughly screen applicants and ensure that they were not involved in human rights abuses while serving in the previous armed forces. Even after passing extensive checks, recruits were on probation for one year. Each recruit received rigorous training, including 120 hours of classroom instruction on human rights, civilian governance of the military, and the country’s history. This training is intended to help ensure that past human rights abuses by the military will not be repeated. In November the US ambassador spoke at the first graduation about respecting civilian control of the military and respecting individual civil rights.

The US ambassador spoke publicly and privately to encourage the legislature and other government agencies to address issues that primarily affect women, such as rape and female genital mutilation, as a national priority. Gender-based violence persisted in the country, and an increasing number of rapes were reported. The United States supported a conference and training on gender-based violence that brought together key representatives from local and international NGOs, the government, UN agencies, and donors. The conference provided the opportunity to

develop, adopt, and secure a commitment to implement a comprehensive and multisector strategy and national action plan to combat gender-based violence in the country by relying on the coordination of legal assistance programs. To protect the large number of young, unemployed, and vulnerable women in the country, the United States supported an awareness campaign to help prevent sexual exploitation and abuse. The campaign included providing support to local and international NGOs in the creation of a referral mechanism for sexual exploitation and abuse cases.

During the year the United States promoted religious freedom through speeches and discussions. For example, US officials organized an Iftar dinner to promote a dialogue with the country’s Muslim leaders. US officials also reminded the government of the importance of including nondenominational prayers in official ceremonies. In September the United States supported a panel discussion among religious leaders from the Islamic, Christian, and Baha’i faiths.

To combat trafficking and the worst forms of child labor, the United States supported a four-year program to eliminate exploitive child labor in Lofa, Nimba, and Montserrado counties. Through an international NGO, the United States funded a cross-border antitrafficking awareness program that reached out to communities in the country and Sierra Leone. US officials encouraged the government to form a national antitrafficking task force, which the president appointed in October.

Madagascar

The Republic of Madagascar is a multiparty democracy governed by President Marc Ravalomanana, who was elected to a second term in December, and his party, Tiako-I-Madagasikara. The presidential election was generally free and fair, although international and domestic observers noted the need for a number of electoral reforms. The following serious human rights problems were reported during the year: use of excessive force by security forces to disperse demonstrators, resulting in death and injuries; harsh prison



conditions, which resulted in deaths; arbitrary arrest of demonstrators; lengthy pretrial detention; restrictions on freedom of speech and of the press; official corruption; restrictions on freedom of religion; societal discrimination and violence against women; trafficking of women and girls; and child labor, including forced labor.

The US strategy to promote democracy and human rights focused on strengthening key governmental and civil institutions. Democracy and governance sector programs worked to strengthen civil society; increase access to information; raise the skill level of journalists and media managers; promote women's rights; increase government transparency, accountability, and responsiveness to community needs; and strengthen the government's capacity to address corruption. The United States worked in close coordination with the government to combat trafficking in persons and supported grassroots human rights initiatives.

The United States partnered with international donors to encourage free, fair, transparent, and peaceful presidential elections. The ambassador met with each

of the 14 presidential candidates and wrote articles promoting democratic election processes. The United States funded five billboards and 3,000 posters that encouraged presidential candidates and citizens to peacefully accept election results. Some journalists attended US-sponsored workshops on responsible election reporting. Both the ambassador and an American expert invited by the United States spoke about the importance of empowering opposition parties. The US Government translated a civic education guide into Malagasy, distributed 10,000 copies to government, education institutions, NGOs, media, and the private sector, and sponsored the author to conduct nationwide speeches and workshops. The guide inspired a US-sponsored weekly civic education program on the national radio station, which ran from July through October, as well as workshops throughout the country, daily call-in programs at local radio stations, and a public outdoor radio quiz. In November the United States also sponsored weekly national radio call-in shows on the national public radio station and eight private stations featuring high-profile government officials on voter education issues. The United States funded a media-monitoring project that



In the studio at Radio Meva Ankarana, the solar-powered station provides an important communications link for the residents of the rural village of Antsaravibe, Madagascar. (RadioActive Photo)

showed the government fulfilled its responsibility to provide all candidates with equal access to public media. Civil society organizations around the country benefited from US-sponsored technical election observation training. The US also provided capacity-building training to the country's largest consortium of national election observers. The United States funded 2,000 local election observers and 25 US teams, who were deployed to polling stations nationwide. The funding also extended the visits of international pre-election and election-day assessment teams. US officials sent several local leaders to the United States under various international visitors programs to study transparency and good governance, engaging emerging Muslim leaders in the political process, and state and local government.

To promote media freedom and freedom of speech, US officials in the country organized election-related programs for a weekly discussion group for English-speaking journalists to broaden their sources of information, as well as Internet chats for journalists on various democracy-related topics. World Press Freedom Day activities included a US-produced nationwide live call-in television and radio show on the media. In May the United States sponsored two prominent local journalists to participate in a regional conference in Nairobi on the role of the media in a democracy, and some journalists participated in training with international experts on election reporting. The United States also sponsored the attendance of a journalist to a reporting tour for foreign journalists on women's empowerment and a workshop on journalism techniques in the south of the country. US officials sent a local leader to the United States under the international visitors program to study investigative journalism.

During the year the US Government sponsored programs to promote freedom of information. One of the most successful programs involved the creation of Radio Meva Ankarana, a rural radio station in the northern town of Antsaravibe, which transmitted human rights programming and health and environmental messages. The United States supported a multisector information service in eight focus regions to link civil society decision makers and government

partners to sector-specific information sources. For the second year in a row, the US Government's radio-corridor coordinator ensured greater access to radio in remote regions of the country. The coordinator's role included the dissemination of independent radio programming that included educational programs relevant to local populations.

The United States funded civil society groups working to improve human rights. Their efforts included support for a women's rights initiative that conducted public outreach activities to approximately two million people. This initiative also trained civil society organizations to implement advocacy action plans, and many organizations actively participated in public consultations with the Ministry of Justice. In addition the women's initiative trained 35 magistrates, who set forth a number of resolutions for the enforcement of international and regional conventions to finalize draft legislation proposals.

The United States provided anticorruption assistance to government organizations and civil society. US funding supported the creation of a regional office of the anticorruption bureau to facilitate citizens' access to anticorruption mechanisms. The United States reinforced the capacity of anticorruption civil society organizations, including the local chapter of Transparency International and the Anticorruption Coalition. Other civil society organizations benefited from advocacy training on budget preparation and implementation at the communal level to promote public finance transparency and accountability, as well as communications training to implement anticorruption awareness campaigns. Anticorruption materials, including five different types of manuals, were produced and distributed to approximately 90,000 students and teachers of primary and secondary schools.

To promote respect for human rights, the United States regularly participated in a multilateral/donor country human rights working group, which conducted outreach to improve public understanding and discourse on fundamental human rights. This served as a significant forum for officials and civil society to discuss human rights issues, including citizens'



rights to elect a government, health and the environment, prison conditions, good governance, and the rights of persons with disabilities. In December the working group conducted a series of awareness and educational activities for International Human Rights Week. A US-funded NGO also began construction on a former community center to provide a place for residents to access more information about human rights. The United States worked to build the capacity of civil society groups, including organizations that dealt directly with the promotion of media freedom, freedom of speech, the rights of women and children, the rights of prisoners, the rights of people with disabilities, and the right to vote.

An arcane system of citizenship laws and procedures has created a significant number of stateless persons in the country. A large majority of these people are Muslims of Indo-Pakistani origin, many of whom have pending naturalization requests. During the year the ambassador regularly raised this issue with government officials and encouraged them to reform the laws and process the pending applications.

To promote religious freedom, in October US officials hosted an Iftar dinner to recognize a traditional Muslim custom and increase awareness of religious understanding. In December the ambassador also wrote an opinion editorial, which was placed in several newspapers, stressing the importance of religious tolerance.

The US Government continued to advance anti-trafficking initiatives in close collaboration with the president's special antitrafficking committee. During the year the committee continued its comprehensive review of existing trafficking-related legislation, expanded its nationwide information campaign, and persisted in its efforts to rehabilitate child prostitutes in welcome centers. To support these efforts, the US Government conducted an in-depth study of sex and labor trafficking in the country. A baseline survey conducted during the year to measure the public's understanding of trafficking issues will be used to tailor awareness-raising activities. The United States also worked with police to publish a training manual

on the protection of minors for distribution to police brigades around the country.

Mauritania

Mauritania is a highly centralized Islamic republic ruled by a military junta led by Colonel Ely Ould Mohammed Vall. On November 19 and December 13, voters turned out in large numbers to elect legislative and municipal representatives in elections deemed credible by international and domestic observers. In August 2005 the military overthrew former president Taya in a bloodless coup and established the ruling Military Council for Justice and Democracy, which dissolved the parliament and appointed a transitional government. In October 2005 the junta and transitional government released an election timeline that scheduled presidential elections in March 2007 and a return to civilian rule by May 2007.

The government's human rights record remained poor; however, there were some significant improvements. At year's end the military continued to control the government, limiting citizens' ability to change their government. Other abuses included harsh prison conditions, official impunity, arbitrary arrest, prolonged pretrial detention, executive influence on the judiciary, and restrictions on freedoms of speech, press, assembly, association, and religion. There was a widespread public perception of governmental corruption and a lack of access to government information. Discrimination against women and female genital mutilation continued. Trafficking in persons, ethnic and racial tensions, and the political marginalization of largely southern-based ethnic groups were problems. Involuntary servitude, particularly in remote regions of the country, and child labor in the informal sector occurred.

Since the 2005 coup, the United States has limited its engagement with the military junta and suspended most non-humanitarian programs, including international military training, antiterrorism assistance, training in international criminal investigation, and foreign military financing. However, the United States has strongly supported the democratic transition and fo-

cused its strategy to promote democracy and human rights on ensuring free and fair elections. The strategy included a robust regimen of diplomatic engagement with the government, international partners, and the UN. In addition to actively promoting this democratization process, the US strategy incorporated respect for fundamental human rights, developing civil society and responsible media, promoting religious freedom and tolerance, and combating forced labor, child labor, and trafficking in persons.

The United States repeatedly raised human rights and democracy issues at every level with the government throughout the year. In February a high-level delegation of US officials also discussed human rights and democracy with military council leader Colonel Vall, various ministers, and representatives of political parties and civil society. The United States funded assistance projects in the areas of good governance, literacy, and the rights of women and children.

The United States funded and implemented programs to enhance the capacity and role of political parties and civil society in the preparation for elections. These programs involved town hall meetings concerning the role of women and youth in the political process, as well as various debates and training seminars on the role of political parties in shaping government policy, including election planning. Activities assisted NGOs in becoming more engaged in the current transition to democracy by actively serving as agents of change.

The United States actively engaged with the government, political parties, civil society, and media to support the democratic transition. The United States funded programs to train hundreds of national election observers and sent over 50 US observation teams to monitor the June 25 constitutional referendum and the November 19 and December 3 municipal and legislative elections. The United States, the UN, and international partners successfully pressed the government to reopen voter registration lists in advance of November's elections, resulting in the registration of an additional 85,000 citizens.

In an ongoing effort to support an independent and responsible press, the US Government celebrated World Press Freedom Day on May 3, bringing together more than 60 journalists to discuss media exchange programs, the new press freedom law, and the evolving role of the country's journalists. On October 25 and 26, the United States sponsored a two-day training workshop for a dozen television journalists. The workshop, one of the first of its kind in the country, focused on journalistic ethics, broadcast tradecraft, and techniques for effective electoral media coverage.

During the year the United States awarded international visitors program grants to two leading journalists working for independent newspapers. The program for an Arabic-speaking journalist on the "Role of Media in the US" included visits to various US media outlets and with political and civil society actors and high-ranking US officials. A francophone journalist whose work reaches underserved ethnic communities was given the opportunity to visit leading schools of journalism in the United States and participate in an international symposium on challenges facing media professionals. In addition the ambassador regularly invited journalists to accompany him and provide news coverage of his frequent travels, highlighting the many US development and human rights promotion projects as well as efforts to actively encourage the democratic transition.

Throughout the democratic transition, the United States has promoted respect for freedom of association and assembly for all participants in the democratic process. The United States promoted the development of stronger civil society associations and worked to bridge the divide between civil society groups and political parties by encouraging partnerships as the most effective means of influencing the democratic process.

In support of rule of law, US officials visited various prisons and met with hundreds of inmates. Following these visits, the United States worked with prison and government officials to improve prison conditions and pressed for judicial reforms to ensure that each



prisoner receives access to legal council and a fair and speedy trial.

The US Government funded and implemented programs to promote the role of women in government. Various training workshops focused on developing the capacity of female candidates to run successfully for elected office. The United States funded a public outreach campaign designed to educate voters on the important role of women in a democracy. US officials voiced strong support for a decree passed by the government on July 6 to require all political parties to reserve 20 percent of positions on their legislative and municipal candidate lists for women.

The United States discussed religious freedom and tolerance with senior government officials and religious leaders. US officials also engaged religious leaders in discussions denouncing terrorism and the use of Islam as a justification for terrorist acts.

Antitrafficking efforts supported by the United States during the year included a grant to help expand the capacity of four NGOs dealing with human trafficking victims. The United States aggressively investigated reports and allegations of slavery and slavery-related practices throughout the year. US officials also emphasized the need for the government to provide statistical evidence of its antitrafficking activities to the public.

Mozambique

Mozambique is a constitutional democracy. President Armando Guebuza was elected in December 2004 in what national and international observers judged to be generally free and fair elections, despite some irregularities. The Front for the Liberation of Mozambique, the ruling political party since independence in 1975, heavily influenced government policymaking and implementation. Although there were improvements in a few areas during the year, serious human rights and societal problems remained, including: police use of excessive force resulting in unlawful killings and injuries; lynchings and mob violence; extremely harsh and life-threatening prison conditions

resulting in several deaths; arbitrary arrest and detention; lengthy pretrial detention; lack of transparency and official corruption; police harassment and arbitrary detention of journalists; widespread domestic violence and discrimination against women; abuse and criminal exploitation of children, including child prostitution; trafficking in women and children; discrimination against persons with disabilities and HIV/AIDS; child labor in the informal sector and forced child labor; and poor enforcement of labor legislation.

During the year the United States carried out several programs to strengthen the country's democracy by supporting improvements in national institutions and in governance. US Government support for key government agencies and civil society groups through its 2005 human rights and democracy fund resulted in a draft freedom of information law which was submitted to the National Assembly. Parliamentary debate and approval of the law is expected in 2007.

The United States continued to fund a five-year project to help the municipalities of Nacala, Monapo, Gurue, Vilankulos, and Chimoio to strengthen the quality and level of broad-based citizen participation and engagement in municipal governance, increase the accountability of and quality of services provided by municipal governments, and strengthen systems to combat corruption and increase accountability at the local level.

With the help of the US Government, the country made progress on press freedom issues, as evidenced by the willingness of journalists to cover politically sensitive cases. In addition, several NGOs noted that fewer journalists were detained and that the government increased its efforts to divulge information to the public, compared with previous years. Nonetheless, many journalists continued to practice self-censorship. The US Government supported radio and print organizations to enhance media independence. Through its Partnership for International Journalism Program, two local journalists traveled to the United States. In Zambezia and Nampula, the two most populous provinces, the United States supported the production of radio programs in local languages on

topics such as the constitution, conflict resolution, and respect for human rights.

To strengthen democracy and good governance, the United States continued its emphasis on anticorruption programs, including activities with both the government and civil society. The United States worked to improve the performance of the Central Office for the Combat of Corruption in the Office of the Attorney General by providing funds to train prosecutors in investigative skills. The United States also supported technical assistance and scholarships for students in the areas of law and auditing. A report on corruption in the country, which was prepared by outside consultants with US funding and released in March, has become an important part of the dialogue about corruption in the country. It was frequently noted in the media and noticeably expanded the parameters within which corruption and mechanisms for combating corruption are debated.

US-funded anticorruption programs supported citizen awareness campaigns by encouraging citizens to denounce corrupt behavior and publicizing the corruption reporting process. With US Government assistance during part of the year, an anticorruption NGO operated corruption reporting centers in several provincial capitals. The centers received approximately 100 citizen reports of corruption and directed them to appropriate institutions for investigation. The visitors program funded travel to the United States for two government officials to attend a conference on transparency and good governance.

US officials met often with a local NGO that monitored prison conditions, allegations of torture, and other serious human rights abuses. In August the United States also hosted a public roundtable on domestic violence and child abuse.

The United States conducted activities to promote religious freedom and tolerance, particularly with respect to the Islamic community. Through its international visitors program, two local Muslim leaders traveled to the United States during the year. During the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, the United States hosted several Iftaar dinners in the country to

demonstrate support for and respect for religious observances.

The United States continued to actively advocate for the drafting and passage of the country's first antitrafficking in persons law. Specifically, the United States worked with a women's rights NGO to provide technical assistance to government officials drafting the law. The country is a source country for an estimated 1,000 women trafficked to South Africa each year for the purpose of sexual exploitation. In addition, children were taken to South Africa to work on farms under extremely harsh conditions. Despite an interest in combating such trafficking, the government had limited resources and consequently had made little progress on prevention or prosecution. The United States also laid the groundwork for linking antitrafficking efforts to existing HIV/AIDS activities in the country's main transit corridors. The United States also organized and hosted a trafficking forum to coordinate information and efforts among the government, embassies, and NGO community. Since the first forum, several have been hosted by other governments.

In May, with support from US funding, the civil society organization Civic Education Forum opened the country's first permanent shelter for trafficking victims near the South African border outside the town of Moamba. The Moamba District government donated 20 hectares of land to be used to grow food for the shelter. During the ceremony the Civic Education Forum announced it would start screening for victims of trafficking among the 800 to 1,000 illegal immigrants repatriated by South African immigration authorities every two weeks.

Through its human rights and democracy fund, the United States supported a program to disseminate information about the 2005 Family Law, about which few women in the country were informed. The project raised awareness of the provisions of the new law, with a particular emphasis on domestic violence.



Nigeria

Nigeria is a federal republic composed of 36 states and a capital territory. In 2003 President Olusegun Obasanjo of the People's Democratic Party was re-elected to a four-year term after being declared the winner in elections that were marred by what international and domestic observers characterized as fraud and serious irregularities, including political violence. The elections also resulted in the ruling party claiming 70 percent of the seats in the national legislature and 75 percent of the state governorships. An extended legal challenge to the election verdict ended in July 2005 when the Supreme Court upheld the election result.

The government's human rights record remained poor, and government officials at all levels continued to commit serious abuses. The most significant human rights problems included the abridgement of citizens' right to change their government; politically motivated and extrajudicial killings by security forces; the use of excessive force, including torture, by security forces; vigilante killings; impunity; beatings of prisoners, detainees, and suspected criminals; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and prolonged pretrial detention; executive influence on the judiciary and judicial corruption; infringement of privacy rights; restrictions on freedom of speech, press, assembly, religion, and movement; domestic violence and discrimination against women; female genital mutilation; child abuse and child sexual exploitation; societal violence; ethnic, regional, and religious discrimination; and trafficking in persons for the purposes of prostitution and forced labor. The government's record on democracy, the rule of law, corruption, prevention of internal conflict, and the welfare of its citizens remained problematic. The executive branch also ignored court verdicts related to the impeachments of various governors. The legislative branch passed relatively little legislation. The government established institutions to tackle rampant corruption, but with one exception – the former inspector-general of police, who received a very light sentence for corruption – those institutions have not brought trials of senior officials to either conviction

or acquittal. National debate centered on whether the 2007 presidential election will be free and fair, as the government moved slowly to register voters and prepare other critical aspects of the elections.

The US human rights and democracy strategy aimed to build an accountable, transparent democracy with respect for human rights, a robust civil society, rule of law, good governance, and conflict resolution mechanisms. In addition, the strategy focused on the need for the government to improve the political environment to hold free and fair elections and to strengthen rule of law. Corruption, ethnic and religious violence, respect for the constitution, and concerns over judicial independence were among many themes addressed by US officials in the country.

The United States funded programs to improve democracy and governance through planning for successful elections in 2007. Working through three partner NGOs, the US Government implemented a three-year program that resulted in the training of 55 voter registration master trainers, the revision and printing of 20,000 copies of the voters' registration manual for nationwide distribution, the training of 195 domestic election monitor trainers, and the negotiation of a political party code of conduct to reduce campaign violence.

The United States actively engaged with the government to promote successful elections in 2007. US officials met regularly with officials at every level of government to stress the importance of timely and orderly elections and to offer technical assistance. US officials traveled around the country to give a series of speeches highlighting the US experience with elections to provide a model for the country's democratic transition and made a number of clear public statements outlining expectations for elections.

The US Government undertook multiple efforts to support media freedom. It funded an NGO in the north of the country that promoted sound human rights reporting. The program included a comprehensive training regimen for selected reporters and concluded with a ceremony and award presentation to the reporter who made the greatest achievement

in human rights reporting over the course of the year. When journalists Rotimi Durojaiye and Gbenga Aruleba were on trial for sedition, a US official attended each hearing in their case and continued to monitor it. US officials met with the Nigeria Union of Journalists to discuss issues of press freedom and hosted a weekly press briefing that provided journalists the opportunity to question government leaders and exchange ideas with one another. The US Government maintained an information resource center in the country, which was available to journalists to provide research facilities, and offered Internet research training classes to teach journalism skills.

To strengthen civil society in the country, the US Government funded a program to build the advocacy and participation skills of non-elite Muslim women to enhance their ability to meet the basic needs of their communities. The United States also regularly distributed information on human rights, rule of law, and related topics to members of civil society through its information resource centers. Targeted audiences included journalists, academics, businessmen and women, civic organizations, teachers, students, government officials, the military, clergy, and traditional rulers. Information provided under the program included US and nongovernmental publications, such as academic and think tank reports. The centers also distributed information throughout the country through the American Corners program, which sponsored corners in nine cities, with three more slated for opening in the near future. American Corners also served as a venue for official and unofficial Americans to speak about human rights, good governance, rule of law, and related themes.

With US support, the Publish What You Pay coalition successfully engaged with the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative process, appearing and presenting comment at several public meetings convened by the initiative's secretariat. The secretariat staffed the position of civil society organization liaison officer to further institutionalize civil society engagement. The US Government worked with civil society groups as implementing partners in numerous programs, and US officials demonstrated support for

freedom of assembly by attending many meetings of such organizations.

As part of an effort to promote rule of law, the United States continued to sponsor a successful community policing pilot project in Kaduna with the Nigerian Police Force. The project promoted tactics aimed at crime reduction, while improving police responsibility, professionalism, and performance. A major portion of the program focused on respect for human rights, covering such topics as excessive use of force and extrajudicial killings. A number of "train the trainer" activities were integrated to ensure the program's sustainability. The program also included donations to the police force of bicycles, handcuffs, flashlights, and other basic equipment.

To reduce human rights abuses, the United States, as in previous years, sponsored a senior leader seminar attended by Nigerian military leaders, in which a plenary session was devoted to human rights. The "Next Generation of African Military Leaders" course, conducted in April and May and attended by military leaders, also included a human rights component, demonstrating to participants that respect for human rights enhances military professionalism and civil-military relations. The United States provided human rights training for all members of the military who received US-sponsored military training. US officials regularly met with local, state, and federal officials to discuss human rights trends in policymaking and law enforcement. They also worked closely with civic and international NGOs on such issues as workers' rights; religious freedom; prison conditions; and women's, children's, and minorities' rights. The US Government also sponsored speakers on the rule of law, religious tolerance, and democratic governance at major universities, think tanks, and American Corners in major cities outside the capital. International Visitor Leadership Program grantees participated in programs on human rights and democracy. Several Humphrey exchange program grantee candidates participated in projects on the rule of law, human rights, democracy, and investigative journalism.

Programs to prevent human rights abuses by managing conflict included sensitizing community and



opinion leaders, youth groups, and faith-based organizations about the benefits of peaceful coexistence; establishing conflict early warning networks; and providing humanitarian assistance for internally displaced persons. Working through local implementing partners, the United States established regional councils on conflict mitigation and management in Kaduna, Kano, Plateau, Rivers, and Delta states. These programs engaged 3,154 youth in structured sports activities, trained 4,763 persons in conflict mitigation, and established 36 “peace zones” and 74 “peace clubs” in schools and other institutions. To support the work of conflict mitigation organizations in the country, two studies were produced on factors that escalate conflict and on opportunities for youth employment. In addition, conflict mitigation services were provided for communities engulfed by pre-election violence, and corporate and government entities working in volatile environments such as the Niger Delta were provided with conflict mitigation training and technical assistance in integrating conflict sensitivity in their programs and processes.

The United States worked extensively on the problems of interreligious violence and restrictions on religious freedom, meeting with national and local political and religious leaders on multiple occasions to gain a better understanding of existing problems and to advocate resolution. US officials gave speeches across the country calling for reconciliation and traveled extensively to work with state officials and Muslim and Christian leaders to promote peace and end discrimination, including by holding interfaith celebrations of tolerance. As part of their efforts to promote religious tolerance, US officials sponsored a series of Iftar dinners during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan in Abuja and throughout the north. During trips to host Iftars, US officials also engaged with local Christian leaders. In Zaria, the US Government supported a forum on interreligious dialogue during Ramadan. US officials participated in radio programs on religious tolerance, and a new position was created at the embassy for a US official designated to reach out to the predominantly Muslim population in the north. In addition, the US Government supported a program to engage Shari’a criminal judges on adopting a modern interpretation of Shari’a that is

compatible with human rights and democracy while remaining genuinely Islamic.

The United States worked with local and international partners to strengthen respect for labor rights. The US Government funded a project of the International Labor Organization to review the country’s draft labor legislation before its planned introduction to the National Assembly in 2007. The bill would strengthen worker rights, collective bargaining rights, and child labor protections, bringing the labor law up to international standards. The country cooperated with the International Labor Organization on a countrywide program to reduce the worst forms of child labor. Another program supported an initiative in West Africa to eliminate hazardous child labor from cocoa production. Additional funds supported an effort to help the government-sponsored Michael Imodou Institute for Labor Studies to upgrade its capacity to train workers about their rights as citizens and employees and to help the institute become a center for conciliation, mediation, and arbitration training for both labor and industry representatives. The United States sponsored activities to mitigate the causes and consequences of human trafficking by, for example, disseminating antitrafficking materials through public media and skills-training programs. US officials held press briefings and participated in workshops to increase public awareness and build societal capacity to recognize and address the dangers of human trafficking. The United States also funded four local NGOs that were working toward these goals with police, local officials, the media, and schoolchildren.

Rwanda

Rwanda is a constitutional republic dominated by a strong presidency. The Rwandan Patriotic Front took power in 1994 and formed a government of National Unity that functioned during the transitional period following the civil war and genocide until 2003, when President Paul Kagame was elected to a seven-year term in largely peaceful but seriously marred elections. Significant human rights abuses occurred, although there were important improvements in some areas. Limits on political party activities continued to

restrict citizens' rights to peacefully change their government. There were reports that security forces committed extrajudicial killings and tortured and abused suspects with impunity. Prison and detention center conditions remained harsh despite positive measures taken by the government. Security forces arbitrarily arrested and detained persons, including street children and other "vagrants," and members of Jehovah's Witnesses. Prolonged pretrial detention, limits on judicial independence, unfair public trials, and the holding of former political figures—including former president Pasteur Bizimingu—remained problems. There continued to be limits on freedom of speech, press, and association. Government corruption and restrictions on civil society remained problematic. In addition societal violence and discrimination against women, trafficking in persons, child labor, and restrictions on labor rights continued to be problems.

The US strategy focused on strengthening local government, supporting the professionalization of the military and security forces, and directly engaging the government on human rights issues. The strategy aimed to increase civil society participation in national dialogue, support the decentralization of local government functions, and assist efforts to make government institutions more responsive to citizens. The United States sought to increase long-term stability, both in the country and in the region, by promoting reconciliation, respect for the rule of law, conflict resolution, and human rights.

To promote democracy, the United States sponsored public outreach for political parties and university students that focused on democratic institutions and good governance, including best practices. For example the US Government sponsored three offices in universities around the country that provided students with access to computers and articles about democracy and good governance. To promote multiparty democracy, US officials organized two digital video conferences on US mid-term congressional elections for approximately 60 students, civil society representatives, parliamentarians, and government officials.

To promote freedom of speech and press, the United States provided training and development to journalists and government officials through the Internation-

al Visitor Leadership Programs. Training focused on the role of the media, grassroots outreach, coalition building, democracy, transparency, and good governance. In May the United States organized a workshop for government communications officers on how to work effectively with the media. In October the United States sponsored a workshop on media management for directors and senior managers from approximately 20 independent newspapers and radio outlets. The US Government also sponsored a one-day workshop in Kigali for journalists on HIV/AIDS reporting as well as sent two journalists to a week-long HIV/AIDS reporting conference in Zambia.

To strengthen civil society, the United States supported projects that partnered civil society organizations with private and public sector actors. The United States continued a five-year project initiated in 2005 to support 14 civil society organizations through small grants, primarily directed at creating employment opportunities and encouraging interaction among elected leaders, civil society organizations, and the general population. To improve community-based reconciliation efforts the United States supported over 50,000 small coffee farmers in the establishment of a cooperative-owned coffee processing stations that brought together victims of the genocide and category three perpetrators, those who committed only property crimes and have already served time or confessed. The United States continued to support a variety of small and mid-sized programs to develop conflict mitigation skills, encourage reconciliation, and to address youth and gender issues.

While the government's campaign against "divisionism" and "genocidal ideology" continued to affect local NGOs working on human rights issues, more were active at year's end than in the previous year. US funding assisted local NGOs focused on human rights and development issues to produce publications and organize public discussions on sensitive issues, including political parties and population pressure.

The United States supported the country's efforts to reform the judicial sector and provided legislative assistance to develop comprehensive land management



policies. The government qualified for a US Government program designed to improve its performance on ruling justly, investing in its people, and economic freedom. The government also worked with a team of US officials on strategies and programming designed to promote political rights, civil liberties, and rule of law.

The United States continued to support the community-based justice system (Gacaca process). Assistance for improved information technology and data entry helped the Gacaca headquarters to communicate efficiently with provincial coordinators facilitating timely public access to accurate information. Furthermore, the United States promoted peace and reconciliation by empowering women to improve the socio-economic conditions of families.

The United States was a forceful advocate in support of human rights and democracy in the country. US officials raised concerns about human rights abuses with high-level government officials, NGOs, and international agencies. The United States utilized a wide range of diplomatic tools, including close monitoring and reporting of human rights abuses; technical assistance and training to promote government accountability and respect for human rights; providing programs to strengthen institutions, NGOs, and civil society; and proactive engagement by US officials in individual cases of concern. During the year the United States and the government held several high-level reviews of human rights problems with officials from the Ministry of Justice, internal security, local government, national police, prosecutor general, High Council of the Media, local civil society, and human rights NGOs.

The United States continued to fund a project that targeted over 30,000 HIV/AIDS-affected children involved in the worst forms of child labor. The project provided vocational training, legal support, income-generating activities, increased access to education through awareness campaigns, and other support for the children, their communities, and related institutions. In collaboration with UN Children's Fund, the government supported programs specifically designed to alleviate poverty in families where poverty

was most often cited as the primary cause of child labor. The United States continued to support the government's efforts to combat trafficking in persons and protect the rights of women and children.

The United States continued security assistance programs in the country, including military education and training programs in the United States and in the country. The programs benefited seven battalions and focused on human rights, rules of engagement, rule of law, and civilian control of the military. Those who received training included soldiers who served as UN and African Union peacekeepers in Sudan's Darfur region, the Comoros, Haiti, Liberia, and Ivory Coast. During the year a police inspector attended the FBI National Academy, where training included sessions on human rights and democracy. United States law enforcement personnel also trained 25 government police investigators in investigation techniques and 20 police officers in the appropriate application of force.

Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone is a constitutional republic with a directly elected president and a unicameral legislature. Following the 11-year civil war that ended in 2002, Ahmed Tejan Kabbah was reelected president, and his Sierra Leone People's Party won a large majority in parliament. Many international monitors declared the elections generally free and fair; however, there were numerous reports of irregularities. The government generally respected the human rights of its citizens. However, there were serious problems in a number of areas: security force abuse, including rape, and use of excessive force with detainees, including juveniles; police theft and extortion; poor conditions in prisons and jails; official impunity; arbitrary arrest and detention; prolonged detention, excessive bail, and insufficient legal representation; restrictions on freedom of speech and press, although fewer than in the previous year; government and chieftom detention and harassment of journalists; harassment of opposition party supporters by ruling party members; widespread official corruption; societal discrimination and violence against women; female genital mutilation; child abuse;

trafficking in persons, including children; forced labor, including by children; and child labor.

The US strategy to promote democracy and human rights in the country emphasized enhancing democratic governance and consolidating peace through transformational diplomacy. US programs were designed to increase citizens' expectations of transparent, responsive government as well as to build the government's capacity to deliver services at all levels. Specific US goals included strengthening key government and civil institutions, encouraging greater citizen participation in the political process, and addressing the climate of corruption that undermined progress. While engaging high-level government officials on these critical issues, US officials also provided assistance to local and international NGOs to facilitate programs to improve human rights and democracy and promote reforms in the areas of decentralization, civic education, child labor, and combating human trafficking.

During the year the United States promoted and supported government efforts to decentralize and become more transparent and accountable, thereby reducing factors, including ineffective leadership and endemic corruption, which had contributed to the country's civil war. One area of focus was the rebuilding of local government institutions, which were abolished in the 1970s but re-instituted in 2004. US programs provided much needed training for local government leaders, who lacked a basic understanding of the responsibilities of public servants. During visits outside the country's capital, Freetown, local government officials told US officials that US programs had been instrumental in helping them to define clearly their responsibilities and improve their performance. There were promising signs that town and district councils were assuming greater responsibility for local governance programs, including health and agricultural services, as the central government continued the process of decentralization.



US programs sought to promote good governance and the development of a stable political process by supporting local and international organizations working to expand civil society. In anticipation of presidential and parliamentary elections scheduled for July 2007, the United States provided direct assistance to local and international organizations to build the country's institutional capacity for conducting and monitoring electoral processes, providing civic education, promoting political parties' compliance with the election law, mitigating conflict, encouraging a responsible media, and strengthening civil society organizations.

US-sponsored programs also helped promote responsible journalism and democracy in the country's media. For example, the US Government funded a three-day workshop led by an American journalist in Freetown, who instructed local journalists on writing styles and interviewing techniques and conducted two radio interviews on the importance of democracy and freedom of speech and the press. Another US program sponsored 25 journalists from the towns of Bo and Kenema for a one-day training workshop to emphasize the importance of fair and balanced reporting and journalistic integrity.

The United States provided support for NGOs and civil society in the country through programs that included films, lectures, and discussions on an array of topical subjects, including civil rights, women's rights, the role of civil society, and politics in a democracy. These programs served to create a forum for free discussion by students, journalists, civil society organizations, academics, and civil servants.

The United States also supported broadened community-based political processes. This included working to enhance the responsiveness and institutional capacity of newly-formed local government councils and civil society by promoting open debate, improving the expertise of local ward committees, providing



effective advocacy skills to community based organizations, building linkages between national and local institutions, and informing citizens of their rights and responsibilities.

The United States continued funding local NGO projects that promoted judicial accountability, including the monitoring of criminal proceedings at the Anticorruption Commission and in lower courts. The US Government funded a local NGO program to train 460 civilian prison monitors to evaluate prisons and detention centers and ensure that conditions in these facilities met minimum national and international standards.

The United States was the largest contributor to the Special Court for Sierra Leone, which has a UN mandate to bring to justice persons with the greatest responsibility for alleged violations of international humanitarian law and human rights in the country between 1996 and 2002. The court was scheduled to complete the trials for nine of the defendants by 2008; the trial of Charles Taylor is scheduled to begin in June 2007 in The Hague. US Government officials communicated regularly with senior special court officials to determine how the United States could most effectively support the court's efforts. The United States funded a project to collect and analyze war crimes and human rights violations data to support the work of the Special Court and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Poor civil-military relations have been an impediment to democratic governance. To address this, US assistance enabled the training of military and civilian personnel at the Washington-based African Center for Strategic Studies. The trainees participated in a number of courses designed to increase capacities in leadership within the Ministry of Defense, counterterrorism, and antiproliferation of small arms.

US Government programs supported the expansion of educational opportunities for young women and addressed gender-based violence, which was a common occurrence. US-funded studies found that lack of money for school expenses was a common barrier that limited educational opportunities for young girls,

and that rural families, often out of economic desperation, selected male family members over females to attend school. Through the Africa Education Initiative and the US ambassador's Girls' Scholarship Program, the United States provided educational scholarships to send 2,000 young women to primary school. Gender-based violence remained a concern, and US funds sent a leading advocate against female genital mutilation to the United States on an international visitor program. US programs also provided support to former practitioners of female genital mutilation to help them find alternative income-generating activities.

To counter the exploitation of child laborers in the country's alluvial diamond fields, the United States provided assistance to government ministries and senior officials to promote management and monitoring of the diamond industry, encourage legitimate investment, and reduce opportunities for criminal activity, including smuggling and exploitation of child workers. US programs also supported efforts to design and implement a project to expand educational opportunities for nearly 10,000 children either employed in or at risk of being employed in the worst forms of child labor.

With US funding, a national antitrafficking task force met regularly and drafted a comprehensive plan of action to sensitize communities to this problem and combat trafficking in persons in the country. The US Government also provided funding for an antitrafficking project that will provide protection and shelter trafficking victims to help prevent further victimization.

Somalia

Somalia has been without effective governance institutions since 1991. During the year the area that was traditionally considered the territory of the Somali state was fragmented into regions in part or whole presided over by four distinct entities: the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), centered around Baidoa; the Supreme Council of Islamic Courts (Islamic Courts) in Mogadishu and the surrounding

regions; the self-declared Republic of Somaliland in the northwest; and the semi-autonomous region of Puntland in the northeast. In Somaliland presidential elections were held in 2003 and deemed credible and transparent; parliamentary elections were held in September 2005. In Puntland the unelected parliament selected General Mohamud Adde Muse Hirsi as president in 2005. Fighting between warlords and the Islamic Courts escalated from early in the year until June, when the Islamic Courts gained control over Mogadishu and much of southeast Somalia, following a military conflict. In December Ethiopian forces entered the country in support of the TFG and drove the Islamic Courts militias and administration from Mogadishu. At year's end the Islamic Courts were in disarray, and the TFG extended its territorial control into Mogadishu. Civilian authorities, outside of Somaliland and Puntland, did not maintain effective control of the security forces in any area of the country.

The country's poor human rights situation deteriorated further during the year, exacerbated by ongoing conflicts, the absence of effective governance institutions or the rule of law, and the widespread availability of small arms. The following human rights problems were reported: abridgment of citizens' right to change their government; unlawful and politically motivated killings by clan militias; kidnapping, torture, rape, and beatings; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention; impunity; denial of fair trial; limited privacy rights; restrictions on freedom of speech, press, assembly, association, religion, and movement; discrimination and violence against women, including rapes; female genital mutilation; child abuse; recruitment of child soldiers; trafficking in persons; abuse and discrimination against clan and religious minorities; restrictions on workers' rights; forced labor, and child labor.

The US human rights and democracy strategy in the country focused on strengthening civil society and democratic institutions, enabling the rule of law and local governance, and mitigating conflict. Since 2005, however, the US Government has suspended some programs because US officials were not permitted to travel in the country to monitor programs. Neverthe-

less, US officials maintained contacts with stakeholders throughout Somalia and continued to support democracy programs through implementing partners.

During the year the US Government carried out several programs to strengthen democracy and local governance. US officials continued to encourage Somaliland's political leaders to develop democratic institutions and to participate in reconciliation efforts.

To promote media freedom, the US Government supported radio programs that addressed political topics and societal concerns. The United States also supported media associations and conducted activities to increase respect for media laws.

To strengthen civil society in the country, the United States engaged a broad cross section of citizens by supporting 30 civil society organizations and media groups that actively promoted peace, social and economic development, and democratic governance. Civil society groups became key partners through community-level programs to improve maternal health, broaden access to education, increase security, and manage conflict. The US Government supported a program to strengthen non-elite Muslim women's advocacy and civic participation skills to enable them to better meet basic needs in their communities. The US Government also continued to support the Dialogue for Peace Project, an innovative field research project, which resulted in 33 meetings of more than 800 citizens to map regional and national conflicts and to establish the causes and key players involved. In addition the United States also funded the establishment of five research centers in Kismayo, Baidoa, Beledweyne, Burao, and Galkayo that promoted peace and reconciliation.

Sudan

Sudan is a republic governed according to a power-sharing arrangement established by the January 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement. That agreement ended a 22-year civil war between the North and South and established an interim government of national unity. The government's mandate extends until



scheduled elections in 2009. Presidential and parliamentary elections were last held in 2000; they were marked by serious irregularities, including official interference, electoral fraud, insufficient opportunities for voters to register, and inadequate election monitoring. Following the 2005 agreement, an interim national constitution was promulgated, and the first legislative assembly in the South convened. An orderly succession in keeping with the interim constitution took place when, following the death of John Garang, leader of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement Salva Kiir was appointed first vice president of the Government of National Unity and president of the government of Southern Sudan.

The government's human rights record remained poor during the year. The long list of human rights abuses was headed by continuing genocide in Darfur for which the government and janjaweed bore responsibility, although all sides to the conflict there bear responsibility for the ongoing violence. Other abuses included: extrajudicial and other unlawful killings by government and allied forces; inhumane treatment of citizens by security forces; harsh prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and prolonged detention, including incommunicado detention of suspected government opponents; executive interference with the judiciary and denial of due process; infringement of privacy rights; abrogation of the freedoms of speech, press, assembly, association, religion, and movement; harassment of internally displaced persons and local and international human rights and humanitarian organizations; violence and discrimination against women, including the practice of female genital mutilation; child abuse, including sexual violence and recruitment of child soldiers, particularly in Darfur; trafficking in persons; discrimination and violence against ethnic minorities; denial of workers' rights; and forced labor, including child labor, by security forces and both aligned and non-aligned militias in southern Sudan and Darfur.

The US human rights and democracy strategy focused on promoting the implementation of the May 5 Darfur Peace Agreement, which was possible due to US diplomatic engagement and financial and technical support, and on the implementation of the Com-

prehensive Peace Agreement that ended the struggle between northern and southern Sudan and created an infrastructure for democracy. As the most significant financial donor to peacekeeping activities and the largest supplier of humanitarian assistance, the United States led international efforts to resolve the country's ongoing conflicts and to assist victims. The US Government also provided financial and technical support to the African Union Mission in Sudan. US programs were directed toward building upon these steps forward by promoting: accountability for perpetrators of human rights abuses; conflict resolution at the community level; respect for fundamental human rights; reduction of violence against women in Darfur; press and religious freedom; and efforts against trafficking in persons. US officials stressed to government officials at all levels and all regions the importance of human rights benchmarks, emphasizing press freedom and religious tolerance, an open political process, and freedom of speech, movement, and assembly. US officials met regularly with opposition politicians, political leaders from around the country, religious leaders, human rights activists, and members of the media to develop the most effective strategies for democracy building and human rights promotion.

The US democracy assistance focused on supporting the Comprehensive Peace Agreement's protocol of power sharing, which calls for an autonomous Government of Southern Sudan and general elections in 2008-09. The United States continued to provide training and technical assistance to components of the regional government in the South--its Office of the Presidency, cabinet, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Constitutional and Legal Affairs, and Ministry of Public Service. US democracy-promotion efforts included support for local authorities and organizations. The US government provided training and technical assistance to democratic political parties represented in the nascent Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly. It also provided assistance for the completion of the southern portion of the national census, whose population figures will be used to adjust the North-South power-sharing percentages in the Government of National Unity and to determine district boundaries for the 2009 elections. Additionally, the United

States sponsored civic education programs on the peace agreement and citizens' rights, roles, and responsibilities and provided assistance for research on public opinion to help inform political leaders about the public's views of the peace process.

The United States worked toward the goals of ending the conflict and human rights abuses that accompanied it and protecting victims; to do this, the US Government adopted several approaches to conflict resolution. Senior US officials traveled to the region many times, including two trips by the president's special envoy for Darfur. The US observer team to the Abuja peace talks on Darfur contributed significantly to the attainment of the Darfur Peace Agreement by two major parties to the conflict: Minni Minawi's Sudan Liberation Movement and the Government of National Unity. The United States pressed non-signatory groups to accede to the accord. The US Government encouraged efforts by the international community to broaden support for the agreement among political and military leaders of hold-out rebel factions.

The US Government worked to promote conflict resolution and security in the region. US officials focused particular attention during the year on the need to implement the human rights provisions of the Interim National Constitution. The United States continued to provide funding and assistance for peace mechanisms in the South, including direct support to grassroots peace processes and strengthening local groups seeking peaceful solutions to problems throughout the South and in Abyei, Southern Blue Nile, and the Nuba mountains. In March the United States funded the travel of an expert from the United States Institute for Peace to the country to speak on conflict resolution. The expert traveled to different regions, offering workshops and training on conflict resolution techniques.

The United States continued to provide strong support to the efforts of the African Union Mission in Sudan to curb violence and report on ceasefire violations, including human rights abuses. The United States provided extensive financial support and technical assistance, including transporting, training, housing, and equipping African Union troops. The

United States also continued to provide substantial, ongoing financial support for the UN Mission in Sudan. US support for development and governance was accompanied by substantial US humanitarian assistance for Darfur and the rest of the country. In the UN Security Council the United States supported a presidential statement issued in May authorizing immediate planning for a transition from an AU peace-keeping force in Darfur to a UN force and in August supported a presidential statement authorizing United Nations deployment to Darfur.

To promote media freedom and freedom of speech, the United States continued to fund independent media and piloted a program that distributed radios to communities with limited access to independent media. Funding also continued for the Sudan Radio Service, which broadcast in 10 local languages and provided access to news, civic education, and health messages. The United States provided training for journalists from the Juba Post, Sudan Vision, Al Sahafa, and Al Sudani newspapers. To foster dialogue about the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the Abyei Boundaries Commission report that defines the 1905 Ngok Dinka boundary, which constitutes the Abyei area, the United States provided support to NGOs for disseminating summaries of the protocols of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

To improve the level of professionalism among journalists, the US Government arranged travel to the United States for five print journalists and two radio journalists. They were given tours of several cities that included briefings by small, medium, and large news organizations, journalism schools, and community organizations. Upon their return home, the journalists wrote columns and editorials about their US experiences, democracy, and human rights. US officials conducted a series of meetings with local media outlets to discuss freedom of the press. The United States also protested the suspension of newspapers and harassment of journalists when it occurred.

The United States supported a large-scale program to address root causes of the widespread violence against women and girls in the region. The initiative sought to improve physical safety of vulnerable populations,



provide immediate services to victims, and address the root causes of the violence through activities in key strategic areas: combating impunity by improving access to justice; enhancing human rights monitoring and advocacy; increasing access to accurate information through better media; enhancing protection and decreasing women's risk through humanitarian activities; and building grassroots capacity to address these issues. As part of the initiative, the United States supported the creation of a Darfur-wide network of pro-bono lawyers, supported the training and deployment of domestic human rights monitors, and sponsored income-generation activities to reduce women's exposure to violence.

The US Government worked to promote religious freedom. US officials continued a dialogue with the government on this subject, stressing the need for the allocation of land and building permits to facilitate church construction. US officials also regularly engaged the government-supported Sudan Inter-Religious Council to push for these same goals and engaged Christian and Muslim leaders in dialogue about religious freedom. This effort included a discussion on Shari'a law in post-peace Sudan, led by a notable American anthropologist. Commissioners of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom visited the country from January 11 to 21 and met with high-level interlocutors to discuss the status of religious freedom, focusing especially on Christians living in Khartoum. The US Government also funded a visit by an American imam to speak about religious tolerance, the experience of Muslims in the United States, and respect for minority groups. The imam met with an interfaith council, a jurisprudence council, and political party figures.

To combat trafficking in persons, US officials met with the government-sponsored Committee for the Eradication of Abduction of Women and Children and other officials to push for the return of abducted persons in accordance with international protection principles. The United States continued to promote the committee's outreach programs and to encourage the government to provide the committee with needed funds. US officials also continued to follow the government's efforts to combat the problems of

children trafficked for soldiering and camel jockeying.

Swaziland

Swaziland is a modified traditional monarchy with executive and some legislative powers vested in the king, Mswati III. The first constitution in 32 years, which went into effect on February 8, confirms most of the king's powers but provides for an independent judiciary. The king rules in conjunction with a partially elected parliament and an accompanying structure of published laws and implementing agencies. The most recent parliamentary elections, held in 2003, were not considered free and fair. Political power remained largely with the king and his circle of traditional advisors, including the queen mother. While the civilian authorities generally maintained effective control of the security forces, there were instances in which security forces committed abuses. The government's human rights record was poor, and government agents continued to commit serious abuses, including: abridgement of citizens' right to change their government; arbitrary killings by security forces; police use of torture, beatings, and excessive force; police impunity; arbitrary arrest and lengthy pretrial detention; infringement on citizens' privacy rights; limits on freedom of speech and of the press; restrictions on freedom of assembly and association; prohibitions on political activity and harassment of political activists; restrictions on freedom of movement; discrimination and violence against women; poor enforcement of women's rights; child abuse; trafficking in persons; societal discrimination against mixed race and white citizens; antiunion discrimination; and child labor.

The US strategy to combat human rights abuses and bolster democracy focused on highlighting the importance of respect for the rule of law, supporting the prime minister's anticorruption program, strengthening the rights of women and children, and improving respect for internationally recognized workers' rights. US goals included strengthening civil society and pressing the government to register political parties.

To promote democracy US officials routinely and publicly stressed the importance of the constitution and discussed the need for the government to address its more problematic issues, including the separation of powers and the legalization of political parties. US officials distributed copies of the US Constitution and the Declaration of Independence to numerous civil society organizations. The US Government provided funding to the Swaziland Coalition of Concerned Civil Organizations to draft and print a trainer's manual on the constitution and to train 750 people countrywide on constitutionalism, good governance, and citizen participation in national issues.

The United States distributed copies of the Handbook of Independent Journalism to the majority of journalists in the country, and the pamphlet *Edward R. Murrow: Journalism at its Best* to students in the University of Swaziland's department of communications. The US Government funded one journalist's study tour of media operations in the United States and sent another journalist to study the US political system through the International Visitors Program.

During the year the US Government conducted activities to strengthen civil society. US officials met with leaders of NGOs, providing them with potential funding leads and information on US institutions and processes. US officials also advocated freedom of assembly and association through conversations with high-level government officials and NGOs.

To promote human rights, the United States worked to reduce instances of abuse, rape, and sexual harassment suffered by women because of their subordinate role in society. A regional African NGO collaborated with the US-funded Women's Legal Rights Initiative to develop an advocacy manual to guide individuals and groups in advocating for human and civil rights.

The US Government worked to improve the rights of persons with disabilities during the year. US officials contributed to a workshop hosted by the Federation of Organizations of the Disabled People in Swaziland for members of parliament. The federation invited the Lesotho minister of justice, human rights, law, and constitutional affairs and a member of the national parliament in South Africa to speak at the

workshop; both officials have a visual disability. The workshop sensitized legislators on the importance of equal rights and opportunities for all and discussed the development and integration into society of people with disabilities. US officials also participated in an 18-part educational video in sign language on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights produced by the Swaziland National Association of the Deaf. The association continued to run the video on local television throughout the year.

Increasing government and business community interest in labor issues was a vital part of the US strategy to promote workers' rights. The US Government funded the Federation of Swaziland Employers and the Chamber of Commerce to publish an updated compendium of the country's labor laws, a project that was completed in November. The United States also funded a multiyear regional program designed to improve labor systems in southern Africa through social dialogue.

The US Government funded two multiyear initiatives in the region to combat child labor, which is a particular problem because the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the country, the highest in the world, has left a large number of children orphaned and vulnerable to exploitation. The first program targeted the worst forms of child labor in Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, and Swaziland, and the second was designed to combat exploitive child labor through education in southern Africa. As part of these projects, a conference on child labor was held in the country in November.

Tanzania

The United Republic of Tanzania is a multiparty republic consisting of the mainland and the Zanzibar archipelago. The union has a unicameral parliament and is headed by a president, who is also head of government. Zanzibar, although integrated into the country's governmental and party structure, has its own president, court system, and legislature and continued to exercise considerable autonomy. In the December 2005 union presidential and legislative elections, Jakaya Kikwete was elected president, and the



Masai women learn about civic rights and obligations in Longido District, Tanzania. (Photo by Tom Bayer)

ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi party made significant gains in parliament. Observers considered the union elections to be largely free and fair. The 2005 presidential elections in Zanzibar were more contentious; despite significant improvements in administration of the elections, there were serious irregularities and politically motivated violence particularly in the urban areas of Zanzibar. The government's overall human rights record remained poor, and serious human rights abuses occurred during the year. Police and prison guards used excessive force against inmates or suspects, at times resulting in death, and police impunity was a problem. There were continued reports of societal killings of elderly individuals suspected of being witches. Prison conditions were harsh and life threatening. Police routinely conducted searches without warrants, were often corrupt, and at times failed to bring detained individuals before a judge in the period of time required by law. The judiciary suffered from corruption in the lower courts. Freedom of speech and press were partly limited, government-

tal corruption remained pervasive, and authorities restricted the movement of refugees. Societal violence against women and girls persisted, including female genital mutilation. Trafficking in persons and child labor were problems.

The US strategy for promoting democracy and human rights was to help establish a more accountable, representative, and effective government based on institutions that actively promote rule of law, human rights, and democratic pluralism. To forward this strategy, the United States facilitated the government's efforts to reduce corruption; promote parliamentary independence and civil society; and increase awareness of human rights, child labor, and trafficking in persons.

The United States sought to promote democracy through diplomatic engagement and financial and programmatic support. US funding supported a multiyear project to strengthen the National Assembly's

representative, lawmaking, and oversight functions. This project increased the capacity of key parliamentary committees, improved the ability of committees to analyze international treaties and protocols, and helped parliamentarians draft a handbook on best practices, which was distributed to all committee members. In collaboration with a local NGO, the US government also sponsored a women's leadership workshop to increase the capacity of female leaders in government.

The United States worked to support civic education activities in the country. After the 2005 Zanzibar elections, the US government provided civic education courses to more than 1,000 people in Zanzibar to promote understanding of multiparty democracy. The US also provided civic education courses to hundreds of Masai women to increase their participation in the democratic process.

The United States worked to support media freedom and a free press. To enhance journalists' investigative skills, the US government organized a training workshop for 30 journalists and hosted a roundtable discussion on the role of media in combating corruption with media owners, journalists, and editors. The US also sent three journalists to the United States through the International Visitor Leadership Program. The journalists spent three weeks in the United States studying investigative journalism.

The US government provided vital support to the government's anticorruption efforts, strengthening the government's capacity and the legal framework to prosecute corruption cases. The US government's multiyear, multi-agency effort was a large factor in the November passage of the Anti-Money-Laundering Bill, a key step toward creating a Financial Intelligence Unit. To improve the legal environment for prosecuting corruption, the United States organized a workshop for journalists and government officials on the importance of protection for "whistle blowers." The US government also supported President Kikwete's efforts to increase the effectiveness of the Prevention of Corruption Bureau, sending its top leadership to train with the New York City Department of Investigation to develop a strategic action

plan for the bureau. The Threshold Program also trained over 30 magistrates on anticorruption legislation and how it can effectively be used in court. Partnering with civil society organizations, the United States also implemented 11 public expenditure tracking systems in districts throughout the country. The roll out of these tracking systems enabled citizens to begin holding their government accountable for the delivery of public services.

The US government supported the improvement of the country's judicial system. The United States created a legal aid network to increase access to the justice system for the rural poor. It continued to provide funds to support a forensic laboratory that improved police investigation skills, sped up investigations, and reduced the number of wrongful arrests and convictions. The US government continued to provide the police force with training on civil disorder management to improve the ability of the police to manage peaceful protests and other large gatherings.

The United States worked to reduce human rights abuses against women and children. It supported programs to reduce rape and other sex and gender-based violence in refugee camps, where approximately 287,000 refugees, primarily from Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo, were living. For example, the United States funded an NGO that launched a four-year program in September to combat child labor. The project will work in five remote districts of the country to withdraw 4,975 children ages 12 to 17 from exploitive labor and prevent 5,100 children ages five to 11 from engaging in exploitive labor. The US government also provided local education courses to teach Masai women about their rights, including the right to forgo female genital mutilation.

Through the International Labor Organization, the United States continued to support a multiyear program to reduce the number of children engaged in the worst forms of child labor through advocacy and targeted support for vulnerable children. The educational component of the program was known nationwide and has been adopted by the Ministry of Education.



The United States worked with government officials, NGOs, and the International Organization for Migration to raise awareness about trafficking in persons and to encourage prosecution of traffickers. In May the ambassador and the permanent secretary of the Ministry of Public Safety and Security signed an agreement to provide training and technical assistance for investigating, prosecuting, and adjudicating allegations of human trafficking. The United States provided antitrafficking assistance for prevention and victim protection, including continued support of a shelter for victims of trafficking and materials for a public awareness campaign. US assistance also enabled the International Organization for Migration to conduct psycho-social training on human trafficking for health care providers and social workers to improve identification of and sensitization about working with trafficking victims. Moreover, the US government sponsored a training course for journalists to increase and improve reporting on trafficking.

The Gambia

The Gambia is a multiparty, democratic republic. In September President Alhaji Yahya A.J.J. Jammeh was re-elected for a five-year term in an election that international observers considered partially free and fair with some irregularities. A foiled coup plot in March resulted in a more restrictive environment, and the government's respect for the human rights of its citizens declined during the year. Arbitrary arrests and detentions increased, particularly after the discovery of the coup plot. Security forces harassed and mistreated detainees, prisoners, opposition members, journalists, and civilians with impunity. Prisoners were held in incommunicado detention, faced prolonged pretrial detention, and were denied due process. The government infringed on privacy rights and restricted freedom of speech and press. Women experienced violence and discrimination, and female genital mutilation remained a problem. Child labor and trafficking in persons also were problems.

The US strategy and goals for promoting human rights and democracy included diplomacy and training to promote respect for democratic freedoms, the

rule of law, and the promotion of human dignity within the government, political parties, military, and police. The United States also provided opportunities for key sectors of civil society, such as the media, to enhance their awareness of and respect for human and civil rights.

To promote the political process and democracy, US officials maintained an active dialogue with all political parties and with civil society representatives, stressing the importance of free and fair elections. US officials also engaged with a US-based NGO in its visits to the country to improve the effectiveness of political parties and civil society organizations and enhance the democratic process. The US Government encouraged regular dialogue and meetings among the donor community to avoid duplication of effort and ensure effective allocation of resources in election support, and it served with other donors on a steering committee headed by the country's electoral commission. The United States also sponsored an NGO program to train election observers throughout the country and a program to form a civil society coalition that will continue to serve as a permanent structure for election monitoring and observation. In addition, US officials conducted observation missions for the May parliamentary by-elections and the September presidential election. The United States funded a major construction and renovation project for the National Assembly that dramatically improved the working spaces of its members.

To promote press freedom, US officials consistently stressed that freedom of speech and the press are essential parts of a democratic society. The United States funded a workshop for journalists to improve the quality of election coverage and reporting and used grants and an international visitors program to support independent media. The US Government provided a printing press to the Gambia Press Union to facilitate the continued publication of independent journals. US officials maintained close relationships with many journalists, and all media representatives, regardless of political affiliation, had access to US officials for interviews and reports and were invited to cover US events.

The United States actively supported NGOs and civil society groups through grants and representational events. In a US event for International Human Rights Day, official remarks focused on the importance of NGOs and civil society in the promotion and protection of human rights. US officials also attended events hosted by NGOs and civil society organizations including an NGO forum that coincided with the 40th Ordinary Session of the African Commission and the launch of a girls' empowerment group.

Following the attempted coup, political prosecutions increased, and due process suffered as a result of several cases of lengthy pretrial detention, incommunicado detentions, and detentions without charge. The US Government frequently stressed the importance of the rule of law and adherence to due process. The US Government stressed the importance of a transparent judicial process in prosecuting cases related to corruption, and the ambassador took every opportunity to stress to government officials the importance of an independent judiciary in a democratic society. Through an international visitor program, a prominent jurist was given an in-depth look at the American judicial system. To support anticorruption efforts, the US Government conducted a seminar and meetings with media representatives, legal professionals, government officials, and civil society organizations to discuss the impact of corruption on development and methods to combat it.

During the year the United States raised questions related to allegations of torture, disappearances, and other human rights abuses in discussions with members of the government, military, civil society, and other partners. The United States encouraged the government to ensure greater respect for women's rights and to maintain harmony between the various ethnic groups. At a reception honoring International Human Rights Day, US officials highlighted the important role that NGOs play in fostering widespread awareness of the international standards for human rights. To support more professionalism in the security forces and prevent human rights abuses by the military, the US Government provided funding for several officers and civilian officials to attend military and education training in the United States through-

out the year. The United States also funded regional training and workshops for military officials and civilian officials.

To reinforce religious freedom and understanding in the country, where religious harmony is the norm, the US Government hosted an Iftar dinner during Ramadan that was attended by many Muslim spiritual leaders as well as members of the minority Christian clergy.

To promote labor rights and combat trafficking, US officials attended a ceremony marking the implementation of the 2005 Children's Act and had discussions with the government and local partners on child labor issues. The United States also provided financial support and guidance to the government to improve its record in combating trafficking. The United States funded a local NGO to assist efforts to protect and promote children's rights through a popular media campaign encouraging awareness of child trafficking.

Togo

Togo is a republic governed by President Faure Gnassingbe, who assumed office in April 2005 after an election marred by severe irregularities. President Gnassingbe replaced his father, Gnassingbe Eyadema, who was in power for 38 years until his death in February 2005. Eyadema and his political party, Rally of the Togolese People, were strongly backed by the armed forces, dominated politics, and maintained firm control over all levels of the country's highly centralized government. The civilian authorities generally did not maintain effective control of the security forces. The human rights situation in the country improved; however, serious human rights problems continued, including the inability of citizens to change their government; beatings and abuse of detainees; government impunity; harsh prison conditions; arbitrary and secret arrests and detention; lengthy pretrial detention; executive control of the judiciary; frequent infringement of citizens' privacy rights; restrictions on the press, including the closing of media outlets; restrictions on freedom of assembly and movement; harassment of human rights workers; female genital



mutilation and violence and discrimination against women and ethnic minorities; trafficking in persons, especially children; and child labor.

The US strategy to promote democracy and human rights focused on strengthening key government and civil institutions through diplomatic and programmatic engagement. The United States raised the importance of human rights through sustained communication with government officials, opposition leaders, civil society, international financial institutions, and other international donors. In addition, the US strategy included using public diplomacy to promote local NGOs, strengthen political parties, and improve the human rights record of the military through military training programs.

To support democracy, the United States actively supported the formation of the government of national unity and encouraged all parties to work together to prepare for the upcoming elections. The United States continued to press local officials to fulfill previous democracy and human rights commitments and to end military impunity, provided technical assistance and training to promote democratic ideals, and also encouraged all principal players to constructively engage in the political process. US funding supported a number of civic education radio programs, with emphasis on explaining the election process and electoral laws, as well as on discussing the role of media, civil society, government entities, and youth in an election.

The United States conducted several programs to enhance media freedom. Conferences, debates, and seminars were held on topics such as the role of media in a democracy, the relationship between the media and government, and how to effect nonviolent political change to promote media liberties and freedom of speech. Two local journalists were selected to participate in the International Visitor Leadership Program. The United States also provided small grants to several radio stations to broadcast democracy education programming focused on democratic political process, citizens' rights and duties, the constitution, and women in politics. The US government sponsored several media workshops to promote collaboration among independent journalists and orga-

nized a 10-session videoconference training program for journalists led by experts based in Paris.

To promote civil society, the United States supported NGOs in their work to educate women about their rights and potential for leadership roles and to instruct teachers, administrators, and students about human rights and civic education.

To promote the rule of law, transparency, and the presumption of innocence in criminal proceedings, the US Government and the Togolese Bar Association organized a series of roundtable discussions and presentations. The United States supported the government's judicial reform project through various forms of assistance and financed periodicals that publicized legal information. US funding supported civil society projects to combat corruption.

To promote human rights, the US Government supported campaigns to promote women's rights and continued a series of seminars encouraging women to participate in the political process. The United States and the government conducted a sub-regional project on HIV/AIDS workplace education designed to combat discrimination in the workplace against people living with AIDS. The United States supported NGOs in their efforts to eradicate the practice of female genital mutilation. US assistance also funded a manual on prisoner rights that was produced and distributed throughout the country, including to prisons and libraries. The US Government directed security assistance to professionalize the military and expand its sensitivity to human rights issues.

To promote religious freedom, the US Government provided scholarships to Muslim high school boys and girls to learn English and to study about religious freedom in the United States. US officials discussed religious freedom issues with the government, and the United States also sponsored a series of radio broadcasts in Muslim areas on religious freedom.

To promote the rights of children, the United States supported several training sessions on the 2005 anti-trafficking law and on protection for trafficking victims. Attendees included members of the security

forces, local government authorities, traditional and religious leaders, teachers, students, and journalists. During the year the United States provided financing to the country's antitrafficking network of NGOs to produce a variety of print, radio, and television advertisements addressing trafficking issues.

Uganda

Uganda is a republic led by President Yoweri Museveni, who continued to dominate the government. On February 23, the country held its first multiparty general elections since President Museveni came to power in 1986. The election generally reflected the will of the people, although serious irregularities occurred. The government and the rebel Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) entered into peace talks in July to end the 20-year war in the north of the country. On December 16, the government and the rebels extended for the second time a Cessation of Hostilities Agreement, begun in August, until February 2007. This agreement has improved the security situation, encouraging hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons to return to or near their homes. The conflict in the Karamoja region between the government and armed Karamoja cattle rustlers intensified during the year, resulting in over 100 deaths and the displacement of thousands of civilians. The government took steps to improve human rights during the year, including parliament's passage of comprehensive labor legislation and the army's increased professionalism and respect for human rights.

However, the government's human rights record remained poor, and serious problems remained, including: election violence and irregularities; unlawful killings by security forces; disappearances; security forces use of torture and abuse of suspects; vigilante justice; harsh prison conditions; official impunity; arbitrary arrest; incommunicado and lengthy pretrial detention; restrictions on the right to a fair trial and on freedoms of speech, press, and association; abuse of internally displaced persons; restrictions on opposition parties; corruption; violence and discrimination against women; female genital mutilation; violence and abuse of children; trafficking in persons; violence

and discrimination against persons with disabilities; forced labor; and child labor.

The US strategy for promoting democracy and human rights in the country included the institutionalization of multiparty democracy and transparent government, promotion of civil society, increasing respect for human rights, and combating child labor, trafficking in persons, and violence and discrimination against women. High-level US officials, including the ambassador, raised these issues in public speeches, interviews, and in meetings with national and local officials.

The United States strongly supported the adoption of a multiparty political system and helped strengthen political parties during the transition. The US Government funded programs to enhance voter participation, political pluralism, and the effective administration of the presidential and parliamentary elections. One US program trained political parties to develop organizational structures, party constitutions, and campaign platforms. US funds also sponsored national polls to measure public opinion on political issues and candidates. Workshops instructed political parties on how to use the polling data to focus outreach efforts and improve party messages.

The United States supported the electoral process by strengthening the electoral commission. A US program trained over 100 commission staff and assisted in developing more effective voter education manuals and leaflets. US funds also helped support a national campaign to update and expand voter rolls by upgrading the commission's information technology system, which resulted in the registration of an additional two million voters. US-funded programs contributed to voter education in the run-up to the general election, and one program organized issue-based debates featuring national politicians from different political parties. Facilitators helped ensure that politicians presented and debated their plans to address poverty reduction, corruption, education, and the insurgency in the north. The debates occurred in six major cities and were broadcast on the radio. The United States also funded the publication of a parliamentary report card to promote transparency in government



An election official inks a man's thumb after voting in Uganda. (Photo by Randy Harris)

and voter scrutiny of elected leaders. The report card scored members of parliament on their attendance, voting record, and participation in debates.

The United States encouraged respect for constitutional checks and balances through strengthening the legislature, government accountability institutions, and public participation in policy-making. A US pro-

gram organized training for all parliamentary committee clerks on their new role in a multiparty parliament. US assistance played a key role in facilitating a draft bill on the rights of persons with disabilities. The US Government also funded local NGO programs designed to develop grassroots participation in governance.

To promote media freedom, the United States supported and encouraged radio stations outside the capital city to report on issues of national and community interest. Through the continued sponsorship of an annual radio-reporting award, the United States encouraged professionalism in journalism and responsible media. The US Government sponsored the travel of 16 journalists to participate in international visitors and exchange programs in the United States, as well as a media conference in Kenya, all of which focused on media freedom, ethics, responsibility, and best practices.

The United States continued to provide support for civil society. US officials, including the ambassador, met regularly with international and local NGOs to discuss challenges facing the country and share ideas about how to support citizens. Local NGOs representing indigenous communities and special interest groups, including women, youth, disabled persons, and workers, received small grants from the United States to raise awareness and expand their services.

The United States supported activities to strengthen the rule of law. One program published a series of compendiums of judicial opinions, which provided attorneys, judges, law students, and human rights organizations with a valuable reference tool of up-to-date legal developments for court arguments. The US Government hosted a training workshop for judges and judicial staff to promote effective enforcement of intellectual property rights, an important tool in helping the judiciary to perform independently of the executive, swiftly adjudicate cases, and prevent corruption by customs officers. US officials promoted honest, accountable, and transparent government institutions during the year by raising these issues in both public and private engagements with government officials, the judiciary, and civil society.

A major focus of the long-term US strategy to protect and strengthen human rights has been to provide assistance to the victims of the brutal rebel insurgency in the north of the country. US Government assistance helped fund reception centers for children rescued from the LRA, most of whom had suffered horrific abuse including torture, rape, and forced labor while in captivity. The reception centers provided psychosocial rehabilitation and facilitated the reunion of victims with their families and communities. US assistance continued to support several overnight shelters to protect displaced children from rebel abduction and, as the security situation improved during the year, to escape domestic abuse and other societal problems. The United States continued to promote a dialogue of peace and reconciliation among citizens in the region. One program organized stakeholder meetings for cultural and religious leaders to discuss how to maintain harmony in communities where former rebels were reintegrated. Another project helped civil society and local government leaders train to more effectively advocate for issues important to displaced northerners.

For the 1.5 million displaced during the LRA insurgency, US humanitarian assistance improved access to essential services, including food, water, sanitation, and education. US military projects in conflict-affected areas included drilling boreholes, building clinics, and rehabilitating infrastructure. The United

States also sponsored a civil-military relations seminar to promote human rights awareness among army officers in the country. Seminar participants, including civil society leaders and officers from the security forces, discussed methods to improve human rights protection and justice for victims.

An extensive US Government program to improve the status of women included training women to compete for elected office. This program developed a manual used to train more than 300 female candidates in local and national races. The program also organized mentoring sessions between female members of parliament and prospective female candidates. Another US program funded a women's group in the north to promote awareness about gender-based violence and women's right to justice. US assistance also supported efforts to promote the awareness and protect the rights of disadvantaged or vulnerable groups, including women and children affected by the conflict and HIV/AIDS.

The United States encouraged the government to combat trafficking in persons and protect labor rights, including the rights of children, during the year. US diplomatic efforts supported passage of a comprehensive national labor law in May. The US Government funded four extensive child labor programs that rescued children from the worst forms of child labor, reunited them with their families, and provided them with informal, transitional, or vocational training. Two of the programs also targeted educational interventions for children made vulnerable by conflict or HIV/AIDS. Ongoing US assistance in the north helped enroll 2,403 formerly abducted children in schools or vocational training. A US funded antitrafficking program organized a national working group composed of government officials and NGO representatives. The working group drafted a new antitrafficking law, which female parliamentarians selected as one of five key areas of concentration in the legislature. The program also sponsored training sessions for judges, prosecutors, and police on enforcing antitrafficking laws.

Zambia

Zambia is a republic governed by a president and a unicameral national assembly. On September 28, President Levy Mwanawasa won a second term of office in an election that international observers and civil society organizations characterized as peaceful and transparent, although there were irregularities. The government's human rights record remained poor, although there were improvements in a few areas. Human rights problems included: unlawful killings, torture, beatings, and abuse of criminal suspects and detainees; life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary arrests, prolonged detention, and long delays in trials; interference with privacy; restrictions on freedom of speech and press and intimidation of journalists; restrictions on assembly and association; government corruption and impunity; violence and discrimination against women; child abuse; trafficking in persons; discrimination against persons with disabilities; and limited enforcement of labor rights and child labor laws.

The US human rights and democracy strategy for the country focused on supporting the demonstrated will of leaders both inside and outside of government to undertake reforms, improve democratic governance, and increase the professionalism of law enforcement agencies. The United States continued to support the country's fight against corruption and assisted efforts to improve fiscal responsibility in government. US programs focused on increasing citizen participation in governance, strengthening governmental checks and balances, and bolstering efforts by the government and civil society to eliminate trafficking and improve the rights of women and children.

To promote democracy and transparent governance, the United States funded several NGOs and a UN organization that provided technical and material support for the September 28 presidential and parliamentary elections. Such support included voter education campaigns, the promotion of political debate among candidates, and assistance in the registration of a record 3.9 million voters. US officials led coordinated election observation efforts and deployed 27

observers to polling stations throughout the country. The US Government also hosted a workshop for female candidates on communication skills and other issues related to running an effective campaign.

To promote media freedom, the US Government sponsored training on media independence, freedom of speech, and investigative journalism techniques. In advance of the presidential and parliamentary elections, the US Government hosted workshops for journalists on election reporting and then organized a televised program in which the trainers and a studio audience discussed free and fair election reporting. The US Government also continued to provide journalists with Internet training to improve reporting skills.

To assist in the government's anticorruption efforts, the United States provided assistance to the country's corruption task force, which coordinated the work of investigators and prosecutors in a wide range of landmark corruption cases. US officials assisted the Ministry of Justice to reform legislation on asset disclosure and forfeiture. The US Government also supported ministry initiatives to develop a new evidence code, provide protection to whistle blowers, and promote plea bargaining. Together with the governments of four other nations, the United States continued to support the Parliamentary Reform Project and its goal of transforming the National Assembly into an effective, independent legislature. During the year the reform project resulted in an increase in constituency offices, which promoted accountability by increasing citizen access to their parliamentary representatives. The reform project also increased the effectiveness of parliamentary committees by providing training in financial oversight and increasing access for civil society groups. Other ongoing activities included public forums on electoral reforms, youth workshops on good governance, and programs to educate rural women on their property rights and inheritance.

The US Government supported training that had a significant human rights component for law enforcement officers. Nearly 40 security officials received training abroad at international law enforcement

academies, and the United States trained an additional 90 law enforcement officers in the country.

US officials met with a wide spectrum of religious representatives to promote inter-religious dialogue and collaboration. US officials focused on outreach to the Muslim community, meeting with groups of Muslim men and women, providing Internet training, and hosting other programs. For example, the US Government arranged a digital video conference in which a respected Muslim leader in the United States and a resident interfaith audience discussed the need for religious tolerance. The US Government also funded a Muslim women's group that sought to promote religious tolerance through dialogue.

The US Government continued to fund the second phase of an ongoing program to combat exploitative child labor through education and also funded a program to strengthen the government's ability to design, implement, and monitor initiatives to address the worst forms of child labor. The United States raised trafficking issues at all levels of government, sponsored local organizations that educated citizens on trafficking, and hosted trafficking awareness programs. One such program involved 90 representatives from various youth organizations and included a lively and informative discussion led by three local experts on the problem. Another program attended by 40 leaders affiliated with local antitrafficking organizations featured a four-hour panel discussion on trafficking in the country. The US Government sponsored the visit of a legislative drafting consultant to help local authorities draft comprehensive antitrafficking law and policy. The United States also funded an intergovernmental regional antitrafficking program and allocated funds for police units charged with protecting trafficking victims.

Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe is constitutionally a republic, but the government, dominated by President Robert Mugabe and his Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) since independence, is now authoritarian. The 2002 presidential election and the

2005 parliamentary elections were neither free nor fair, and the government and its supporters intimidated voters, disqualified opposition candidates, constrained campaign activities of the opposition, and distributed food in a partisan manner. During the year the political opposition and civil society continued to operate in an environment of intimidation, violence, and repression. In December President Mugabe and his loyalists in the ruling party proposed extending his term for two years by deferring presidential elections to 2010, rather than holding them in 2008 as scheduled.

The government systematically violated human rights, and official corruption and impunity were widespread. Security forces selectively harassed, beat, and arbitrarily arrested opposition supporters and critics within human rights organizations, the media, and organized labor. The judiciary was subject to executive influence and intimidation. A government campaign of forced evictions, which left 700,000 people homeless during Operation Restore Order in 2005, continued, albeit on a lesser scale. The government regularly used repressive laws to restrict freedom of assembly, speech, and press. In an attack on the independent media, the government jammed broadcasts of the popular Voice of America Studio 7 program, one of the few sources of uncensored news throughout the country, and seized radios belonging to listening groups in rural areas. The economy continued to decline, with skyrocketing prices, widespread shortages, and rapidly deteriorating social services, primarily due to the government's command and control economic policies.

The US strategy for fostering democracy and human rights in the country is three-fold: to maintain pressure on the Mugabe regime; to strengthen democratic forces; and to provide humanitarian aid for those left vulnerable by poor governance. The US Government utilized diplomatic efforts, public outreach, and technical and financial assistance to advance these goals. To maintain pressure on the regime, the United States emphasized international cooperation and coordination. US officials engaged multilaterally and bilaterally to expand international support of sanctions against government and ruling party officials responsible for



human rights violations. A growing number of like-minded donors now agree that fundamental political and economic changes are a prerequisite to reengagement by the international community with the government. US officials regularly communicated to the ruling party the importance of lifting political restrictions and curbing human rights abuses. To encourage greater public debate on restoring good governance in the country, the United States sponsored public events that presented economic and social analyses discrediting the government's excuses for its failed policies.

To further strengthen pro-democracy elements, the US Government continued to support the efforts of the political opposition, the media, and civil society to create and defend democratic space and to support persons who criticized the government. US officials observed parliamentary by-elections and rural district council elections in several towns and cities throughout the country during the year. The observers concluded that the ruling parties' restrictive registration procedures, partisan distribution of government food aid, and inappropriate pressure by traditional leaders served to unduly influence the election results.

The United States promoted freedom of speech and of the media during the year. US officials participated in ceremonies commemorating World Press Freedom Day and delivered remarks on the relationship between freedom of expression and economic prosperity. The US Government sponsored programs and supported organizations that promoted the free flow of independent and objective information, including several township newspapers that disseminated reports and advised residents of their rights. Voice of America's Studio 7 radio station provided uncensored and balanced news to citizens throughout the country and worked to expand its listener base during the year. Citizens had access to independent information through the US-sponsored American Corners program, which operated libraries throughout the country, and a newsletter that provided information and articles on key US policies and priorities. US programs provided funding to

NGOs that collected and circulated information on civil society, human rights, and government actions. The United States sponsored two Fulbright scholars during the year: one helped improve a leading undergraduate journalism program by facilitating workshops designed to foster freedom of the press, while the other taught conflict resolution and mediation at one of the country's top universities. Two journalists participated in US-sponsored professional exchanges in the United States.

The United States supported the efforts of civil society to create and defend democratic space. The US Government funded international and local NGO programs that promoted a wide variety of causes, including social welfare, democratic processes, human rights, peace-building, women's and youth empowerment, and public advocacy. For example, a recipient organization involved members of all political parties, traditional leaders, and other local leaders in the establishment of peace committees that encouraged open dialogue on local issues by all community members. One grantee hosted a series of community forums in rural areas that provided a platform for discussing women's issues. Another grantee supported workshops to develop youth leadership skills necessary to confront social injustice through nonviolent strategies. The US Government also sponsored an NGO leader on an exchange program to learn about activism by civil society groups in the United States.

The United States continued to promote rule of law in the country. Although the ruling party maintained its monopoly on the executive branch, other institutions--including Parliament, the judiciary, and local government--were at times able to exercise some independence. The United States encouraged the capacity of these entities to govern and, in some cases, directly supported their efforts. For example, a



US-sponsored program to strengthen parliamentary committees resulted in increased debate in Parliament--both from opposition and reform-minded ZANU-PF parliamentarians--and encouraged greater transparency through public hearings on legislation. In an unprecedented development, several bills that contained particularly repressive or ill-defined sections were publicly debated and sent back to committee for redrafting. Support for the portfolio committees also served to provide a greater check on the executive branch, as ministers and other high-ranking officials were held more accountable for their policies through vigorous questioning by committee members. US funding and support enabled local citizen groups and select local authorities to improve transparency, accountability, and municipal service delivery. For example, local authorities throughout the country received training in financial management skills, including the use of participatory budgeting methods that requires public involvement throughout the entire process.

The US Government was committed to combating human rights abuses during the year. US officials continued to raise the country's human rights record in international fora and bilaterally with other governments. Statements by US officials, including highly critical commentary on human rights abuses, corruption, and gross economic mismanagement, received prominent coverage in the local media; however, government-controlled outlets often distorted the message. US officials emphasized in all substantive contacts with government and party officials the importance of ending human rights abuses in the country. The US Government widely circulated human rights-related reports among civil society, government, and party officials. The United States supported programs providing critical assistance to human rights defenders and members of civil society who suffered abuse and torture at the hands of the government. One US-sponsored program helped civil society organizations develop a rapid response support network for frontline human rights defenders and enhanced their ability to capture, document, and disseminate information about abuses. A prominent human rights lawyer participated in a US-sponsored international visi-

tor exchange program focused on promoting human rights in government policy.

The United States continued to be among the largest contributors of humanitarian assistance in the country. These programs provided persons who were vulnerable or displaced--including those affected by the government's continuing campaign of forced evictions--with critical resources during the ongoing crisis, regardless of their political affiliation. US Government assistance included support to the UN World Food Program, the International Organization for Migration, and NGOs.

In support of religious freedom, the United States widely disseminated relevant reports on religious rights, and US officials privately and publicly emphasized concern regarding intimidation and harassment of religious leaders who criticized the government. The United States supported efforts by religious leaders to highlight human rights abuses and flawed economic policies and to sustain a dialogue to improve the country's political situation. The US Government hosted an event in which a returning international visitor's program participant gave a speech and moderated a discussion session comparing local religious pluralism with that of the United States.

The US Government continued to encourage the protection of worker rights. In response to the arrest and beating of 15 leaders of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions, US officials publicly condemned the government's brutal reaction to the peaceful assembly of its citizens. The United States funded programs on labor issues, including support for an NGO that assisted trade unions in responding to and representing their members' interests and sponsorship of a labor leader's participation in a professional exchange program. The United States encouraged efforts by the government to combat trafficking in persons and supported a local NGO providing assistance to child trafficking victims. US officials met with government representatives to share best practices and promote cooperation in combating trafficking. US officials widely disseminated relevant reports and participated in local and regional meetings on trafficking.



AFRICA

EAST ASIA & THE PACIFIC



ビルマに
平和と自由を!!

ビルマに
平和と自由を!!

FREE
AUNG SAN SUU KYI

ビルマに
平和と自由を!!

တော်ပွဲ အနိုင်ရ
D ပါတီ ကို
တော်ခံ ဝိုင်းရံကြ



“People across this country are awakening to their rights and seizing on the promise of the law. But you cannot be a rights lawyer in this country without becoming a rights case yourself.”

Gao Zhisheng
Chinese civil rights lawyer

An elderly woman pedals past protesters at a rally outside the Burmese embassy in Tokyo.
(AP photo)



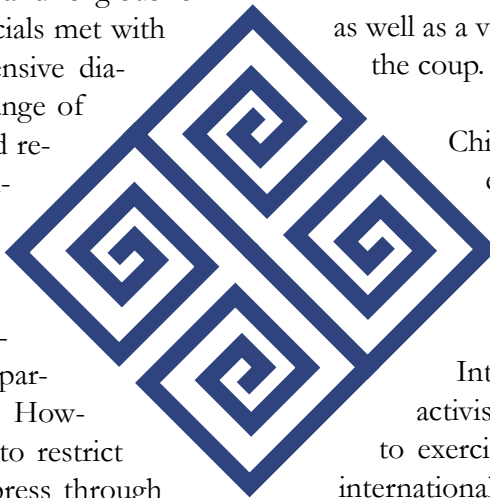
EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

The United States continues to support fragile democracies and to advocate for greater human rights reforms throughout the region. In 2006, there were both advances in freedom and human dignity, and setbacks. Candid human rights discussion between the U.S. Government and the governments of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia laid the groundwork for future progress; however, progress made in the region was overshadowed by coups in Fiji and Thailand, and continued human rights abuses and lack of freedom in countries such as Burma and North Korea. Despite expanding personal freedoms in some areas, China's government continued to suppress individuals and groups, including religious groups, it deemed threatening to Party authority.

In Vietnam, the United States resumed its human rights dialogue with the government for the first time since 2002, when the U.S. suspended the dialogue for lack of progress. During the year, the government of Vietnam released three high-profile human rights prisoners of concern, invited U.S. officials to visit two prisons, and initiated political and religious reforms. In Laos, senior USG officials met with the government for a comprehensive dialogue that focused on a broad range of issues, including human rights and religious freedom. The U.S. will continue to press Laos for greater human rights reforms. The Cambodian government took positive steps by releasing five human rights activists from jail, and partially decriminalizing defamation. However, the government continued to restrict freedom of speech and of the press through the use of defamation and disinformation suits. Additionally, impunity and lack of respect for the rule of law remained areas of concern.

Respect for human rights and the rule of law in Thailand were set back with the military coup d'etat on September 19. In response to the Thai coup, the United

States suspended nearly \$29 million in assistance and has consistently pressed for Thailand's quick return to democratic rule. Deteriorating civilian-military relations in Fiji culminated in a military coup on December 5, and the United States responded swiftly with the suspension of approximately \$2.5 million in assistance and all sales of lethal military equipment, as well as a visa ban on individuals implicated in the coup.



China's human rights record deteriorated in some areas. During the year, there were an increased number of high-profile cases involving the monitoring, harassment, intimidation and arrest of journalists, Internet writers, religious and social activists, and defense attorneys seeking to exercise their rights under Chinese and international law. The government tightened restrictions on freedom of speech, including the Internet, and NGOs and non-registered religious groups continued to face scrutiny and restrictions. The government continued to pursue some criminal and judicial reforms, and, in a positive development, China's Supreme People's Court began implementing new appellate procedures for hearing death penalty



cases. Although the United States has not resumed its Human Rights Dialogue with China due to the lack of results on key human rights issues, the United States continued to pursue a multi-faceted policy to encourage China to bring its practices into compliance with international standards. The United States raised human rights issues of concern at all levels of government, including travel to China by the Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor for talks with various Chinese ministries. The United States also increased its efforts to work with other countries that have Human Rights Dialogues with China to amplify the voice of the international community on key issues and cases. In addition, the United States funds a robust program of projects to promote rule of law, public participation and civil society, and to support those in China working on reform.

Burma remains one of the most repressive countries in the world, and the authoritarian military regime continues to rule without respect for democratic and human rights. Nobel Laureate and National League for Democracy (NLD) General Secretary Aung San Suu Kyi has been held incommunicado and under house arrest for most of the past seventeen years. In February the military extended by one year the house arrest of NLD Vice-Chairman U Tin Oo. Over 1,100 other persons in Burma are imprisoned for the peaceful expression of their political views. The United States and other countries introduced a resolution at the UN Security Council to express deep concern about the situation in Burma and support for the Secretary General's "good offices" mandate, and to encourage the Burmese leadership to take concrete steps towards greater freedom and improved humanitarian conditions for the Burmese people. The United States was pleased that the majority of Security Council members supported the resolution but was deeply disappointed that it was vetoed. Nevertheless, the Security Council has placed Burma on its permanent agenda and the U.S. remains committed to working with our partners and allies to address the deplorable conditions in Burma.

The U.S. Special Envoy for Human Rights in North Korea, appointed in 2005, intensified USG efforts to highlight the dismal human rights conditions in that country, one of the most repressive regimes in the world. In order to avail North Koreans of information denied to them by their government, the USG supports independent radio broadcasts into North Korea. The Broadcasting Board of Governors expended \$4.6 million on Korean broadcasting in 2006. The State Department administered a \$1 million grant for the promotion of North Korean human rights. Consistent with the North Korean Human Rights Act, the U.S. also began admitting North Korean refugees in 2006.

Efforts to advance the promotion of human rights and democracy in East Asia focused directly on supporting civil society, advancing freedom of the media and the Internet, strengthening rule of law, encouraging increased women's political participation, promoting religious tolerance, and pressing for reconciliation for past abuses. The Global Internet Freedom Taskforce established by Secretary Rice in 2006 to monitor and respond to threats to freedom of expression on the internet, focused in particular on the challenge to internet freedom in China.

Despite the continued challenges, the Freedom Agenda remains a cornerstone of US foreign policy towards East Asia. The United States is committed to helping citizens throughout Asia seek a life free from chaos and marked by peace and dignity.



Advancing Human Rights Abuse Reporting in the Philippines

The Philippine Commission on Human Rights, an independent organization mandated by the Philippine constitution to promote and protect human rights, was perennially hampered by limited resources. A US Government-funded program implemented by the Asia Foundation worked with the Commission and other local NGOs to strengthen and expand the human rights abuse reporting network throughout the country and in Mindanao.

The Asia Foundation provided the Commission and an informal group of several of the country's most respected human rights NGOs with software and training to improve the efficiency and security in documenting, storing, and reporting information on human rights abuses. This program has provided a critical tool to NGOs for systematically advancing human rights in the Philippines by monitoring, documenting, and submitting reports of abuse to the Commission. The end result is a stronger network among the Commission, its field offices, and human rights NGOs, particularly in Muslim Mindanao. Quick and reliable input of information on perpetrators of human rights violations into the software system will help serve as a critical check on human rights abuse.

Mindanao, the poorest and most unstable region of the country, is home to most Filipino Muslims. It is perhaps the most critical area of concern for human rights violations. In this volatile arena buffeted by conflict, the project helps the Human Rights Commission and NGO community to provide credible and impartial monitoring of human rights violations, and to promote trust among Muslim and non-Muslim communities.



US-based and local NGOs convene to train members of the Philippine Human Rights Commission to use computers to document human rights abuses. (Asia Foundation photo)



Burma

Burma is ruled by an authoritarian military regime that enforced its firm grip on power with a pervasive security apparatus. The State Peace and Development Council, led by Senior General Than Shwe, was the country's de facto government. In 1990 the National League for Democracy won more than 80 percent of the seats in a general parliamentary election, but the regime ignored the results. During the year the regime's deplorable human rights record worsened. Security forces committed extrajudicial killings, custodial deaths, disappearances, torture, rape, and forcible relocation of persons, used forced labor and conscripted child soldiers. Citizens did not have the right to change their government. Although the government revoked its original order to the International Committee for the Red Cross that it close all of its five field offices, it has not granted the International Committee for the Red Cross permission to continue all of its activities from those offices. The army increased attacks on ethnic minority villagers in Bago Division and Karen State in an attempt to drive them from their traditional land. The government abused prisoners and detainees, held persons in harsh and life-threatening conditions, and routinely used incommunicado detention. More than 1,100 people continued to languish in jails for the peaceful expression of their political views. National League for Democracy General Secretary Aung San Suu Kyi and Vice Chairman Tin Oo remained incommunicado and under house arrest. The government restricted freedom of speech, press, assembly, association, religion, and movement. The government harassed and created difficulties for domestic human rights NGOs, and international NGOs encountered a restrictive environment. Violence and societal discrimination against ethnic minorities continued, as did trafficking in persons, including state-sponsored forced labor and widespread sexual exploitation of women and children. During the year the government released just a few political prisoners, among them labor activists Su Su Nway and Aye Myint, but arrested 17 others, including five leaders of the 88 Generation Group.

At year's end, the regime reportedly intended to promulgate a new constitution and handpicked the delegates to attend the National Convention, which was suspended in 1996 and reconvened in 2004. The National Convention did not permit free debate and, for that reason, the National League for Democracy has not participated since 1995. Apart from its Rangoon headquarters, the National League for Democracy offices nationwide remained closed. Although the regime allowed UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Ibrahim Gambari to visit twice during the year, there was no discernable improvement in the government's human rights record or lessening of its harsh treatment of democratic opponents. Moreover, it continued to refuse permission for UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Paulo Sergio Pinheiro to visit the country.

US human rights and democracy goals include the unconditional and immediate release of Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi and more than 1,100 other political prisoners, an immediate end to military attacks on ethnic minorities, initiation of a credible and inclusive political process leading to national reconciliation, and unrestricted access for humanitarian assistance providers. The United States engaged in active bilateral and multilateral efforts with key partners and players in the Asia region, as well as the EU and like-minded countries, to raise international pressure on the regime to affect meaningful political reform.

The United States worked aggressively and multilaterally to press for change in Burma. Such efforts included support for the UN process led by Under-Secretary-General Gambari, the UN special rapporteur on human rights, as well as for the work of the International Labor Organization, the office of the UN high commissioner for refugees, and other international organizations. With the strong support of the United States, the UN Security Council agreed to place Burma on its permanent agenda on September 15. Following his two trips to Burma during the year, UN Under-Secretary-General Gambari briefed the Council on the continued deterioration of freedoms and called on the regime to release political prisoners, engage the democratic opposition in dialogue, stop its attacks on ethnic Karen civilians, and permit great-



er access to humanitarian organizations. The United States urged Burma's neighbors to press the regime to release all political prisoners and initiate a credible and inclusive political process.

The United States was a vocal advocate for the rights of democracy activists, including Aung San Suu Kyi. First Lady Laura Bush chaired a session on the situation in Burma in New York concurrently with the UN General Assembly. Speaking to key ASEAN leaders on the sidelines of the APEC summit in November, President Bush described the situation in Burma as "totally unacceptable" and encouraged them to engage the country more actively to improve its human rights record and move toward democracy. The United States also pursued the goal of promoting democracy and respect for human rights through vigorous public diplomacy and democracy programs. Following the regime's May announcement that it had prolonged Aung San Suu Kyi's detention for another year, the United States again called on the government to release Aung San Suu Kyi and all political prisoners and to initiate meaningful dialogue with the democratic opposition and ethnic minority political groups.

The United States, EU members, and other nations have imposed a variety of sanctions on the junta. These sanctions signaled international disapproval while exerting pressure on the regime to end its human rights abuses and allow for genuine democracy. The US Congress voted overwhelmingly to renew the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act for a fourth year, and President Bush signed the bill on August 1. US sanctions included bans on the export of financial services by US citizens, on imports from the country, and on new US investment and a full arms embargo. Sanctions also blocked all bilateral aid to the government, Generalized System of Preferences privileges, and funding through the Overseas Private Investment Corporation and Export-Import Bank programs. The United States maintained visa restrictions on Burma's senior military and government officials and opposed all new lending or grant programs by international financial institutions.

The United States also supported journalist training, civil society development, and scholarship programs inside the country and among exile communities to prepare citizens to assume leadership roles during a political transition. The United States promoted the rule of law and democracy by providing information on human rights, democratic values, and governance issues through speaker programs, exchange programs, publications, and other information outreach. US officials in the country regularly disseminated news from Web sites blocked by government censors. US courses on civics and good governance inspired political activists to create their own Burmese-language versions of the courses, as well as improving their organizational and speaking abilities. The United States also supported humanitarian assistance programs in the country and along the Thai border serving Burmese refugees. All US humanitarian and democracy-related assistance was channeled through NGOs; none of the funding benefited the military regime.

The United States also sought an end to the egregious human rights abuses perpetrated by the army, many of which were carried out against ethnic minority civilians in border regions. The regime harassed and created difficulty for domestic human rights groups and dismissed all outside scrutiny of its human rights record. Several US-funded groups working along Burma's borders documented human rights abuses inside the country, including murder, rape, and forced labor. During travel throughout the country and along the Thai-Burma and Thai-Bangladesh borders, US officials personally interviewed victims of violence. The US Government also helped facilitate access for US and UN investigations into human rights abuses and maintained close contact with influential members of the political opposition about initiatives supporting the struggle for democracy in the country.

There was no change in the regime's infringement on religious freedom. The regime continued to monitor public meetings and activities of virtually all organizations, including religious ones. It systematically restricted efforts by Buddhist clergy to promote human rights and political freedom, discouraged or prohibited Muslims and Christians from constructing new places of worship, forced Muslims to tear down their



own houses of worship, and in some ethnic minority areas used coercion to promote Buddhism over other religions. During the year the United States responded by redesignating Burma as a “Country of Particular Concern” under the International Religious Freedom Act for the eighth consecutive year. Several US-funded organizations along Burma’s borders provided information on the serious repression faced by minority ethnic and religious groups in Burma, including Rohingya Muslims and Christians in ethnic areas.

The United States continued to press the regime to respect workers’ rights and unions and to discontinue its use of forced labor. The United States actively supported the work of the International Labor Organization liaison office in Rangoon, which sought to bring the regime into compliance with its international labor obligations. At the International Labor Organization’s Governing Board meeting in November, the United States supported consideration of further actions to address the regime’s lack of progress on the development of an adequate mechanism to address forced labor complaints.

To address the serious problem of trafficking in persons, the United States approved funding for NGO-implemented antitrafficking programs intended to raise awareness among vulnerable Burmese and to support antitrafficking efforts of local NGOs. The United States also pressed the regime to improve implementation of its antitrafficking law and to cooperate with NGOs and UN agencies such as the International Labor Organization on the serious issue of forced labor and the commercial sexual exploitation of women and girls.

Cambodia

Cambodia is a constitutional monarchy with an elected government. The royalist National United Front for a Neutral, Peaceful, Cooperative, and Independent Cambodia Party and the Cambodian People’s Party formed a coalition government in 2004; however, the Cambodian People’s Party dominated the government, with most power concentrated in the hands

of Prime Minister Hun Sen. Although the country’s human rights record remained poor, the government took some positive steps early in the year by releasing five human rights and labor rights activists jailed on defamation charges and allowing the opposition leader to return and restoring his parliamentary immunity. The government also partially decriminalized defamation by eliminating imprisonment as a penalty. However, impunity and a lack of political will to adhere to the rule of law remained chief areas of concern. Land disputes and forced evictions often accompanied by violence were a growing problem. Corruption was endemic and extended to all segments of society.

US officials cooperated closely with civil society, international organizations, government officials, and international and local NGOs to monitor and promote human rights, good governance, and democratic development. In the short-term, the US Government seeks to continue opening political space by supporting political and legal rights groups. In the longer term, the US Government seeks to develop a consensus for rule of law reform by strengthening legal professionals’ skills, upgrading court administration, and supporting key human rights groups and legal aid providers.

To advance political pluralism, the United States supported one NGO that focused on internal democratization and decentralization of political parties and another NGO that held 127 public forums, attended by over 52,000 citizens, to increase debate on human rights and democracy. A US program to broaden youth participation in political life trained over 24,000 young activists. Approximately 500 of the trained youth have engaged in a follow-on program encouraging voter registration and monitoring preparations for the upcoming commune council elections. One US-sponsored program produced a radio program on democracy that reached over 1.2 million voters in eight provinces. Another US-funded NGO supported electoral reform, NGO capacity building, political party reform, including increasing youth and women’s participation, and 61 constituency dialogues attended by over 23,000 citizens and 53 members of the National Assembly.



US efforts to promote media freedom centered on programs to educate journalists on their role in a democratic society and to improve the quality of reporting. A Pulitzer prize-winning journalist conducted a US-sponsored lecture on reporting corruption. Other US-funded programs included English training for working journalists, developing English teaching materials for the leading journalism school, sponsorship of the director of the Voice of Cham radio program for the inaugural Edward R. Murrow International Visitors Leadership Program, and the translation and distribution of the book, *The Elements of Journalism*. In light of the numerous threats to freedom of expression, the United States embarked upon a campaign with other like-minded countries and international organizations to urge the government to decriminalize defamation. In May the government responded by eliminating imprisonment as a penalty for defamation.

Following a meeting with US Assistant Secretary for East Asia and the Pacific Christopher Hill in January, Prime Minister Hun Sen requested that the courts release on bail the civil society leaders who had been detained on criminal charges of defamation in 2005. After the men wrote letters to the prime minister thanking him for their release, the government requested that the courts drop the charges. Additionally, the US Government provided financial support for civil society organizations promoting human rights and democracy in the country.

US officials continued to press for strengthening the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary. The US Government supported training and provided technical assistance for legal and judicial professionals. The rector and 10 other faculty members at the Royal University of Law and Economics were trained in interactive teaching techniques and provided with technical and financial support to develop new course materials. A Fulbright Scholar developed and taught a course on family law at the Royal University of Law and Economics. A US federal judge conducted clinical education workshops on judicial ethics, land law, and judicial reform for more than 227 sitting judges, prosecutors, and lawyers-in-training in Phnom Penh and four provincial courts. A US-funded anticorruption

program strengthened the ability of the citizens to hold public officials more accountable for the use of public resources. The US Government supported a December workshop to train judges and prosecutors on a new code of conduct, which was finalized by the Supreme Court and sent to the Supreme Council of the Magistracy for approval during the fall.

During the year more than 900 people in 15 provinces benefited from US government-supported legal aid. US programs promoted access to justice by providing legal assistance in more than 3,000 cases. Approximately 30 percent of these were handled successfully through the existing legal system and alternative dispute resolution mechanisms. Fifty lawyers, including 17 women, completed US-supported clinical legal education programs to increase the quality of legal professionals. As in 2005 10 legal fellows, including six women, were placed in internships to increase access to legal representation for average Cambodians. The United States continued to support local NGOs that investigated hundreds of alleged human rights abuses and provided direct intervention and legal services to individuals. Local NGOs took on legal cases with high public visibility or the potential to influence policy, which helped other partners develop the will and capacity to bring more cases of human rights abuses to court. A US-funded Cambodian legal defense NGO continued to provide legal aid services for the poor. Another US program continued the use of class action cases on behalf of communities involved in land disputes.

US government officials continued to discuss human rights concerns when meeting government officials; these concerns were highlighted during the October visit of the US Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor Barry F. Lowenkron. During his visit, Assistant Secretary Lowenkron met with members of the opposition and Prime Minister Hun Sen. Assistant Secretary Lowenkron also spoke at a public forum sponsored by a local civil society organization where he addressed freedom of speech, land rights, and good governance. US support enabled key human rights NGOs to monitor, investigate, and report on human rights violations, including unlawful arrests, extrajudicial killings, abuse of power by gov-



Cambodian workers march to ask for higher pay in Phnom Penh. (AP photo)

ernment officials, restrictions on freedom of speech and assembly, and intimidation of human rights workers. The United States continued to support the country’s only independent NGO devoted to investigating and documenting the crimes against humanity committed by the former Khmer Rouge regime to aid in bringing those responsible for the atrocities to justice. The US government also financed a project to train journalists to report on cases before the Khmer Rouge Tribunal.

US officials continued to urge authorities in both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Interior to meet the country’s obligations to grant the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees access to persons seeking asylum in Cambodia. The United States processed for resettlement Montagnard refugees referred by the high commissioner. One local NGO continued to receive a US grant to conduct training for more than 2,000 girls and young women on exercising their rights in a democratic society. The US Government funded a “Baseline Survey of Violence against Women in Cambodia.” The survey’s findings will be used to design new activities by the

Ministry of Women’s Affairs, donors, and NGOs to fight violence against women.

The United States continued its efforts to address the threat of radical Islam by promoting democracy education and support for the Muslim community through a combination of outreach programs and small grants. The US Embassy continued distributing Khmer-language and Cham-language copies of Muslim Life in America at mosques and Muslim community centers and hosted its first-ever Ramadan iftar dinner in the main chancery. The “Shared Futures” program expanded to include the creation of micro-enterprise centers through the distribution of 1,200 sewing machines to 60 Muslim communities. Additionally, a local NGO received US funding to raise human rights awareness and reduce discrimination and stigmatization related to HIV/AIDS in Islamic communities through education and training. With US support, a local NGO broadcast a weekly Cham-language news and information program, the only program in the country to engage Cham Muslims in their own language. The program regularly featured US stories and targeted a potential audience of



500,000--roughly 80 percent of the country's Cham Muslim population. The United States also supported train-the-trainer workshops for over 900 imams and village leaders in 10 provinces on human rights and democratic practices conducted by two Muslim NGOs.

During the year, the United States expanded the use of English language micro-scholarships. More than 100 Muslim secondary school students in six provinces participated in this language study program. These English language scholarships expanded the educational and economic opportunities for Muslim students, one of the most educationally marginalized populations in the country. Learning English increased the chances that these students will graduate from secondary school, attend college, find employment, and learn about civil society structures different from those in the country. Most participants lived near an American Corner, increasing the students' access to materials on democratic principles and practices. Through small grants, the United States partnered with five Muslim NGOs to select suitable candidates in each province and to provide a network to help ensure that students awarded a scholarship had the support they needed to succeed in their studies. Administering the program in this fashion also helped to develop institutional capacity in the fledgling Muslim NGO community.

The United States continued to fund the International Labor Organization and other programs to protect worker rights through monitoring labor conditions in garment factories, supporting a labor arbitration mechanism, and combating the worst forms of child labor. One US-supported program provided training on union building and legal aid to union leaders and activists. The Labor Arbitration Council, an International Labor Organization project, funded primarily by the United States, continued to carry out its mandate to arbitrate labor disputes impartially and was a model of legal credibility and transparency in an environment where the lack of rule of law continued to be a problem. The Better Factories garment project monitored and reported on working conditions and labor rights in the country's nearly 300 garment factories. This project helped the country grow economi-

cally by attracting socially conscious garment companies to buy from Cambodia and increased respect for and protection of labor rights and standards. The United States supported a continuing NGO project that increased school enrollment and attendance of children who were at high risk of falling into the worst forms of child labor, such as child trafficking or commercial sexual exploitation. Another US-funded child labor project supported government efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor and targeted children involved in brick-making, portering, rubber-making, domestic work, salt production, fish processing, and service industries.

Combating trafficking in person was a vital component of the US strategy to promote human rights. The United States continued to provide financial and technical assistance to NGOs focusing on the protection of victims, prevention, and prosecution of traffickers. A new project funded by the US Government will support NGOs and government ministries to counter trafficking by strengthening prevention, prosecution, and protection while building bridges between civil society and the government. A local US-supported NGO launched a women's economic empowerment program, which targeted women at risk of being trafficked. US-funded programs trained 38 police officers in investigative techniques to improve law enforcement competency in combating trafficking in persons. The United States continued to provide financial support for local NGOs to run shelters with training and reintegration programs for trafficking victims and victims of rape and domestic violence. These programs assisted over 345 at-risk individuals and trafficking victims to obtain shelter services. US programs assisted with the reintegration of 121 victims and helped 94 victims gain employment. Another US-funded program aimed to reduce the number of children, especially girls, who fall victim to trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation through education and other programs appropriate to their needs in three provinces and certain areas of the capital.



China

The Chinese government continued to deny citizens basic democratic rights, and law enforcement authorities suppressed those perceived to threaten the legitimacy or authority of the Chinese Communist Party. There were an increased number of high-profile cases involving the monitoring, harassment, detention, arrest, and imprisonment of journalists, writers, activists, and defense lawyers, many of whom were seeking to exercise their rights under law. The government tightened restrictions on freedom of speech and the press, including stricter control and censorship of the Internet. Chinese officials continued to enforce measures in an attempt to curb the growth of China's emerging civil society, and NGOs, especially those perceived as promoting democratic agendas or worker rights, faced continued scrutiny and restrictions. The government often used vague criminal and administrative provisions to justify detentions based on membership in social, political, or religious groups and prevented such groups from organizing or acting independently of the government or the Party. Chinese authorities often interfered with legal proceedings, intimidating attorneys or witnesses in politically sensitive cases, including by threatening to charge them with crimes. Authorities also used forms of administrative detention to circumvent the criminal process. Laws that could expand citizens' rights often failed to do so in practice, especially when rights protection conflicted with the interests of law enforcement institutions responsible for maintaining social order. Local authorities who abused human rights often violated the law, but the central government rarely stepped in to address such violations. Trafficking in persons continued to be a serious problem.

The United States employed multiple strategies to promote human rights, democracy, and the rule of law, making clear that progress in these areas would enhance the country's stability. The United States' comprehensive approach included bilateral diplomatic efforts, multilateral action, and support through government and nongovernmental channels for rule of law and civil society programs. In public statements and private diplomacy, US officials continued to urge

the government to bring its human rights practices into compliance with international standards, to make systemic reforms, and to release prisoners of conscience. The United States continued to press the government to strengthen the country's judicial system and further the rule of law, encourage democratic political reform, promote freedom of religion and the press, protect human rights, including the rights of workers and women, improve transparency in governance, and strengthen civil society. US officials at all levels also worked with Chinese officials, domestic and foreign NGOs, and others to identify areas of particular concern and encourage systemic reforms.

President Bush raised human rights, democracy, and religious freedom issues and advocated for the release of political prisoners during meetings with President Hu Jintao in Washington in April, St. Petersburg in July, and Hanoi in November. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice raised concerns about these issues during multiple meetings with senior Chinese officials. In February the Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Barry F. Lowenkron conducted a two-day visit to discuss key human rights issues in Beijing with Chinese officials. Members of Congress and their staff traveled regularly to the country to discuss democracy, human rights, religious freedom, corporate social responsibility, and rule of law concerns, and raised these issues with government officials. However, the Communist Party's on-going concern with growing social unrest led to deteriorating human rights in some areas.

US officials worked to strengthen cooperation and the flow of information about human rights issues between the United States and like-minded governments. The United States was an active participant in the biannual meeting on the country's human rights record with other governments that have bilateral human rights dialogues with China. The goal of the dialogue was to share information about human rights issues and approaches concerning prisoners of conscience, as well as democracy, human rights, and rule-of-law programming.

The United States supported programs aimed at increasing popular participation in government and



fostering the development of local elections. The country holds elections for village assemblies, local people's congresses, and urban community residential committees in certain cities. US programs offered support for grassroots democratization efforts through training for elected village officials and deputies to local legislatures. US officials and NGOs participated in election observation missions. Other US programs provided technical assistance to ministries and legislative bodies charged with drafting local election regulations and to those experimenting with legislative oversight, budget reform, and public participation in government decision-making.

The US Government supported seminars and training on international standards for free expression, reaching out to journalists, lawyers, judges, and lawmakers. Visiting officials and experts discussed the need for greater freedom for the Internet and for the press, especially in light of increasing international attention on the 2008 Beijing Olympics. The president, the secretary of state, the ambassador, and other US officials also repeatedly raised the cases of detained journalists and Internet writers in public remarks and in private meetings with senior Chinese officials.

The government continued to use strict regulations in an attempt to limit the growth of independent civil society, and NGOs operating in the country continued to face a restrictive environment. Nonetheless, the number of civil society organizations continued to grow and hundreds of mostly government-affiliated NGOs were active in health, environment, and other areas. Many small independent NGOs operated without official interference. The US Government encouraged the development of civil society in China by supporting projects that increase the capacity of independent NGOs to address societal needs, expand access for marginalized citizens to legal services, and

enable citizens to either individually or collectively provide input into public decisions. US officials frequently raised concerns with the government over restrictions on NGOs, emphasizing the important contributions NGOs can make in addressing many of China's most pressing social issues.

The United States worked to promote legal reform, urge progress on rule of law and encourage judicial independence. The United States funded projects designed to provide legal technical assistance, assist efforts to reform the country's criminal law, strengthen legal education, support judicial independence, and enable average citizens to find the information necessary to seek protection under the law. For

example, one US-supported project provided training for prosecutors on trial skills consistent with international standards, and complementary projects focused on techniques for defense attorneys. Another program allowed a federal prosecutor to work with US officials in the country to encourage criminal justice reform through interaction with the country's academic community and the government. This official lectured at government training institutions and universities on issues ranging from search and seizure to compelling

witness testimony at trial and participated in international and domestic anti-corruption conferences. In addition, US officials coordinated programs for federal and state judges and other legal experts to discuss trial and criminal procedure reform, discovery and evidence rules, prison reform, and other rule of law issues with judges, lawyers, officials, and academics.

Through the US International Visitors Leadership Program, numerous US speakers traveled to China to discuss rule of law issues. Nearly half of the Chinese citizens sent to the United States to participate in various programs worked in democracy- and rights-related fields or in areas related to religious freedom.





Both the Fulbright and Humphrey exchange programs devoted significant resources to rule-of-law subjects. For example, the Fulbright Visiting Research Scholar Program included opportunities for established scholars in the field of law to undertake independent advanced research at US universities, and US professors served in residence at top Chinese law schools and lectured at leading legal training institutions.

The government made some progress on legal reform. During the year the government announced plans to amend its criminal, civil, and administrative procedures laws and reform its judiciary to prepare for the ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. During the year the judiciary also made death penalty reforms a top priority and introduced new procedures for requiring the Supreme People's Court to review death penalty cases. The Supreme People's Procuratorate issued new regulations for prosecuting official abuses of power and clarified that police are accountable when they use torture to coerce confessions. US advocacy helped political prisoners gain early release from prison or improved treatment. Journalist Jiang Weiping was released from prison in January after receiving a two-year sentence reduction. Labor leader Xiao Yunliang was released from prison early in February. Tibetan nun Phuntsog Nyidrol was permitted to travel to the United States in March for medical treatment; she was released from prison in 2004. Bishop An Shuxin of Hebei Province was released from prison in August after 10 years in custody. In May China was elected to a three-year term on the UN Human Rights Council thus obligating the government to fulfill its obligations under numerous human rights accords and submit to a peer review of its human rights record.

The United States devoted significant resources and time to address numerous other human rights concerns. It urged the government to put an end to its coercive birth limitation program. The United States publicly and privately urged the government not to use the war on terrorism as justification for cracking down on Uighurs expressing peaceful political dissent. US officials also pressed the government not to forcibly repatriate North Koreans and to allow the UN High Commission for Refugees access

to this vulnerable population, as required by international conventions to which the country is a party. In March officials met with the UN high commissioner for refugees.

The president and senior US officials consistently called upon the government to respect international standards for religious freedom for people of all faiths. US officials regularly raised religious freedom issues with Chinese leaders, including calling for the release of religious prisoners, the reform of restrictive registration laws, and more freedom for religious groups to practice their faith. The president emphasized the importance of religious freedom in meetings with Chinese leaders. The 2004 Regulations on Religious Affairs provided some legal protections for registered religious groups so long as they do not engage in activity deemed threatening to Communist Party authority. However, the regulations continue to allow the government to define lawful religious activity and to punish activity by those who have not registered, and enforcement of the regulations increased during the year.

The United States promoted compliance with international labor standards. US officials worked to monitor compliance with the 1992 US-China Memorandum of Understanding and 1994 Statement of Cooperation on Prison Labor and to investigate allegations of forced child labor. The United States supported programs of technical cooperation to advance labor rule of law and coalmine safety as well as exchange programs in the areas of occupational safety and health, mine safety and health, wage and hour administration, and administration of private pension programs. The United States supported programs of technical cooperation on dispute resolution. Through the Partnership to Eliminate Sweatshops, the US Government supported programs that addressed unacceptable working conditions in manufacturing facilities that produce goods for the US market. The US Government also supported projects to deal with wage arrearages, workplace injury, and excessive overtime through education and other means consistent with labor provisions under Chinese law. Other US programs combated discrimination associated with HIV/AIDS in the workplace and improved the abil-



ity of labor institutions to combat trafficking for labor purposes.

TIBET

The US Government continued to advocate vigorously for improvements in human rights conditions in the Tibet Autonomous Region and other Tibetan areas of China. In February envoys of the Dalai Lama met with Chinese officials for the fifth time since talks began in 2002. In public remarks, the Dalai Lama continued to call for a “middle way” approach, which included “meaningful autonomy” for Tibet but not independence. When President Bush met with President Hu Jintao in Washington in April he encouraged the government to engage in dialogue with the Dalai Lama and suggested they invite the Dalai Lama to China. The Secretary of State reiterated the president’s message during her October visit to Beijing and urged officials to improve the human rights situation in Tibetan areas. In August Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky, who is also the US special coordinator for Tibet, raised a broad range of Tibet issues with Deputy Foreign Minister Dai and Assistant Foreign Minister Cui during her trip to China. During the year State Department officers raised human rights concerns with government officials during official visits to Tibetan areas. Tibetan nun Phuntsog Nyidrol, who was released from prison in 2004 and who met in Lhasa with members of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom in 2005, was permitted to travel to the United States for medical treatment in March. US-funded programs focused on sustainable development and cultural and environmental preservation continued during the year.

Fiji

Fiji is a constitutional republic with a constitution that provides for an elected president, prime minister, and parliament. On December 5, armed forces commander Commodore Voreque Bainimarama overthrew the elected government of Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase of the Soqosoqo Duavata ni Lewenivanua Party in a bloodless coup d’etat and announced the

establishment of an interim military government. Bainimarama also proclaimed a state of emergency, effectively suspending the constitutional provisions for freedom of expression, association, and assembly, and the right to privacy, subject to the military’s interpretation and without recourse to courts. The human rights situation deteriorated dramatically as the military government arbitrarily detained, and sometimes abused, coup opponents; engaged in intimidation of the media; restricted the right to assemble peacefully; and conducted searches without warrants. Prior to the coup, human rights problems included poor prison conditions; attacks on religious facilities, particularly Hindu temples; government corruption; continuing deep divisions between indigenous Fijians (55 percent of the population) and Indo-Fijians (37 percent); violence and discrimination against women; and child prostitution.

US policies and activities in support of democracy, good governance, rule of law, and human rights in the country focused on engaging and reinforcing relevant NGOs, building capacity within the media, and fostering accountability and transparency at all levels of government and society, including the military. Prior to the coup, US officials encouraged and assisted civilian and military leaders to participate in meetings, seminars, speeches, conferences, and courses that underscored the themes of rule of law and democratic practices.

Human rights and democracy issues in the country were dominated by the abiding ethnic divide between the majority indigenous Fijians and the minority Indo-Fijian community and the recurring tension between the elected government and the military. US officials focused their efforts in the country on these two issues. Visits by high-ranking military officials, Congressional delegations, visiting speakers and regular diplomatic contacts and media events were all used to underscore US concerns regarding the country’s human rights and governance lapses.

The United States engaged with government authorities, political parties, and other stakeholders throughout the May election process to underscore transparency, fundamental democratic principles, and the rule



of law. US officials independently observed the election process. US civilian and military officials, including the assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs and the commanders of the US Central and Pacific Commands, met with government and military leaders to underscore the importance of the principle of military subordination to lawful civilian rule.

Prior to, during, and following the December coup, the United States, through its public and media statements, maintained its firm commitment to democratic order, support for the rule of law, and opposition to any illegal military takeover. Following the illegal overthrow of the Qarase government, the United States publicly condemned the coup, expressed its support for the democratically elected government, and called on the military to withdraw immediately from all political involvement. On December 19, the State Department announced a series of measures, including the cessation of military-related Foreign Military Financing and International Military Education and Training assistance, the imposition of visa sanctions on the coup leaders and members of the illegitimate interim government, and suspension of military participation in US-sponsored training, joint military exercises, or other events. US officials consulted closely with foreign diplomatic missions in support of a common call for a rapid return to democratic rule and for rigorous respect of human rights principles.

During the year the United States used its grant programs to promote capacity building in the media and to support a conference on mediation techniques. A number of promising young journalists, who have shown an interest in freedom of the press issues, participated in the International Visitor Leadership Program. US officials regularly contributed pieces for newspaper publication and worked closely with the media community to provide US views on media freedom. In the wake of media and freedom of speech restrictions under the post-coup state of emergency, the United States spoke out strongly for a free press and called on the military to respect and uphold the country's constitutional rights, including freedom of speech.

Prior to the coup, the United States provided funding to a multiyear, post-2000 coup mediation process and for a multinational conference on conflict mediation at the University of the South Pacific. US support for local NGOs and civil society intensified following the 2006 military coup. In the weeks after the coup, a small, courageous group of human rights NGO representatives and democracy activists demonstrated and spoke out to the media, only to be unlawfully detained, interrogated, and intimidated by the military. US officials met with several of these activists and offered support to promote democratic and human rights ideals in helping the country confront and recover from the coup.

Corruption was a significant problem, and in an attempt to justify the coup, the military repeatedly cited reports of corruption. It dismissed numerous individuals from offices and boards on the basis of claims of corruption. Indeed, the military itself has been accused of corruption. Prior to the coup, US officials met with the auditor general, who annually produces reports uncovering government corruption, to discuss corruption issues.

The country has historically benefited from a strong and independent judiciary that has played a key role in defending human rights, principles of democracy, and the rule of law. Following the coup, the military suspended the chief justice and chief magistrate, a move that has compromised the independence of the judiciary. US officials have met repeatedly with the chief justice and criticized his dismissal in deliberations with international stakeholders in the Pacific Islands Forum.

In an effort to silence critics of the coup, the military on numerous occasions detained citizens for publicly criticizing the coup and the military's violations of civil and human rights or for vocally advocating democracy and the rule of law. Other persons were arbitrarily detained for minor complaints on the basis of accusations by third parties. Victims were subjected to threats, humiliation, intimidation, and beatings. In several instances, physical punishments were carried out anonymously in the dark or under blinding lights. Several women were threatened with sexual



violence. In response to abuses, US officials interviewed victims to assess the situation and determine ways to assist the organizations in their efforts to promote respect for fundamental civil and human rights. The United States condemned the military's tactics in a public statement and warned the military that human rights violations would have consequences for future assistance and training.

Sexual violence and discrimination on the basis of sex are pervasive problems in the country. Prior to the coup, the United States funded community outreach activities by the Fiji Women's Rights Movement to educate the public on the rights of women and children under the new Family Law Act.

The right to freedom of religion was widely respected. US officials maintained close contact with a broad range of religious leaders. With some exceptions, the three large religious communities -- Christian, Hindu and Muslim -- lived together in relative harmony. However, religious differences are largely along ethnic lines. Most ethnic Fijians are Christians, and most Indo-Fijians are Hindu, with a sizable minority of Muslims. A worrying trend of break-ins, vandalism, attempted arson, and thefts directed at houses of worship, predominantly Hindu temples, may reflect inter-communal strife, but there is evidence that common theft is also a frequent contributing factor. Such acts are condemned by all local religious denominations.

The United States has increased its outreach to women's and children's rights organizations in response to the small but reportedly growing problem of child prostitution. US officials met with representatives of these organizations to better assess the extent of the problem and discuss potential cooperation in addressing it.

Indonesia

Indonesia, the world's third most populous democracy and home to the world's largest Muslim population, took further steps to consolidate a pluralistic and representative democracy after four decades of repressive

and authoritarian rule. Implementation of peaceful, free and fair district level elections continued during the year. The first local elections since the 2005 peace accords were held in Aceh, ending three decades of strife and human rights abuses. In addition, there was a substantial reduction in killings and unlawful disappearances of suspected rebels and civilians in sensitive areas. The government also strengthened some basic human rights by adding Confucianism to the list of officially recognized faiths, conferring citizenship rights on foreign spouses and children of Indonesian citizens, and applying the more expansive press law rather than the more punitive criminal law in press freedom cases. The Constitutional Court declared articles of the penal code criminalizing defamation of the president and vice president unconstitutional. Despite these positive developments, the country experienced many challenges to its nascent democracy. The rule of law was weakened as the government failed to bring to account security forces engaged in unlawful killings. Pervasive corruption undermined good governance. Basic human rights such as freedom of religion, speech, and press came under pressure from fundamentalist religious groups, and in a few cases, the government itself. Other problems included sexual abuse and violence against women and children; trafficking in persons; and failure to enforce labor standards and violations of worker rights, including forced child labor.

US human rights and democracy goals included supporting the country's new democracy by helping to transform governmental institutions into efficiently functioning entities; promoting civilian control over and internal reform of the security forces; encouraging accountability and ending impunity for past human rights violations; and fostering good governance. The United States urged the government and civil society to defuse separatist and communal conflict by promoting peace processes and assisting victims. The United States also encouraged government policies and civil society actions that promoted democracy, good governance, and human rights.

Senior US officials used bilateral meetings, press releases, speeches, and interviews to highlight the need for strengthening democratic institutions, enhancing



the rule of law, and protecting human rights. During the year, the United States provided technical assistance to the Independent Election Commission of Aceh to successfully implement the historic, first-ever direct election of a governor, mayors, and district chiefs in the province. Forty US officials worked as election monitors to help ensure a free and fair election. In Sulawesi, the United States supported election commissions and several NGOs conducting local election monitoring. The United States also funded civil society groups focused on ensuring free and fair elections and educating voters on their rights and responsibilities.

The United States held over 20 lecture programs and workshops across the country featuring speakers on human rights and democracy. The United States used the International Visitor Leadership Program to send 49 persons to the United States to foster a deeper understanding of issues critical to democracy such as respect for international standards of human rights and good governance. In addition, 39 students participated in a month-long youth leadership program in the United States, studying the rights and responsibilities of citizens in a democracy. In another program, 10 students were paired with American counterparts for a reciprocal program on civic responsibility. The United States also sponsored 18 secondary school English teachers to travel to the United States to study the civil rights movement and supported a program encouraging increased women's political participation, particularly within political parties.



Acehnese workers load ballot boxes onto boats for distribution to remote areas of the country. (AP photo)

The United States took several steps to promote media freedom and freedom of speech. It supported an indigenous, prodemocracy radio news program based in Jakarta and provided equipment and training to radio stations to enable effective reporting on democratic reforms and human rights. The United States produced press training materials, held workshops and video conferences on investigative journalism, and sponsored a program to raise reporting



standards by local television journalists. The United States strongly supported efforts to pass a Freedom of Information Act and assisted civil society groups to review the draft criminal code to ensure protection of freedom of speech. During the year senior US officials conveyed concern to the government over the small number of peaceful protesters jailed for “insulting the president” or “spreading hatred against the government.” In December the Constitutional Court declared unconstitutional the two provisions of the criminal code criminalizing defamation of the president and vice president.

The United States encouraged respect for freedom of association and assembly for all participants in the democratic process. The United States collaborated with and funded civil society groups working in areas such as good governance and anticorruption, reform of the judicial system, human rights and conflict management in sensitive areas, and women’s empowerment. As part of this effort, the United States engaged mass-based Islamic organizations with members numbering in the millions to spread knowledge of democracy and human rights by funding educational programs, visitor exchanges, and informational brochures. Dozens of members of civil society participated in US-sponsored programs, such as the International Visitor Leadership Program, in which they increased their understanding of democratic principles, including freedom of assembly and association.

To strengthen respect for the rule of law, the United States provided professional training programs to over 1,000 prosecutors, police, anticorruption commissioners, and judges on issues including ethics, corruption, and money laundering. The United States provided expertise to the Constitutional Court on the development of a case tracking and management system. With US assistance, an interagency group preparing a new criminal procedure code introduced significant changes that addressed human rights concerns. The United States helped the Attorney General’s Office begin drafting a code of conduct for prosecutors and provided technical assistance, training, and equipment on issues such as terrorism, money laundering, and trafficking in persons cases. The United States sup-

plied training and equipment to support programs in criminal investigation including cyber crime skills and the proper collection, handling, and analysis of physical evidence. To advance understanding of law and human rights, the United States awarded Fulbright fellowships to 10 individuals.

The United States closely followed trials with important human rights implications and spoke out against impunity, stressing the importance of achieving accountability for human rights violations committed in past years. Ending impunity for human rights crimes continues to be the biggest unfinished human rights task in the country. US officials met human rights activists and the widow of murdered human rights campaigner Munir Said Thalib and publicly supported their demand for a reinvigorated investigation into Munir’s 2004 murder. At the end of the year, the police chief reopened the investigation at the request of President Yudhoyono. The United States provided forensic assistance to the new investigative team.

The United States continued to help the national police make the transition into a civilian law enforcement agency based on the principles of democracy and human rights. The US-sponsored Police Survival Skills project included training in the appropriate use of force. The expanded International Military Education and Training program provided defense-related training to 125 personnel representing all branches of the military. This training incorporated human rights topics such as the law of war, the law of armed conflict, rules of engagement, and humanitarian law.

In Aceh, the United States supported civil society organizations that assisted human rights victims. To support implementation of the memorandum of understanding between the government and the Free Aceh Movement, also known as GAM, to end the conflict, the United States funded ongoing activities including public forums, peace concerts, and a new Aceh Magazine focused on peace. The United States helped to develop the Aceh Joint Forum Supporting Peace which served as a think tank on peace issues. During the year, a US-funded peace advisor was attached to the Joint Forum Secretariat office. The United States helped design and support the “Building



Lasting Peace in Aceh Workshop,” which brought together civilians, Free Aceh Movement members, local and central government officials, and security forces to discuss implementation of the memorandum of understanding in Aceh. Since 2002, the United States has been funding a program for survivors of torture that strengthens the capacity of local NGOs to assist victims of past acts of abuse and torture.

In Papua and West Irian Jaya provinces, where the security forces have a history of repression, the United States took steps to improve monitoring of human rights abuses and engaged in continued outreach to a broad cross section of Papuan society. The United States provided further assistance in the investigation of the 2002 murders of two Americans and an Indonesian near Timika, Papua. In November an Indonesian court found one person guilty of murder and six others guilty of lesser, related charges. The United States funded a public-private partnership in the province to improve local governance through better decision making, enhanced participation of local communities, and increased local government transparency.

The United States helped combat domestic violence and supported a media campaign to inform women of their rights. The United States sought to empower women through educational programs in Islamic boarding schools. Dozens of women took part in the International Visitors Leadership Program, the Voluntary Visitor Program, the Fulbright Summer Institute, and other programs, many of which focused on human rights issues. US support of the National Commission on Violence against Women resulted in the establishment of regional women’s crisis centers.

The United States promoted interfaith dialogue and freedom of religion. US officials met Muslim and other religious leaders and urged the government to bring to justice perpetrators of violence against minority faiths. US officials traveled to Maluku and North Maluku provinces to meet leaders and encouraged continued efforts at reconciliation and effective sectarian conflict resolution. US officials closely monitored ongoing interreligious violence in Central Sulawesi.

The United States supported the Islam and Civil Society program, which promoted messages of tolerance through religious leaders. As part of this program, the United States provided assistance to 48 Islamic universities and 40 Islamic boarding schools, trained 80 teachers and 90 university instructors at these Islamic schools, and distributed flyers on democracy at 443 mosques in 21 cities. Five American Corners operated in Muslim institutions of higher learning across the country. The United States also funded an international center to promote linkages among progressive Muslim intellectuals and activists.

The United States worked with international NGOs and civil society to combat the problems of child labor and trafficking in persons and repeatedly raised the importance of the issue with senior government officials. The United States devoted significant funding to protecting children from sexual exploitation, trafficking, and exploitative and dangerous employment. US-funded training of law enforcement officials in antitrafficking increased this year. For example: 70 religious judges in Aceh were trained in adjudicating trafficking cases; 150 police and NGO representatives were trained in joint classes; and 60 prosecutors from the newly formed national traffickers task force as well as local prosecutors also received training. The United States also began helping the police expand a 12-person trafficking unit to hundreds of officers. These efforts resulted in an increased number of investigations, arrests, and convictions for trafficking.

To reduce the vulnerability of women and children to trafficking, the United States funded projects improving their education, economic prospects, and political participation. Subgrants to 48 NGOs and community groups resulted in local antitrafficking actions focused on prevention, rehabilitation, and advocacy. An International Visitor Leadership Program alumna was given funding to produce an antitrafficking television program. US funding supported the creation of new shelters for victims and two new hospital treatment centers and assisted the safe return and reintegration of victims. US grantees continued technical assistance in the drafting of a strong and comprehensive antitrafficking bill. In Aceh, US-funded NGOs continued to work with authorities and community



groups, including Muslim communities, to respond to the increased risk of trafficking.

Korea, Democratic People's Republic of

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK or North Korea) remains one of the most repressive countries in the world and stands in stark contrast to democratic governments elsewhere in Asia. The country, one of the world's most closed and militarized societies, is a dictatorship under the absolute rule of Kim Jong Il, General Secretary of the Korean Workers' Party. An estimated 150,000 to 200,000 persons are believed to be held in detention camps in remote areas, many for political reasons. Defectors report that many prisoners have died from torture, starvation, disease, exposure, or a combination of these causes. North Korean officials reportedly prohibited live births in prison, and forced abortions were performed, particularly in detention centers holding women repatriated from China. Over the years, there have been unconfirmed reports from a few defectors alleging the testing on human subjects of a variety of chemical and biological agents up through the early 1990s. The regime controlled many aspects of citizens' lives, denying freedom of speech, religion, the press, assembly, and association. The deportation of North Koreans from China to the DPRK was a matter of particular concern to the United States. A number of repatriated North Koreans faced severe punishment upon their return, including execution in some cases. The regime also severely restricted freedom of movement and worker rights. There were widespread reports of women and girls being trafficked in China.

The North Korean Human Rights Act of 2004 was enacted to raise awareness of the serious human rights situation in the country and to find durable solutions for North Korean refugees. Since enactment of the law, the United States has heightened its engagement on North Korean human rights issues. Since his appointment in 2005, Special Envoy on Human Rights in North Korea Jay Lefkowitz has urged other coun-

tries, including the Republic of Korea (ROK), Japan, and the European Union, to join the growing international campaign urging the DPRK to address and improve its human rights conditions. In April at the White House, President Bush met with a group of North Korean defectors and the family of a Japanese girl abducted by the DPRK.

During the year the US Government continued to fund an international advocacy campaign focused on North Korean human rights. In March, for the first time, several North Korean defectors testified before the European Parliament about the human rights conditions in the DPRK, and in July a conference was held in Rome. In addition, the US Government continued to provide funding to promote international awareness of the North Korean human rights situation and to increase the flow of independent information into North Korea.

Numerous US officials worked to raise awareness of the country's human rights abuses with the international community in both bilateral and multilateral fora and before US audiences. US officials also urged other governments to call for concrete, verifiable, and sustained improvements in North Korean human rights as an important component of their bilateral relations with the country. Human rights remain part of the US Government's comprehensive agenda with North Korea, and US officials have repeatedly stated that improvements in the DPRK's human rights record would be necessary for the country to join the international community and normalize relations with the United States. During a congressional hearing on North Korean human rights in April, Special Envoy Lefkowitz criticized the North Korean government for abducting ROK and Japanese citizens.

In November the United States cosponsored a resolution before the UN General Assembly Third Committee that condemned the country's poor human rights record, expressing "very serious concern" at "continuing reports of systemic, widespread, and grave violations of human rights." In December the UN General Assembly adopted the resolution, marking the second time such a resolution has passed. The resolution called on the DPRK to fulfill its ob-



President George W. Bush spends a few moments with Kim Han-Mee in the Oval Office, the daughter of North Korean defectors, during a meeting Friday, April 28, 2006 with North Korean defectors and family members of Japanese citizens who were abducted by North Korea. (White House photo)

ligations under human rights instruments to which it is a party. The resolution further urged the government to invite UN special representatives to visit the DPRK and to ensure that humanitarian organizations have free access to the country. The resolution also requested the secretary general to submit a comprehensive report on the human rights situation in the DPRK.

The United States remained deeply concerned about the plight of North Korean refugees and asylum seekers and continued to work to find durable solutions for this vulnerable population as outlined in the North Korean Human Rights Act. The United States granted asylum to nine refugees and resettled them in the United States during the year. The United States worked with governments in the region to urge protection of, and assistance to, North Korean refugees and to facilitate their permanent resettlement. The

US Government has consistently and at high levels urged China to adhere to its obligations as a party to the 1951 refugee convention and its 1967 protocol, including by: 1) not expelling to North Korea (refouling) North Koreans protected under those treaties and 2) undertaking to cooperate with the office of the UN high commissioner for refugees in the exercise of its functions. The United States also urged China to cease deportation of North Korean asylum seekers and allow the office of the high commissioner access to them. The United States has addressed the issue of North Korean refugees in China with the office of the high commissioner, and sought to coordinate the US approach with allies who share US concerns. In April the White House expressed grave concern about China's deportation of a North Korean asylum seeker who had sought refuge at a Korean school in China and urged the Chinese government not to return the asylum seekers. President Bush also raised



the issue with Chinese President Hu Jintao during his visit later that month.

During the year, Secretary of State Rice again designated the DPRK a “Country of Particular Concern” under the International Religious Freedom Act for severe violations of religious freedom.

Laos

The Lao People’s Democratic Republic is an authoritarian one-party state ruled by the Lao People’s Revolutionary Party (LPRP). Although the 1991 constitution outlines a system composed of executive, legislative, and judicial branches, in practice the LPRP continued to control all branches of government and the choice of leaders at all levels through its constitutionally designated “leading role.” The government’s overall human rights record worsened during the year. Citizens continued to be denied the right to change their government. Government security agents committed unlawful killings. Prison conditions were harsh and at times life threatening. Corruption in the police and judiciary persisted. The government infringed on citizens’ right to privacy and did not respect the right to freedom of speech, the press, assembly, or association. Local officials at times interfered with religious freedom and restricted citizens’ freedom of movement. There were no domestic human rights nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Trafficking in persons, especially women and girls for prostitution, remained a problem, as did discrimination against minority groups, such as the Hmong. Workers’ rights were restricted. The government continued to deny publicly ever holding a group of 27 Hmong, including 26 children, who were deported from Thailand in December 2005.

The US Government worked to encourage transparency and more responsible behavior by the government. It promoted respect for religious freedom, ethnic minority rights, women’s and children’s rights, and the rule of law in order to inculcate within the bureaucracy a sense of responsibility and improve the lives of Lao citizens. US officials traveled and reported on human rights and governance issues; encouraged

official US visits to Laos; worked with key ministries to build trust, promote transparency, and encourage the Lao to address issues of concern; and cooperated with international organizations and NGOs, including the funding of projects and programs that support human rights and good governance.

The United States used the occasion of visits from senior US administration and legislative branch officials to raise human rights concerns. The Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Barry F. Lowenkron, raised religious freedom and ethnic minority rights concerns with the Lao vice foreign minister during his October visit to Laos. Additionally, the deputy assistant secretary of state for East Asia and Pacific affairs visited Laos twice during the year and led a delegation which held the first comprehensive dialogue meeting with the government to discuss a broad range of issues, including human rights and religious freedom. During the year US diplomats traveled to remote parts of the country to gather first-hand information about the human rights situation, particularly pertaining to the treatment of the country’s ethnic minorities. The US Ambassador visited Bolikhamsay and Vientiane Provinces, speaking with government officials in both provinces about the ongoing insurgency as well as human rights and religious freedom issues.

The United States used three separate US Congressional delegation visits to address human rights as well. For example, Representative Betty McCollum visited Laos in December and met with the deputy prime minister, vice foreign minister, and members of the National Assembly. She pressed the government to accept a greater role for nongovernmental organizations, to allow international organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to monitor prisons as well as the situation of the Hmong, and to resolve the case of the 27 detained Hmong, most of whom are children. Representative McCollum also attended Christmas mass and made it known that she would not have visited the country had she been unable to attend mass. Congressional staff delegations from the offices of Representative Henry Hyde and Senator Brownback also visited in during the year. Both delegations raised human



rights, religious freedom, and prison access issues as well as the need for greater transparency on the part of the government.

Visits such as these helped the United States gather the information needed to draw a more complete picture of the insurgency and of government efforts to resettle former insurgents who had surrendered. US diplomats also met with many senior government officials, including members of the Politburo and provincial governors, to encourage increased respect for human rights and a peaceful resolution to the insurgency. The government permitted some international assistance to reach groups of former insurgents recently resettled. In addition, the ambassador and other diplomats met frequently with a broad range of contacts, including counterparts in the diplomatic community, to discuss ways of resolving the insurgency.

The United States worked to support freedom of speech and media freedom. US programs supported a workshop on “News and Document Production for Television” from June 27 to 29. A small democracy grant was provided to the Creative Writers Group for a September 6 to 27 workshop to train writers and journalists in preparing scripts for news stories and documentaries for radio and television in Champasak Province. Funding was also provided to the Participatory Development Training Center for a June 5 to 30 workshop to improve the capacity of video filmmakers and producers who have their own studios. Additionally, a journalist from the country’s primary English language newspaper, the *Vientiane Times*, participated in the International Visitors Leadership Program on investigative journalism. One of seven Lao to receive Fulbright Fellowships during the year will pursue a master’s degree in journalism.

The United States has consistently encouraged the government to allow the development of domestic associations and NGOs (which the government chooses to refer to as nonprofit organizations, or NPOs). In 2005, the government took a first step in allowing for the development of domestic nonprofit organizations through the establishment of the Lao Union of Science and Engineering Associations,

which is tasked with vetting applications from nonprofit organizations and overseeing their operations. The United States donated computers in 2006 to the Lao Bar Association as well as to groups involved in drug treatment and in providing shelter and counseling to human trafficking victims.

Promoting good governance is an important element of the US government’s efforts to support democracy and human rights. Through a project supported by the State Department’s Women’s Issues Fund, the Asia Foundation is working to strengthen women’s political leadership in the country by encouraging public awareness of the value women bring to government, pressing the need to promote decision making that is responsive and accountable to women, and providing training to improve women’s capacity to shape policy processes and outcomes. Another Women’s Issues Fund project carried out by Save the Children Australia seeks to improve the livelihood of women in three northern provinces and also attempts to expand the role of women in community decision making. The US Government funded projects both to work to reduce opium production in the country, and to bring villagers into the decision-making process, promoting grass roots participatory governance. The United States held a seminar on managing the prosecutorial function for 45 prosecutors and prosecutorial staff members and met with officials of the Ministry of Justice as well as the Office of the Supreme People’s Prosecutor during the year. The seminar and related meetings stressed the importance of effective dissemination and enforcement of laws. A US Department of Justice delegation visited the Lao Bar Association and has shown interest in holding a future seminar for Lao defense attorneys.

US diplomats used the International Visitors Leadership Program to promote human rights, sponsoring Lao officials’ visits to the United States to study aspects of the US judicial system, US foreign policy and human rights issues, investigative journalism, and antitrafficking programs. The US supported American Centers also provided information in English and Lao on international practices and norms in the areas of human rights and democracy to university students and the general public.



The United States raised the need for the government to allow international monitoring of the country's prison system. US diplomats met frequently with members of international organizations and with other concerned embassies to discuss strategies for convincing the government to open its prison system to outside scrutiny. The United States also closely follows the cases of known political prisoners, using official meetings to raise its concerns with the Lao leadership.

The US Ambassador repeatedly raised the issue of a group of 26 ethnic Hmong children who were detained by Lao authorities in December 2005 and whose fates remain unknown. The United States, along with like-minded missions and the UN, agreed to deliver a joint demarche to the government on the issue, but the government refused to receive the demarche. Nevertheless, the United States continued to raise the issue, often in the context of official administration and congressional visits. The US ambassador also met with the governor of Vientiane Province and leading central government officials regarding allegations of an April 6 massacre in Vientiane Province of 26 unarmed Hmong, mostly women and children.

The United States endeavors to promote religious tolerance in Laos. The US ambassador continually raised the issue of religious freedom with top government officials, including provincial governors. Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, Barry Lowenkron, as well as a visitor from the State Department's International Religious Freedom Office, also raised the issue of religious freedom in meetings with senior Lao officials. Representatives of the Institute for Global Engagement (IGE) visited the country in January 2007 and gave a presentation on the importance of religious freedom to a group of more than 60 central government officials. IGE representatives also visited Catholic and Protestant churches and met with the governors of Bolikhamsay and Savannakhet provinces, areas that have witnessed numerous instances of religious persecution in recent years.

The United States pressed the Lao Front for National Construction, the government body overseeing religious issues, to resolve cases of religious intolerance by local officials. When US diplomats became aware of cases of religious persecution, they used their working relations with provincial and central government officials to bring these cases to the attention of authorities, often resulting in a more expeditious resolution of problems.

The United States provided assistance to the country in its effort to combat human trafficking, a serious human rights concern. The US Government funded more than \$1.4 million for antitrafficking projects carried out by international organizations and locally based NGOs for projects extending from 2005 through 2006. These projects focused on strengthening the rule of law, public education, alternative vocational education for those most vulnerable to trafficking, as well as return and reintegration assistance. The United States also provided funding for two Laos-based NGO staff members to attend a Trafficking in Persons Conference in Bangkok, Thailand, in an effort to expand their knowledge of the issue and to develop regional contacts. Additionally, a representative from the US Department of State's Trafficking in Persons Office visited the country in March 2006 to encourage greater efforts on the part of the government to address the issue. Through increased efforts and improved communication, Laos was upgraded from its previous trafficking tier.

Papua New Guinea

Papua New Guinea is a federal multiparty parliamentary democracy with an elected unicameral parliament. The most recent general elections were held in June 2002. The coalition put together by Prime Minister Somare has remained in office for the full term, being the first government to complete its term since independence in 1975. A national police force, the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary, was under overall civilian authority, but it lacked resources, training, and leadership. The government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, there were serious problems in some areas. Human rights abuses in-



cluded arbitrary or unlawful killings by police; police abuse of detainees, including of children; poor prison conditions; lengthy pretrial detention; infringement of citizens' privacy rights; government corruption; violence and discrimination against women and children; discrimination against persons with disabilities; and continuing intertribal violence. A pervasive lack of law and order, continuing poor economic growth causing low national income and living standards, severely deteriorated infrastructure, and the lack of effective government service delivery in much of the country were all barriers to progress.

US officials continued to advocate high standards for democratic processes and respect for international human rights standards. Although the US Government ended most of its assistance programs in the country in the 1990's, the United States remained a respected voice in Papua New Guinea.

During the year US officials worked closely with the Media Council of Papua New Guinea to sponsor and provide support for a workshop on investigative journalism. The workshop was led by an Emmy Award-winning American professor of journalism. As a result of the workshop, participants began organizing a society of professional journalists. International Visitor Leadership Programs also provided exposure to democratic systems and values to future leaders.

The United States continued to provide training that emphasized respect for human rights to defense and police personnel through the International Military Education and Training program, Title X military conferences, and the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies.

The US Government's counterterrorism efforts in the country and the surrounding region emphasized human rights protection. The United States strongly supported Australia's Enhanced Cooperation Program, which focused on better law enforcement, strengthened court and trial operations, and improved practices in the Finance, Internal Revenue, and Justice Ministries.

Philippines

The Republic of the Philippines, with a population of 87 million, is a democracy with an elected president, an elected bicameral legislature, and a multiparty system. The May 2004 national elections for president and both houses of congress continued to be a source of contention, with unsuccessful attempts in 2005 and during the year to impeach the president on grounds of alleged election fraud. The government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, there were serious problems in certain areas. Some elements of the security forces were apparently responsible for extrajudicial killings, disappearances, and arbitrary arrest and detention. Members of the security services committed acts of physical and psychological abuse on suspects and detainees, and there were instances of torture. Corruption remained a problem in all sectors of the criminal justice system, including police, prosecutorial, and judicial organs.

US Government efforts to promote human rights and democracy in the Philippines were numerous and broad-based. The United States focused on building respect for human rights in the security forces, strengthening civil society and promoting rule of law, including transparency, in the judiciary and government. Strengthening democracy continued as an essential US goal.

A US Government grant assisted Philippine NGOs in promoting voter education and training election monitors. The grant also supported an electoral modernization program of the Philippine Commission on Elections in preparation for May 2007 national and local elections. Programs at both the local and national level promoted equity, transparency, and popular participation – all key factors for the healthy functioning of a democracy.

Improving the quality of media reporting was also a US priority. The media was generally free and electronic and print media were numerous. However, reporting often fell short of accepted journalistic standards. During the year the US Government sent several young journalists to the United States as par-



ticipants in International Visitor Leadership Programs with the intention of enhancing their knowledge and understanding of American life and the US media. An American expert, sponsored by the United States, spoke on public relations, the Internet, and blogging. His audience was comprised of individuals actively engaged in the growing community of political and public affairs bloggers. During the year new publications produced by the State International Information Programs office, including, “Media Emerging,” and “Handbook of Independent Journalism,” were widely distributed to journalists and editors across the country by representatives of the US Government.

Support for NGOs and civil participation in the processes of government were the foci of the US-funded Transparent and Accountable Governance Program. This program was active at local and national levels to promote better governance, increase public participation through conferences and other public forums, and reduce opportunities for corruption. Among other activities at the national level, the program supported implementation of the new procurement law by training NGO volunteers to observe procurements carried out by bids and awards committees and established a system for reporting irregularities to the Office of the Ombudsman. At the local level the program assisted 16 city governments to implement a range of anti-corruption and good governance reforms. From 2002 through the current year, the program also assisted 98 municipalities in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao and adjacent conflict-affected areas to reform and increase citizen participation in their budgeting and planning processes.

The US-funded Rule of Law Effectiveness Program supported the Philippine Government’s effort to make corruption a high risk, low reward activity by providing assistance to several Philippine judicial court systems including the Anti-Graft Court, and the Court of Tax Appeals. Assistance directed toward two of the courts included training and the installation of case management systems designed to make the disposition of cases more efficient and effective. This program also supported assessments of selected government agencies for their vulnerability to cor-

ruption. A separate but complementary Threshold Country Program under the US Millennium Challenge Account focused on countering corruption by providing assistance to the Office of the Ombudsman, the Bureau of Internal Revenue, and the Bureau of Customs.

To encourage respect for due process and anti-corruption among members of the Philippine National Police and other law enforcement agencies, the United States sent approximately 111 law enforcement officials to the International Law Enforcement Academy in Bangkok for courses with human rights, ethics, rule of law, leadership, and anti-corruption components. In addition, US law enforcement agencies conducted in-country seminars and training on ethics, human rights, anti-corruption, jail management, and US law enforcement standards for personnel from the Philippine National Police, National Bureau of Investigations, Office of the Ombudsman, Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency, Bureau of Immigration, and the Armed Forces. Training included a visit to the FBI’s National Academy in Virginia. Under a new program a US-funded Senior Law Enforcement Advisor and his staff provided assistance to the Philippine National Police force’s transformational program to devise and implement reforms that will make the Philippine National Police a more transparent, modern, and effective institution. This included cooperation with the police force’s Task Force Usig, created in May to investigate allegations of unlawful and extrajudicial killings.

US assistance helped institutionalize alternative dispute resolution systems and improved judicial transparency and case management in the courts. At the community level, the Barangay Justice Program worked in some 800 barangays (precincts) in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, enabling marginalized individuals and groups to obtain redress for grievances and settle disputes. As a result, community disputes were resolved more rapidly. Support for alternative dispute resolution in the courts also led to the referral of more than 22,000 cases to mediation during the year. Since court-referred mediation was introduced with US support in 2001, the country’s court backlog has steadily declined.



United States officials continued to coordinate closely with the Philippine Commission on Human Rights, an independent government agency tasked to monitor and investigate alleged human rights abuses, in the vetting of all military and police officials attending training funded by the USG, as required by the Leahy Amendments.

The International Military Education and Training Program continued to strengthen the professionalism, commitment to human rights, discipline, and technical expertise of the Philippine military. The program was an important component of US Government efforts to professionalize the Armed Forces of the Philippines. Graduates of the program populated top armed forces ranks, which actively supported close and professional US and Philippine military-to-military relationships. During the year these senior leaders continued to support constitutional processes and civilian control over the military, despite efforts by some members of the armed forces to stage a coup d'etat in February. The army participated in the United States Defense Institute of International Legal Studies program at all officer levels in order to inculcate adherence to the rule of law. The Philippine Defense Reform initiative, with funding assistance from the United States, continued to work to make the Philippine armed forces more transparent and professional. A major strategic benefit of the initiative was the reinforcement of civilian authority over the military, thereby strengthening the overall stability of the Philippine Government.

A US Government program for women provided education and skill-building activities for survivors of prostitution. Another project addressed the needs and concerns of female migrant workers, especially

those who were victims of trafficking or exploitation in Japan, and their Japanese-Filipino children. A third program focused on women serving as advocates for peace to resolve conflicts in Mindanao.

The Philippine Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respected this right in practice. Muslims comprise a significant religious minority in the Philippines and historically have been victims of societal prejudice by the Christian majority. The US Government organized numerous public conferences and gatherings throughout the year to promote interfaith dialogue among Filipinos, making use of programming tools such as the US Speaker Program. Programs to foster interfaith dialogue included a citizen exchange program, which enabled 25 high school students and five young adult community activists, a mix of Muslims and Christians from Mindanao, to travel to Chicago for training on conflict resolution and interfaith dialogue. Also, the Youth Exchange and Study Program, funded by the US Government, brought 15 Muslim students to the United States to attend a full year of high school (school year 2006-2007) and live with American host families. These students learned about US society, developed leadership skills, and educated Americans on Philippine Muslim culture. In addition, US Government funded Democracy Grants were awarded to local NGOs to educate and mobilize communities for human rights protection and promotion; to engage grass roots anti-corruption activities; and to support efforts by Muslim women to attain political and economic empowerment. For the second year in a row, the United States sponsored an American imam's visit to the Philippines to discuss religious tolerance and diversity issues with large audiences of Muslims -- as well as Christians -- in Mindanao and elsewhere





in the country. Another program gave Muslim college students and young professionals an opportunity to work as interns in the Philippine Congress. During the year the United States sent both Muslim and Christian leaders on International Visitors Leadership Programs to the United States. The programs covered a wide range of topics aimed at the promotion of human rights and democracy; including grassroots activism, religion and the community, youth empowerment, the role and responsibility of a free press, leadership development for Muslim women, accountability in government and business, and community service and NGOs.

Trafficking in persons remains a serious problem in the country. Due to an improved record of prosecutions and convictions in cases handled by prosecutors trained by a US-funded program for Philippine prosecutors, enforcers, and social workers the situation has improved somewhat. Other US grants helped to create and strengthen mechanisms to combat trafficking at the local government level, provide preventive antitrafficking education, and support public information campaigns. To strengthen worker rights, the United States continued to support a project to develop an early warning system aimed at preventing deterioration of labor standards compliance, and several other projects focused on combating the worst forms of child labor.

Thailand

Democratic rule and respect for human rights in Thailand suffered severe setbacks with the military coup on September 19. Prior to the coup, which resulted in the overthrow of the democratically elected government of Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, the country was a democratically governed constitutional monarchy. Immediately following the coup, the military coup leaders repealed the constitution, abolished parliament, declared martial law, and issued decrees limiting civil liberties. On October 1, the military coup leaders renamed themselves the Council for National Security, promulgated an interim constitution, and established an interim government. During the year, security forces continued to use exces-

sive force against criminal suspects and committed or were linked to dozens of extrajudicial, arbitrary, and unlawful killings. Reports of disappearances in the southern provinces, in many cases after the missing allegedly had been questioned by security officials, continued. There were reports that police tortured, beat, and otherwise abused detainees and prisoners, generally with impunity. Prior to the coup, the use of defamation suits and, in some cases, charges of sedition, encouraged self-censorship by the media and NGOs. Human rights workers, particularly those focusing on disappearances and the violence in the south, experienced government harassment. The country continued to be a source, transit, and destination for trafficking in women and children for a variety of purposes, including indentured servitude, forced labor, and commercial sexual exploitation. Members of hill tribes without proper documentation continued to face restrictions on their movement, could not own land, and were not protected by labor laws.

To promote and improve human rights, the United States focused its efforts on the threats against the country's longstanding freedom of the press, extrajudicial killings, trafficking in persons, the rights of other ethnic minority groups residing within its borders, and the increased violence in the Muslim-majority provinces in the south. US officials also maintained close contact with the many domestic and international NGOs in the country that seek to protect and defend human rights. After September 19, the United States consistently pressed the military to return the country to democratic rule, urging authorities to quickly draft a new constitution and hold new elections, fully lift martial law, and restore civil liberties to all citizens. In immediate response to the coup, the US Government suspended nearly \$29 million worth of military assistance and continued to carefully review all significant interactions with the government, including military exercises, on a case-by-case basis. To support a quick return to democratic rule, the US Government funded various programs to address issues of constitutionalism and other democratic principles.

The United States promoted democracy in the country by organizing a series of digital video conferences



to address issues of good governance. The United States also hosted a week-long program on civic participation with local government officials, academics, and leading women civil society figures.

The United States promoted media freedom and freedom of speech, particularly focused on the broadcast press, by offering a series of training and speaker opportunities over the course of the year. The United States also provided a large grant to the community radio association to conduct conferences and training for community radio operators so that they might provide an alternative to the government-owned or controlled broadcast media. The US programs in the country brought a former FCC commissioner to the country for a two-week program to advise the Thai on the importance of neutral media regulators. The United States also translated and distributed a variety of publications related to press freedom, including the Handbook of Independent Journalism and the Unfettered Press.

Following the September 19 coup, the United States initiated programs to address press restrictions. A press organization received a US grant to hold a conference on democracy and broadcast media freedom, create a publication, hold legislative drafting workshops, and promote broadcast media freedom in general. Another journalist association received US support to hold a series of training seminars and instruction manuals aimed at investigative journalists interested in reporting on corruption and other issues. The United States also provided assistance to an NGO to assist in the production of media reform proposals.

Immediately after September 19, the military imposed martial law and placed restrictions on various civil liberties, including a ban on gatherings of more than five people for a political purpose and the prohibition of political activities at local levels. The United States urged the military at its highest level to lift martial law and restore civil liberties as soon as possible; restrictions on gatherings of more than five people were repealed in November. On November 28, the interim government announced that it would lift martial law in 41 of the country's 76 provinces. However, at year's end 35 provinces remained under martial law.

The United States supported a resident legal adviser in the country who effectively developed and participated in seminars dealing with intellectual property enforcement, witness protection, plea bargains, and obstruction of justice issues. The United States also supported the development of rule of law by continuing an annual grant to a lawyer's organization that cosponsored workshops and seminars with US officials aimed at comparing and improving ethics codes for lawyers, prosecutors, and judges, as well as a regional conference on combating judicial corruption. To address corruption issues, the United States worked with the government in an effort to bring an end to the personal cash rewards system for law enforcement officers.

The United States helped to enhance the legal, professional, and technical capabilities of government institutions. In an ongoing example of bilateral partnership, the United States and the government continued to manage the Bangkok-based International Law Enforcement Academy, a US-funded regional training center for police, immigration, customs, and other law enforcement officials. During the year the academy hosted courses that addressed regional issues such as human trafficking, combating terrorism, leadership development, police accountability, and forensic investigation. All curricula focused on support for democratic institutions, the importance of impartiality and integrity in criminal law enforcement, and the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. In addition to in-country training, the US Government continued to send Thai police officers for advanced training in the United States, which included US and international standards for human rights as related to law enforcement.

The United States continued to raise concerns over the lack of progress in prosecuting those responsible for human rights abuses, including during the Tak Bai incident of October 2004 and the Krue Se Mosque Incident of April 2004. The government has not yet prosecuted those responsible for the possible extrajudicial killings of at least 1,300 suspected drug traffickers during the 2003 "war on drugs" campaign. On December 14, the Department of Special Investigations under the Ministry of Justice reopened four of



these cases. The interim prime minister traveled to the south on November 2 and offered a public apology for abuses at the hands of security officers. The United States continued to urge the government at the highest levels to respect human rights and take appropriate legal action to punish responsible officials and end practices that allow security forces to operate with impunity.

The United States supported the efforts of the National Reconciliation Commission, headed by former Prime Minister Anand Panyarachun, which sought to address underlying causes of the violence in the south. The now-defunct commission released its findings in June. To reach out to the Muslim community in the far south, US officials sent 32 citizens, including nine Muslims and 13 women, to the United States to learn about key issues including multiculturalism and religious tolerance in the United States, human trafficking, media freedom, conflict resolution, civic activism, and human rights. The United States increased activity at the five American Corners in the country, three of which are located in the far south, through continued personal outreach, funding, and purchases of new computers, enabling persons living outside of the capital to learn more about US society and culture. US officials gave speeches on subjects such as US human rights policy, US democracy, and US values (religious tolerance and freedom of expression) during visits to universities and in digital video conferences with the American Corners. The US speakers program also brought in speakers to address issues such as human trafficking and counterterrorism, as well as a visit by a Thai-American imam to discuss Muslim life in the United States with Muslim audiences around the country. US officials also distributed reference materials, including the Arab-language versions of the Principles of Democracy, in an effort to increase outreach to the non-Thai speaking communities who studied Arabic in the south.

The United States supported a local NGO that educated hill tribe villagers about their legal rights and helped those persons entitled to full citizenship to apply for it. The NGO created a comprehensive database of villagers and their biographic information in order to help track pending cases. Under current law,

more than 60,000 hill tribe individuals are estimated to be eligible for, but do not have, citizenship. These individuals have limited access to primary and secondary education and are not legally entitled to higher education, health care, work permits, or freedom of travel, which makes them particularly vulnerable to exploitation, such as government corruption and human trafficking. With the creation of this project's database, more than 100 hill tribe villagers obtained citizenship by year's end.

The United States continued to press the government at the very highest levels to use its influence with the Burmese regime to push for positive democratic change and the release of all political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi. The US Government translated the Burma Country Report on Human Rights into Thai and held forums with university students in an effort to raise awareness of this issue.

The United States, in conjunction with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and other international organizations, maintained close contacts with Burmese refugees, political activists, and NGOs in the country. US officials also worked closely with the government to advocate for and monitor the conditions of Burmese refugees within Thailand's borders. US officials frequently visited camps along the Thai-Burma border to report on the living conditions of those who have fled Burma. These efforts contributed to a significant positive change in policy; the government has indicated that it will permit enhanced educational and vocational training for refugees and will consider proposals that provide legal work opportunities for refugees.

The United States also provided funding for the High Commissioner's operations in East Asia that included protection of Burmese refugees in the country. The United States also advocated for the humanitarian treatment of ethnic Hmong from Laos living in the north. US officials urged the government to allow the UN access to the Hmong to determine whether any have valid refugee claims. The United States also continued its program to resettle Burmese refugees and ethnic Hmong living with unofficial status in the country.



During the year there were no instances of restrictions to religious freedom. However, at the end of 2005, US officials received complaints from Hmong refugees that graves at their former refuge in Thailand were being desecrated. The Wat Tham Krabok monastery had originally provided a portion of its land to the refugees for their use as a cemetery, but removed the bodies after the cemetery expanded beyond the allocated plot and the decomposing bodies reportedly contaminated ground water. US officials urged the local Thai authorities to practice cultural sensitivity in their treatment of these graves.

On numerous occasions, US officials urged the government to support Burmese migrant workers' rights. In January the ambassador and the US assistant trade representative met with the minister of labor and urged the government to uphold international labor standards for Burmese migrant workers and to extend existing legal protections to those workers.

Trafficking in persons for commercial sexual exploitation and labor remained serious problems. The United States supported more than a dozen government agencies and NGOs involved in combating trafficking and helping victims. Programs included assistance for the improvement of law enforcement and prosecution, legal assistance centers for victims, prevention initiatives, protection for victims, and reintegration assistance for human trafficking victims willing to return to their country of origin. The number of trafficking cases reported in the north has decreased over the past three years as a result of increased attention devoted to this issue. The United States also provided funding to the International Organization for Migration for return and reintegration assistance for victims trafficked between countries of the Mekong region. One outcome of this program is that Cambodian street children used for forced begging and repatriated from Thailand are now thoroughly screened and provided with psychosocial counseling before being reunited with their families.

Vietnam

Vietnam is a single-party authoritarian state ruled by the Communist Party. The government's human rights record remained unsatisfactory and some local government officials continued to commit severe abuses; however, there was an increase in grassroots political and labor related activities, which the government generally tolerated. The government released the only remaining religious prisoner to have been incarcerated for reasons solely connected to his faith. It also released all but two remaining political prisoners of concern. The government continued to significantly restrict freedom of speech, the press, assembly, and association during the year, but eased restrictions on freedom of religion. Vietnam continued to censor domestic media, sporadically blocked foreign radio stations and websites, and denied citizens the right to form independent organizations.

The United States promoted the development of human rights and democracy in the country by consistently focusing attention on areas of concern. At the same time, the United States supported good governance and legal reforms necessary for country's integration into the global economy. In addition, US officials maintained close contact with the country's political activists and religious groups in order to identify and investigate abuses throughout the country, and advocated on behalf of human rights and political and legal reform during bilateral and multilateral meetings at all levels, including during the visit of the President in November. In February, the Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, Barry F. Lowenkron, led a delegation to Hanoi to resume the bilateral human rights dialogue which was previously suspended due to lack of progress in 2002.

The United States promoted democracy at the grassroots level in the country by pressing the government to respect the right of citizens to peacefully express their views. The government granted two amnesties over the course of the year, and a number of prisoners of concern were released, including four prominent political prisoners. They and others who were



Conditions for ethnic minority Christians in Northern Vietnam, like this Red Dzao woman in Lao Cai Province showed improvement. The United States worked with local partners to educate local Vietnamese leaders on the country's new policies on religion. (Photo by Amanda Morrow Jensen)

released had been the subject of long-term US Government advocacy efforts. The United States also encouraged the government to grant greater freedom of movement and activity to recently released political activists and to protect these individuals from violence and discrimination. In addition to leading the US delegation at the human rights dialogue in February, the Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor returned to Hanoi in October to urge Government officials to follow-up with human rights reforms and press for greater political freedom.

Though citizens had no right to change their government and no true elections were held during the year, the United States closely monitored Communist Party debates in the period leading up to the April Party Congress concerning possible political reforms and continued reduction of the party's preeminent role in society. Throughout the year, US officials also closely monitored the status of a nascent political opposition movement, comprised of various activists who established new political advocacy groups with the aim of promoting peaceful political change.



The United States supported media freedom and freedom of speech through comprehensive outreach programs to Vietnamese officials and journalists. For example, in October, the US Government worked to develop an exchange program for the country's television senior current affairs journalist and his producer. A prominent Foreign Affairs reporter was also nominated to participate in the prestigious Georgetown Leadership Seminar and two other journalists for Foreign Press Center reporting tours. In addition, the ambassador and other US officials participated in widely viewed live web chats in which they addressed issues related to human rights and religious freedom. US officials also maintained close contact with government and party officials during sessions of the National Assembly to encourage greater emphasis on freedom of expression in the country's legislation and the operation of the Assembly.

The United States supported the development of civil society and freedom of assembly and association in the country through direct advocacy by senior officials for revisions to the draft law on associations. The United States also funded programs aimed at building the capacity of civil society institutions, including NGOs working in a number of development areas. During the year, these programs included funding to empower women, civil society advocates, and journalists with Internet organization skills.

The United States promoted the development of a transparent and responsive legal system in the country through rule of law programs related to reform of the judicial system and the development of new legislation and regulations. The United States continued to fund a program to develop and codify a stronger and more transparent legal and regulatory framework as part of the implementation of the U.S.-Vietnam Bilateral Trade Agreement and the country's WTO commitments. Among the activities supported by this program during the year were the development of eight legal and institutional improvements in the country's court operations, the training of 170 Ministry of Justice personnel through 40 policy workshops, and the establishment of 13 public fora for national legislators to discuss legal and regulatory reform. As a result of these efforts, five new laws were passed

by the National Assembly and 12 legal, regulatory, and institutional actions were taken to improve the country's implementation or compliance with international trade and investment agreements. In December, a US government sponsored International Visitor program for nine senior National Assembly officials met with US government and non-governmental organizations and learned the complexities of the local, state, and federal lawmaking process. The United States also hosted several US speakers on judicial and legal reform issues. These guest speakers addressed lawyers, judges and law students at various venues to promote and expand the understanding of the US legal system.

US diplomats closely monitored a politically motivated prosecution and deportation in Ho Chi Minh City. Throughout the year, US diplomats, including Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, Barry F. Lowenkron, encouraged the government to promote due process for its citizens by abolishing Administrative Decree 31, which allows government officials to detain and imprison individuals without a trial. In November and December, the government committed to rescinding the decree and pledged to act on this by year's end.

US diplomats in Ho Chi Minh City extensively investigated one credible allegation of an extrajudicial killing during the year. The United States helped combat violations of the rights of women, minorities, and persons with disabilities, primarily through advocating consistent application of existing laws that protect individual rights. US officials and six US Cabinet-level visitors to the country raised the government's poor record of enforcing national laws and policy at the local level in their bilateral meetings with local, provincial, and national officials.

The United States promoted religious freedom in the country by maintaining close contact with local religious groups in order to identify and highlight abuses and to encourage reform efforts. In a May 2005 exchange of letters with the United States, the government committed to address a number of important religious freedom concerns. During the year, US officials at all levels and the Ambassador at Large for



International Religious Freedom, John Hanford, encouraged the government to carry through with these commitments under the exchange of letters, particularly in the area of recognition of new religious organizations and registration of sub-congregations of previously recognized faiths. The Ambassador for Religious Freedom also participated in the human rights dialogue and made follow-up visits to the country in order to press for greater progress.

In November, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice removed the country from the list of “Countries of Particular Concern” for continued violations of religious freedom in recognition of the significant progress the government made in easing restrictions on and facilitating religious worship by its citizens. Restrictions remain on religious worship for some ethnic minority Protestant groups in the Central Highlands, and the slow progress in registration of Protestant groups in the Northwest Highlands continued to be a focus of US diplomatic efforts. The US government sponsored an International Visitors Leadership Program for four provincial officials and members of the Committee on Religious Affairs to examine religious freedom in the United States, which offered them a unique opportunity to meet with US Government officials, NGOs, and faith-based organizations.

The United States, through continued advocacy of international labor standards and through targeted programs aimed at helping victims of trafficking in persons, domestic violence, and discrimination helped to combat trafficking, supported efforts against child labor, promoted employment access for the disabled, strengthened government institutions, and improved worker/management relations. The United States encouraged the government to ratify additional International Labor Organization conventions addressing worker’s rights and recognizing international core worker rights. The United States also continued to stress the need to discuss issues surrounding freedom of association and collective bargaining. The United States funded several programs that ad-

ressed the protection of worker rights. The United States implemented, in cooperation with Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs, a number of multi-year programs to advance labor rights. To combat trafficking, the United States sponsored international NGOs that operated two shelters for trafficking victims repatriated from Cambodia and China and vulnerable populations at risk of trafficking, and conducted antitrafficking training for law enforcement institutions. Other programs assisted in the re-integration of returned victims of trafficking and protected women and children in high-risk areas by providing awareness raising, vocational training, and economic opportunity through micro-credit programs. US officials at all levels continued to raise human trafficking issues with their government counterparts, and US officials played an important role in coordinating and focusing the international community’s response to the trafficking problem in the country.





EAST ASIA & THE PACIFIC

EUROPE & EURASIA





“How could I live with myself if I didn’t write the truth?”

Anna Politkovskaya
Murdered Russian journalist

Russia rights activists commemorate victims of political repression in downtown Moscow. The photograph features slain journalist Anna Politkovskaya. (AP Photo)



EUROPE AND EURASIA

During the past year, a number of countries in Europe and Eurasia continued to strengthen their democratic systems. For the first time since the 1995 Dayton Agreement, the authorities in Bosnia-Herzegovina fully administered their own elections in October. The parliamentary elections in Ukraine in March met international democratic standards and were the most open in the country's 15 years of independence. Unfortunately, democratic principles and human rights eroded in other countries. Russia implemented onerous NGO registration processes and restrictive legislation that had some adverse effects on NGO operations. Restrictions in freedom of expression and the harassment and intimidation of journalists in a number of countries in the region, including Azerbaijan, Armenia, Russia, and the Balkans, were significant setbacks to democratic progress. Trafficking in persons for commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor remained serious concerns.

The United States gives high priority to helping democracy and human rights advocates in Europe and Eurasia succeed and consolidate their successes. The United States continued to engage governments of the region toward this end, often with other democratic allies and in multilateral forums, and employed a variety of tools to deliver tangible support to democracy and human rights efforts in 2006. These tools included training for officials, media, democratic parties, and NGO advocates; monitoring of elections and criminal justice proceedings; capacity building of civil society groups and government structures; and technical and legal assistance, grants, and exchanges.

The United States actively supported democratic institutions and processes through diplomatic engagement bilaterally and multilaterally with international partners, such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the European

Union. As both a barometer of, and nourishment to, a country's democratic health, elections were an intensive focus of US support during the past year. The United States promoted democratic political processes and the administration of fairly-contested elections by, for example, supporting political party development in Belarus, empowering voters' groups – including women activists and youth – in Serbia, and assisting international election monitoring efforts in Ukraine. In preparation for Armenia's elections in 2007 and 2008, the US supported efforts to improve election systems, update voter lists, educate the public on voting and democratic principles, and strengthen political parties. The United States is providing similar support, through political party training, training for mass media representatives on covering political issues, and voter education initiatives, in support of free and fair elections in Russia for the Duma in December 2007 and for president in March 2008.





While elections are an important, visible sign of democracy in action, democracy has other essential components. Countries need an active civil society, where individuals feel empowered to peacefully exercise their rights of expression, association, and assembly, including participating in non-governmental organizations, unions, and other civil society organizations. Strong civic action is the best defense against a relapse into totalitarianism. Thus, the further erosion of civil society in Russia and Belarus during the past year was particularly concerning. US officials persistently raised concerns about government undermining civil society in Russia, in particular the passage of a new and restrictive NGO law. The United States also provided technical assistance and grant support to Russian civil society groups, NGO resource centers, think tanks, labor unions, and watchdog organizations to sustain their active participation in society. In Belarus where civil society was under increasing threat, approximately 2,000 leaders from trade unions, NGOs, and independent media participated in over 1,300 US-sponsored training sessions and seminars.

The press, as the watchdog of an informed and free civil society, is essential for government accountability. The United States remains committed to supporting robust independent media that offer diverse views and objective information for citizens. Unfortunately, much work remains to be done. Most worrisome were direct attacks on freedom of expression in Europe and Eurasia, including the murder of independent journalist Anna Politkovskaya, and the temporary closure of independent media outlet ANS in Azerbaijan and physical attacks on journalists in several countries in the region. In Russia, US programs worked to promote media independence by improving professional standards, business practices, and socially responsible journalism. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the United States helped engender a more favorable media climate through journalism training. In Turkey, where media restrictions remained a concern, the US supported professional exchange programs for journalists designed to foster ethics and journalistic responsibility among younger reporters

and to promote freedom of expression among editors and media gatekeepers.

Constitutional order, sound legal frameworks, and judicial independence constitute the foundation for a well-functioning society, but they are only as effective as the government's ability to appropriately apply these tools and safeguard against corruption and other abuses of power. While some countries in Europe and Eurasia have a long tradition of the rule of law, many lack experience with international judicial training best practices, the practice of public interest law, and effective court administration. As a result, they have difficulty implementing the rule of law and addressing human rights problems, such as corruption and trafficking in persons. The United States engaged in a variety of programs to help bring legal systems in Eastern Europe in closer alignment with international standards for legal structures that can adequately protect the human rights of all citizens. US assistance in this arena included working with local partners in Ukraine and Azerbaijan to create legal advocacy centers and develop clinical legal education programs in Ukrainian law schools; developing an ethics code for legal practitioners in Armenia, which led to the administration of the first open and transparent administration of the bar exam; providing technical assistance in Georgia to establish a bar association and the bar's adoption of a code of professional ethics; and strengthening the rule of law and capacity of the police, prosecutors, and judges to try war crimes in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

A cornerstone of US foreign policy is to advance and protect the rights and liberties of all individuals as embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The United States has partnered with governments in the region to implement programs that guarantee the rights of marginalized populations, including women, ethnic, religious, and other minorities, the disabled, and trafficking victims. In Georgia, the United States supported the upgrading of the main forensics lab and five regional evidence collection centers, which would promote evidence-based



investigations and enhance human rights. To assist in efforts against trafficking, the United States worked with Russia's Ministry of Internal Affairs to train police and prosecutors on methods to investigate and prosecute such cases. In Belarus, the US sponsored a two-year economic empowerment program for approximately 1,000 at-risk women and trafficking victims in Belarus.

The United States is dedicated to working with our partners to help them build and strengthen their own sustainable institutions of democratic governance. The United States will continue to use bilateral diplomacy, multilateral cooperation, and international institutions to support human rights and democracy in Europe and Eurasia.



American Bar Association training session for lawyers in Azerbaijan. (ABA photo)

Promoting Access to Justice in Azerbaijan

The USG-funded American Bar Association-Rule of Law Initiative's Azerbaijan Legal Advocacy Center ("LAC") is enabling young Azerbaijani lawyers to gain practical legal experience while providing pro bono legal services to citizens.

In Azerbaijan, aspiring lawyers need at least three years of legal experience before they can sit for the bar examination and gain entrance into the Collegium of Advocates, Azerbaijan's equivalent of the defense bar. The overall lack of well-trained practicing advocates in Azerbaijan makes the fulfillment of this requirement highly urgent. The country desperately needs more practicing advocates, but there are not enough available to mentor and provide the internships to produce more advocates. The LAC addresses these challenges by providing young lawyers with the opportunity to work with experienced advocates and gain firsthand practical experience, while the public benefits from free legal services.

Since the opening of the LAC in June 2006, over 1500 Azerbaijani citizens have requested legal services on a wide variety of issues, including children's rights, the right to a fair trial, and labor law. The young lawyers, in consultation with experienced advocates, work to resolve these cases, including guaranteeing citizens the right to appeal a court decision. The LAC has also begun to submit individual petitions to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR,) which helps to stimulate public discussion and debate on prevalent human rights issues and create an open space for reconsideration of discriminatory laws and practices in Azerbaijan.

In addition to strengthening the legal and advocacy skills of young attorneys, the LAC offers a series of monthly trainings on a variety of national and international legal topics. This combination of hands-on experience and intensive training has created a cadre of young lawyers working to strengthen legal institutions and promote respect for human rights and access to justice in Azerbaijan.



Armenia

Armenia is a republic with a popularly elected president and a unicameral legislature. A constitutional referendum in 2005 and presidential and National Assembly elections in 2003 were seriously flawed and did not meet international standards. The government's human rights record remained poor, and serious problems remained. Citizens were not able freely to change their government; authorities beat pretrial detainees; the national security service and the national police force acted with impunity; authorities engaged in arbitrary arrest and detention; prison conditions were cramped and unhealthy, although slowly improving; and authorities imposed restrictions on citizens' privacy, freedom of the press, and freedom of assembly. The judiciary, while still subject to political pressure and corruption, gained some independence from the entry into force of new constitutional revisions during the year. Journalists practiced self-censorship, and the government and laws restricted religious freedom. Violence against women and spousal abuse were problems, as were trafficking in persons, discrimination against persons with disabilities, and societal harassment of homosexuals. There were reports of forced labor.

The US human rights strategy for the country focused on promoting democratic institutions and processes, independent media, freedom of assembly, a vibrant civil society, the rule of law, human rights, freedom of religion, and adoption of concrete measures to combat trafficking. In anticipation of parliamentary and presidential elections in 2007 and 2008, respectively, US assistance programs sought to improve electoral systems, procedures, and infrastructure. The country's five-year Millennium Challenge Compact is tied to its performance on these and other indicators related to good governance. It remains eligible for funding under the compact despite its regression in democratic governance indicators during the year; however, US officials warned the government that continued funding is contingent upon its progress in that area.

The US Government continued implementation of its three-year democracy promotion strategy, which

focused on enhancing the capabilities of the election administration, including working to produce accurate voter lists, providing public information and voter education, developing a democratic political culture, building public opinion polling capacity, strengthening fair electoral adjudication, enhancing election monitoring capabilities, strengthening political parties, and increasing independent media coverage of elections. US grants funded production of a documentary about participatory democracy in one local village, as well as several public-awareness campaigns on voting procedures and the establishment of centers to teach young people about democratic governance.

During the year US officials consistently emphasized the importance of media freedom and responsibility in contacts with high-level government officials, media directors, and journalists. The United States funded a program to develop professional and sustainable media outlets, decrease the media's heavy dependence on sponsorship from political and private interests, and encourage outlets to adjust their programming to respond to public concerns. Building on the successes of earlier efforts, the program supported training and technical assistance to help media outlets qualify for and repay loans provided by the United States. The program also established a television ratings system that would provide information critical to helping media outlets develop audience-based programming and increase advertising revenues. Under the International Visitor Leadership Program, the US Government sent eight print journalists and eight broadcast journalists to the United States to learn about the media's role in the US midterm elections.

To help increase public access to independent sources of information, US programs facilitated the technical and programmatic transfer of Internet Connectivity Centers, which had been installed in 2005, to the Ministry of Education. The centers connected the country's citizens and schoolchildren with one another as well as to the rest of the world. Through the centers, a nationwide network of schools and communities engaged in organized discussion forums, courses, and other learning activities, including curricula on principles of democracy, civic involvement,



and community development. Two American Corners provided information about US democratic institutions and facilitated cultural events, including an ongoing series of guest lectures by US officials and exchange program alumni. Lecture topics included US constitutional amendments, civil society and the state in America, American journalism and politics, grassroots political work in the United States, and the US midterm elections.

US officials promoted a vibrant civil society by encouraging the government, independent and opposition political parties, and civil society organizations to engage in constructive dialogue on governance issues. With substantial US funding, local NGOs pursued initiatives to promote human rights, democratic development, and civil society. These efforts to strengthen civil society produced concrete results. A government-proposed bill on lobbying, originally introduced and tabled in the National Assembly in 2005, resurfaced and threatened to significantly curtail the ability of civil society groups to advocate reform; however, effective lobbying by local and international NGOs--many of which the United States supported--persuaded the National Assembly to table the bill again. Additional US grants improved the technical skills of NGOs.

US officials in the country urged the government to respect freedom of assembly and closely monitored the few demonstrations and rallies that took place during the year.

To promote the rule of law and fight corruption, the United States provided grants that supported anticorruption workshops and publications and facilitated the publication of 12 investigative reports on corruption cases around the country. US programs also helped support the new Chamber of Advocates, which began work in 2005 to establish a code of ethics for attorneys and in September held the first competitive and transparent bar exam in the country's history.

The United States conducted several training programs for judges and attorneys with the aim of bringing law enforcement and judicial practices into line with international standards. Specifically, US officials

conducted a seminar to familiarize members of the judicial branch with the European Convention on Human Rights and related case law and published 300 copies of the Manual on the Practice of the European Court of Human Rights for dissemination to defense lawyers and prosecutors. The US Government also made a concentrated effort to improve criminal procedure laws in accordance with international standards by bringing experts to the United States to review draft legislation with local authorities. The United States also encouraged the president's office to enhance its anticorruption efforts. To fight a pervasive culture of corruption, every US assistance program during the year included anticorruption components.

To promote respect for human rights, US grants funded public-awareness campaigns and training workshops on domestic violence. US officials in the country maintained close, collaborative relations with local human rights defenders and representatives of human rights NGOs.

The ambassador and other US officials frequently discussed religious freedom problems with government and religious leaders as part of the overall policy to promote human rights. The US Government maintained close contact with the head of the Armenian Apostolic Church, the country's national church; leaders of other religious and ecumenical groups in the country; and regional representatives of foreign-based religious groups, such as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Baha'is, and raised their concerns with the government. US officials took an active role in policy forums and NGO roundtables regarding religious freedom. In meetings with government officials, US officials consistently raised the importance of the government establishing alternatives to military service for Jehovah's Witnesses who are conscientious objectors. An American Corner lecture in December addressed the topic of religion in the United States.

Combating human trafficking in the country remained a top priority, and US diplomacy on this front produced concrete results. US officials met frequently with high-level members of the government, resulting in the allocation of funds for the



government's national action plan on trafficking and the restructuring of the prosecutor general's antitrafficking unit. One visiting US official delivered an address at an international antitrafficking conference in Yerevan that was covered by national media. The United States also funded a program that provided a safe haven and medical, social, and legal services for trafficking victims, facilitated the repatriation of 10 trafficking victims, and supported a victim hotline. The United States funded two comprehensive anti-trafficking studies and published their conclusions. In June the United States conducted an antitrafficking seminar for judges, prosecutors, investigators, and police. The United States also funded the distribution of an antitrafficking manual for the country's consular personnel stationed abroad, as well as a survey of the country's laws to uncover gaps in antitrafficking statutes. The United States also contributed significant funding to the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe's robust antitrafficking programs in the country.

Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan is a republic with a presidential form of government. The president dominated the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. The government's human rights record remained poor. The public's right to peacefully change the national legislature was restricted in the November 2005 parliamentary elections, although there were some improvements in the period leading up to the elections and in the May 13 parliamentary election reruns that took place in 10 parliamentary constituencies. Torture and beating of persons in police custody resulted in three deaths during the year, and police officials acted with impunity. Prison conditions--despite improvements in infrastructure--were generally harsh and life threatening. Arbitrary arrest and detention, particularly of individuals considered by the government to be political opponents, and lengthy pretrial detention continued. The government continued to imprison persons for politically motivated reasons. Pervasive corruption in the judiciary and in law enforcement continued. Restrictions on media freedom, freedom of assembly, and political participation increased.

The government promoted religious tolerance and generally respected religious freedom, although at times it restricted the activities of some groups. During the year the government took several important steps to combat human trafficking, including establishing a shelter for victims of trafficking, creating a new antitrafficking unit within the interior ministry, and removing antitrafficking responsibility from the ministry's organized crime unit.

The US human rights and democracy strategy focused on five key sectors of democratic development: 1) strengthening the political process; 2) advancing the rule of law and the fight against corruption; 3) advocating respect for human rights; 4) protecting media freedom; and 5) creating an engaged, empowered, educated citizenry.

To promote democratic reform, US officials regularly met with representatives of political parties, a range of human rights and democracy activists, and government officials. The assistant secretary of state for democracy, human rights and labor, the assistant secretary for European and Eurasian affairs, and several members of Congress visited during the year to reinforce US support for democracy and human rights.

To encourage democratic political processes, including elections, the United States intensified its efforts through sustained high-level government intervention, public diplomacy outreach, and training programs. In the period preceding the May 13 parliamentary election reruns in 10 constituencies, the ambassador and visiting senior US officials regularly engaged government officials on the need to conduct elections consistent with international standards, including the need to deter fraud and other interference in the electoral process, prosecute cases of such interference, and permit domestic nonpartisan organizations to monitor the elections.

In the period leading up to the May elections, the United States funded campaigns encouraging citizens to vote, which were tailored to target various voter groups. As part of an effort to encourage political dialogue and issue-based parliamentary elections, US programs supported the development and broadcast of several public service announcements. In addition



the United States sponsored the design and distribution of brochures encouraging public participation in the rerun elections as well as voter instruction guides. In an effort to strengthen public knowledge of democratic principles and values, US programs funded the translation and publication of American books on democracy. Other US projects included developing networks of domestic election observers as well as training political candidates on the basics of campaigning, local election officials on the mechanics of carrying out a democratic election process, and judges and lawyers on fair adjudication of the election code. A US-sponsored exit poll that provided an independent estimate of the results in all 10 rerun races helped to corroborate credible allegations of fraud, and contributed to some corrective actions by election officials. US officials in the country deployed an election observation mission. Before and after the elections, the United States urged the Central Election Commission to forward complaints of election code violations to the prosecutor general's office.

In the period preceding the October 6 partial municipal elections, US officials in the country engaged national and local election officials on the importance of adhering to international electoral standards. They also fielded observer teams to monitor the elections. US programs funded and trained domestic election observers. US officials raised all known cases of fraud and irregularities with the Central Election Commission.

To underline the importance of media freedom, US officials urged the state prosecutor to investigate and bring to justice individuals—including police officers—responsible for physical attacks on journalists. The United States publicly criticized the government's November 24 decision to suspend the broadcasts of a national television and radio network and urged the government to restore it to the air as soon as possible. US funding supported the professional development of journalists and advocates for media rights. At the same time, US-supported programs provided technical and programming assistance to several television stations and newspapers. Through an international visitors program focusing on journalism, five journalists and staff members from the two year-old public

television station studied programming standards and best management practices at US public television stations. Another visitors program offered young journalists the opportunity to study "new media" in the United States including the use of the Internet, blogs, and audio and video podcasts. US programs brought specialists in media management and English for journalists to help develop the capacity of local media organizations and funded other professional media training for journalists. In the aftermath of the 2005 murder of prominent independent journalist Elmar Huseynov, US officials encouraged the government to conduct an expeditious and impartial investigation into his death and provided technical law enforcement assistance to facilitate the investigation.

To support the development of civil society, the United States continued to provide technical assistance, grants, and exchange programs to support the activities of local NGOs, to encourage dialogue between the government and civil society, and to educate the government about democratic practices. US grants helped NGOs develop community networks to strengthen participatory government on a national and local level. To improve democratic governance at a local level, the United States launched a major project aimed at involving citizens, the business community, civil society, and media in a collaborative dialogue with government officials in six regions to identify, address, and resolve local problems. The United States funded NGOs promoting the implementation of access to information laws, a project designed to support effective interaction between newly elected members of parliament and their constituents; several anticorruption projects in local schools; and a weekly radio program addressing corruption in law enforcement.

US officials urged their counterparts to respect the right of freedom of assembly and to authorize peaceful demonstrations. To emphasize the importance of this freedom, US officials in the country monitored police conduct at political rallies, publicly affirmed the need for full restoration of the right to freedom of assembly, and condemned the excessive use of force against demonstrators. The United States voiced its concerns to all levels of the government regarding the



An Azerbaijani woman casts ballot during an election in Baku. (AP photo)

international right of citizens to organize and demonstrate peacefully against government policies. US officials in the country monitored police conduct at the November 25 forced eviction of a leading opposition party and media outlets from their co-located office in central Baku. They supported efforts to enable the building's tenants to regain access to their property, obtain acceptable premises, and obtain financial compensation for property damaged during the eviction.

practices. To promote the creation of an independent judiciary, US officials monitored exams given to those seeking to become new judges. The United States continued to work with law schools on curriculum development and new teaching methodologies. US funding and expertise helped to establish a legal database project which provided easy access and use of legal framework documents for the legal profession and the general public.

The United States promoted respect for the rule of law and human rights diplomatically and programmatically. US officials monitored high-profile court proceedings, including the trial of three leaders of a youth group convicted of alleged coup plotting; eviction proceedings against an opposition party and several media outlets; the trial of a journalist convicted of alleged narcotics possession; and the trial of a kidnapping and extortion gang led by a former official. In addition the United States advocated respect for the rule of law and human rights during government investigations of individuals accused in 2005 of fomenting an alleged coup. US-funded programs assisted citizens to gain access to justice and to protect their rights through legal advocacy. US training programs worked to strengthen the professional development of judges and lawyers, to assist them in combating corruption, and to help officials develop the legal framework necessary to stop corrupt



The United States funded programs to increase the professionalism and skills of the judiciary, prosecutors, and the defense bar, placing special emphasis on developing the adversarial system between prosecutors and the defense. To strengthen the legal profession as a whole, the United States supported efforts to promote the role of women lawyers, to develop an independent bar association, and to eliminate corruption in the education system. US-funded programs provided training and material to judges, prosecutors, and attorneys on the European Convention on Human Rights, fair trials, and ethics. To provide a legal basis for anticorruption efforts, the United States also provided technical assistance on the drafting of a new Conflicts of Interest Law and a new draft Code of Ethics for Civil Servants. US funding also supported an anticorruption study-tour for government officials and NGOs. Finally, a US program provided technical assistance to investigators and prosecutors to encourage evidence-based investigations, which could help decrease forced confessions.

To address human rights abuses by law enforcement officers, US officials repeatedly urged the government to ensure that police complied with human rights standards and to hold police officials accountable for torture, abuse, or misconduct, and routinely visited detainees. The United States funded local NGO monitoring of detention and prison facilities in Baku and the regions as well as the provision of human rights training for police and detention officers. In addition US officials visited prisons to focus attention on poor conditions.

Several US-funded projects promoted the protection of women's rights, as well as those of children and workers. The United States supported the reprinting and distribution of the Azerbaijani human rights self-study manual *Thirty-three Steps Up* to strengthen awareness of the existence and importance of human rights. US programs educated young people on basic human rights in an effort to create awareness of these issues among youth. The United States continued to support a program, which it helped design, to integrate human rights into training for security forces guarding the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline.

The United States actively encouraged respect for religious freedom, including the right to practice religion without unnecessary interference or restriction. In meetings with government officials, US officials regularly stressed the importance of respecting religious freedom. A US project funded high school debates on the role and importance of religious tolerance in society. In November the ambassador delivered a widely received public address on religious freedom and tolerance. Throughout the year, US officials in the country actively spread the message about religious tolerance and Islam in America. The ambassador hosted an Iftar dinner in October for the religious leaders of the Muslim, Orthodox, Christian, and Jewish communities.

To combat human trafficking, the United States promoted antitrafficking measures and effective preventive mechanisms in meetings with government officials and offered guidance on implementation of the national antitrafficking action plan. US officials regularly engaged with the international community to coordinate antitrafficking efforts. To help trafficking victims, the United States funded training of volunteers to staff a shelter and victims' hot line.

Belarus

Under its constitution, the Republic of Belarus has a directly elected president and a bicameral National Assembly. However, since his election in 1994 as president, Alexander Lukashenko has systematically undermined the country's democratic institutions and concentrated power in the executive branch through authoritarian means, flawed referenda, fraudulent elections, and arbitrary decrees. Presidential elections on March 19 that declared Lukashenko president for a third consecutive term failed to meet international standards for democratic elections. The government's human rights record remained very poor and worsened in some areas as the government continued to commit frequent and serious abuses.

Throughout the presidential election campaign and in the months afterward, political opposition and civil society activists, including four domestic election



observers and a former presidential candidate, were beaten, harassed, fined, or imprisoned. The government failed to account for past disappearances of opposition political figures and journalists. Prison conditions were extremely poor, and there were numerous reports of abuse of prisoners and detainees. Arbitrary arrests, detentions, and imprisonment of citizens for political reasons, criticizing officials, or participating in demonstrations were common. The outcomes of court trials were usually predetermined, and trials frequently were conducted behind closed doors and without the benefit of an independent judiciary or independent observers. The government further restricted civil liberties, including freedoms of press, speech, assembly, association, and religion. The government seized published materials from civil society activists and closed or limited the distribution of several independent newspapers. The few remaining independent publications often were fined, usually for alleged slander or for not following restrictive registration procedures. State security services used unreasonable and often brutal force to disperse peaceful protesters. NGOs were subjected to harassment, fines, prosecution, and closure. Religious leaders were fined or imprisoned for performing services and ceremonies, and churches were either closed, deregistered, or had their congregations evicted. Trafficking in persons remained a problem; however, some progress was made to combat it. There was official discrimination against Roma, ethnic and sexual minorities, and against persons who spoke Belarusian. Authorities harassed independent unions and their members by severely limiting the ability of workers to form and join independent trade unions and to organize and bargain collectively.

The US strategy to promote human rights sought to exert pressure in the form of targeted sanctions on senior Belarus officials, while empowering political and civil society activists who remain committed to democratic principles and institutions in a repressive society with little exposure to democracy and the rule of law. Assistance priorities included: supporting democratic political processes, particularly with regard to the March 19 presidential elections and subsequent local elections; strengthening the NGO sector; increasing access to independent information

through print, broadcast and electronic media; and building the legal defense capacity of human rights NGOs and university programs. US-funded exchange programs were designed to familiarize students and professionals with, and expose them to, democratic, market-based systems. To combat trafficking in persons, the United States focused its assistance on prevention and victim protection by increasing trafficking awareness among vulnerable populations and addressing the underlying causes of trafficking, including poverty and unemployment through job skills and internship programs.

Democracy and human rights issues were the central themes of speeches, media interviews, and other public events, which US officials in Belarus organized or in which they took part. The United States monitored the government's attacks on civil society and opposition political parties, and closely cooperated with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and European Union (EU) missions in the country to demonstrate solidarity for prodemocracy activists. US officials also repeatedly raised the problem of Belarusian human rights at the OSCE, and cosponsored a UN resolution, which was adopted in December by the General Assembly. It expressed deep concern over the human rights situation in the country and urged the government to cease politically motivated prosecution and harassment of political opponents. Also in December the United States raised the plight of Belarusian political prisoners at the UN Security Council.

US activities with regard to political processes were aimed at promoting institutional growth of democratic organizations and strengthening the political skills and outreach capabilities of pro-democracy party leaders and activists. US assistance helped prodemocracy forces develop and implement a process for democratically selecting a single candidate and a consolidated platform for the March presidential elections. The coalition candidate attracted small, but credible support from voters and mounted a much stronger opposition effort than that of the opposition in the previous presidential election in 2001. US activities also focused on facilitating local-level political party development, including establishment

of common democratic platforms for the municipal elections of January 2007, and on training nonpartisan election observers.

During the year US officials met often with election officials and government authorities to encourage them to adhere to democratic principles, to conduct free and fair elections, and to invite international observers to monitor elections. Following the presidential elections, the US Government condemned the flawed outcome, stating that the election was characterized by the arbitrary abuse of state power, detentions, and a disregard for basic civil and political rights. In response, the US Government imposed targeted financial sanctions and travel restrictions on key government officials and other persons responsible for human rights abuses and political repression.

Bolstering freedom of speech, access to information, and independent media remained a central component of the US strategy. The US Government sponsored 70 projects to strengthen media capacity to provide citizens with objective sources of information. For example, during the year European Radio for Belarus, an independent station based in Poland and funded in part by the United States, began broadcasting into Belarus. US programs also helped independent print and electronic media outlets remain in operation in an environment hostile to free media, and provided financial support to independent media through a Media Development Fund. In addition,



Opposition supporters rally in downtown Minsk, Belarus (AP photo)

the US provided financial and technical assistance to help make independent newspapers available via the Internet. The level of public trust in the independent media continued to remain high because of increased professionalism and objectivity, despite ongoing government efforts to close down all nongovernment print and electronic publications.

As in previous years, NGOs and civil society groups continued to rely on outside technical and financial assistance. The US Democracy Commission small





grants program continued to promote political and social activism by strengthening NGOs and civil society organizations. Approximately 2,000 leaders from trade unions, NGOs, and independent media participated in more than 1,300 US Government-sponsored training sessions and seminars. During the first 10 months of the year, the United States funded 51 grants to support civil society projects within the country and 12 grants to link civic groups with counterparts in neighboring countries.

US-sponsored professional and academic exchange programs provided support for 12 undergraduate and graduate students and four university faculty at US universities within the framework of the Fulbright scholar program. At the same time, five American Fulbright fellows conducted research and lectured at universities in the country. Despite the government's efforts to hinder the US-funded future leaders exchange program, 57 high school students visited the United States and attended a conference in Washington, DC during a three-week program in June and July. In an effort to break the country's increasing isolation and to promote mutual understanding, the US Government provided three to five-week training programs in the United States for entrepreneurs, professionals, and NGO leaders under the auspices of the Community Connections program. US officials in the country supported nine projects that encouraged networking among exchange program alumni to promote democratic advancement and economic reform, and also helped alumni to implement the teaching concepts they studied during their US exchange programs. In addition, nine US specialists visited the country under the auspices of a US speaker program to give lectures and seminars on topics ranging from the rule of law to business entrepreneurship.

Although stymied by government interference and the forced closure of an independent, legal aid office in April, the US Government continued to provide assistance for programs aimed at promoting the rule of law. Projects included hosting political and legal education and information events for different sectors of society and providing free legal assistance to persons whose rights were violated by the government. US-sponsored NGO lawyers provided free legal consul-

tations, prepared documents, and supported human rights activists, NGOs, and independent newspapers at court trials, particularly during the presidential election campaign. US-supported NGOs also published human rights bulletins to inform the public about key legal issues on how to protect their rights, and reported on rights violations in their localities. The US Democracy Commission small grants program funded more than 30 public seminars on legal issues regarding labor, housing, and elections. The US Government also funded the travel of Belarusian law students to Washington, DC to participate in a prestigious international law competition and organized exchange programs for other students to attend legal education courses in the United States.

The US ambassador and other US officials, often in coordination with EU counterparts, regularly observed, or attempted to observe, the trials and sentencing of opposition figures and human rights activists, such as those of former presidential candidate Aleksandr Kozulin, youth leader Dmitriy Dashkevich, and independent election observers of the NGO Partnership. All were sentenced to jail terms ranging from six months to 5 1/2 years. US officials also attended trials of NGOs and religious groups that were targeted by the authorities for closure on politically motivated pretexts. To demonstrate solidarity with imprisoned political activists, US officials in the country hosted several events for families of political prisoners. The United States issued statements urging the government to honor its OSCE commitments to observe human rights, and supported efforts by the organization to assist the government to meet those commitments. The United States continued to press the government to conduct an independent, transparent, and impartial investigation into the disappearances of several opposition activists and one journalist. To support women's rights and help create a wider network for women's groups, the United States continued its series of events focusing on women's issues in various aspects of civil society and invited a communication consultant as a guest speaker to meet with women's activists and conduct a series of workshops for female entrepreneurs. In addition, the US Government sponsored the participation a prominent female activist in the Global Women's Summit in Egypt.



The United States closely monitored violations of international norms and urged the government to respect religious freedom. However, the government's Committee of Religious and Nationalities Affairs repeatedly ignored official requests for meetings to discuss religious freedom issues. US officials met with representatives of a wide spectrum of religious groups to demonstrate US support for religious freedom. The US ambassador, together with EU ambassadors, visited the embattled New Life church during a hunger strike by church members to protest the government's forced sale of church property. The US Government denounced incidents of anti-Semitism that occurred throughout the country and took action to help prevent future acts, including regularly following up on reports of desecrated Jewish memorial sites and cemeteries.

In response to violations of workers' rights, the US Government maintained close contact with local independent labor leaders and with the International Labor Organization (ILO) to assess the government's efforts to meet the organization's recommendations to improve freedom of association and collective bargaining. The United States also continued to support ILO efforts to promote workers' rights and independent trade unions in Belarus. To help combat human trafficking, US assistance helped to increase awareness among vulnerable groups and provided job skills training and an internship program for approximately 1,000 at-risk women and trafficking victims. The focus of the project addressed two of the underlying causes of trafficking, poverty and a lack of job opportunities. Of the 463 participants who completed internships, approximately 50 percent found permanent jobs. In addition, the US Government hosted a film screening of a US-produced investigative documentary on trafficking victims from Eastern Europe. The film was followed by a roundtable discussion with independent journalists and leading members of the antitrafficking community.

Bosnia

The independent state of Bosnia and Herzegovina consists of two multiethnic constituent entities with-

in the state, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska, along with the Brcko District. As stipulated in the 1995 Dayton Agreement that ended the 1992-95 war, a state-level constitution provides for a federal democratic republic with a bicameral parliamentary assembly but assigns many governmental functions to the two entities. In October the country held self-administered national elections that international observers judged to be generally free and fair. The government's human rights record remained poor, although there were improvements in some areas. Serious problems that remained included: death from landmines; physical abuse by police; overcrowding and poor prison conditions; improper influence on the judiciary; harassment and intimidation of journalists; restrictions on religious minorities and attacks on religious structures; obstructionism toward minority returnees; government corruption; societal discrimination against women, ethnic minorities, sexual minorities, and persons with disabilities; ethnically-motivated violence; trafficking in persons; and limits on employment rights. Two of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia's most wanted war crimes suspects, Ratko Mladic and Radovan Karadzic, also remained at large.

The US strategy for promoting human rights in the country focused on promoting a robust civil society through media and NGO development, building the capacity of government institutions on both the state and entity level, strengthening the rule of law through judicial system improvements, combating discrimination against vulnerable groups, advocating for religious freedom, and assisting the government in combating trafficking in persons. The United States also focused on developing more competitive and inclusive political processes in which moderate political parties could compete more effectively, particularly with regard to the October national elections. Efforts to increase citizen participation in political decision-making and voter turnout were also priorities.

To promote democracy and the political process, senior US officials continued to send a strong message on democratic reform and respect for human rights. For the first time since the end of the war, US efforts brought representatives from the country's three con-



stituent ethnic groups together to discuss changes to the Dayton Agreement. The discussion resulted in a number of proposed reforms intended to strengthen state structures to make the government more effective and efficient; the proposed reforms failed to win adoption in parliament by only a small margin but were instrumental in advancing a discourse on democratic reform in the country.

During the year the United States launched a civic advocacy partnership program to augment work by NGOs to strengthen the political process. The program focused its work on increasing political awareness and activism in the pre-election period, thereby generating greater voter turnout and a more informed electorate. During the pre-election period, the program supported the civic movement GROZD (Citizens Organized for Democracy), the largest network of its kind ever organized in the country, which included 480 NGOs and 3,000 volunteers in over 100 municipalities. The movement called for parties to adopt concrete political platforms rather than rely on campaign slogans. A total of 500,000 citizens signed GROZD's petition, and 36 political parties agreed to work on a platform if they were elected. Prior to the election, the US Government also granted funds to several local NGOs to educate voters, encourage grassroots civic participation, and organize local election monitors to observe nearly 3,000 polling stations around the country during the vote.

The US Government continued to assist in the development of an independent and professional media. Two US-supported media projects provided training and technical assistance to journalists, editors, and owners of both print and electronic media. In an effort to raise journalism standards, the United States helped media partners ensure their survival in a tight, highly competitive market by professionalizing their business operations. In addition, US-funded media assistance programs supported 650 investigative and in-depth reports by print, radio, and television partners through a 10-month project to increase citizen involvement and participation in the October general election. US support for the creation of a national consortium of broadcasters and advertising agencies, the United Media Industry, demonstrated that rivals

could become allies if they share economic interests. During the year publishers also met for the first time and agreed to form an association. Media partners received small grants to produce programs and articles that increased awareness of the contributions and challenges of women, minorities, and people with disabilities and that promoted tolerance and reconciliation.

US programs provided local journalists training in reporting on specific issues, including war crimes, elections, and diversity. US funds helped to develop an online resource for journalists reporting on war crimes. In the period preceding the general elections, the United States funded training for journalists on issues regarding election coverage. To help advance professional reporting standards, US funds supported a program promoting free access to the media. The US Government also provided funding to strengthen the capacities of local NGOs specializing in journalism training and to support journalistic reporting from diverse communities.

Development of the country's civil society and increased cooperation between NGOs and the government, particularly local governments, remained a US priority. During the year a US-funded civil society program assisted NGO coalitions in conducting advocacy campaigns on a variety of issues. The program helped depoliticize the primary school system in Tuzla Canton by introducing the direct election of school principals, revise state and entity-level laws to improve living conditions for persons with disabilities, secure the adoption of a law to protect the Prokosko Lake and Vranica mountain areas as natural monuments, and convince 32 local municipal councils to adopt procedures to increase citizen participation in the budget planning and implementation process.

The United States also promoted civil society through diverse educational and capacity-building initiatives. A US-funded civic education project developed a democracy and human rights course taught in all secondary schools in the country. During the year the course was also taught at the Faculty of Islamic Sciences of the University of Sarajevo and at medresas (Muslim secondary schools) throughout the country.



A US-funded parliamentary internship program gave talented young Bosnians the opportunity to serve as interns in the country's state and entity-level parliaments, helping them gain valuable leadership skills and work experience. US assistance was used to reform the way parliamentarians and their staff carry out lawmaking and oversight duties. US grants assisted in building NGO capacity, developing communities, funding NGO Resource Centers, and promoting volunteerism to assist persons who were underserved by the government. US-funded health projects focused on disease prevention, formation of a home-care medical team, and education and prevention programs related to women's health.

US Government assistance strengthened the rule of law and judicial institutions in particular. With US financial, technical, and political support, the country made significant strides in developing its capacity to investigate and try war crimes cases as well as cases involving official corruption, tax evasion, and money laundering. Intensive training programs for police, prosecutors, and judges increased skills in subjects such as crime scene investigation, chain of custody, and searches and seizures while providing a mechanism for open dialogue between law enforcement and the judiciary. US funds supported the publication of a comprehensive reference on war crimes cases and convictions and provided prosecutors and judges the opportunity to travel to The Hague to interact with their counterparts at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. US assistance to help the government fight corruption paid dividends during the year, when the government convicted a former minister of justice and deputy interior minister of forgery and abuse of office for making fraudulent bank loans. Another politician who had been a member of the three-person presidency was also convicted for abuse of office. The government also obtained significant convictions in both indictments transferred to the country from the tribunal in The Hague and in war crimes indictments based upon Bosnian investigations.

Judicial reform received a further boost from the US-funded justice sector development program, which assisted the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council, the

oversight authority for the country's judicial system, on budgetary and appointment issues. The program also helped the state-level Ministry of Justice improve its ability to coordinate legal reform with entity-level institutions and NGOs. US-funded programs helped to improve court administration practices and reform the system for providing legal counsel to indigent defendants. The successful "model court" project was extended to eleven additional courts in the country to reduce case backlogs and improve efficiency and responsiveness to the public. The US Government also assisted a skills-based legal education reform program by providing two civil procedure legal clinics in law schools in Banja Luka and Bihac. US programs also improved efficiency and accountability in local governments. A joint US-Swedish governance accountability project continued improving the service and financial management profiles of 41 municipalities and their ability to respond effectively to citizens' needs. By year's end, 35 new municipal "one-stop shops" had been created throughout the country, enabling citizens and businesses to receive municipal permits more quickly, while simultaneously reducing corruption and discrimination against ethnic minorities.

The United States remained resolute in supporting efforts to address past human rights abuses in the country. Through US funding, the International Commission on Missing Persons continued to collect blood samples to help identify persons reported missing during the 1992-95 conflict. By year's end the commission had collected over 64,746 samples representing 22,226 missing individuals and had generated DNA matches relevant to 8,549 missing individuals. The commission also assisted authorities in carrying out 294 exhumations of mass or illicit gravesites in 145 locations, leading to the recovery of 342 complete and 1,093 incomplete sets of human remains. The commission also trained staff for the newly operational state-level Missing Persons Institute and provided forensic information as evidence in war crimes proceedings. The United States also continued to support the development of the Srebrenica-Potocari Memorial and Cemetery, where 2,442 of the estimated 7,800 victims of the Srebrenica massacre have been interred.



The United States actively supported initiatives to promote respect for the rights of women, children, persons with disabilities, and minority groups. One initiative provided funding to establish a centralized information center and registry of individuals officially categorized as “invalids,” thereby widening a network of support and improving public awareness for the needs of persons with disabilities. During the year the United States continued to facilitate the return of refugees and persons displaced by the 1992-95 conflict, the majority of whom were from ethnic minorities. US funding enabled the repair of vital local infrastructure, including the electrification of houses, and improved community-based government services in the areas to which these persons returned. The improvements were critical to helping returnees reestablish themselves as permanent residents in their communities. Working with the Bosnian Roma Council, the United States also funded a social research project to collect information on the social, economic, health, and education conditions of Romani citizens that would be used to help the government and NGOs modify regulations affecting Roma and improve their socio-economic status.

During the year state and entity-level authorities expanded antitrafficking efforts with US assistance. Local NGOs continued to implement a US-funded public awareness campaign targeting children and youth, victims of trafficking, potential consumers of sexual services, local authorities, and media professionals. The United States supported the national-level antitrafficking strike force with technical advice and training on the effective use of plea bargains. Prosecutors and police subsequently had several significant successes in trafficking cases. In October the government successfully prosecuted an individual for smuggling of persons, forgery, and aggravated theft. In November an appellate court affirmed a prior conviction for trafficking and money laundering and increased the sentence, imposing a fine and forfeiture of property. At year’s end government prosecutors were pursuing a trafficking case in court against 10 defendants, seeking confiscation of a nightclub, a hotel, and real estate as part of the indictment. These cases were among the first examples of prosecutors

confiscating property as an additional penalty for the crime of trafficking.

Georgia

Georgia’s constitution provides for an executive branch that reports to the president, a unicameral Parliament, and an independent judiciary. International observers determined that the 2004 presidential and parliamentary elections represented significant progress over previous elections and brought the country closer to meeting international standards, although several irregularities were noted. The government’s human rights record improved in some areas during the year, although serious problems remained. While the government took significant steps to address these problems, there were some reports of deaths due to excessive use of force by law enforcement officers; cases of torture and mistreatment of detainees; increased abuse of prisoners; impunity; continued overuse of pretrial detention for less serious offenses; worsened conditions in prisons and pretrial detention facilities; and lack of access for average citizens to defense attorneys. Other areas of concern included reports of government pressure on the judiciary and the media. Despite a reduction in widespread corruption and reforms led by the president, corruption remained a concern. The government continued to implement an ambitious program of governance reform, including in democratic institution building and the justice system, and took significant steps in other important areas such as adopting and implementing laws on antitrafficking and domestic violence. De facto authorities in the separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia remained outside the control of the central government; although ceasefires were in effect in both areas, incidents of violence occurred in both regions. Abkhaz de facto authorities restricted the rights of citizens to vote and failed to allow for the opening of a UN human rights office, the assignment of a UN civilian police force to the region, or the teaching of Georgian in predominantly ethnic Georgian regions.

The US strategy for promoting human rights and democracy continued to focus on democratic elec-



Young journalists in Georgia take a 'reporting tour' of the U.S. Embassy. (State Department photo)

tions and political processes; improved governance; fundamental freedoms; civil society; the rule of law, including an independent judiciary; human rights; and antitrafficking measures. US officials, including the secretary of state and members of Congress, consistently encouraged the government to continue efforts to promote democracy and human rights. The United States continued to work at the highest levels through the United Nations Observer Mission to Georgia, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and directly with the government to find a peaceful solution to the conflicts and promote human rights and democracy in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The US Government continued to urge Russia to use its influence in the separatist regions to achieve these goals. The US Government supported these efforts through expanded assistance activities in the separatist regions, including through exchange programs.

To promote democratic institutions and processes, the US Government advocated sweeping local government reform legislation that drastically consolidat-

ed the number of local government units, increased the transparency of central government budget transfers to local governments, and decentralized property ownership. Through a US-funded program, 14 cities held public hearings prior to producing and approving program budgets. As a result, citizen satisfaction with municipal services in those cities increased by 86 percent and fee collection rates doubled.

The October local elections represented the first nationwide elections since 2004; officials were elected to fill the new positions created by the local government reforms. Through diplomatic efforts and collaboration with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and civil society, the United States played a vital role in ensuring that these elections generally respected fundamental freedoms and reflected the will of the electorate. As the election approached, US officials encouraged the legislature to enact reforms to the election code and the Central Election Commission to launch a nationwide door-to-door campaign and create a digital archive to verify the voters list, which had been a serious problem in



previous elections. The United States supported the efforts of respected local NGOs to conduct pre-election monitoring, voter education programs, and develop voters' guides. US officials appeared on television shows and traveled throughout the country to speak about the importance of voting. High-level US officials visiting Tbilisi emphasized to the government that the conduct of the elections would be a litmus test of the country's democratic progress since the Rose Revolution. US-funded programs included domestic observers in every precinct, a parallel vote tabulation effort in the five largest cities, and observation teams of US officials in key precincts. Following the elections, the United States funded training of the newly elected local government officials in program budgeting, performance management, media relations, and economic development planning.

The United States provided the Parliament, the president, and the prime minister with assistance to promote improved governance. US Government assistance to the Parliament supported transparency, leadership skills, and improved oversight of the executive branch. Assistance also facilitated dialogue among opposition party factions; as a result, the opposition decided to end a boycott of plenary sessions. Workshops and technical assistance improved parliamentary rules and procedures, increasing transparency and strengthening democratic processes. Roundtables on proposed legislation resulted in improvements, such as a new labor code to replace the Soviet-era law. To strengthen political pluralism, the United States funded programs and worked with political party leaders to promote political party development. The US Government also provided assistance to women leaders to prepare them to run for elected office and positions within their political parties. Over 10 percent of the newly elected local government officials are women. To increase the transparency of the budget process, the US assisted the government in preparing the first citizen's guide to the state budget.

The United States continued to encourage the government to respect media freedoms and seek opportunities for constructive cooperation with the media. With encouragement from the United States, the government postponed adoption of a code of conduct

for broadcasters in order for additional stakeholders to comment and discuss the proposal. The United States sponsored a media development professional to train government spokespersons and graduate students. In addition, a US-sponsored English language fellow conducted a series of language training workshops for journalists and advised Tbilisi State University journalism faculty on development of an English language teaching curriculum. The United States funded several media development programs, including an international visitors program visit for regional print journalists and government spokespersons. US Democracy Commission grants supported projects aimed at improving independent journalism. A US-funded working tour taught television journalists from the Autonomous Republic of Ajara about freedom of the press, market economics, small business development, and international journalism standards. US travel grants also enabled journalists to work on antitrafficking and human rights issues. The United States continued to sponsor the Caucasus School of Journalism and Media Management at the Georgian Institute for Public Affairs.

The United States continued to promote a strong civil society through development grants to local NGOs. Such grants included assistance to establish youth clubs, educate first time voters, and support ecological clubs. Through Democracy Commission grants to local NGOs, the United States supported civic activism, multicultural awareness, ethnic integration, Georgian-language instruction, and conflict resolution.

US Government officials in the country regularly met community leaders, civil society groups, and local government leaders in regions with large ethnic minorities including in Kvemo-Kartli, Samtskhe-Javakheti, and the Pankisi Gorge. To support development of civil society, the United States worked with NGOs in Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo-Kartli to organize capacity building seminars, social outreach programs, and networking opportunities with domestic and international NGOs. Civic education programs supported the development of innovative extracurricular teaching in civic values and responsibilities for youth. Through television, print interviews, and other public



diplomacy opportunities throughout the country, the United States actively encouraged the government to include ethnic minorities in the country's political, economic, and social development.

The United States continued to promote rule of law and human rights. US funding supported a rule of law program that increased public awareness of legal rights and assisted in the reform of the legal system, including the establishment of the Georgian Bar Association and its adoption of a code of professional ethics. US Government assistance led to the creation and implementation of a judicial qualification exam system and increased use of bail as a pretrial detention alternative. With US encouragement, the government adopted reforms of the High Council of Justice to strengthen judicial independence and opened a training school for newly appointed judges. US officials marked Human Rights Day by hosting a film festival for university students highlighting the role of the judiciary in protecting human rights. The United States supported the finalization of a new criminal procedure code that codified human rights

protections. A landmark judicial conference brought together 30 prominent judges from across the region and 13 US and international experts to discuss strengthening judicial independence in all three South Caucasus countries.

The United States continued to support the country's successful ongoing efforts in battling corruption, and torture and abuse of detainees by law enforcement officers through the provision of expertise and training at all levels of the law enforcement community on professional and ethical standards. The country received high marks from the World Bank and other observers as it continued its aggressive anticorruption campaign. With US support, the government began construction of a new police academy facility with dormitory space to house officers in extended training from all regions of the country. The United States also supported the upgrading of the main forensics lab, as well as five regional evidence collection centers to analyze and preserve evidence and promote effective law enforcement that would respect human rights. Through the use of roundtables with judges,



Georgian man and his daughter in Tbilisi view a copy of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on Human Rights Day. (State Department photo)



government officials, and law enforcement officers, US assistance facilitated the adoption of the country's first-ever law against domestic violence.

The separatist authorities in Abkhazia continued to prevent repatriation of approximately 234,000 internally displaced persons, and the de facto authorities of South Ossetia continued to obstruct repatriation of approximately 13,000 ethnic Georgians. The United States regularly worked with the government, international organizations, NGOs, and internally displaced persons to examine the potential for conflict mitigation and recovery assistance. The US Government provided follow-on funding to further refine and expand on the housing voucher pilot program to move displaced families living in public-use facilities to safe, standard, and legal housing. As a testament to its success, the government included the housing voucher program as a component of its new national strategy on internally displaced persons. The US also funded a local NGO to help implement the newly-passed restitution law for South Ossetia.

Despite a continued decrease in reports of violence against minority religious communities, several groups reported intimidation by fellow citizens, prompting continued US Government engagement on behalf of religious freedom. With US support, the prosecutor general's office regularly investigated and prosecuted claims of religious persecution. US officials met with representatives of a wide spectrum of religious groups to discuss the effective protection of religious freedom and reiterated to the government the need for religious and ethnic minorities to play a role in the social and political development of the country.

In the fight against human trafficking, US officials in the country met weekly with officials in the prosecutor general's office and other agencies to promote government efforts against trafficking. US officials also met regularly with officials from the general prosecutor's office and the Ministry of Internal Affairs to promote antitrafficking efforts and to train members of the special operations division in the ministry and officials from the prosecutor general's office on victim identification and the apprehension and investigation of traffickers. US assistance sup-

ported the development of the Law on the Fight against Human Trade (Trafficking), which entered into force in June. US assistance also helped to raise public awareness on trafficking issues through the creation of a variety of printed and visual materials with antitrafficking messages; to train representatives of the ombudsman's office, NGOs, judges, airport personnel, and other professionals on antitrafficking issues; to provide legal aid and to establish a shelter for trafficking victims; and to improve mechanisms for victim protection.

Moldova

Moldova is a parliamentary republic with power divided among a president, a cabinet, a unicameral parliament, and the judiciary. In 1990 separatist elements supported by Russian military forces declared a "Transdniester Moldovan Republic," which lies east of the Dniester River along the border with Ukraine. This authoritarian, secessionist regime continues to control Transnistria today. Unless otherwise stated, all references that follow exclude the secessionist region. Parliamentary elections in March 2005 generally complied with most international standards for democratic elections. The following month parliament reelected Communist Party leader Vladimir Voronin to serve a second term as president. The government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, there were problems in some areas. Security forces beat persons in custody, there was incommunicado detention, and prison conditions remained harsh. Other problems included harassment and intimidation of select political opposition figures by the authorities and widespread corruption throughout society and government, particularly in the law enforcement and judicial sectors. Security forces monitored political figures through unauthorized wiretaps. There was intimidation of journalists, and the government's attempts to privatize two municipal broadcasters, Antena-C and EURO-TV, sparked international criticism. Several religious groups continued to have problems obtaining official registration. Societal violence and discrimination against women, children, and Roma persisted. Trafficking in persons remained



a serious problem, although the government took steps to address some aspects of the problem.

The human rights record of the Transnistrian authorities remained poor. The right of citizens to change their government was restricted, and authorities interfered with the ability of residents to vote. On September 17, authorities conducted a referendum on the region's independence and future accession to Russia. Authorities claimed that a large majority of Transnistria's voters supported the proposal; however, the referendum was not monitored by independent observers. On December 10, elections for "president" of Transnistria returned the incumbent, Igor Smirnov, to power. However, the election was marked by problems, and as with previous elections in the separatist region, voting was not monitored by internationally recognized observers and results could not be independently verified. Transnistrian authorities continued to use torture, arbitrary arrest, and detention, and prison conditions remained harsh. They also harassed independent media and opposition lawmakers, restricted freedom of association and of religion, and discriminated against Romanian speakers and Romanian-language schools that used Latin-alphabet textbooks for teaching.

The US strategy for promoting human rights in the country continued to focus on strengthening the rule of law, good governance, and independent media; encouraging an active civil society; curbing corruption; and combating trafficking in persons by enhancing the government's law enforcement and victim-protection efforts. The US Government also worked closely with EU countries on programs to help improve the country's prospects for future EU membership. In addition, the US Government cooperated with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) on efforts to peacefully resolve the conflict in Transnistria. The US Government also expanded its efforts to promote the growth of democratic civil society in the separatist region.

US democracy assistance in Transnistria, although limited, continued to reach out to civil society activists who remain committed to democratic principles and encouraged interaction between the separatist re-

gion and the rest of the country. Programs included educational and professional exchanges and training, support for a legal aid clinic, and efforts to promote democratic institutions at the local level.

With regard to the Transnistrian conflict, the United States worked through the OSCE and directly with the government and other mediators to help resolve the situation in a manner that respects the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of Moldova. At international fora, the US Government continued to stress that separatist authorities in Tiraspol should agree to an exchange of military information, the monitoring of Transnistria's military-industrial enterprises, and an international assessment that would facilitate free and fair elections. In addition, the United States urged the authorities to resolve the plight of farmers who have been denied access to their fields and to rescind a decree that prohibits NGOs in the separatist region from receiving funding from external sources.

To promote democracy and the country's political process, the US Government played a key role to ensure that elections in December for governor of the autonomous Gagauzia territory in the southern part of the country complied with international standards. During the election campaign, US officials and their EU counterparts repeatedly urged the government to conduct fair elections and to allow equal campaign opportunities for all candidates. US-sponsored assistance programs provided support and technical assistance to NGOs to support voter-education campaigns, to provide training for members of elections commissions, and to conduct media and election monitoring. US officials met with Gagauz authorities, candidates, and election officials prior to, during, and after two rounds of voting on December 3 and 17. Both OSCE and Council of Europe observers stated that the elections were held in a calm and orderly manner and complied with most international standards. During the year US-sponsored assistance programs in Gagauzia helped develop leadership and democratic initiatives at the grass-roots level by helping citizens build coalitions, local democratic party structures, and policy platforms.



US-sponsored exchange visits for members of parliament gave them an opportunity to meet with their Latvian and Lithuanian counterparts to learn firsthand about building democratic institutions and how to integrate into European structures. In addition, the United States supported programs to assist parliament in developing information systems that allow legislators to research laws and to communicate more effectively with each other and with the public.

The US Government promoted media freedom and freedom of speech through direct diplomatic efforts and through programs involving the country's media, including exchanges, grants, and training courses for journalists on freedom of the press, speech and professional journalistic standards. US officials urged government authorities to ensure that reforms in the country's broadcast sector lead to tangible improvements, and to properly implement a new broadcast code that regulates the activity of private television and radio stations, the government-controlled public broadcaster Teleradio Moldova, and the Audiovisual Coordinating Council. The United States also called on parliament to ensure that the members of Teleradio Moldova's supervisory board be selected in a transparent manner that is based on merit and professional experience. US officials urged municipal authorities involved in the privatization of two Chisinau public broadcasting stations, Radio Antena-C and Euro-TV, to ensure that the outlets continue to operate free of government pressure and influence.

During the year many independent media outlets received US grants for projects to increase their independence and to promote pluralism in news reporting. For example, during the year US media experts traveled to the country to work with the Independent Press Association on improving newspaper marketing and with several television stations on upgrading management skills. In addition, the US Democracy Commission's small grants program helped support efforts to promote independent media, increase public access to libraries and data bases, and provide training in citizenship and community support.

In the autonomous Gagauzia region, US grants helped to restore the operation of a local television

station and to consolidate the partnership established between NGOs and local media. With regard to Transnistria, the US ambassador hosted a roundtable for seven Transnistrian journalists, which was well received as an enhancement of the dialogue between the United States and residents of the separatist region. The US Government supported an independent radio station in Ribnitsa, which broadcast programs on the development of civil society in partnership with NGOs in Transnistria, and provided a grant to an NGO from Tiraspol to train 16 young journalists on how to report social issues.

The US Government directly supported NGOs and civil society through its Community Connections program, which brings residents of Eurasian countries to the United States. During the year 69 midlevel Moldovan professionals traveled to the United States for up to five weeks to observe best practices in the fields of health, education, and social assistance, and transparency in government.

The United States supported several efforts to promote the rule of law and combat corruption and engaged senior government officials on the need to seriously address corruption. In December US and Moldovan officials signed a two-year agreement for a program designed to reduce persistent corruption in the judiciary, the health care system, and the tax, customs, and law enforcement agencies. The program, which will help reform and strengthen the government's primary anticorruption agency, the Center for Combating Economic Crimes and Corruption, builds on US efforts begun in 2005. It will provide management expertise, technical assistance, and training to the center and to the prosecutor general's office with the goal of fighting corruption and increasing the effectiveness of general law enforcement and the government's antitrafficking efforts. The United States helped the government to adopt a so-called guillotine law, which eliminated 189 costly regulations, reduced opportunities for corruption, and made it easier to start and operate a business. The US Government also issued 10 grants to NGOs to promote academic integrity in educational institutions by involving students and faculty members in the development, discussion, and implementation of honor codes.



During the year the United States continued to press its concerns for religious freedom in the country, in particular urging the government to register several religious organizations that had been denied registration by the State Service for Religions. In December the state service, responding to a high court ruling, registered the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, ending its six-year legal struggle to obtain government recognition. In January the US ambassador hosted a religious liberty reception, to which he invited government officials and leaders of religious organizations active in country. At the reception, he encouraged minority religions to seek the rights enshrined in international human rights covenants and urged the government to continue its progress in registering religious organizations.

During the year the US ambassador and other officials continued to emphasize the importance of combating trafficking in persons. A US Government antitrafficking initiative endorsed by President Bush provided support to create a network of transitional living and educational facilities to reduce the risk that vulnerable young persons and former trafficking victims may fall prey to trafficking. The United States also funded several programs to address the economic roots of trafficking by improving access to counseling, job training, and legitimate employment opportunities. The US Government continued to support the work of the Center for the Prevention of Trafficking in Women, which cooperated with the government to investigate trafficking cases, prosecute traffickers, establish data bases, and provide legal counseling and representation for trafficking victims.

Russia

The Russian Federation has a weak multiparty political system with a strong presidency, a government headed by a prime minister, and a bicameral legislature consisting of a lower house (State Duma) and an upper house (Federation Council). President Vladimir Putin was re-elected in 2004 in an election process the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) determined did not adequately reflect principles necessary for a healthy democratic election, par-

ticularly in equal access to the media by all candidates and secrecy of the ballot. However, the voting itself was relatively free of manipulation, and the outcome was generally understood to have represented the will of the people. The most notable human rights developments during the year were the killings of the Central Bank's pro-reform deputy chairman and of journalist Anna Politkovskaya. Continuing centralization of power in the executive branch, a compliant State Duma, political pressure on the judiciary, corruption and selectivity in enforcement of the law, continuing media restrictions and self-censorship, and government pressure on opposition political parties eroded the public accountability of government leaders.

Security forces were involved in additional significant human rights problems, including alleged government involvement in politically motivated abductions, disappearances, and unlawful killings in Chechnya and elsewhere in the North Caucasus; hazing in the armed forces that resulted in severe injuries and deaths; torture, violence, and other brutal or humiliating treatment by security forces; harsh and frequently life-threatening prison conditions; corruption in law enforcement; and arbitrary arrest and detention. The executive branch allegedly influenced judicial decisions in certain high-profile cases. Government pressure continued to weaken freedom of expression and media independence, particularly of major national networks. Media freedom declined due to restrictions as well as harassment, intimidation, and killing of journalists. Local authorities continued to limit freedom of assembly and restrict religious groups in some regions.

There were also reports of societal discrimination, harassment, and violence against members of some religious minorities and incidents of anti-Semitism. Authorities restricted freedom of movement and exhibited negative attitudes toward, and sometimes harassed, NGOs involved in human rights monitoring. Also notable was the passage and entry into force of a new law on NGOs, which had some adverse effects on their operations. There was widespread governmental and societal discrimination as well as racially motivated attacks against minorities and dark-skinned immigrants, including the outbreak



of violence against Chechens in the northwest and the initiation of a government campaign to selectively harass and deport ethnic Georgians. Xenophobic, racial, and ethnic attacks, and hate crimes were on the rise. There were also instances of attacks on Jews and Jewish institutions. Violence against women and children, trafficking in persons, and instances of forced labor were also reported.

The US human rights and democracy strategy in the country focused on promoting democratic institutions and processes, a vibrant civil society, the rule of law, human rights, independent media, and antitrafficking measures. A range of senior US officials, including the president, secretary of state, national security advisor, and under secretary of state for political affairs, raised human rights and democracy concerns with their Russian counterparts. Early in the year, the assistant secretary for democracy, human rights and labor visited Moscow to discuss the NGO law with civil society groups, members of the State Duma, and government officials. In April the under secretary of state for political affairs met with civil society leaders on the state of democracy in the country. In July within the framework of the G-8 Summit, President Bush hosted a roundtable of civil society and NGO leaders. Also in July senior US officials participated in the “Other Russia” gathering for independent civil society; the assistant secretary for democracy, human rights, and labor and the assistant secretary for European and Eurasian affairs attended and during the year also met with NGO and democratic opposition representatives in the US and elsewhere. In October Secretary Rice and the ambassador met with editorial staff at the Novostal Gazeta newspaper to discuss the state of independent media in the country following the murder of Politkovskaya, one of its leading journalists.

To promote free and fair elections, the United States continued to provide programmatic and technical support to a Russian election watchdog organization, nonpartisan training for political parties, and training for mass media representatives on covering political issues and engaging with the public about the role of free media in an open, competitive political system. With US support, NGOs continued to monitor the

work of deputies in regional legislatures, encouraging interaction between constituents and their elected officials and promoting good governance. Sixteen US-supported coalitions of business associations united more than 170 associations nationwide; these groups won at least 30 legislative changes in various regions of the country. The ambassador met with the head of the Central Election Commission and with political party leaders, including opposition leaders, throughout the year to emphasize the need for transparent and fair elections.

US political party institutes conducted polling to help political parties, civic organizations, and citizen groups understand and be more responsive to their constituents, foster greater citizen participation in the political process, and strengthen links among parties, citizen groups, and constituents. In May over 250 volunteers from a US-supported NGO conducted activities in 31 regions to increase citizens’ awareness of the electoral amendments made in 2005 and stimulate interest in elections. A major nonpartisan group observed regional elections in October; in one region, local monitors maintained a public hot line and provided information to the public about election laws against the abuse of public resources by candidates with ties to the government.

Media freedom in the country was a continuing concern during the year and was publicly raised by the secretary of state and the ambassador in October following the murder of Politkovskaya. The United States worked to strengthen journalism in the country, organizing international visitors leadership programs for journalists on public policy to advance the role for journalists in the policy dialogue. The United States also contributed to journalism education through a visitors program on broadcast news to coincide with the International Symposium on Online Journalism, as well as through the three-year Moscow State University-University of Missouri Columbia partnership in journalism and the Fulbright Summer Institute in Journalism. In addition, journalists across the country participated in the Open World visitor program. With US funding, four media experts visited the country to address various aspects of journalism with Russian audiences.



The United States worked to strengthen regional broadcast media and to improve access to nongovernment information sources. More than 2,700 broadcast journalists participated in US-supported training, conferences, and competitions on professional standards, socially responsible journalism, production best practices, and media business development. US support helped create conditions for an independent association of newspaper publishers to advocate on behalf of its members and for the media lawyers' association to help protect the editorial freedom of news outlets from external pressure. In May a US-supported NGO co-hosted a regional festival in Moscow to encourage socially responsible journalism.

US officials raised concerns about and closely monitored the implementation of the controversial new NGO legislation that came into effect during the year and resulted in increased government scrutiny of many foreign and domestic NGOs. Senior US officials, including the president and the ambassador, met with NGO and civil society representatives to underscore the importance of their work. In September the US Government signed a three-year agreement with an NGO in the country to implement a legal support program to help NGOs meet the requirements of the new law and improve laws governing NGOs.

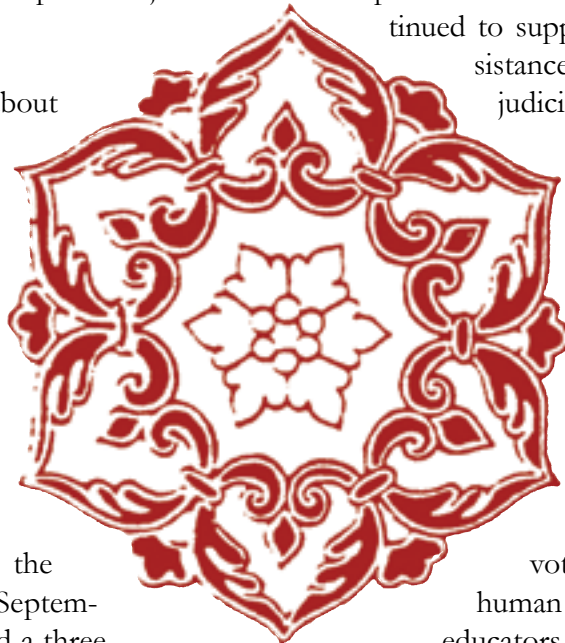
US-funded NGO networks in Siberia and the Volga, Far East, and Southern regions continued competitive grant-making programs with governors. Forty-five local governments developed and implemented more transparent governance models under a US-supported program, including community-based strategic planning, training for over 2,057 local officials and NGO leaders in public policy development, and adoption of more than a dozen policies and procedures that improved the economic environment in the regions. US programs also provided technical assistance and

grant support to civil society groups, NGO resource centers, advocacy and watchdog groups, policy think tanks, business associations, and labor unions. With US funding, NGOs promoted volunteerism and community service, advocated for citizens' rights, and fought corruption. Grant programs supported 500 grassroots civic initiatives in Siberia, Samara, and the south of the country. Through US programs, approximately 6,500 young persons voluntarily participated in more than 100 community service projects. During the past year more than 20 government bodies in Siberia introduced competitive grant procedures.

To promote the rule of law, the United States continued to support exchange and technical assistance programs aimed at bolstering judicial independence, ethical conduct, transparency, and professionalism. Nearly 120 government officials, political activists, NGO representatives, and business leaders involved in community development traveled to the United States as part of Open World's accountable governance visitor program. Two Democracy Commission grants were devoted to increasing rule-of-law and human rights awareness among youth, educators, and law enforcement officials.

US funding sponsored six judges as they spent a week observing federal and state court programs in San Diego to rehabilitate juveniles, drug users, and spouse abusers. In September five judges visited Oklahoma to examine the fundamentals of trial tactics and the role of prosecutors. Other US programs continued to support legal clinics, defend the rights of women, labor, and migrants, and develop NGO advocacy skills related to legal rights.

The United States supported the continued implementation of the country's 2002 Code of Criminal Procedure, which provides for jury trials for certain categories of serious crimes, mandates the exclusion of illegally obtained evidence, sets stricter standards for pretrial detention, and requires judicial approval





for wiretapping and searches of residences. The United States also provided trial advocacy training to prosecutors and defense lawyers. Judicial independence and reform programs led to the promulgation of self-defined standards of judicial ethical conduct and a commitment to publish the results of commercial court decisions. US funding of one city's anticorruption coalition helped to foster public awareness of corruption. The coalition produced anticorruption television spots, hosted an annual week-long anticorruption festival, advised on loopholes in draft legislation, and publicly evaluated local officials on their activities.

The gravest violations of human rights continued to take place in Chechnya and other areas of the North Caucasus. Senior US officials expressed concern to government leaders about the conduct of Russian security services and the government of the Chechen Republic, which was linked to abductions and disappearances of civilians. In meetings with federal and local officials during a visit to the North Caucasus in December, the ambassador conveyed US concerns and expressed US willingness to assist in ways that promote respect for the rule of law. US officials met frequently with human rights NGOs to discuss the situation in Chechnya and to show support for the work of those organizations. They traveled to Chechnya, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, and North Ossetia-Alania to assess the humanitarian situation as well as the potential to provide conflict mitigation and recovery assistance. US officials also regularly met with officials from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and persons displaced by the conflict to ensure that those who returned to Chechnya did so voluntarily or had the alternative of staying in Ingushetia. The United States supported legal assistance to displaced persons through the UN and an NGO that assisted thousands of displaced persons in the North Caucasus. The United States funded international humanitarian assistance programs that addressed the needs of displaced persons in the North Caucasus and supported the strengthening of civil society in the region.

The United States continued to support a wide range of human rights activities. US officials in the country

attended the second All-Russia Human Rights Congress in December. In January a community organization working on a US-supported project opened the first women's crisis center in the Far East city of Blagoveshchensk to provide counseling and support to victims of trafficking and domestic violence and training for psychologists and regional officials. The United States also continued working to promote the rights of the disabled and children. A US-supported advocacy organization worked with 15 NGOs in the country to improve their advocacy efforts and improve the rights for the disabled. The United States supported seminars on the rights of persons with disabilities for thousands of government and educational officials, community leaders, media representatives, and lawyers. In November a US-supported network of disability rights NGOs hosted its third international film festival, "Breaking Down Barriers," in Moscow, raising public awareness of the needs and lives of persons with disabilities.

Senior US officials, including the ambassador, maintained an active dialogue with government officials, NGOs, and religious denominations on freedom of religion and religious, racial, and ethnic tolerance. US officials condemned attacks on religious minorities and their places of worship and met with country officials at multiple levels to urge them to hold accountable those responsible and to condemn such attacks publicly. The ambassador publicly deplored the January attack on one of Moscow's synagogues. The US Democracy Commission program gave grants to five NGOs working to improve interethnic and interreligious tolerance. The US international visitor program sent religious and community leaders, scholars, journalists, and regional government officials to the United States for three weeks to study community activism in promoting a tolerant society. A US speaker program in Vladivostok focused on various aspects of tolerance, including interfaith relations and multicultural themes. In April a US-supported program facilitated dialogues in Ivanovo, Kostroma, and Moscow among religious leaders in an effort to increase interfaith communication and understanding and expose local university students to tolerance issues. In June the US Commission on International Religious Freedom visited the country to discuss religious free-



dom with government officials, NGOs, and religious leaders.

US support continued for a nationwide association of labor lawyers and advocates operating legal centers in eight cities that provided workers, trade unions, and their members with expert legal advice on labor contract issues. During the year the centers represented the interests of over 1,700 individuals and 35 unions in 713 court hearings; the hearings resulted in 243 decisions, two-thirds of which were in favor of labor. The lawyers also consulted with workers and trade unions on more than 5,400 occasions and prepared over 2,500 documents (complaints, appeals, etc.). The centers organized 34 seminars and roundtables that drew 343 participants.

To assist the country in combating trafficking in persons, the United States worked closely with the Ministry of Internal Affairs to train police and prosecutors on methods to investigate and prosecute human trafficking cases using a victim-centered approach and worked closely with a US NGO to develop a trafficking investigation manual for policemen on the street. US and local law enforcement agencies held two bilateral law enforcement conferences to promote closer cooperation in human trafficking cases, including the development of witness protection, victim assistance, and legislation to better address child trafficking and pornography. The United States, working closely with the human trafficking working group of the State Duma and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, sponsored referral mechanism conferences throughout the country to encourage closer cooperation between police and NGOs on trafficking cases; this resulted in the creation of formal written agreements between police and NGOs in two cities during the year.

US officials also worked with the presidential administration and the Ministry of Internal Affairs to develop implementing regulations for the country's new witness protection program. During the year the program protected over 500 witnesses, including a small number of trafficking victims. The United States supported antitrafficking NGOs throughout the country that provided assistance to victims and trained police on trafficking issues. The US Government partial-

ly funded a number of such NGOs through small grants programs and incorporated them into training programs for police and local government officials. During the year more than 4,000 people participated in antitrafficking street fairs as part of the US-funded "PATH to success!" program. These large-scale activities helped raise public awareness about trafficking and the associated risks. In October more than 60 teachers participated in a US-sponsored event at a Khabarovsk conference on preventing trafficking by developing positive values among youths.

Serbia

The Republic of Serbia is a parliamentary democracy with a multiparty government led by Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica. Boris Tadic was elected president in June 2004 elections that observers deemed essentially in line with international standards. In a referendum on October 29 and 30, voters approved a new constitution. According to the election commission, turnout was nearly 55 percent, and 53 percent of voters supported the new constitution, although some human rights groups disputed the results. The government generally respected the human rights of its citizens and continued efforts to address human rights violations; however, numerous problems persisted. The following human rights problems were reported: widespread corruption in the police and the judiciary; impunity; inefficient and lengthy trials; government failure to cooperate with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in apprehending war crimes suspects; government failure to initiate new domestic investigations and prosecutions of war crimes from the 1990s; harassment of journalists, human rights workers and others critical of the government; arbitrary arrest and selective enforcement of the law for political purposes; limitations on freedom of speech and religion, including a problematic new law on religion; societal intolerance and discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities; the presence of large numbers of internally displaced persons; violence against women and children; and trafficking in persons.



US human rights and democracy goals in the country included encouraging full participation in free and fair national elections and greater protection of human rights. During the year the United States promoted democracy and human rights by supporting democratic institutions and practices, encouraging transparency and accountability in government, endorsing respect for the rule of law, and seeking justice for perpetrators of war crimes and organized crime.

During the year the United States helped fund training for and directly engaged political party leaders, thereby building the capacity of democratic parties to serve and represent citizens, formulate and implement reform agendas, move toward an issue-based political dialogue, and mount fair and transparent election campaigns. US programs worked with women activists and youth, helped strengthen the role of parliamentary committees and party caucuses, and trained organizations on polling strategies. The United States also provided technical assistance and training to build the capacity, accountability, and transparency of municipal governments. US officials urged central government officials to promote greater decentralization in order to foster more participatory and representative democracy.

The United States provided training, technical assistance, exchanges, and grant support to increase media professionalism and competitiveness. During the year the United States supported the production of reports on topics such as the Kosovo status talks, integration with the European Union, unemployment, job opportunities, and starting new businesses. US assistance enabled the production of a film series entitled “A View from the Other Side,” which examined the lives of families in Serbia and Kosovo. Approximately 250 journalists participated in US-sponsored media training programs in the country, and the United States hosted teams of journalists for training, internships, and non-degree study. US assistance also helped train ethnic minority media professionals in news production and electronic media.

The United States actively supported the continued development of a vibrant civil society by working closely with a variety of NGOs to increase institu-

tional effectiveness and sustainability. US grants supported NGO educational programs on war crimes, domestic violence, minorities, government transparency, and corruption. One US program supported the development of civil society in preparation for the October constitutional referendum and elections scheduled for January 2007.

The United States assisted in building respect for the rule of law and domestic capacity to try war crimes in the country through training programs to improve the professional capacity of the police, prosecutors, and judges who oversee war crimes cases. A US-organized trial monitoring program for war crimes cases helped identify and resolve legal and technical issues that arose during such trials. The United States also provided training and technical assistance to magistrates, judges, prosecutors, and law enforcement officers to promote a more independent, transparent, and efficient judicial system. The United States continued training programs and study tours in the US aimed at preventing money laundering and corruption and strengthening witness protection programs. Visitor exchanges during the year proved to be an invaluable tool for educating government and judicial officials about the US judicial system and methods of judicial reform. The United States helped law schools establish courses on legal ethics and provided technical assistance to the country’s commercial courts.

The United States pressed the government to prevent and respond appropriately to attacks against ethnic minorities, increase ethnic tolerance, and promote reconciliation within society. The United States supported a university campaign designed to increase tolerance and interethnic dialogue and funded exchange visits focused on managing diversity in a multiethnic society and minority political participation. US officials also met with government representatives to urge changes in a new religion law that favored some religious groups over others.

During the year the United States trained and equipped police, prosecutors, and judges to help them combat trafficking more effectively. In September a reintegration center for trafficking victims, partially funded through US assistance, was opened. Another US pro-



gram trained roughly half of the country's magistrates on dealing with domestic violence and trafficking in persons. The United States also funded public awareness campaigns and supported the establishment of a family violence hotline.

KOSOVO

Kosovo has a population of approximately 2.2 million and is administered by the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo pursuant to UN Security Council Resolution 1244 of 1999; government services are largely provided to the population by the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government. International and domestic observers determined that the 2004 Kosovo Assembly elections generally reflected the will of the voters, although less than five percent of Kosovo Serbs participated. The UN mission and the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government generally respected the human rights of Kosovo's residents; however, there were problems in some areas, particularly relating to minority populations. The most serious of these were cases of politically and ethnically motivated killings; death and injuries from unexploded ordnance or landmines, many left over from the 1998-99 conflict; lengthy pretrial detention and lack of judicial due process; corruption and government interference in the judiciary; societal antipathy against Serbs and the Serbian Orthodox Church; lack of progress in returning internally displaced persons to their homes; official corruption; violence and discrimination against women; trafficking in persons, particularly girls and women for sexual exploitation; societal violence, abuse, and discrimination against minority communities; societal discrimination against persons with disabilities; abuse of homosexuals; and child labor in the informal sector.

The US strategy for promoting human rights in Kosovo focused on aiding Kosovo's transition to a stable, democratic society on a path to Euro-Atlantic integration. During a period of rapid institutional transformation, and as some competencies for justice and rule of law were transferred from the UN mission to Kosovo authorities, the United States worked to strengthen transparency, institutional accountability, understanding of and respect for the rule of

law and the rights of minorities and obligations of all citizens. The US Government worked closely with the international community, including the UN, the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, NGOs, and local government officials, to foster democratic and accountable institutions in Kosovo. In coordination with local and international agencies, the US Government assisted the UN mission in monitoring, protecting, and promoting human rights.

The US-sponsored local government and municipal infrastructure and support initiatives provided training and technical assistance to municipalities to promote their financial self-sustainability, transparency, and accountability and to enhance good governance and effective citizen participation. The United States worked to create the conditions that would facilitate the return of internally displaced persons and refugees who fled Kosovo during the 1998-99 conflict and the 2004 riots. At the request of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government, the United States provided advisors to the Office of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Finance on macroeconomic policy, budgeting, legislative drafting, organization, management, and public relations.

The United States also promoted democracy in Kosovo by providing political support and technical assistance to help local governments pass and implement legislation and encourage a constructive opposition in the Kosovo Assembly. As a result of continued US encouragement, political parties used polling and constituent research data to make timely policy and strategic decisions and better represent constituents' views. To encourage greater participation by Kosovo Serbs, the majority of whom boycotted participation in local institutions, the United States supported minority political parties and encouraged them to play a more effective representational role in Kosovo's political life. Several Assembly committees received expert advice and staff support in an ongoing effort to monitor the implementation of parliamentary and governmental decisions for alignment with budgetary realities. At the request of Assembly members, the United States provided training on the Assembly's rules of procedure and discussed how to protect the

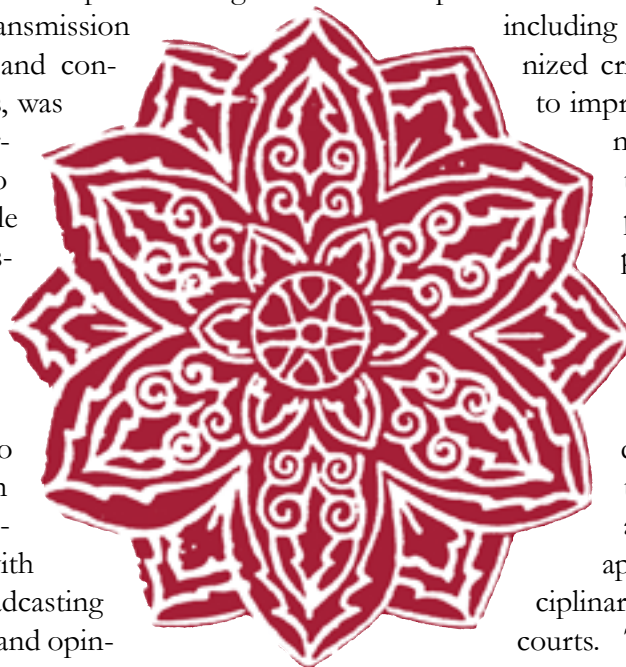


rights of opposition and minority parties and ensure achievement of public policy objectives.

The United States promoted media freedom by providing training to print and broadcast media on professional journalism and assistance that enhanced the media's ability to cover often complex matters of public interest. During the year the United States further reduced its direct subsidy to the media, while providing assistance for business planning, increasing the use of audience research and targeting, and encouraging professional and trade associations to represent both media interests and the public at large.

The Kosovo Terrestrial Transmission Network, a project funded and constructed by the United States, was transformed into a commercial network, enabling it to maintain independence while attracting investment necessary for it to continue providing Kosovo-wide television and radio services. With US Government technical guidance, the Kosovo Assembly passed legislation that established an Independent Media Commission with a mandate to maintain broadcasting that represents diverse views and opinions, improve public media accountability, and support the new regulatory body governing the licensing and operation of broadcast media. The United States supported efforts by the Association of Independent Broadcasters of Kosovo and the Association of Professional Journalists of Kosovo to make libel and defamation civil rather than criminal offenses and to change customs restrictions on the importation of media equipment and content.

Recognizing that the development of civil society will influence Kosovo's democratic development, the United States assisted civil society by helping to bring together networks of like-minded organizations and by supporting training, management, and grant-making efforts to help civil society organizations define their future roles in Kosovo.



Strengthening the rule of law remained a key US priority for ensuring a stable, democratic future with efficient and transparent legal structures. The US Government initiated and funded a project to publish quarterly issues of all Supreme Court decisions, thereby promoting transparency and accountability. Working with the UN mission and the European Union, the United States also assisted in designing and funding an initiative to vet judges and prosecutors to raise the quality and professionalism of the justice sector. The United States placed a legal advisor at the newly established Special Prosecutor's Office to mentor and

train prosecutors handling serious crime cases, including human trafficking and organized crime. Other US-led projects to improve the quality of the criminal justice system included initiatives to strengthen witness protection and introduce plea bargaining. The United States and European countries assisted the creation of the organizational and legal framework for an independent judiciary through the Kosovo Judicial Council, a professional body which appoints judges, exercises disciplinary action and administers the courts. The United States also supported efforts to pass legislation that

would align the local legal system with international standards. U S assistance extended as well to institutions such as the Chamber of Advocates, the Public Prosecutors Association, and the University of Pristina Law School in the form of continuing legal education and professional development for lawyers, the establishment of a legal clinic, and the construction of a student courtroom at the law school. Working with the European Agency for Reconstruction, the United States provided recommendations on court administration, which were adopted by the UN mission's Department of Justice, to support the establishment of the new justice ministry as local authorities assumed more responsibilities from the UN mission.



In collaboration with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the United States played a significant role in developing the capacity of the Kosovo Police Service. The effort led to the training of 8,300 officers and the development of a range of police training programs. The joint project also created a functioning local institution, the Center for Public Safety Education and Development, which was charged with public safety education and developing professional standards for police.

The United States actively encouraged the creation of an open and safe climate for the return of persons who fled Kosovo following the 1998-99 conflict and the 2004 interethnic riots. US officials publicly urged the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government to continue the Red Cross-led Belgrade-Pristina dialogue to help resolve the fate of an estimated 2,200 persons missing since 1999. The United States provided funds to identify new gravesites and exhume and identify remains. The United States continued to emphasize its commitment to a multiethnic Kosovo through robust conflict mitigation programs. Economic and social infrastructure projects strengthened cooperation among municipal leaders and minority communities. US-funded projects in 16 communities instructed over 700 local leaders and police officers how to prevent and manage conflict. Support to NGOs enhanced interethnic dialogue and built a constituency for policies promoting reconciliation. During the year the United States provided advocacy and funding for the UN mission's efforts to relocate hundreds of displaced Roma in northern Kosovo away from lead-contaminated camps and provide treatment for children suffering from lead poisoning. The United States provided much-needed computer equipment, books, and English-language instruction in the Kosovo Serb-majority municipality of Gracanica, three miles from Pristina. Two "American corners" established during the year—one in Gracanica and one in the Kosovo Serb-majority area of northern Mitrovica—provided a platform for community outreach, including speakers, exhibits, and English language classes and resources.

The United States actively promoted the rights of women and persons with disabilities by contributing

to women's regional business initiatives, awareness campaigns for disability issues, and the first women's center in Kosovo Serb-majority areas of northern Kosovo. The US Government also awarded 22 small grants for projects ranging from weekly interethnic radio call-in shows to women's career training and rights awareness networks and student government training camps. A US-funded program sent local television crews to the United States to participate in the production of documentaries on get-out-the-vote programs and minority-group experience in filmmaking.

US officials continued to urge dialogue between members of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Kosovo and the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government. US officials met frequently with the heads of major religious communities, hosted an Iftar dinner for the Islamic community, and attended Serbian Orthodox holiday services. US officials encouraged the UN mission and the local government to continue reconstruction on religious buildings damaged during violence in previous years against the Kosovo Serb community. US officials met frequently with the heads of the major religious communities as well as with mayors of Kosovo's municipalities to urge local communities to protect Orthodox religious sites in their territories and to prevent criminal acts against them. The United States provided funds to upgrade the storage, inventory, and exhibition of Kosovo's most important collection of historic and cultural artifacts, and monitored the expenditure of US funds in the UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization's large-scale effort to preserve Kosovo's significant cultural monuments. In May US officials participated in the interreligious conference organized by the Serb Orthodox Church held at the Pec/Peja Patriarchate. US officials continued efforts to protect religious sites and to ensure that they receive appropriate consideration and recognition after Kosovo's future political status is resolved.

The United States advocated increased UN mission and local government attention to curbing human trafficking in Kosovo through support of governance structures and NGOs. The United States sponsored an expert to improve the quality of media coverage



of the trafficking problem, assisted in developing an antitrafficking strategy for Kosovo, organized public awareness campaigns, improved the quality of services for victims, and provided surveillance equipment for the UN mission's antitrafficking unit that aided in several arrests.

Turkey

Turkey is a constitutional republic with a multiparty parliamentary system and a president with limited powers elected by the single-chamber parliament, the Turkish Grand National Assembly. In the 2002 parliamentary elections, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) won the majority of seats and formed a one-party government. During the year the government faced the major challenges of increasing the legal accountability of government security forces, reducing restrictions on free speech, and modernizing societal attitudes with respect to practices such as "honor killings" of women. Although reform of the criminal code helped to reduce torture and improve due process for defendants, the government struggled to fully implement the new laws. The number of arrests and prosecutions of security forces for committing extrajudicial killings was low compared with the number of incidents, and convictions remained rare. Members of the security forces occasionally tortured, beat, and otherwise abused persons. Prison conditions remained poor, with problems of overcrowding and insufficient staff training. Law enforcement officials did not always provide detainees immediate access to attorneys as required by law. The executive branch at times undermined the independence of the judiciary, and the overly close relationship of judges and prosecutors continued to limit the right to a fair trial. Excessively long trials were also a problem. The government restricted freedom of expression through the application of constitutional provisions and numerous laws, including articles of the Penal Code that prohibit insults to the government, the state, "Turkish identity," or the institution and symbols of the republic. Non-Muslim religious groups and Alevis continued to face restrictions on practicing their religion openly, owning property, and training leaders. Violence against women, including

rape, continued to be a widespread problem. Child marriage was a problem. Police corruption at all levels contributed to trafficking in women and children to and within the country for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

The United States promoted human rights and democracy through programs that addressed a broad range of issues, including police and judicial practices, religious freedom, freedom of expression, government ethics, trafficking in persons, and the right of return for internally displaced persons, most of whom are Kurds. To implement this strategic vision, US officials in the country met routinely with representatives of the country's political, religious, social, cultural, and ethnic groups to discuss human rights conditions and development of relations between these groups and the government. US officials also met regularly with members of the legislative and executive branches as well as with the judiciary to encourage continued broad reforms, including those needed for the country to meet EU accession criteria. The ambassador and other US officials met with Cabinet ministers and Foreign Ministry officials to discuss freedom of expression and religion.

The US-sponsored international visitors programs played an important role in achieving US strategic objectives by providing opportunities for professionals in all fields to be introduced to the United States and their American counterparts. During the year, 25 Turks participated in projects specifically related to human rights and democracy, including programs on local government, human rights in US foreign policy, NGOs and civic activism, judicial reform, and trafficking in persons. Projects for the year included the exchange of Turkish and American delegations of the American Council of Young Political Leaders. Through the US-sponsored television cooperation program, journalists from one of the country's major national television station filmed documentaries for national broadcast on subjects that included transparency and governance, multiculturalism, and interaction between civil society groups and local and national government.



International visitors programs played an important role in US programs to promote the political process in the country. In February six mayors from diverse communities throughout the country traveled to the United States. During the visit, the group looked at local governance in large and small communities throughout the United States. Upon their return, the group commented frequently on the accountability provisions of American governmental systems. Several of the mayors adopted similar provisions in their own municipalities after the program. A US-funded project brought a delegation of Turkish high school students to the United States in January for a three-week visit that examined democratic governance and respect for human rights in the United States.

To promote media freedom, the United States supported professional exchange programs for journalists designed to foster ethics and journalistic responsibility among younger reporters and to promote freedom of expression for editors and media gatekeepers. A wide range of persons from both the secular and Islamist press attended these programs. US officials in the country also hosted a speaker from National Public Radio during a visit to discuss accountability in the press.

The United States continued to promote legal reforms in the country. With US Government support, the government hosted the chairman of the American Bar Association, who spoke to judges and lawyers in the country about developments in the American legal system. In addition, the prosecutor responsible for felony cases in most of western regions of the country visited the United States on an international visitors program grant. After attending criminal trials and talking to judges, prosecutors, and groups concerned with the practice of law, he returned to the country with new ideas about prisoners' rights. A judge from the Intellectual Property Rights Court also traveled to the United States on the same program and returned with positive views on the enforcement of intellectual property rights. In addition the US Government sponsored a bilateral legal exchange project that promoted the discussion of issues dealing with freedom of expression, police conduct, and trial alternatives in the criminal justice system through

the exchange of visits by US and Turkish legal professionals. US officials stationed in the country hosted Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg at a dinner for law students and professors from Istanbul's pre-eminent law schools, during which Justice Ginsberg spoke about rule of law and the relationship of the judiciary to the executive branch.

Throughout the year the United States sponsored speakers who focused on human rights and democracy. In March the chair of Georgetown University's Government Department, spoke to over 400 persons about the problem of balancing freedom and security in democratic societies. In January a visiting professor from the University of Virginia spoke about freedom of religion in Istanbul. A professor from the University of Tennessee spoke about the role of religion in democracy in Ankara as well.

The United States also provided official speakers to address local audiences on human rights issues through a US-sponsored speakers program. Official speakers engaged audiences at local universities and social clubs throughout the country on topics ranging from freedom of expression and democracy to human rights in the context of terrorism suspects held at Guantanamo, Cuba. For example, in Istanbul, US speakers addressed a "democracy summer camp" organized by a local university, while in Izmir an official speaker described US Government policies to one of the country's Model UN teams. In these engagements, speakers drew upon US Government publications, including Human Rights and You: A Reader and publications on the history and workings of American democracy.

The United States also stressed the need to allow free religious expression for persons of all faiths, including Protestants, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Baha'i, none of whom have legal standing in the country. The United States continued to urge high-level government officials to reach agreement with the Ecumenical Patriarchate on the re-opening of the Halki seminary on the island of Heybeli, to acknowledge the ecumenical nature of the Patriarchate, and to ensure the right of non-Turkish citizens to serve as clergy. US officials



engaged government officials regularly in a dialogue on religious freedom.

With the help of a US grant, the International Organization for Migration continued work with government authorities to implement a comprehensive mechanism for protecting trafficking victims and enhance the country's capacity to combat trafficking; a third of the grant was used for protecting and providing direct assistance to trafficking victims. US funds allowed the International Organization for Migration to continue training the Jandarma (police) and judiciary in high-trafficking areas of the country and to work on international law enforcement cooperation initiatives to facilitate prosecution of traffickers. The United States also funded a major international public awareness campaign, including television and print media advertisements for a toll-free 24-hour victim hotline that assisted the rescue of more than 50 victims during its first six months of operation.

Ukraine

Ukraine is a republic with a mixed presidential and parliamentary system, governed by a directly elected president and the Verkhovna Rada (parliament). Parliamentary elections were held on March 26. According to international observers, fundamental civil and political rights were respected during the campaign, enabling voters to freely express their opinions. International observers noted that the conduct of the election was in line with international standards for democratic elections, making this the most free and fair in the country's history. Despite improvements, a number of serious human rights problems remained, including torture in pretrial detention facilities, violent hazing of conscripts, societal violence against Jews, anti-Semitic publications, incidents of the return of refugees to a country where they feared persecution, serious corruption in all branches of government, and trends of violence and discrimination against women, children, and minorities. The government at all levels generally sought to protect freedom of religion; however, some minority and nontraditional religions experienced difficulties in registration and in buying and leasing property. Domestic and international human

rights groups generally operated without government harassment, and there were few restrictions on media freedom or freedoms of assembly and association. Authorities increased investigations of suspected human traffickers but were still grappling with how to strengthen the country's prosecution capabilities.

The US human rights and democracy strategy focused on supporting democratic reform. This included strengthening the rule of law, independent media, electoral processes, and respect for civil liberties; fighting corruption; promoting good governance; and improving the monitoring and advocacy capabilities of human rights organizations. Combating anti-Semitism and trafficking in persons were also important goals. The ambassador and senior US officials met frequently with senior government officials, including the president and prime minister, to stress the importance of continuing democratic reform and highlight that membership in Euro-Atlantic institutions such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization hinges on respect for democracy and human rights. This message was regularly reinforced in Washington and in Kyiv by the secretary of state, the under secretary of state for global affairs, the assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian affairs, and others.

To support free and fair parliamentary and local elections, US assistance programs focused on public monitoring of the electoral process, voter education, nonpartisan training for political parties and local government officials, domestic and international election monitoring, and election administration issues. The US-funded Election Administration Support Project improved the legal and regulatory election framework and successfully supported the Central Election Commission in updating and improving voter lists. The project also provided training for 175,000 election officials and produced instructional guides and videos distributed to more than 33,000 election commissioners prior to parliamentary and local elections held in March. US grants to local NGOs also significantly increased civic oversight of the vote and helped increase voter awareness of election issues. With US support, a Dnipropetrovsk-based NGO, in cooperation with local governments, conducted voter education and get-out-the-vote campaigns in 14 cities



and produced an information brochure for first-time voters. The United States also supported training for print and broadcast journalists on election coverage, public service announcements, and watchdog groups.

To promote effective, transparent, and participatory local and municipal government, US programs enhanced local government capacity to improve service delivery, further develop autonomous and transparent financial planning and management strategies, and provide forums for an informed citizenry to actively participate in local decision-making. Through such US-funded programs, dozens of cities improved delivery of municipal services, instituted competitive bidding for procurement of equipment and services, and adopted financial analysis models as a planning tool. There were 252 cities actively using task forces or advisory boards with citizen participation to work on city development plans.

US media assistance programs continued to improve the legal and regulatory framework for media, support legal aid for media outlets, help independent outlets improve their financial sustainability, provide training in investigative journalism, and promote socially responsible media. In the lead-up to the March elections, a US-funded media project assisted in the development of and lobbying for changes to the election law. These changes included dropping limitations on the coverage of election news and improvement of legal protections for media.

The civil society sector continued to grow and show gains in sustainability. US-funded activities helped NGOs to advocate for and secure better laws, such as further simplification of NGO registration procedures. Equally important, NGOs that received US assistance successfully prevented implementation of laws that could have restricted NGO and citizen rights. For example, NGOs pushed successfully to cancel a decree to monitor the Internet. With US grant support, an Uzhgorod-based NGO amended the forestry code to give citizens public control over the rights to manage and own forestry land, and a Donetsk-region NGO successfully introduced changes to legislation obligating the Ministry of Education to offer street

children equal access to an elementary education. A Luhansk-based NGO addressed problems with communal services, published a brochure with strategies for handling various issues, and established a hot line serving 500 people per year. The United States also successfully assisted in boosting the development of local philanthropy by way of promoting public-private partnerships.

The United States facilitated efforts to strengthen the rule of law, increase judicial independence, and combat corruption. These efforts sought to capitalize on the government's commitment to reform and bring the country both into compliance with its obligations as a member of the Council of Europe and move it closer to the government's long-term objective of joining the European Union. Working with partner organizations, the United States created legal advocacy centers specializing in human rights; trained judges on new legislation and application of international conventions to ensure the quality of legal services, established regional judicial associations; developed student legal clinics, designed election advocacy and education programs, and implemented a wide range of public legal literacy initiatives. The program assisted more than 30 law schools in developing clinical legal education programs by sponsoring numerous conferences and roundtables and offering training and exchange programs for students and clinic directors. The program awarded small operational grants to 17 legal clinics and produced three clinical legal education textbooks. Other anticorruption programs supported public hearings on corruption, a major public information campaign against corruption, the government's initiative to establish a public complaint program, training for journalists in investigative reporting, grants to NGOs engaged in anticorruption advocacy and watchdog efforts, and a pilot testing program for university entrance exams.

US technical and advisory assistance supported the drafting of a concept paper for comprehensive reform of the criminal justice and law enforcement system along European lines. To promote development of transparency and balance in the system, the US Government continued to support the drafting of a Council of Europe-compliant Criminal Procedure



Code. In the same vein, the United States launched a pilot program to demonstrate the benefits of respecting the basic human rights of detainees through a fair and transparent pretrial detention system. To help offset the influence of Soviet-era practices on the prosecutor's office, US officials developed programs to strengthen the advocacy skills of defense attorneys with the long-term goal of helping the defense attorney community establish its own continuing professional education program.

A new US-funded program to combat corruption and strengthen rule of law advanced judicial reform through rapid-response technical assistance, support for the drafting and implementation of improved laws and regulations, training for new judges and court staff, and support in improving the budget process in the legal system. For example, the program cooperated with the National Commission for Strengthening Democracy and the Rule of Law to develop a comprehensive "judicial reform concept" and draft laws on the judiciary and the status of judges. A number of these proposals were successfully incorporated into the Concept Paper on the Judicial Reform, Concept Paper on Anticorruption, and in draft anticorruption bills. The president approved both concept papers and submitted a package of bills on judiciary reform and fighting against corruption to the parliament.

Through public diplomacy and small grant support to local NGOs, the United States worked to monitor and curb human rights abuses such as torture and to encourage respect for the rights of women, children, minorities, and people with disabilities. The United States supported the second annual National Human Rights Forum, organized by a national human rights NGO, which brought together over 200 civic activists and representatives of human rights organizations, the media, international organizations, and government agencies to discuss methods for curbing abuses. A 300-page report prepared by a national network of human rights organizations was presented at the forum. The Democracy Commission Small Grants Program provided 22 grants to human rights NGOs to conduct a broad range of nationwide monitoring and reporting on the rights of refugees and prisoners, the

right to a fair trial, and freedom from arbitrary arrest. A Lviv-based NGO used a US grant to help people with disabilities enjoy equal access to national parks and major recreational areas; the NGO also proposed a list of amendments to current national laws on access to public facilities by people with disabilities. With US support, a Kyiv-based NGO strengthened cooperation between NGOs, businesses, and governmental organizations to ensure the delivery of social services and charitable donations to people with disabilities and their families. A national NGO used US funding to bring victims of domestic violence together with government, law enforcement, and social services personnel to discuss ways to improve the implementation of domestic violence legislation.

The ambassador and other officials demonstrated the US Government's concern for religious freedom by maintaining a dialogue with government and religious leaders and staying in close contact with clerics and lay leaders in religious communities. Throughout the year, the United States tracked developments in religious freedom and cultural heritage preservation court cases involving anti-Semitism, including the Sambir and Volodymyr-Volynsky Jewish cemetery cases, and followed closely the rise in anti-Semitic incidents in Dnipropetrovsk and cases involving discrimination against Tatars in Crimea. The United States raised concerns about religious freedom and anti-Semitism with the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the office of the prosecutor general, the office of prime minister, and the presidential secretariat. The special envoy to monitor and combat anti-Semitism, the ambassador, and other senior US officials also raised concerns directly with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about the anti-Semitic teachings and publications of the Inter-Regional Academy of Personnel Management (known by its Ukrainian acronym, MAUP.) On February 27, the ambassador hosted an interfaith dialogue lunch that brought together leading clergymen, the head of the department for religious affairs, two prominent members of parliament, and a leading journalist to discuss progress and challenges in promoting religious tolerance.

The United States supported the labor movement in its efforts to obtain independence from government

control and to exercise its legal rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining. The United States funded a trade union development program that maintained continuing contact with union representatives, regularly reported on workers' rights issues, and funded technical assistance programs to promote basic rights of workers. Combating trafficking in persons and assisting trafficking victims were

also priorities. The US Government conducted training programs on combating labor exploitation for the Ministry of Interior's new antitrafficking department. The United States also facilitated the development of interior ministry-to-interior ministry exchanges with neighboring countries that were primary destination points for local trafficking victims.



NEAR EAST & NORTH AFRICA

لله توعية ضد العنف





“The Lebanese people are determined to build a strong state: a state which can reclaim the position of Lebanon as a haven of moderation, where tolerance and enlightenment triumph over fanaticism, ignorance and oppression; where individual initiative and potential can be fulfilled; a state that rekindles the beacon of freedom and democracy in Lebanon where justice and the rule of law prevail.”

Fouad Siniora
Prime Minister of Lebanon

National reconciliation workshop in a high school for girls in Baghdad. (IRI photo)

NEAR EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

Despite sobering challenges in the Middle East and North Africa, citizens, civil society organizations, and some governments continued to call for greater personal and political freedoms.

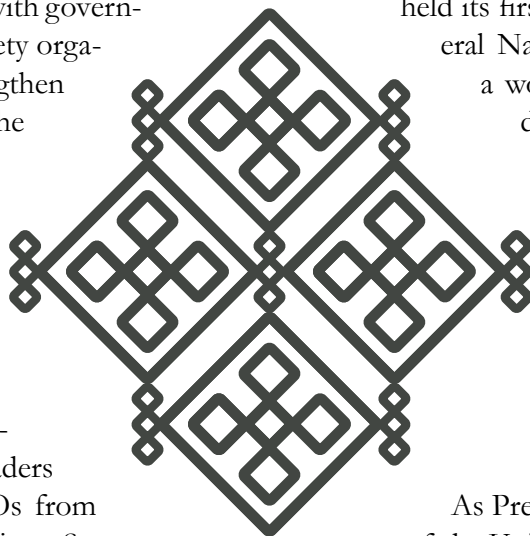
Beyond elections and more open political processes in countries like Kuwait and Morocco, civil society groups are mobilizing throughout the region as never before, women are becoming more aware of and acting upon their rights, and there is increased discussion of reform.

The yearly Forum for the Future has become the centerpiece of the Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA) Initiative, which brings the G8 and European nations together with governments, businesses, and civil society organizations of the region to strengthen democracy and prosperity. The US has continued to provide targeted financial and sustained diplomatic support to this multilateral initiative.

The 2006 Forum witnessed unprecedented participation of civil society organizations, including nearly 50 civil society leaders representing hundreds of NGOs from 16 countries in the BMENA region. Secretary Rice's attendance at the Forum underscored the United States' deep commitment to advancing reform in the region. Civil society organizations and their respective governments made presentations on the progress of initiatives relating to the rule of law, transparency, women's and youth empowerment, and the legal environment for non-governmental organizations. The Foundation for the Future, which was announced at the 2005 Forum, organized a board of directors that has highlighted the rule of law, independent media, women's empowerment, and civic education as program priorities and will begin issu-

ing grants directly to civil society organizations this winter.

In many areas of the Middle East, specifically among the Arab Gulf states, women have been able to exercise greater political rights than ever before, with several notable 'firsts' taking place in 2006. Kuwaiti women now have greater political rights and ran for office and voted for their parliament for the first time this past fall. In 2006 the United Arab Emirates held its first ever elections for half the Federal National Council seats and elected a woman to the Council. Eight additional women were appointed bringing the total female participation in the Council to approximately 22%. Women also played an active part in the political process in Bahrain, participating as candidates and voters in parliamentary elections.



As President Bush said in his 2007 State of the Union Address, "Our goal is a democratic Iraq that upholds the rule of law, respects the rights of its people, provides them security, and is an ally in the war on terror." In working toward this end, in 2006 the United States supported programming which strengthens democratically oriented political parties and provides leadership and advocacy training to Iraqi women, thereby equipping women to more fully participate in the political process. Another US program in Iraq worked toward the development of a vibrant civil society by providing human rights education and helping to develop human rights NGOs.



The United States utilizes a variety of tools to promote and support democracy and human rights across the region. Our work ranged from educating and training Egyptian women on how to obtain ID cards and then register to vote so that they could participate in a democratic electoral process, to helping establish community centers in rural Jordan for women to learn advocacy skills, mobilization techniques, and methods for identifying community needs. US funded programming includes strengthening the rule of law, helping improve women's political participation, supporting reconciliation of atrocities and missing persons, strengthening independent media, developing anti-corruption programs, and supporting labor and union organizing.

In addition, we consistently stand in solidarity with, and advocate on behalf of, human rights activists, the indigenous voices for reform across the region who are detained or harassed for defending those rights in all countries in the region, be it Iran and Syria or Egypt and Tunisia. The United States defends the rights of individuals who have been banned from travel for championing human rights and reform within their country, and for individuals who seek to end abuses against minorities. We also defend those who desire to exercise their freedom of belief and worship according to the dictates of their conscience.

The United States uses its bilateral and multilateral relationships to promote democracy and human rights throughout the region, including working to advance United Nations (UN) and other international resolutions supporting the struggle for human rights. For the fourth year in a row, the United States co-sponsored and actively supported a resolution that passed in the UN General Assembly's 61st Plenary condemning the human rights situation in Iran.

The United States promotes religious freedom and advocates for tolerance in the Middle East and North Africa. Egypt's failure to redress longstanding legal discrimination against Copts – the region's largest Christian minority – and refusal to grant Baha'is valid

identity documents continue to raise concern. As a result of bilateral discussions in 2006, the Government of Saudi Arabia confirmed its policies on religious practice and tolerance, including halting the dissemination of intolerant literature and extremist ideology, both within Saudi Arabia and around the world. The US-Saudi Strategic Dialogue Working Group seeks to promote mutual understanding between the United States and Saudi Arabia by addressing issues of bilateral concern and increasing exchanges between the two countries. Along with the international community, the United States continues to advocate for greater religious freedom for all religious groups in Iran. Significant challenges remain as both Saudi Arabia and Iran were designated Countries of Particular Concern for continued severe violations of religious freedom.

The United States actively promotes labor rights in the context of free trade agreements in the Middle East. Pursuant to free trade negotiations with the United States, in 2006 Oman passed a number of far-reaching reforms to its 2003 Labor Law. Under the reforms, workers now are allowed to organize unions, conduct peaceful strikes, and engage in collective bargaining – freedoms that were unimaginable just one year earlier. In the same context, Bahrain is in the process of modifying its sponsorship system to make it easier for workers to move legally from one employer to another, which in turn will encourage employers to improve working conditions. Bahrain banned retaliatory dismissal of employees for trade union activities and is revising its labor code to conform to International Labor Organization standards. In addition to new antitrafficking legislation, the United Arab Emirates worked to rescue, rehabilitate, and repatriate more than 1,000 children who had worked as camel jockeys, with the last known case of a child being used as a jockey occurring in March 2005.



A training session in Sohaq, Egypt for women micro entrepreneurs. (CRS photo)

Empowering Egyptian Women for Advocacy, Access and Action

Around the world, the United States is partnering with indigenous voices for reform, to ensure that women have a role in the political discourse.

In Egypt, the United States funded an extraordinary program through Catholic Relief Services (CRS) called Empowering Egyptian Women for Advocacy, Access and Action, which helped rural Egyptian women register and obtain national identity cards and voter registration. The goal of the project was to empower poor and marginalized women at the grassroots level in two governorates (Sohag and Qayoubia) to participate fully in political and civic life.

By the end of the project, the Egyptian Government had issued 61,100 ID cards, 6,975 birth certificates, and 27,433 voter registration cards to women in rural areas—resulting in civic benefits while also meeting a tangible social need for Egyptian women to obtain proof of their birth and identity. For example, one Egyptian woman, abandoned by her husband for 10 years without an ID or marriage certificate, was able to take her case to court and prove that she was eligible for the government's social pension. She is now receiving monthly payments.

The program also employed seminars and awareness campaigns about citizenship, leadership skills, voter rights, and legal and cultural barriers which exclude women from full political participation and civic life.

The lasting implications of this program will be felt for decades as the women who obtained ID cards through this program have been able to claim inheritances, receive a deceased husband's pension, register for literacy classes, find formal employment, obtain passports, formally register as married, and obtain government health insurance, loans, and voting cards. Some of the women who participated in the program even went on to run for elective local office, and may well be among Egypt's future leaders.



Algeria

Algeria is a multiparty republic governed by a president elected by popular vote to a five-year term. President Bouteflika was reelected in April 2004 from among five other candidates in a generally transparent election in which the military remained neutral. Aspects of the human rights situation in Algeria have improved. The president pardoned journalists convicted of defamation; the police required formalized human rights training; and local governments began providing death certificates and compensation to some family members of the thousands of persons who disappeared while in detention during the 1990s. However, problems remained. The government failed to account fully for the thousands of disappeared. There continued to be credible reports of abuse and torture; progress was slow on judicial reforms; and the government continued to place restrictions on freedoms of speech, press, assembly, and association. Other problems included limitations on religious freedom, including increased regulation of non-Muslim worship; discrimination against women; and restrictions on workers' rights.

US human rights and democracy goals included the realization of a democratic, transparent, and accountable political system with full respect for the rule of law. The United States sought to accomplish these goals through targeted programs and technical assistance, as well as through sustained diplomatic engagement. These programs aimed to promote reform of public institutions and governing practices and increased participation by civil society organizations in the political process.

US officials emphasized at every opportunity the importance of democratic practices with government officials, members of political parties, civil society, and the media. The United States provided technical assistance aimed at promoting democratic practices, in addition to programs that educated voters and encouraged the participation of women in politics and their communities. The United States funded programs that exposed members of parliament to US democratic principles. International Visitor Leader-

ship Programs contributed to the development of political parties and candidates and promoted the participation of youth in the political process. The United States also encouraged youth involvement in the political process through a program utilizing a roundtable series for political parties.

The United States underscored the importance of freedom of the press in both private and public exchanges with high-ranking government officials and nongovernmental leaders. In July President Bouteflika pardoned 200 journalists convicted of defamation. Following the pardon, US officials continued to encourage the decriminalization of defamation. To encourage and support press freedom, the United States sponsored training on responsible journalism and greater coverage of critical issues.

US-funded programs aimed to strengthen civil society organizations and promote freedom of association through a program focused on the country's law of association. Algerian participants attended the Forum for the Future preparatory meeting on NGO law reform, and one was elected to represent Arab civil society on this issue at the Forum itself. US officials met regularly with members of civil society organizations.

The United States promoted reform and independence of the judiciary with projects that encouraged judicial reforms, anticorruption efforts, and greater adherence to the rule of law. These efforts included a program aimed at improving the business environment in Algeria by training judges and supporting efforts to increase transparency on commercial law issues. Through another program, the United States expanded training for judges and students at the National Institute for Magistrates and supported work on establishing a code of ethics for judges.

The United States encouraged improved human rights practices and protections throughout Algerian society and governmental institutions. US officials met frequently with human rights NGOs and government officials dealing with human rights and placed particular emphasis on issues related to President Bouteflika's National Reconciliation Plan. A US-



funded program focused on building the capacity of civil society, including the media, by providing training and facilitating information-sharing among local NGOs. The United States supported governmental efforts to integrate human rights principles and practices fully into professional training for the security forces. Over 30 individuals participated in seminars that covered human rights issues and civilian control of the military. The United States sponsored the participation of a specialist in international human rights at a UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization conference held in Oran. In addition, the US-funded film *Les Citoyennes* promoted the rights of Algerian women by encouraging their equal participation in society.

The United States continued its dialogue on religious freedom with the High Islamic Council, the Council of Algerian Religious Scholars, and representatives of moderate Islamic political parties. The Ambassador raised with the religious affairs minister concerns about the rights of non-Muslim worshipers following the adoption of Ordinance 06-03.

Algeria is a transit and destination country for persons subject to sexual and labor exploitation. The government did not comply fully with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. US officials continued to raise concerns about trafficking in persons with the government, particularly the need to screen and protect victims, and encouraged the government to follow through on its promises to establish an antitrafficking office.

Bahrain

Bahrain is a monarchy led by King Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa. In 2002 the country adopted a constitution that reinstated a bicameral legislature consisting of a 40-member Shura Council (consultative) appointed by the king and a 40-member elected Council of Representatives (Nuwab). Parliament has the authority to propose and review legislation; however, the king, as head of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government, holds most legislative authority. Citizens over the age of 20 have the right to vote.

Political parties are not permitted under the law, but in July 2005 the government passed legislation that legalized political societies that function somewhat like political parties. The country held parliamentary and municipal elections in November and December, and all registered political societies participated, including four opposition political societies that boycotted the 2002 legislative elections. Election observers did not report significant problems during the voting itself, although there were allegations of some manipulation, particularly related to the general polling stations. Both Shi'a and Sunni citizens were represented in the government, including the first Shi'a deputy prime minister in the recently-formed cabinet.

Among the most serious human rights challenges were reports of discrimination against the Shi'a majority population in leadership positions and the need for greater transparency in the political process. The lack of respect for the one-person, one-vote principle inherent to democracy remained a problem. The judiciary lacked full independence. Discrimination against women and third-country nationals continued. During the year the government prohibited at least one US-based democracy non-governmental organization (NGO) from continuing to work in the country. The government also infringed on the privacy rights of citizens and in some cases restricted freedoms of speech, press, assembly, and association.

Advancing human rights and democracy in the country was a US priority. The United States promoted the rule of law, greater political participation, freedom of the press, judicial reform, civil society development, labor rights, the protection of foreign workers, and actions to combat trafficking in persons. US officials regularly met with officials in the country to advocate respect for human rights and a proactive approach to democratization. US officials also met with civil society activists and representatives from a range of political societies, including the opposition, and encouraged their participation in the political process.

US diplomatic efforts and programs worked to strengthen the democratic movement leading up to the November and December municipal and parliamentary elections. The United States engaged po-



litical societies in dialogue and encouraged them to be involved in the political process and voice their concerns within the system. The opposition is represented in the new parliament (18 of 40 seats) and is working within the democratic process to address the concerns of their constituents. The United States sponsored efforts to help the country's political societies strengthen their institutional capacity and transparency and to assist civil society initiatives. The United States provided resources to civil society groups to train volunteer election observers and conduct public awareness campaigns that discouraged vote-buying and educated the public about the confidentiality of the vote. US experts held trainings on election processes, suggested ways to increase election transparency, and conducted campaign training for women candidates. A US program sponsored a delegation composed of representatives of government and political societies to visit the United States to observe the US midterm election process.

The US Government focused on civic education initiatives as a key to long term consolidation of democracy in the country. A Civic Education Program trained more than 100 Ministry of Education officials and teachers on a curriculum that focused on the value of participation in the community and in government, individual responsibility, and collective problem solving. Approximately 1,000 students in 18 secondary schools participated in the Arab Civitas Project Citizen program.

Freedom of expression and press liberties were priorities for the United States in the country. US-funded programs trained journalists in investigative journalism and on the role of media in society and worked to promote broader and more balanced reporting on political and social issues. One program designed specifically for the elections focused on the ethics of press coverage and balanced reporting. Participants discussed components of an effective code of conduct for election coverage, and the principles of the training were evident in subsequent reporting on the elections. The US Government regularly sponsored journalists on International Visitor Leadership Programs to study the role of the media in a democracy and the responsibilities of an investigative journalist.

The United States promoted a free and robust civil society and freedoms of association and assembly through diplomacy and assistance programs. US officials met regularly with leaders of various civil society organizations focused on human rights, women's rights, youth, labor, protection of domestic workers, and transparency in government. The US established an additional embassy position in order to better outreach to NGOs and support civil society programs. In September a US expert conducted a workshop on NGO management to increase civil society capacity. In addition, US officials met with government officials to discuss new US-developed guiding principles for NGOs.

Judicial reform was another US priority that was supported through a multi-faceted project facilitating programs in the Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs. The United States continued to support the development of the country's Judicial and Legal Studies Institute through targeted consultation with institute leadership to develop a strategic plan and standard operating procedures for the institute. Throughout the year the project sponsored a series of trainings and workshops using outside experts, including a media course for judges, a workshop to develop a judicial code of conduct, a review of appellate court procedures, and an election monitoring seminar. The project continued to train lawyers and judges in Alternative Dispute Resolution that resulted in the resolution of some previously intractable cases. Training for judges on the newly-automated case management system continued.

US programs promoted women's rights and progress in the country. In March the joint-sponsored regional women's conference highlighted the successful progress of women in legal, political, and economic reform. Women from across the Arab world participated, including scores of Bahraini women, who gained practical tools to encourage further reform in their respective countries. A US-funded NGO began to coordinate with the country's reformers in the area of family law legislation to develop strategies to build grassroots support for family law reform. US officials reached out to encourage human rights organizations



and activists, including women and youth, to network and leverage their efforts in this area.

The United States promoted and monitored religious freedom through regular meetings with representatives of different sects and faiths. US officials supported Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs programs promoting moderation and tolerance in religious discourse and cross-cultural communication. To that end, four clerics visited the United States which enabled them to meet their religious leader counterparts in the United States as well as their counterparts from other religions. To foster better relations between Muslims and non-Muslims, the United States sponsored the Ramadan visit to the country of a prominent American imam, who is the president of the Islamic Affairs Council of Maryland. He met with clerics, government officials, and members of the public, delivered lectures, and gave interviews to the local media to promote tolerance and moderation.

According to recent statistics, 57 percent of the country's work force is composed of expatriates. Some foreign workers, particularly household workers, were victims of human trafficking. The government opened a shelter to protect victims of both trafficking and domestic abuse. US diplomatic efforts focused on this and the need for labor law protection for foreign household workers. US programs provided consultation on antitrafficking legislation and training to increase awareness about trafficking to a diverse audience, including government officials, civil society representatives, and members of the business and labor communities.

Egypt

The Arab Republic of Egypt has been governed by the National Democratic Party since 1978. In September 2005, President Hosni Mubarak won a fifth 6-year term, with 88 percent of the vote, in the country's first multi-party presidential election, a landmark event that was otherwise marred by low voter turnout and charges of fraud. The government's respect for human rights and the overall human rights situation remained poor. Significant human rights problems

included limitations on citizens' ability to change the government and broad use of a decades-old Emergency Law, including the use of emergency courts and indefinite administrative detentions. Human rights organizations and independent observers questioned the government's commitment to protecting and expanding human rights as a result of several events, including the imprisonment of an opposition leader, Ayman Nour; persistent and credible reports of abuse and torture at police stations and in prisons; and police violence against protestors, including during May demonstrations in support of judicial independence. The government remained publicly committed to a program of political reform, but did not make significant progress during the year. Human rights groups and other independent observers criticized new laws restricting the press and the judiciary. A culture of impunity discouraged prosecution of security personnel who committed human rights abuses. There were arbitrary and sometimes mass arrests and detentions, poor prison conditions, executive influence over the judiciary, restrictions on religious freedom, corruption, a lack of transparency, and societal discrimination against women and religious minorities, including Christians and Baha'is.

The US human rights and democracy strategy addressed human rights problems and supported efforts to build a more robust civil society, promote the rule of law, and encourage the growth of democratic institutions, including an independent media. On February 21 in Cairo, the secretary of state reiterated the US position that "Egypt, which has so often led this region in times of decision, needed to be an important voice in leading this region again as it faces questions of democracy and reform." While noting positive changes in 2005 and "a president who has sought the consent of the governed," the secretary further remarked that, "There have been disappointments and setbacks as well, and we have talked candidly about those because the United States comes to discuss these issues as a friend, not as a judge...But this is a country of greatness and this region needs this country to be at the center of positive change." On May 21 in Sharm El Sheikh, the deputy secretary of state said the United States urged the government to "follow through" on its political reform plans and



Teachers take part in a training session in Cairo on public policy. (Street Law photo)

reiterated US concerns about the conviction and imprisonment of opposition politician Ayman Nour in December 2005. He criticized the government's use of security forces against the political opposition but also urged opposition groups like the Muslim Brotherhood to make clear their commitment to following a democratic process and to nonviolent solutions. Other senior US officials urged the government throughout the year to lift the Emergency Law and implement other critical political reforms. In official exchanges, senior officials raised US concerns about civil society development, political participation (including electoral reform), and basic political rights, including the imprisonment of opposition leader Ayman Nour.

The United States promoted a democratic, open, and participatory political process through diplomacy and technical assistance. US programs focused on promoting greater participation, accountability, and transparency for Egypt's elections. US democracy

programs supported international and local NGOs working to improve Egypt's electoral processes. Major US nongovernmental democracy institutes continued their programs for the first six months of the year, assessing assistance needs of political parties, facilitating discussions on electoral administration, and assisting in the development of an alternative election law. In June, the government ordered the suspension of these activities—on the grounds that they had not yet received legal status in Egypt. As a result these groups were unable to continue their work in support of electoral reform and political party strengthening. With US support, local NGOs worked to sustain the engagement of election monitors trained in 2005 by using them to document inaccuracies in voter registers and to advocate for an effective voter registration system.

The United States promoted freedom of speech and of the press. Local media, opposition figures, and civil society were able to voice strong public criticism



of the government and its policies. However, these freedoms were challenged during the year by several defamation lawsuits against outspoken independent journalists, as well as the passage of a new press law, which allows for imprisonment of journalists who “vilify” heads of state and for levying harsh penalties against journalists and bloggers whose writings are judged by the government to have spread false news or disturbed public order. The United States continued its efforts to promote greater independence and professionalism in the media and to assist Egyptian television, radio, print, and electronic media to improve professionalism, sustainability, and diversity. Several grants to local NGOs complemented these activities by documenting and countering instances of intolerance and hate speech in the print media, providing legal support to journalists, supporting freedom of expression, and using the media to promote civic participation.

To strengthen civil society, the United States supported local organizations working on human rights, religious tolerance, and women’s and children’s issues. Several dozen small grants supported local, grassroots initiatives, including training for youth activists, support for both model parliamentary workshops and a model US Congress program at Cairo University, legal systems training and exchanges for lawyers and judges, civic education summer camps, and programs focused on women’s and children’s rights. The International Visitors Leadership Program supported exchanges on civil society, as well as human rights, good governance, the media, elections, and women’s rights. Other grants supported advocacy by domestic NGOs in support of judicial independence and anti-corruption. The United States provided two grants to the NGO Support Center to build the capacity of local democracy NGOs in proposal development and project implementation and to promote business social responsibility and collaboration between NGOs and the business community at the community level.

The United States supported lawyers and civil society advocates to improve the legal and political environment for civil society and facilitate NGO registration. Other significant grants promoted the efforts of NGOs to increase citizen awareness and political

participation throughout Egypt. These programs focused particularly on women and youth. They helped citizens seek accountability from elected and appointed government officials at the national and local levels.

US programs continued to support nationwide reform of the judicial system, with a pilot program streamlining court procedures and enhancing judicial transparency. The bilateral assistance agreement also initiated a program to provide more effective counsel to criminal defendants and improve administration of criminal justice through development of a public defense system and a human rights curriculum for prosecutors and judges as well as automation of selected areas of the prosecutor general’s office. Under an ongoing criminal justice project with the prosecutor general’s office, Egyptian judges and prosecutors visited the United States to study best practices and network with US federal judges. The United States expanded its involvement in the rule of law by initiating a program to build the capacity of the Council of State, which oversees the Administrative Courts. The program will strengthen the competency of State Council members and administrative officers in several legal areas and share international experience in comparable areas of administrative justice.

In support of an Egyptian government initiative, the United States provided support for improved public accountability, in order to improve the quality, transparency, and scope of dissemination of government budgets; strengthen the government’s capacity to promote public accountability and transparency; increase public understanding and exposure to transparent budgets; and improve public awareness and understanding of corruption.

The United States funded a number of human rights initiatives, including reaching an agreement with the National Council for Human Rights to undertake a media campaign to build a culture of human rights. With US support, two other councils will strengthen legislation and regulations that protect the rights of women and children. US-funded civil society organizations responded to acts of violence against women and children. Local NGOs produced human rights



books for children and integrated human rights education into university programs.

The United States promoted religious freedom for all and raised specific concerns about the issue of the government requiring notation of religious affiliation on national identity cards, a practice that discriminates against citizens who wish to convert away from Islam and members of religions not recognized by the Government. US officials also raised concerns about discrimination against the country's Christians, Baha'is, and other religious minorities. US officials maintained excellent relations with representatives of the country's various religious communities.

There were reports that Egypt was used as a transit country into Israel for women trafficked for sexual exploitation. The Embassy also worked to support media attention to the issue of trafficking in persons.

Iran

The Islamic Republic of Iran is a theocratic, constitutional republic dominated by Shi'a religious leaders. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei dominates the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, directly controls the armed forces, and controls internal security forces. President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad won a four-year term after a flawed election in 2005 and heads the executive branch. The unelected 12-member Guardian Council and parliamentary electoral committees screened candidates for the December 15 Assembly of Experts and Municipal Council elections respectively, disqualifying hundreds of reformist candidates as well as some hardliners. The election of a conservative and ideologically driven president in 2005, following the seating of a hardline conservative parliament in 2004, negatively impacted the human rights of Iranian citizens. Hardliners opposed to change closed down many reformist newspapers, and continued to pressure and intimidate the media and control the flow of information by other means as well.

During the past year the government committed a number of serious human rights abuses. Summary

executions, denial of fair trials, discrimination based on ethnicity and religion, harassment and arrest of journalists and bloggers, disappearances, extremist vigilantism, widespread use of torture, and other degrading treatment remained problems. The government continued to detain and torture dissidents and individuals exercising freedom of expression, including scores of political prisoners. Bloggers continued to endure arrest and stiff penalties for expressing their ideas on the Internet. There were also reports of executions based on charges of homosexuality, but details remained difficult to verify.

Although the United States does not maintain diplomatic relations with Iran, it continued a multi-faceted effort to support the Iranian people's aspirations to live in a democratic country with an accountable, transparent government that respects the human rights of its citizens. For instance, the United States publicly condemned specific human rights abuses and funded programs to support the efforts of the Iranian people to promote democracy and the respect of human rights. The US human rights and democracy strategy included urging friends and allies to condition improvement in bilateral and trade relations on positive changes in the country's human rights policies. Furthermore, the United States actively supported the UN and other international scrutiny and other resolutions condemning the government's human rights record and practices and publicly highlighted the government's abuse of its citizens' fundamental rights and freedoms. The United States also supported in various ways the continuing efforts of the Iranian people to broaden real political participation and reassert their right to fundamental freedoms.

For the fourth year in a row, the United States co-sponsored and actively supported a resolution that passed in the UN General Assembly's 61st Plenary Committee condemning the human rights situation in the country. This sent an important signal to the people and their government that serious concerns regarding the government's overall behavior would not be overshadowed by other concerns regarding Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons and support of terrorism.



The United States also regularly raised concerns about the government's poor human rights record in consultations with allies, urging them to raise these concerns during any formal human rights dialogue or other bilateral contact with the government. US policy consistently called for the government to respect the human rights of its citizens, and public statements reflected this core issue. In the run-up to the December Assembly of Experts and Municipal Council elections, the United States issued a statement condemning the disqualification of hundreds of aspiring candidates on purely ideological grounds and the continued crackdown on media outlets. The statement expressed continued support for the Iranian people in their efforts to exercise their basic rights including the freedom of expression and participation in electoral competition. President Bush and senior US officials repeatedly expressed support for the population in its quest for freedom, democracy, and a more transparent and accountable government. US officials reached out to the Iranian people to convey the US message and gave interviews to US and European Persian language media highlighting the Iranian public's aspirations for increased respect for human rights and civil liberties and a more democratic and open government.



Under current law, the country is ineligible for most assistance from the US Government. However, the United States continued to obligate funds for democracy and human rights promotion programs through an Iran-specific appropriation from Congress to promote democracy and human rights. These funds allowed the United States to initiate a wide range of democracy, human rights, educational, and cultural programs, as well as to significantly expand efforts to improve the free flow of information.

Under the limited special authority granted by Congress, the United States renewed a grant to docu-

ment the abuses of citizens. This program provided subgrants to educational institutions, humanitarian groups, NGOs, and individuals to support the advancement of democracy and human rights. The project sought to raise public awareness of accountability and rule of law as an important component of democratization. This program produced and disseminated a case report illustrating chronic, systemic problems in law enforcement and justice systems. The report examined specific violations of Iranian and international law that occurred and identified numerous structural impediments to accountability for human rights violations, concluding that significant reform of the judicial system is needed to counter ongoing impunity for violators.

In addition to this program, other US-funded programs promoted respect for human rights and advocacy for freedom of assembly, free speech, political participation, independent labor activities, and rule of law. During the past three years, the United States directed funds to projects that promoted respect for human rights, empowered citizens in their call for more representative political participation, and supported NGOs to conduct capacity-building training and to provide technical assistance to domestic NGOs.

In addition, the United States continued to support the advancement of democracy and human rights standards inside the country via Voice of America radio and television broadcasts, a Web site in Persian carrying stories promoting democracy and human rights issues, and Persian-language Radio Farda, which operated 24 hours a day.

US officials regularly met with individuals and members of various groups suffering human rights abuses, documenting incidents for dissemination to other governments and for inclusion in the annual Country Report on Human Rights Practices and the Report on International Religious Freedom. The secretary of



state also redesignated Iran as a Country of Particular Concern for particularly severe violations of religious freedom. At the end of the year, a US-funded program documenting abuses inside the country sent to publication a report on the persecution of the Baha'is, exploring how Baha'i religious practice has effectively been criminalized. The report found rising levels of persecution since the 2005 election of President Ahmadinejad and resurgence of other conservative political figures.

Iran was believed to be a source, transit, and destination country for commercial sexual exploitation and labor-related trafficking in persons. Although lack of access prohibited a full assessment of official antitrafficking efforts, the government took measures to sign memoranda of understanding with source countries and international NGOs to prevent human trafficking. Victims of trafficking in the country reportedly have access to counseling, legal, and health services; however, victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation were vulnerable to arrest, prosecution and sometimes execution for prostitution and adultery. The United States encouraged the government to improve screening of trafficking victims to distinguish them from illegal immigrants and to pursue cooperation with neighboring countries to monitor borders.

Iraq

Iraq is a republic with a freely elected government. The current administration assumed office on May 20 after the Council of Representatives voted in a unity government comprising the major political parties. The December 2005 elections met international standards for free and fair elections. During the past year, widespread violence prevented effective governance in parts of the country, and the government's human rights performance was handicapped by insurgency and terrorism, sectarian violence, and militia and death squad activity. Elements of the security forces frequently acted independently of governmental authority, committing serious human rights violations. Weak political and governmental institutions, pervasive corruption, and widespread violence continued to impede respect for basic civil liberties. Extrajudi-

cial killings, torture, and other abuses by law enforcement personnel including some members of the Iraqi police went largely unpunished. Some ministries that were engaged in security and counterterrorism operations, such as defense and interior, began to hold their personnel accountable to the rule of law and showed a willingness to investigate and consider appropriate action against offenders. Many women were threatened and intimidated into adopting conservative behavior and dress, with most forced to wear the hijab (veil) in public; honor-related crimes against women increased. Although Islam is the official state religion, the constitution includes protections and guarantees of religious freedom. While the government generally endorsed these rights, its efforts to prevent or remedy violations were hampered by substantial political and sectarian violence, harassment of non-Muslims, and the courts' lack of capacity to adjudicate such claims. Trafficking in persons for commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor also remained a serious problem.

To combat these conditions, the United States supported the development of institutional safeguards for democracy and human rights, underscoring the importance of an inclusive, transparent, and responsive government in preventing abuses and ensuring stability. The United States also supported measures to strengthen the justice system and establish greater accountability in government. Toward this goal, the United States employed a variety of diplomatic and programmatic tools in support of good governance, rule of law, institutional capacity, independent media, civil society, human rights, and democracy. Senior US officials promoted the constructive engagement in the political process of all segments of society, including minorities and women.

The United States supported the formation of a unity government, representing political parties from across the spectrum. The United States also supported the inaugural session of the first permanent Council of Representatives and the subsequent constitutional review process. The United States helped establish the Council's Research Directorate and trained a professional staff in legislative research, drafting, and analysis. The United States helped build the capacity of



a diverse range of political parties and supported a variety of NGOs conducting advocacy and civic education campaigns.

At the national level, the United States continued to support the elected legislature's development of new processes, rules of procedures, and regulations. The United States also strengthened legislators' capacity to craft legislation, offer constituent services, and strengthen oversight of governmental institutions. The United States funded numerous educational events on the constitution, supported female National Assembly members, as well as provincial and civic leaders advocating constitutional protections for women's rights, and fostered youth participation in the political process.

The United States promoted participatory, representative, and accountable government in rural and urban communities nationwide, working under hostile conditions to prevent and mitigate conflict across gender, ethnic, sectarian, and religious lines. Expansion of US provincial reconstruction teams during the year supported improvements in the rule of law, promoted political and economic development, and fostered improved service capacity in provincial administrations. The United States supported local government capacity-building projects in major cities and all 18 governorates.

The United States further promoted media freedom and development through the establishment of an independent news agency and the training of journalists and media managers on subjects ranging from investigative journalism to strategic media management. US training focused on building skills to produce informative and responsible reporting by a professional, independent press and included regular events at the International Press Center. The United States also supported the development of a civil society media watchdog group that monitors programming on the Independent Media Network.

Civic education programs supported by the United States promoted democratization and civil society development. Training, technical assistance, and outreach to civil society organizations benefited more than

6,000 members of civil society organizations during the year, resulting in organizations better equipped to advocate for good government and human rights protections. Over 250,000 citizens were trained through civic forums and cascading instruction programs to define and exercise their role in democratic practices. Despite rising violence, the United States supported nation-wide reconciliation efforts, working with partner civil society organizations to conduct over 200 workshops and to initiate a reconciliation campaign.

Four civil society resource centers served as regional hubs for capacity-building services for local NGOs, providing training to strengthen operational competencies, enable advocacy and awareness-raising on specific issues, encourage the building of networks and coalitions, and foster inter-institutional policy dialogues and productive engagement between NGOs and the government. In partnership with local organizations, the centers sponsored a variety of anticorruption, independent media, civic education, human rights, and women's advocacy activities. The United States also facilitated broad participation in public dialogues, promoted interaction between citizens and public officials to encourage responsive and accountable local government, and provided start-up resources and training to strengthen the institutional capacity of grassroots organizations.

The United States supported indigenous efforts to strengthen the rule of law and work toward an independent and impartial judicial system. The United States worked closely with the UN and the EU to support a Rule of Law Working Group chaired by the Chief Justice. US programs provided training to judges and funded security measures to protect both judges and witnesses to allow them to remain impartial by remaining free of intimidation. US training and advisory programs were directed at improving the skills of judiciary officials as well as fostering more efficient judicial processes and a culture of lawfulness.

The United States also focused significant resources in strengthening and coordinating anticorruption efforts through the Office of Accountability and Transparency. Through this office the United States



supported the inspector general system, the Board of Supreme Audit, and the Commission on Public Integrity. US funding also supported the development of civic organizations such as the National Anti-Corruption Legislative Coalition in its lobbying efforts against corruption. The United States supported the Iraq Property Claims Commission, (now known as the Commission for the Resolution of Real Property Disputes), established in 2004 as an independent commission designed to resolve claims for real property confiscated, forcibly acquired, or otherwise taken for less than fair value by the former regime for reasons other than land reform or lawfully applied eminent domain. US support included a capacity-building program managed by the International Organization for Migration and the office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. Through bilateral assistance to the Ministry of Displacement and Migration and multilateral assistance to UN partners, the United States also enhanced legal and physical protections for growing numbers of refugees, returnees, and internally displaced persons.

The United States promoted efforts to protect human rights and improve the rule of law climate by focusing on detention facility conditions. In response to complaints of serious prisoner abuse and torture in Interior Ministry facilities, senior US officials encouraged prosecution of those responsible for the abuses and the re-establishment of inspections of all detention facilities by internal affairs units. In response to detention facility overcrowding concerns, the United States continued to invest in the construction of new prison facilities and facilitated the transfer of Ministry of Interior detainees to the Ministry of Justice prison facilities where US prison experts provided critical mentorship on effective management and human rights standards.

The minister of interior requested and the United States incorporated a strong human rights and rule of law component in the training of all police forces. This training has continued as local nationals assumed lead instructor positions at the various police training centers. Police advisors in the field have reinforced principles learned at the academies while mentoring their local counterparts. Additionally, with US sup-

port, the Ministry of Interior has begun to implement measures designed to prevent and correct human rights violations, including the investigation, indictment, and dismissal of officers implicated in human rights abuses. These efforts also included Iraqi Police Service applicant screening and background investigations and continued in-service training of local police, National Police, Department of Border Enforcement, and other officers. The United States worked to build capacity to protect human rights both in the government and through NGOs that address human rights issues. US programs supported the opening of the Human Rights Education Center in Baghdad, sponsored human rights workshops for government officials, and supported the establishment of a human rights defenders network. US grants to NGOs fostered treatment and reintegration of victims of torture, spurred collection and documentation of human rights abuses committed by the former regime, enhanced awareness of human rights standards throughout society, and encouraged the development and strengthening of human rights organizations.

The United States placed a high priority on the issue of equality for women, supporting this goal through diplomatic advocacy and programming. The US-funded Iraqi Women's Democracy Initiative provided women with training and education in the skills and practices of democratic public life. The US-Iraqi Women's Network, a public-private partnership, linked local NGO representatives and business leaders with American counterparts, strengthening women's skills and enhancing their participation in the political and economic sectors of their country. The United States held workshops for women political leaders and sponsored numerous regional meetings and workshops across the country on women's rights and women in the political process and civil society. The United States also sponsored delegations of Iraqi women to the UN Commission on the Status of Women as well as to US-Arab economic forums aimed at advancing economic empowerment of women.

US officials regularly engaged with religious leaders and government officials to urge that legal protections for minority rights and freedom of religion be



respected. The United States supported seminars, conferences, and interfaith dialogue aimed at uniting religious groups against violence and fostering an environment of tolerance, particularly between the Sunnis and Shi'a, as well as towards non-Muslims. US-funded projects brought together members of different religious and ethnic backgrounds to discuss common problems. With US support, community groups were formed with diverse membership, including women and youth, in an effort to promote reconciliation. In ethnically or religiously mixed communities, these community groups included representatives from all segments of society. The Iraqi Institute of Peace, an interfaith dialogue center established with US financial and organizational support, continued to focus on mitigating conflict and building peace primarily through its forum work. These forums targeted specific groups such as women, youth, and the media and focused on human rights and religious dialogue.

The United States acted to prevent trafficking in persons, distributing information and working with officials to increase awareness of trafficking issues.

Jordan

Jordan is a constitutional monarchy; the constitution concentrates executive and legislative authority in the king. Prime Minister Marouf al-Bakhit heads the government. During the year the government respected human rights, although its overall record continued to reflect problems. While the government sought to promote social and political reform, progress lagged in some areas. Citizens' right to change their government remained restricted. Official restrictions on the rights of women and societal discrimination against women continued, as did restrictions on freedom of speech, press, assembly, association, and religion. Citizens participated in the political process through their elected representatives in parliament. The Royal Commission for the National Agenda completed a 10-year comprehensive reform plan, which was in the parliament for review at year's end.

The US human rights and democracy strategy strives to promote rule of law and legal reform, civil society

development, civic participation in the political process, and women's rights. Through a broad portfolio of programs, the United States worked in close collaboration with its Jordanian counterparts to increase citizen participation in the political, economic, and social development of the country; increase the capacity of the parliament to promote transparency and accountability within the institution; strengthen independent media; improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the judicial system; strengthen the rights of women; and increase religious freedom and interfaith dialogue and tolerance. The United States pursued this strategy through direct dialogue with the government, training on rule of law and political participation as well as civilian, government, and military exchanges.

US assistance programs served as a catalyst for democratic reform in the country. Programs helped modernize parliament's research department, strengthened capacities to conduct meaningful monitoring and evaluation of public expenditures, and increased transparency and accountability within key committees of parliament. The United States funded programs to assist political parties in the country, improving the ability of parties to develop platforms, diversify membership, and more effectively advocate for the passage of legislation in line with party values and citizen interests. A US exchange program facilitated the visit of parliamentarians to the United States to study American legislative models and create partnerships with American institutions.

US assistance continued to help field-test civic education modules to educate youth on the responsibilities of citizens in the democratic process. Citizens improved their understanding of democracy and governance through exposure to and participation in numerous US-funded comprehensive outreach projects and exchange visitor programs conducted on democracy, the rule of law, and participation in the legislative process.

The United States launched a comprehensive media professionalization project to support development efforts to strengthen university-level journalist education, media business management practices,



Participants from communities outside of Amman at a youth radio workshop hosted by Internews Network. (Internews photo)

and community-level journalism. Several smaller US initiatives provided expertise to local broadcast journalists reporting for the country's leading investigative television and radio broadcast program and sponsored a speaking tour by an American expert on media law on the US courts' experience in handling media cases.

Several efforts, including a number of US exchange programs, worked to strengthen local NGOs. These programs focused on fostering networking and cooperation between groups working to promote democratic reform and human rights norms, and on strengthening their capacities to inform and communicate with national decision-making institutions to encourage reform. US officials regularly attended local NGO activities, regardless of sponsoring agency.

US programs aimed to promote respect for the rule of law and improved court efficiency while simultaneously promoting greater accountability and transparency in the judicial system. US assistance facilitated leading stakeholders to draft and adopt the

country's first comprehensive code of judicial conduct. Through US programs, 50 percent of the courts in the country were automated during the year. A new Arabic-language case management system was developed and installed in Amman courts and is scheduled to be extended to all civil and criminal courts in the country over the next two years. Approximately 500 judges and court staff received training on the new automated system. In addition, approximately 350 judges received training in ethics, mediation, media and human rights, and for the first time, judges from rural areas received training through US programs. In June, US programs supported the first court mediation center in the court of Amman, which resulted in over 150 cases settled through mediation.

US programs promoted greater judicial independence through opening dialogue between stakeholders and providing expertise to develop plans towards achieving independence. Programs strengthened capacities of the Ministry of Justice, the Inspectorate and Monitoring Department, and the Jordanian Judicial Institute. Exchanges for lawyers, law students, and



Shari'a court judges exposed the country's judiciary to democratic legal institutions and helped to introduce democratic legal models. US programs also introduced alternative dispute resolution and presented a model for criminal justice reform.

The United States continued to work with the quasi-independent National Center for Human Rights, which published its second report on the status of human rights in the country during the year. US assistance designed to advance and promote the role of women in society achieved tangible successes during the year. The US-supported programs promoted advocacy against gender-based abuse, and funded an annual antiviolence campaign with events held throughout the country. The United States supported and organized numerous training and exchange programs, including developing the skills of female trade union leaders and women who led civil society grassroots initiatives outside Amman. Several civil society discussions with female leaders were held during the year, which often coincided with the visits of high profile US officials and civil society leaders.

One of the primary purposes of the US military education and training in the country is to strengthen bilateral relations by exposing members of its military to democratic principles and to raise awareness and respect for human rights. Most of the training offered consisted of short technical courses; however, all long-term courses included seminars on the US government, judiciary, and culture. All Professional Military Education courses included a bloc of instruction on the Law of War. Additionally, the Counterterrorism Fellowship Program taught the country's military personnel how to combat terrorism while respecting the rule of law, human rights, and civil rights. During the year approximately 300 Jordanians received US-funded training through these programs.

Working to promote religious freedom and tolerance, the United States sponsored numerous exchange visits and two major regional conferences that encouraged interfaith dialogue and understanding. A US grant supported exchange visits between Americans of diverse religious backgrounds and Jordanian Shari'a judges, scholars, and students. A multi-year project to

strengthen social dialogue and address labor administration and labor-management relations continued during the year. The project included the successful creation of a Jordanian Economic and Social Council and the establishment within the Ministry of Labor of a Tripartite National Committee. Following allegations of trafficking and human rights abuses in factories in the Qualified Industrial Zones, a US-sponsored independent short-term assessment team investigated the working conditions. The United States also provided funding to the NGO Friends of Women Workers, which lended support and assistance to foreign domestic workers in the country. The United States expressed to the government its concern over child labor and trafficking in persons.

Kuwait

Kuwait is a constitutional, hereditary emirate ruled by the Al-Sabah family. The 1962 constitution grants the emir executive authority. The emir shares legislative authority with the elected National Assembly, which can propose legislation independently and must ratify all laws promulgated in the country. The assembly also appoints a prime minister, who then proposes candidates for ministerial positions subject to approval by the emir. The constitution permits dissolution of the elected National Assembly by emiri decree, although it also stipulates that new elections must be held within 60 days of any such dissolution. The emir exercised his constitutional right to dissolve parliament on May 21, and elections were held on June 29. The National Assembly passed a law in 2005 granting women the right to vote and run for office. Women exercised these rights for the first time on April 4 in a race for a vacant seat on the Municipal Council, and again during the June parliamentary elections. Most members of the military and police do not have the right to vote. While not strictly illegal, political parties were effectively banned by the government. Despite the lack of political parties and some reports of vote-buying by both the government and certain candidates, the year's elections were considered generally free and fair by local observers and the press. The National Assembly is able to influence or overturn government decisions. One example was its passage



of a major parliamentary redistricting law in July that the government had originally opposed. Kuwaiti law provides for an independent judiciary and the right to a fair trial; however, the emir appoints all judges, and the Ministry of Justice must approve the renewal of most judicial appointments. Civilian authorities maintained effective control of the security forces. A new press law passed in March enabled the licensing of new daily newspapers for the first time in decades. Freedom of worship was protected, although Shi'a Muslims and Christian groups faced difficulties in obtaining permission to build adequate places for worship. Expatriate laborers continued to face significant violations of their human rights due to the country's labor laws and practices. Trafficking in persons and forced labor continued to be a significant human rights issue in the country.

The US strategy for promoting human rights and democracy in the country was multifaceted, involving study tours to the United States, US government outreach, and digital video conferences between Kuwaiti and American students, journalists, subject experts, and government officials. The United States worked to instill the values of democracy and participatory civil society, especially among youth and women, through support of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), participation in the International Visitor Leadership Programs, and educational and training programs. A major focus of the US government's activities during the year was raising awareness about human trafficking in society and among government officials.

During the year the United States took a number of diplomatic and programmatic steps to promote democracy. Three participants went to the United States on a US Government-funded program that helped emerging leaders gain a better understanding of and appreciation for the democratic political process. The program taught young people about American social and political values through a combination of academic study, meetings, lectures, and roundtable discussions with American civic leaders and academics. Students also learned about civic participation through experiential learning, community service, and meeting and engaging with American citizens. A similar program based in the country exposed young

Kuwaitis to transparent systems of commerce, rule of law, and participatory governance. English language microscholarship grants were awarded to 115 high school students and helped to instill the values of democracy and civic participation through in-class elections and community service projects.

During the year women voted and ran for office for the first time in the country's history. The United States, in cooperation with nongovernmental partners, provided training to women and men on campaign strategies, including platform development, working with the media, and advocacy. A US-funded program allowed female candidates to have individual sessions with political campaign experts to plan their campaigns. The training also brought a female parliamentarian from another Arab country to share her experiences with Kuwaiti women running for office for the first time. The United States supported the production of nonpartisan radio and television spots and printed materials encouraging women to vote. Approximately 58 percent of eligible female voters voted, but no female candidates won their races. US funding was used during the year to conduct follow-up polling on what contributed to voters' decisions and to see how political views were evolving, which will be a valuable tool for candidates who wish to run issues-based campaigns in future elections.

The US Government engaged in ongoing and frequent discussions with Kuwaiti parliamentarians and government officials to encourage further progress in the development of democracy in the country.

The US strategy to encourage media freedom has been to implement programs that increase reporters' exposure to US counterparts and encourage objective reporting on people, policies, and events. During the year the US Government arranged for two female reporters, one from the state news agency and one from an Arabic-language daily, to participate in a program that explored the role of a free press in democracy and investigated how the media and other entities influence the crafting of foreign policy in the United States.



Another US objective was to support the Kuwaiti Journalists Association's efforts to improve its capacity to provide training for journalists and become a more effective advocate for the profession of journalism. During the country's election season, the United States arranged for an American journalism professor to conduct a two-day workshop on accurate and fair coverage of election campaigns. Twenty-seven print and broadcast journalists attended and learned about ethics, responsibility to the public, how to conduct an interview, and how to present both sides of an issue. Follow-up workshops were conducted later in the year that emphasized basic reporting skills, the role of the media in a democracy, and effective coverage of the parliament. A separate workshop on the role of the media in a democracy was conducted for reporters of the state news agency. These workshops gave journalists and editors tools for better reporting and also helped bring to light the limits imposed on journalists in the country by the new press and publication law's broadly worded restrictions on reporting certain issues.

NGOs in the country operate in a difficult environment, since they are prohibited by law from engaging in overt political behavior. To strengthen the country's NGO community, the United States funded a number of programs through small grants. In one project, a local NGO carried out a study on how the government's budgeting affects women. Another NGO conducted a survey that measured support for women's political rights. In the interest of strengthening civil society, the United States awarded a grant to a local group to produce a series of civic-minded films by young filmmakers. Another US-funded NGO created a summer entrepreneurial and civic action training program for youth.

Several US-funded projects supported the rule of law in the country through International Visitor Leadership Program exchanges. The United States hosted a legal counselor who specializes in women's and human rights issues to learn about the US legal system and to observe it in practice. The program stressed legal frameworks to safeguard the rule of law and fundamental human rights and promoted judicial reform. Another program provided young women in

business and law the skills and experience needed to help them grow as professionals and advocate for legal reforms.

The United States promoted religious freedom and tolerance through diplomacy and exchange programs. US officials met with government officials and various religious groups to encourage the government to allow religious groups to establish places of worship adequate to serve their expanding congregations. US officials also worked with the government to send a Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs official to five representative cities in the United States on an International Visitors Leadership Program entitled "Promoting Interfaith Dialogue." The project showed the scope of religious freedom in the United States and encouraged the promotion of tolerance and interreligious understanding. The participant met with counterparts of different religious backgrounds and discussed issues related to their vocation.

Expatriate laborers, who form the majority of the country's labor force, face significant problems, particularly household workers, since they are not covered by labor laws. US officials made public addresses concerning the need for the country to address the problems domestic workers face. The United States implemented a program to raise awareness among foreign workers of their rights and duties. US officials worked closely with labor-sending countries to compose text for a nine-language brochure and print media campaign publicizing information to help expatriate workers avoid some of the common problems that befall them. The United States engaged in ongoing and frequent discussions with high-ranking and working-level government officials, in addition to conducting outreach with media outlets to raise awareness of the problems faced by foreign workers in the country.

Lebanon

Lebanon is a parliamentary republic in which the president is a Maronite Christian, the prime minister a Sunni Muslim, and the speaker of the chamber of deputies a Shi'a Muslim. In 2005, the country made



significant progress with respect to human rights under a democratically elected parliament and a reform-oriented government. With the end of the Syrian occupation, press and media self-censorship decreased, and government attempts to restrict freedom of assembly during mass demonstrations dissipated. On July 12, Hizballah killed three and abducted two Israeli Defense Force soldiers during a cross-border attack from southern Lebanon, resulting in a conflict that lasted until August 14. According to the UN, Israel's air and ground operations in Lebanon killed 1,191 persons and injured 4,409 persons. Approximately 900,000 Lebanese were internally displaced, and sectarian tensions were heightened. Following the conflict, political tensions between the democratically-elected government and the antigovernment opposition, led by Hizballah, rose significantly. Sectarian demonstrations further increased tensions, particularly after the November 23 assassination of Maronite leader Pierre Gemayel.

There are still areas in the government's human rights record that require improvement to meet international standards, specifically poor prison conditions; insufficient legal protections for certain segments of society, particularly the poor; migrant workers and child laborers; and lack of judicial independence, especially when dealing with politically sensitive cases. During the year, before the conflict broke out, the government took significant steps to increase freedom of assembly and association at mass demonstrations and by facilitating the formation of new political associations and parties. The government also took concrete measures to prevent unauthorized eavesdropping on private citizens.

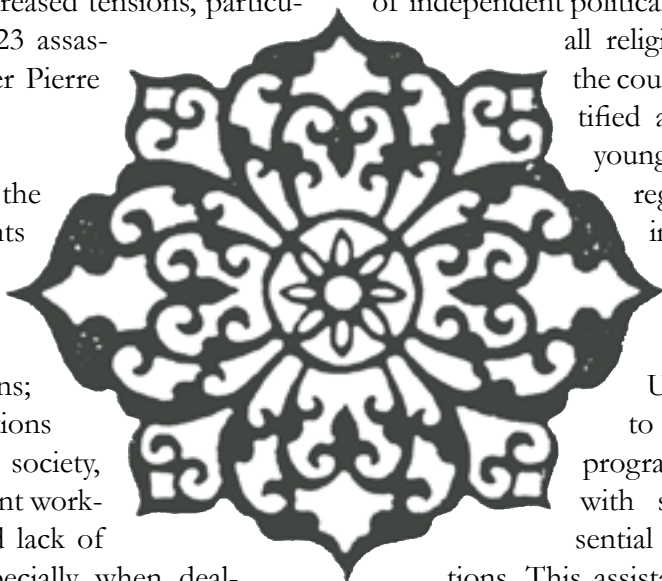
The United States continued to help Lebanon rebuild as a sovereign and independent country founded on respect for human rights and democratic principles after decades of Syrian occupation and civil conflict. The United States worked with the government and

international allies to support the goals outlined in UN Security Council resolutions 1559 and 1701 and worked with a coalition of international partners, known as the Core Group, to support Lebanese plans for economic, fiscal, and political transparency and reform.

Governance programs funded by the United States further enhanced the government's efforts to promote transparency and accountability, strengthened civil society, built greater independence of the judiciary, promoted respect for the rule of law, and supported the conduct of free and fair elections. US diplomatic engagement also promoted freedom of the press, women's rights, and universal education.

US assistance programs promoted the development of independent political parties with members from all religious groups represented in the country. The United States identified a diverse representation of young political leaders for local, regional, and US-based training programs and seminars that included discussions of independent platform-based electoral politics. The United States also continued to support a municipal reform program that has been credited with successfully rebuilding essential local government foundations. This assistance focused on enhancing administrative and financial capabilities, expanding social services, encouraging public participation, and increasing accountability.

The domestic press is generally independent and free. In the wake of the Syrian withdrawal in 2005, journalists were emboldened to speak out, but some of the country's most courageous voices for democracy were killed. US officials emphasized the importance of protections for freedoms of speech and press and noted the critical role of journalists in advancing democracy and human rights protections. The press benefited from a number of US-funded programs to strengthen press freedom and independence of the





media, which included training for the media and civil society in the role of the press and on the importance of free expression in promoting democracy and human rights.

Because the role of civil society continued to grow in the country, the United States expanded its support of local advocacy groups, NGOs promoting transparency in government, and civil society organizations. US programs continued to support building effective civil society networks in isolated and underserved municipalities in the north and the eastern Bekaa valley. Numerous street demonstrations throughout the year emphasized the high value citizens place on freedom of assembly and their willingness to play a role in effecting changes in their government and society.

The law provides for equality among all citizens, but in practice, some aspects of the law and traditional customs continue to discriminate against women and other disadvantaged groups. The United States supported a wide range of programs to promote rule of law and improve legal rights without bias, as well as wider access to education and health care for women. With US funding, an international NGO incorporated substantive and practical human rights within the legal education framework. The United States worked to protect the rights of persons with disabilities through grants that assisted persons with disabilities to earn a dignified wage. The United States continued to advocate on behalf of the refugees in the country and supported numerous unilateral programs in training and education. It remained the largest contributor to UN Relief and Works Agency and UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

To promote religious freedom, which is provided for under the Constitution, US officials met regularly with religious leaders and members of the Council on Religious Understanding and facilitated an International Visitors Leadership Program, including an Islamic-Christian interfaith dialogue. The United States maintained contact with a variety of faith-based organizations and documented incidents for dissemination to other governments and inclusion in the annual Report on International Religious Freedom.

The United States continued to press the government to acknowledge trafficking in persons as a serious issue and take immediate steps to eliminate it. In March the United States sponsored an International Migration Organization training course for law enforcement officers and supervisors on the most advanced techniques for combating human trafficking activities. A US program continued to fund a local NGO to protect trafficking victims, a first for the region. NGO officials interviewed victims with the support of social workers, as well as screened and referred trafficking cases to the country's judiciary so that abusive employers could be prosecuted. The United States continued its support of the only safe house in Beirut for victims under governmental protection.

US officials met regularly with labor leaders to reiterate US support for labor rights and for economic liberalization and reform. US officials encouraged labor leaders to engage in dialogue with the private sector and government to promote reforms, and US-funded programs provided the country's labor unions the opportunity to train with American unions on labor organization, labor law, and workers' rights.

Libya

The Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya is an authoritarian regime led by Colonel Mu'ammar Al-Qadhafi since 1969. In theory citizens rule the country through a pyramid of congresses, committees, and communes; however, in practice, Qadhafi and his inner circle monopolize political power. The government's human rights record remained poor. An extensive security services network, lack of an independent judiciary, and rigid government control of the media stifled political reform and denied citizens some basic civil liberties. Security forces operated without judicial restraint; they tortured and detained individuals without formal charges and held some detainees incommunicado, often without charge or trial. Corruption and impunity were widespread. Government control of the media, prohibitions on the establishment of independent human rights organizations, and a continued ban on political parties precluded freedom of speech or assembly. Minority religions,



women, and tribal minorities encountered some government repression and societal discrimination. The government denied basic worker rights and did not prevent discrimination against foreign workers.

US human rights and democracy work in the country aimed to empower citizens to play a more active role in their government and to secure basic civil liberties for all inhabitants. On May 31, the United States upgraded its diplomatic representation to an Embassy. On June 30, it rescinded the country's designation as a state sponsor of terrorism and a country not fully cooperating with US counterterrorism efforts. To promote human rights and democracy effectively, the United States continued to normalize bilateral relations and foster a meaningful and multifaceted relationship to address human rights concerns. The United States strengthened working relations with key local actors, advocated for greater transparency in government decision-making, promoted enhanced respect for the rule of law, and identified and supported nascent civil society actors. The United States regularly raised human rights issues at senior levels within the government by urging adherence to international human rights standards and publicly condemning the country's human rights abuses.

The government maintained complete restrictions on all political activities by banning all political parties, criminalizing membership in any association not approved by the government, and preventing meaningful elections for any public office. US officials routinely advocated for greater transparency of government decision-making and greater public participation in political life. From April 17 to 25, the United States facilitated the first National Democratic Institute visit to the country to begin preparations for future work on electoral and constitutional reform.

The United States consistently supported greater media freedom, particularly focusing on the distribution of foreign media within the country. On July 1, a quasi-official government body began to allow the distribution of some foreign publications. In addition to urging more regular access to foreign publications, US officials advocated greater professionalism of journalists by nominating for the first time a televi-

sion correspondent for an International Visitor Leadership Program focusing on investigative journalism.

Since the government prohibits the establishment of truly independent NGOs, US efforts centered on identifying and supporting nascent civil society individuals and organizations that may develop into NGOs. The United States sponsored the director of a quasi-official NGO focusing on disaster relief on an exchange visit to learn how US NGOs manage assistance operations and how his own organization could provide better humanitarian services in the country and abroad. US officials also supported international NGOs looking to travel to or work in the country.

The United States called for respect of the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary from political pressure or outright manipulation. US officials supported government plans to hold retrials for Muslim Brotherhood members held in prison since 1988. On March 2, the government released 86 members of the Muslim Brotherhood and 46 other political prisoners. During the year the United States arranged for a member of the Supreme Judicial Council, an official entity outside of the justice system that reviews court decisions for political implications, to participate in a visitor's program on the US legal system and judicial independence. The United States nominated a prominent lawyer specializing in women's issues for a similar program. The United States consistently raised the issue of political prisoners, including the continued detention of democracy advocate and outspoken regime critic Fathi al-Jahmi.

The United States collaborated with international counterparts to encourage fair and humane treatment for six foreign medical personnel accused of intentionally infecting more than 400 Libyan children with HIV in 1999. US participation facilitated the 2005 establishment of the International Benghazi Families Support Fund to assist the infected children. Throughout a retrial between May 15 and December 19, US officials routinely stressed the importance of ensuring the medical personnel receive a fair trial, access to their lawyers, and access to any evidence against them. After a court again sentenced the health workers to death on December 19, the US continued to



Street Law workshop provides training on law, human rights, democracy, crime prevention, and conflict resolution in Morocco. (Street Law photo)

urge additional judicial review of the court decision, with an emphasis on the consideration of all pertinent evidence in the case. The United States urged that a means should be found to allow the medics to go home.

To promote women's rights, the United States nominated a pioneering female engineer at the Libyan National Oil Company for an exchange program focusing on women as economic and business leaders. Beyond working to modernize administrative practices in the state-owned oil firm, the nominee plays a key role in economic reform through her seat on the National Economic Planning Council.

The United States promoted religious freedom by sending the head of the Islamic studies faculty at a major Libyan university to the United States on a visitor's program focusing on religious tolerance and interfaith communication.

A US-funded program aimed to raise government officials' capacity to combat human trafficking and to raise awareness of trafficking in society.

Morocco

Morocco, with a constitution and an elected parliament, is ruled by a hereditary monarchy; ultimate authority rests with the king. The king may terminate the tenure of any minister, dissolve parliament, call for new elections, and rule by decree. The country's human rights record showed notable progress, although problems remained. The government began addressing past human rights abuses by providing compensation for specific cases of arbitrary arrest and disappearance. In March the government enacted an antitorture law, although reports of torture by various branches of the security forces persisted. The judiciary lacked independence and transparency. There was extensive and largely open debate in public and in the press, despite continuing restrictions on freedoms of the press and speech. Many journalists practiced self-censorship. Trafficking in persons, particularly for sexual exploitation, and child labor remained issues of concern; however, both the government and civil society were increasingly active in addressing the issues.



The US strategy for promoting human rights and democracy integrated assistance programs and public diplomacy outreach to promote freedom of the media and speech, support the development of civil society, strengthen human rights principles and core democratic values, strengthen the rule of law, and support human rights and democratic reforms implemented by the government. Implementation of the strategy was through formal programs such as roundtable discussions, debates, speaker and training programs, and US-based training, and advocacy by US officials.

US officials promoted democracy by assisting the country's development of a more competent, effective, and responsive government. US programs focused on integrated capacity building for parliament and political parties, including ongoing training of parliamentarians and their staff members on the effectiveness of committees, budget analysis, oversight and expertise, and the development of parliamentary and civil society advocacy capabilities. US programs enhanced the capacities of parties to run transparent and effective campaigns in the 2007 parliamentary elections. During the year key parliamentary staff members participated in a study tour focused on legislative committees. Visiting US congressional delegations met regularly with parliamentarians to share ideas and experiences. US initiatives included support for local good governance, promotion of regional and municipal efforts to respond more effectively to citizens' needs, improvement of the long-term financing capacities of local government, and support for the implementation of the 2004 Family Law.

US officials regularly discussed media freedom and freedom of speech with senior government officials and actively encouraged their efforts to expand freedom of expression. Senior US officials encouraged the government to reform the press code, including the need to eliminate criminal penalties for libel. US outreach programs promoted freedom of the press and discussed journalistic ethics, professional standards, and research skills. Thirteen journalists participated in US-funded programs on media ethics, investigative journalism, free access to information, and freedom of speech. One journalist participated in a program focused on human rights advocacy and

another in a program focused on the role of civil society organizations.

US officials frequently held discussions and consultations with members of civil society organizations to promote respect for human rights and increase understanding of societal changes. US officials and programs actively promoted interactions and partnerships between the government and civil society organizations through specific programming in which the two groups interacted, including travel for training in the United States, debates, and speaker programs.

US assistance aided the continuing development of an informed, participatory citizenry. US programs concentrated on effective dissemination of the 2004 Family Law and educating the population about the changes. US regional programs enabled Moroccan participation in seminars on Islam, governance and the rule of law. More than 10,000 high school students and teachers received training on participatory government and citizenship. In February five secondary students participated in a regional citizen workshop.

US officials advocated the rule of law, an independent judiciary, and judicial and penal reform with government counterparts and civil society. US programs to help educate the judiciary on the Family Law progressed significantly during the year. The United States focused on judicial independence and transparency, as well as legal education. A US program worked closely with the government, universities, and lawyers to strengthen institutional capacity. This same program actively supported civil society by strengthening the capacity of a local NGO advocating judicial independence.

The government's reform agenda included penal reform, gender equity legislation, and safeguards for the physically and mentally impaired. To complement this agenda, the United States supported a program, in partnership with a local university law school, to develop a human rights law clinic. This program included development of curriculum and teaching modules and encouraged law students to provide legal assistance under the supervision of the law faculty



and private human rights lawyers. US officials worked closely with the government to provide professional training, including human rights awareness, for public security officials. During the year more than 200 members of the military received human rights training through a variety of programs and conferences. The United States advocated penal reforms, including improved conditions in prisons, and supported a local NGO working to improve the penitentiary system through training and institutional capacity building. US officials strongly advocated for the application of human rights protections, including in the disputed Western Sahara. US officials discussed allegations of torture and lack of due process with the government.

Women's rights remained a significant concern for the government. Female NGO leaders participated in programs to enhance their leadership skills. Many US programs relating to the Family Law were directed towards women to help them advance their legal rights. The US and NGO partners used the Family Law as subject matter in literacy classes to help educate women about the law and increase women's literacy rates. US programs promoted the application of human rights laws to illegal migrants and asylum seekers.

Religious freedom is provided for by the constitution, despite the recognition of Islam as the state religion and the king as the commander of the faithful. US officials met regularly with members of all religious communities to promote religious tolerance and freedom. US officials facilitated meetings between the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs and visiting US religious leaders. US programs enabled a university professor and 14 journalists to study the relationship between religion and civic education, and a US sponsored Muslim religious leader highlighted religious tolerance and freedom in the United States.

US officials met regularly with local NGOs working to support the government's efforts to eliminate child labor, forced labor, and TIP and with those supporting the reintegration of children and trafficked persons into society. Many trafficked noncitizens were returned to their home countries at the expense of the government and international organizations. The

United States continued to support NGOs working to end child labor and provided alternative educational programs for children in the labor force.

The United States funded a consortium of Moroccan and international NGOs striving to end child labor. One project implemented by an international NGO improved access to education for working and at-risk child maids, as well as child laborers in sectors such as auto repair and handicrafts. This assistance targeted more than 7,000 children in the areas of Rabat/Sale/Temara, Marrakech, Fez, and Casablanca, and enrolled them in informal education and vocational training programs. The project included a joint child labor awareness-raising campaign to mainstream child labor concerns into broader education and development strategies. During the year the United States supported a four-year program to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government estimates 7,334 children are working in or are at-risk of entering hazardous agricultural activities or exploitive child labor.

Saudi Arabia

Since King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud assumed the throne on August 1, 2005, he has continued to pursue an incremental reform agenda. The 178 all-male municipal councils, half of whose members were elected in April 2005 and half appointed in December 2005, performed limited administrative duties, reviewed budgets, and made recommendations to the Ministry of Rural Affairs and Municipalities. In December, the government finally announced the appointment of the Board of Directors of the Human Rights Commission. There was greater involvement in government activities by the Majlis Al-Shura (the Consultative Council) and the 178 municipal councils. Despite increased public and media discourse about human rights, the overall human rights environment remained poor. There were reports that some authorities practiced physical abuse and torture. Security forces also continued to arbitrarily arrest, detain, and hold persons incommunicado. The Mutawwa'in (religious police) continued to intimidate, abuse, and detain citizens and foreigners with impunity, although



to a lesser extent than in the past. Strict limitations on women's rights continued, including a prohibition on voting or participating in governmental elections, harassment by the religious police, restrictive dress codes, a prohibition on driving, restrictions on ability to travel domestically and internationally, discrimination in family law and other legal proceedings, and extraordinary segregation in schools, most workplaces, and public facilities. However, in February 2006, women voted and ran as candidates in elections for the Board of Directors of the Eastern Province Chamber of Commerce and Industry, but were not elected. Violence against women and children, as well as discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities, continued. Most trials were closed, and defendants usually had no legal counsel. The government continued to infringe upon privacy rights and restricted freedom of speech and the press. The government did not provide legal recognition or protection for freedom of religion, and it was severely restricted in practice. The government restricted freedoms of assembly, association, and movement. Some cultural fora were further restricted.

The U.S.-Saudi Strategic Dialogue continued with a meeting in May, as well as other meetings of its working groups, notably the Partnership, Education, Exchange, and Human Development working group. The dialogue reinvigorated the bilateral relationship and raised the profile of key issues such as improving citizen participation in decision-making, religious freedom, fighting trafficking in persons, and promoting tolerance.

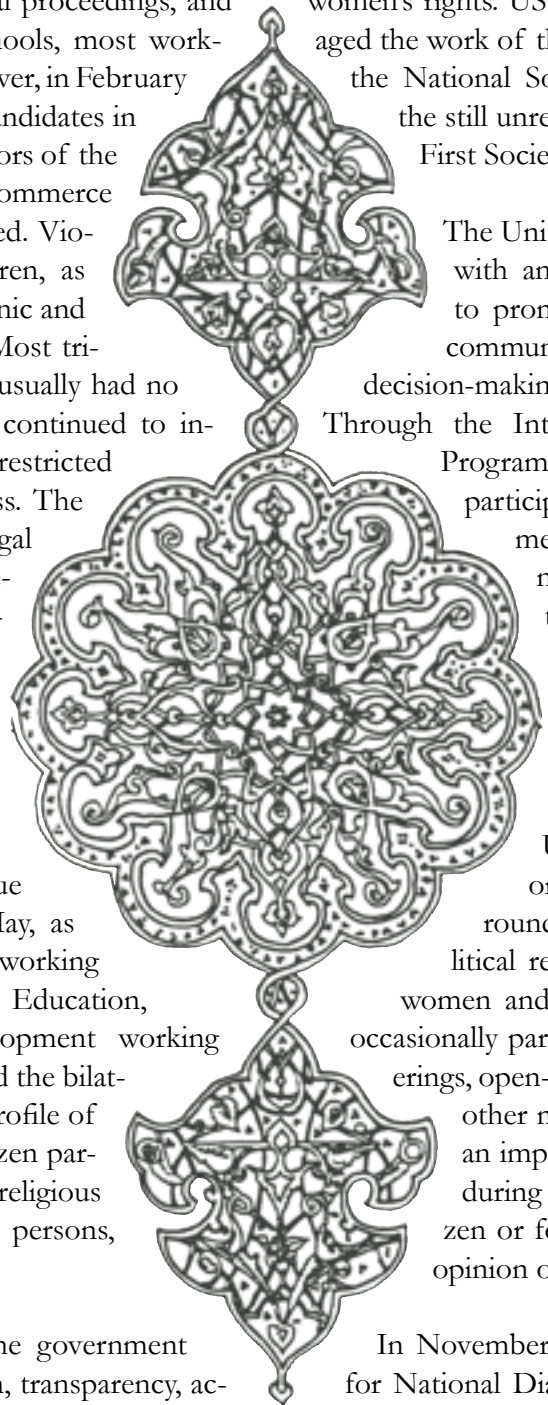
US officials frequently urged the government to promote political participation, transparency, accountability in government, religious freedom, and rights for women and workers. Numerous high-level US officials, including the vice president, secretary of state, members of Congress, and cabinet secretar-

ies, used visits to the kingdom to discuss these and related concerns with King Abdullah and senior officials. The United States continued to raise human rights concerns at all levels of the government, notably on religious freedom, labor conditions amounting to involuntary servitude, trafficking in persons, and women's rights. US officials met with and encouraged the work of the Human Rights Commission, the National Society for Human Rights, and the still unrecognized NGO Human Rights First Society.

The United States sponsored exchanges with and provided training to Saudis to promote an independent judiciary, community involvement in government decision-making, and grass roots democracy. Through the International Visitor Leadership Program, the United States sponsored participation by members of government and civil society in US seminars and exchanges focused on the rule of law, religious and public education in the United States, NGO administration, participatory democracy, and volunteerism.

US officials participated in civic organization meetings and press roundtables to discuss internal political reform, as well as the rights of women and minority groups. US officials occasionally participated in weekly majlis gatherings, open-door meetings held by the king, other members of the royal family, or an important national or local notable during which, in theory, any male citizen or foreign national may express an opinion or a grievance.

In November, the King Abdul Aziz Center for National Dialogue held the Sixth National Dialogue Forum in Al-Jawf called "Education: Reality and Promises." The Dialogue produced a "road map" for educational reform, including revi-





sion of textbooks, curricula, and teaching methods to promote tolerance.

The United States continued to provide education and training to the country's military, which increases awareness of international norms of human rights and fosters greater respect for the principle of civilian control of the military and the rule of law.

The United States strongly advocated for religious freedom, which is severely restricted in the Kingdom. In September, the secretary of state re-designated Saudi Arabia as a Country of Particular Concern for particularly severe violations of religious freedom. The ambassador and other senior officials raised the issue of religious freedom with senior Saudi officials. The ambassador also protested raids on private homes and the detention of religious groups for practicing their faith in private. The United States encouraged officials to honor their government's policies to halt the dissemination of intolerant literature and extremist ideology, both within Saudi Arabia and around the world, protect private worship for all religious groups, curb harassment of religious practice groups, and promote tolerance towards all religious groups. The United States supported provisions calling for religious tolerance, including elimination of discrimination against religious minorities, improved human rights standards, and state accountability.

The government failed to show concrete efforts to criminally prosecute and punish trafficking crimes, but reportedly used its September 2005 labor law to address some issues affecting foreign workers, such as non-payment of wages; the labor law, however, does not cover foreign domestic workers. The US Government strongly encouraged the Saudi Government to take a proactive criminal law enforcement response to all trafficking crimes. The United States similarly recommended the government raise public awareness of abuse of foreign domestic workers and extend labor protections to domestic workers, as part of long-term improvements in the status and legal rights of foreign laborers under labor law. In coordination with source-country embassies, the United States worked to promote better legal protections for foreign workers, the

prevention and protection of trafficking victims, and the investigation and prosecution of traffickers.

Syria

Syria is a republic under the authoritarian presidential regime of Bashar al-Asad. The president makes key decisions with counsel from a small circle of security advisors, ministers, and senior members of the ruling Ba'ath Party (Arab Socialist Resurrection). Civilian authority over the security forces is weak, and members of the security forces committed numerous serious human rights abuses. During the year, the government's human rights record remained poor, and the government continued to commit serious abuses. Citizens did not have the right to change their government. Security forces arbitrarily arrested and detained individuals, while lengthy pretrial and incommunicado detention remained a serious problem. Beginning in April 2005 and continuing throughout the year, the government increasingly violated citizens' privacy rights and stepped up already significant restrictions on freedoms of speech, press, assembly, and association in an atmosphere of government corruption and lack of transparency.

As a state sponsor of terrorism, Syria remained ineligible for all forms of economic assistance from the United States. While contact with government officials was limited because of strained bilateral relations, US officials encouraged the development of democracy and respect for human rights through discussions with allies, regular contact with Syrian and international human rights and civil society advocates, and public diplomacy and other programs designed to strengthen civil society and stimulate dialogue on key issues for promoting human rights and democracy.

The United States consistently called on the government to respect the human rights of its citizens, and public statements reflected this core value. The United States raised concerns about the government's poor human rights record in discussions with allies, urging that these be raised during any formal bilateral contact with the Syrian government. On December 13, the United States issued a statement condemn-



ing the government for its continued harassment and detention of civil society activists and political prisoners. The statement by President Bush expressed continued support for the Syrian people's desire for democracy, human rights, and freedom of expression. During the year the US government's contact with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was limited by the al-Asad regime; however, US officials continued to stress to the government the importance of respecting human rights, including the freedom of assembly, association, speech, and the press. US officials actively participated in a diplomatic monitoring group that exchanged information on the human rights situation and coordinated diplomatic responses and related assistance programs.

The United States also supported in various ways the efforts of the population to broaden real political participation and reassert their right to fundamental freedoms. Although the government is ineligible for most assistance from the US Government, the United States obligated funds during the year through a Syria-specific appropriation from Congress to promote democracy and human rights. These funds allowed the United States to support activities that promote democracy, human rights education, and the free-flow of information to the population.

During the year the United States sent approximately 15 Syrians on various International Visitors Programs to the United States to promote journalistic integrity, develop a free and independent media, raise awareness of issues related to human trafficking, and foster the development of the rule of law. In addition, the United States used the International Visitors Programs to provide training in leadership, management, and policy advocacy to promising young leaders in a number of fields including academia, the media, and civil society. The United States used these programs to contribute to the professional development of the next generation of activists and leaders, investing in their potential to develop a vibrant and robust civil society.

US officials used public diplomacy and reporting to highlight human rights abuses and urged the government to improve its practices. The United States

maintained contact with a variety of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society activists throughout the year, documenting incidents for dissemination to other governments and inclusion in the annual Country Report on Human Rights Practices and the Report on International Religious Freedom. Through regular contacts with human rights activists reporting on significant abuses, the United States monitored the government's repression of organizations and democratic activists who sought to peacefully assemble and associate.

US programs supported the promotion of rule of law by providing funding to an NGO to incorporate substantive and practical human rights policies within the legal education framework. In April the United States also provided 90 copies of the 200-page Arabic publication "An Outline of the US Legal System" to the University of Damascus Law School, which were distributed to graduate students.

The United States also sponsored a number of public events to promote religious freedom in the country, such as providing a grant to help support the visit of an American rabbi to promote interfaith dialogue and strengthen efforts for conflict resolution. In addition, the United States hosted a number of celebratory gatherings in connection with the holy month of Ramadan that brought together members of the Islamic clergy, other religious leaders, influential actors in civil society, and prominent members of NGOs.

Few Syrians actively work to combat trafficking in persons and forced labor or assist its victims. To help foster concern for this issue, US officials sponsored a Syrian candidate with academic interest in this area to participate in a Multiregional International Visitor Leadership Program entitled Combating Trafficking in Persons. This exchange program provided an opportunity for the participant to make contact with trafficking in persons activists and learn about tangible ways to prevent trafficking and forced labor, protect its victims, and prosecute its perpetrators. The United States closely monitored the trafficking in persons situation in the country, cooperating and sharing information with international organizations that worked in the field.



Tunisia

Tunisia is a constitutionally-based republic with a population of approximately 10 million, dominated by a single political party, the Democratic Constitutional Rally. Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali has been the president since 1987. During the year the government continued to commit serious abuses. An authoritarian system of government exercised significant control over political participation and freedoms of expression, association, assembly, and the press. The government remained intolerant of public criticism and used a number of coercive methods to discourage that criticism, including harassment of journalists and widely condemned legal actions against outspoken dissidents and human rights and opposition activists. Security forces arbitrarily arrested and detained individuals and tortured prisoners and detainees. The government continued to invoke a variety of laws and regulations to obstruct implementation of reform projects and initiatives, including those promoting media freedom. While some activities were successfully completed, restrictions imposed by the government delayed or led to the cancellation of others.

The US democracy and human rights strategy in Tunisia recognized the country's achievements on social and economic issues, particularly its advancement of equal rights and opportunities for women, and called for similarly bold steps on political process reforms and respect for human rights. The United States pushed the government and civil society to increase the pace and substance of critical political, economic, and human rights reforms. High-level US officials raised human rights, democracy, and good governance issues with the government throughout the year. US officials placed opinion pieces in the local press, raised inquiries regarding specific cases, and worked to strengthen civil society organizations supporting economic, media, and political reform through small grants. US officials monitored political trials and urged the government to respect freedoms of assembly and association after observing firsthand incidents where the government prevented human rights organizations from conducting meetings.

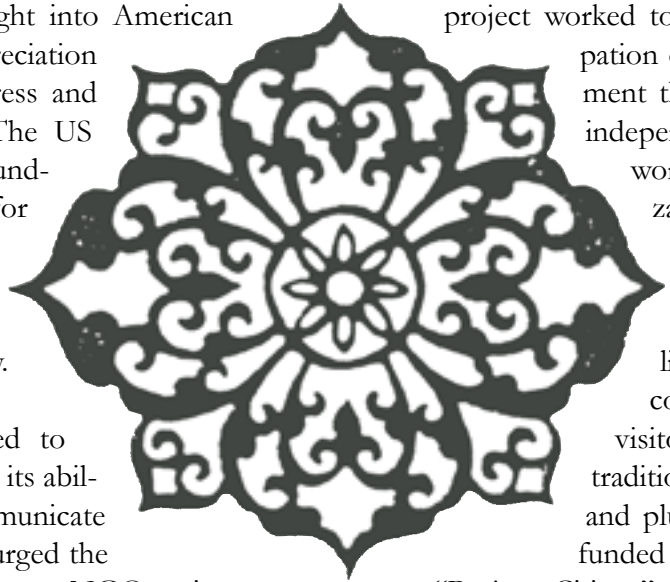
The United States released several statements throughout the year on human rights issues, including a statement supporting citizens' rights to express dissident views peacefully and organize legally. The United States distributed Arabic- and English-language resource materials, including US reports on human rights, religious freedom, and trafficking in persons; independent NGO reports on regional human rights issues; and electronic journals and articles on rule of law and transparency in government. The US Embassy distributed a targeted packet of outreach materials directly linked to the celebration of Human Rights Day.

The United States made full use of exchange, cultural, and professional programs to promote democratic values. In fields of government, human rights, judicial reform, education, and the media, 24 individuals participated in the International Visitor Leadership Program to meet international counterparts and gain exposure to the United States. Four Tunisian faculty members studied in the subject areas of US Political Economy, American Civilization, and American Studies for Foreign Secondary Educators at US Summer Institutes. Two mid-career professionals participated in exchange programs, one focused on human rights and democracy and the other on management in the public and private sectors. The United States brought high profile speakers to the country to discuss human rights and democracy issues with think tanks, government officials, journalists, and university classes. In September the Embassy began hosting a monthly roundtable series on topics related to human rights and democracy. Six Tunisians were among the 42 Arab student leaders who participated in Student Leaders Institutes in the United States and a subsequent Alumni Conference in Abu Dhabi. During these programs students learned about democratic principles and institutions, interacted with American and other Arab students, and developed a civic engagement project using skills they learned in the program.

The United States promoted media independence and professionalism through programs for journalists and regular interaction with media professionals. The ambassador and other officials consistently highlighted



the US commitment to human rights, transparency, and freedom of expression in speeches, media interviews, and publications. One US official worked full-time on press and media outreach, increasing direct journalist access to International Information Program material and other open and diverse sources of information. The United States actively supported a program between a US university and the Institut de Presse et des Sciences de l'Information Universite de la Manouba, the only Tunisian journalism institute for enhanced professional journalism. The program allowed Tunisian and American students to learn from each other and share experiences about publishing campus newspapers. Another US small grant allowed the institute to start a student newspaper. Three journalists participated in US exchange programs and returned with greater insight into American culture and renewed appreciation of the value of a free press and freedom of expression. The US Embassy hosted a press roundtable with 11 journalists for an American Fulbright professor who spoke of the role that press should play in a democratic society.



The United States worked to strengthen civil society and its ability to influence and communicate with the government and urged the government to remove onerous NGO registration and funding restrictions. Three individuals active in human rights and democracy promotion participated in a program in which they received training and conducted internships in the US on civil society activism. Support for freedom of assembly and association was a key aspect of both private dialogue with the government and public statements throughout the year. US officials met regularly with NGOs that suffered from government harassment and restrictions and attended events hosted by these NGOs.

To promote greater awareness of the importance of the rule of law and human rights protections, the United States supported a program that identified and sponsored guest American professors for a law

school in the country. A US-funded Commercial Law Development Program continued to promote judicial competency, transparency, and independence, as did other regional technical assistance programs that emphasized rule of law. During the year 80 Tunisian military personnel took part in US training that included components on respect for human rights and rule of law.

US projects focused on increasing opportunities for women, including a business and entrepreneurship training program held in the United States in which five Tunisian women participated. The United States worked to ensure the active participation of Tunisian women in all assistance programs, including the "Women and the Law" regional network. One project worked to increase effective participation of women in local government through the creation of an independent regional network of women's activists and organizations.

US officials maintained close contact with Muslim, Christian, and Jewish communities and promoted visitor exchanges on American traditions of religious tolerance and pluralism. The United States funded a program that included a "Project Citizen" component, which taught secondary students how to identify civic issues, express their opinions, and influence decision makers.

The country is a transit country for North and sub-Saharan African men and women migrating to Europe, some of whom may be trafficked for the purposes of involuntary servitude or sexual exploitation. The United States maintained links with and provided training and equipment to border security forces to increase their ability to detect trafficking in persons and immigration flows and protect the country's borders. US officials worked to raise awareness of human trafficking patterns and concerns with the government and local NGOs in coordination with international organizations.



West Bank and Gaza

The Palestinian Authority has a democratically elected president and legislative council, which select and endorse a prime minister and cabinet. In January 2005 Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Mahmud Abbas won approximately 62 percent of the popular vote in a presidential election regarded as generally free and fair. Palestinian Legislative Council elections were held on January 25, bringing the current Hamas-led government to power; international observers concluded the elections generally met democratic standards, despite some irregularities. Israel exercised occupation authority through the Ministry of Defense's Office of Coordination and Liaison. Despite a democratically elected legislature and presidency, the Palestinian Authority's overall human rights record remained poor. This was due in part to the government's failure to fully establish control of public security, including insufficient measures to prevent attacks on targets within the Occupied Territories and in Israel by Palestinian terrorist groups, which operated with impunity. There was also widespread public perception of corruption, notably within the security forces. The Government of Israel's overall human rights record in the occupied territories remained poor during the year, due in part to actions by Israeli soldiers and settlers that resulted in death and injury to hundreds of Palestinian civilians.

The goal of the United States is to support reform of political, economic, and security institutions in accordance with the Quartet Roadmap and President Bush's vision for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The January legislative elections led to the formation of a new Palestinian government that did not meet the requirements set out by the Middle East Quartet: to commit to the principle of nonviolence, recognize Israel, and accept previous agreements and obligations, including the roadmap. In light of Quartet decisions, the US Government conducted an extensive review of assistance programs to the West Bank and Gaza, and as a result re-focused assistance on basic human needs (health care, education, food security). The United States continued to work with Palestinian President Abbas, who sup-

ported the Quartet requirements. The United States also worked with NGOs to support democratization and respect for human rights. US efforts highlighted support for the rule of law, strengthening civil society and fostering a responsible and independent media. The United States worked through diplomatic initiatives, public outreach, and assistance programs to advance democracy and human rights.

The United States provided critical support for democratic elections with technical and in-kind assistance to the Central Election Commission. The United States supported the deployment of international observers for the January parliamentary elections, focusing public and international attention on the conduct of those elections and enhancing the credibility of their results. US technical assistance facilitated campaign polling and surveying, supported voter education and information campaigns, and assisted democratic political parties in building management skills.

The United States also supported the promotion of democratic principles and development through public outreach programs designed to encourage political activism and respect for democratic ideals. The Consulate General hosted a student debate on American-style democracy, as well as a video conference for students and teachers on political activism. The United States hosted speakers and video conferences for women and youth on democracy. This included a conference on women's political participation and a series of lectures and workshops with a variety of female audiences in the West Bank and Gaza by an American expert on women's empowerment. The United States also sponsored the completion of a training and mentoring program for women NGO leaders and supported the launch of the Palestinian Business Women's Forum, organized by a group of exchange program alumni.

Palestinians residing in the West Bank and Gaza regularly participated in exchange programs that focused on democracy and human rights, including press freedoms. In one International Visitor Leadership Program, the Consulate General sent seven key political figures and electoral campaign activists to the United States to observe US campaign techniques in



action. In a joint program with the United States, six Palestinian mayors and six Israeli mayors traveled to the United States together for an exchange program which allowed them to meet some of their American peers and engage with each other. Other exchange programs sponsored by the United States focused on human rights advocacy and awareness; accountability in government; promoting rule of law, NGOs, and civic activism; US foreign policy and human rights; and youth leadership and its effects on social, political, and economic change.

In support of freedom of the press and media responsibilities in a democratic society, the United States facilitated discussions between American expert speakers and Palestinian journalists, including programs on the role of election observers and on US foreign policy. US officials also held regular press seminars for local and international correspondents based in the Palestinian Territories to encourage accurate and responsible reporting on issues of concern to both Palestinians and Americans. The United States launched a new independent media program in October to improve the performance, professionalism, and economic viability of private broadcast media outlets in the West Bank and Gaza by providing training and small grants to local media professionals.

The United States has provided strong support to civil society. Over the past six years, the United States has provided grants to over 100 civil society organizations. During the year the program established student parliaments in all 15 UN Relief and Works Agency schools in the West Bank and Gaza; supported the development of a legislative performance index to improve oversight of the parliament; provided after-school programs to 800 youth in Gaza living in impoverished neighborhoods; and supported a campaign fighting violence against women in Gaza.

The United States continues to support rule of law reform through targeted assistance to five law faculties and the Palestinian Bar Association. The rule of law program completed the training of 26 law school professors on interactive teaching methods; advanced a continued legal education program that seeks to en-

hance the skills of legal professionals; supported in cooperation with the Palestinian Bar Association the first bar examination ever held in the West Bank and Gaza; and trained nearly 1,000 Gaza youths in respect for the rule of law. The United States is also supporting efforts to increase legislative accountability and transparency through targeted support to Palestinian civil society organizations and the Institute of Law at Birzeit University.

US support for religious, ethnic, and social tolerance continued with video conferences and speaker programs, which facilitated dialogue among Palestinians about religious tolerance and linked Muslim religious leaders with their Israeli Jewish and American Muslim counterparts. One local speaker, after returning from a US-sponsored exchange program, led a discussion on “Accepting Others and Coexistence between the West and East” with a group of 30 female high school students and teachers in a small village near Bethlehem.

Yemen

Yemen is a republic governed by a powerful executive branch headed by President Ali Abdullah Saleh. On September 20, President Saleh was re-elected to a seven-year term. Despite reported instances of irregularities, the election was judged by international observers to have been open and competitive. The constitution calls for power to be shared between the president and the 301-seat House of Representatives and appointed 111-member Shura council. In practice, however, power rests squarely with the president and the ruling party, the General People’s Congress. Significant human rights problems continued to exist in some areas throughout the year, although the government improved its human rights record by taking several steps to reduce corruption, including removing and investigating several judges accused of malfeasance, passing a financial disclosure law for government officials, and establishing an independent anticorruption authority with civil society representatives. However, weak governmental institutions and pervasive corruption continued to undermine civil liberties. In addition, security forces continued to arbi-



Yemeni women protest against political parties' lack of support for their participation. Women voters represent 42% of the electorate but they are represented in the parliament by only one seat. (AP photo)

trarily arrest and detain individuals, and in many cases the government failed to hold members of the security forces accountable for abuses. Members of the Political Security Office and Ministry of Interior police forces continued to torture and abuse persons in detention. Despite constitutional prohibitions against such practices, security officers routinely monitored citizens' activities, searched their homes, detained them for questioning, and mistreated detainees. Prolonged pretrial detention, judicial corruption, and executive interference also continued to undermine due process. Discrimination against women, child labor, and trafficking in persons remained problems.

During the year the United States consistently focused on supporting the government's efforts to strengthen its human rights record and pushing for democratic and judicial reforms. The United States maintained an open dialogue with opposition parties to further promote democratization efforts. Anticorruption activities and programs, for example, were supported through projects with government, opposition, and civil society groups. US programs focused on bolster-

ing civil society and giving women a greater voice in the government. The United States advocated democratic reform and human rights by continuing and commencing several long-term projects during the year, while playing a key role in uniting the international donor community to press the government on implementation of delayed reform commitments.

Opposition parties, although quite active, had difficulty matching the electoral successes of the General People's Congress, partly because the General People's Congress could and did draw upon state resources to mobilize its campaigns. During the year the United States was steadfast in its support to strengthen and democratize political parties, improve election administration, foster fair elections, and support anticorruption initiatives. Throughout the year, US efforts had a dramatic impact in the country, resulting in advances in fighting corruption, increasing women's representation in government, and ensuring independence of the judiciary. The United States marshaled a multilateral initiative to pressure the government directly on these goals. The president named new cabinet minis-



ters and adopted a national reform strategy to fight corruption, improve judicial effectiveness and independence, and expand media freedoms. The United States provided a range of technical and policy assistance in each of these reform areas. Major programs included a parliament program that worked to strengthen core skills of parliamentarians and develop the professional capabilities of parliamentary committees as well as Yemen Parliamentarians Against Corruption, the country's chapter of the Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption. US efforts to support women's political participation resulted in the creation of a network comprised of representatives from the five major political parties who worked together to strengthen women's roles within their parties.

During the year US advocacy helped ensure the country's first truly competitive presidential election in which the opposition mounted an aggressive campaign against President Saleh. US officials met with government and opposition political party members to press for critical electoral reforms, working in close cooperation with an international donor working group. The United States helped expand the capacity of the Supreme Commission for Electoral Reform to regulate the September presidential and local council elections. In the lead up to the elections, US support enabled opposition parties to come to an agreement with the ruling party on contentious issues including voter registration and access to broadcast media. The United States supported local and international NGOs to monitor for fairness and transparency of the election process, which resulted in a historic step towards democracy for the country.

During the year US officials routinely spoke out against violations of press freedom and met with individual victims of harassment, resulting in a sharp decline in attacks against journalists critical of the government compared to 2005. The United States strongly pressed government, media, and civil society leaders on the need to support a free and professional press and provided training to journalists and lawyers on legal defense strategies. Cooperation with the government led to the suspension of a proposed

press law that was uniformly opposed by journalists and civil society.

During the year US officials met frequently with members of the Yemeni Journalists Syndicate as well as individual victims of harassment. Through innovative programs, the United States worked closely with local NGOs and the press to create thematic projects aimed at consciousness-raising and increasing technical capacity, supporting freedom of information, and fostering a better and safer environment for freedom of speech. Programs included training for high-level government officials, NGOs, and projects such as the production of the first film in the country to discuss HIV/AIDS openly with youth, which was aired on Yemen TV on the commemoration of International Human Rights Day.

Throughout the year the United States engaged NGOs on the issues of rule of law, human rights, and political freedom by encouraging them to take a lead in pressing for needed reforms. The United States supported dozens of domestic NGOs during the year, specifically focusing on capacity-building, organizing, and advocacy. US programs focused on strengthening civil society networks and improving their capabilities to become more active in political processes. One such project funded a local NGO to work with welfare organizations to transform them into effective advocates for human rights and democracy through training and education. US officials successfully pressed the government to respect laws guaranteeing freedom of assembly, resulting in largely unhindered nationwide election rallies staged by the opposition and ruling parties.

The judicial system has long coexisted with more traditional means of dispute resolution, such as tribal mediation. There were numerous problems within the court system, including tampering by the executive branch, corruption, inefficient court administration, and the failure by authorities to enforce rulings. Throughout the year the United States supported programs with tribal leaders, assisted in their efforts to resolve long-standing conflicts, and promoted development in their governorates in an attempt to ameliorate and better integrate the traditional judicial



ways with more contemporary forms. The leaders from these programs united and formed an independent organization to coordinate tribal negotiations and engage with local and national government institutions.

At the urging of the United States and other donors, President Saleh signed a law in May that removed the Supreme Judicial Council from the office of the president. To support this opening in the system, US programs focused on assisting the Supreme Judicial Council in establishing its independence from the executive branch as well as working with reform-minded parliamentarians to tackle the issues of corruption and public finance.

During the year the United States consistently promoted women's rights through support for greater female political participation and education. A long-term initiative on women's illiteracy continued throughout the year, with cooperation from an international NGO, to establish women's literacy associations in the country. The United States supported a local NGO in its efforts to implement Women Democracy Watch, a project aimed at effectively involving women in the broader Middle East region and strengthening their role in current political dialogue. To further support women's empowerment, the Women in Technology program trained women in basic and advanced computer skills to increase women's participation in the economy.

More than 90,000 Somali and Ethiopian refugees resided in the country, many of whom live in a government-run camp. The United States provided funding to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees for its activities to assist these refugees. The United States supported the UN High Commissioner for Refugee's efforts to encourage the government to permit improvements to living conditions in the camps and to seek progress on other concerns facing the refugees, such as access to education and permission to work.

During the year the United States, with international labor organizations, provided technical assistance and capacity-building training to labor unions in order to strengthen their abilities to be stronger advocates of

labor rights in society. The United States continued to work closely with the government and NGOs to fight human trafficking, particularly of children. The United States continued funding NGOs in providing educational outreach and job opportunities for low-income areas with known incidences of child trafficking to Saudi Arabia. With this approach, the United States aimed to stem the problem before it begins and attack the root causes of trafficking in the country.



NEAR EAST & NORTH AFRICA

SOUTH & CENTRAL ASIA





“It is the work of human rights activists to make... the link between democracy and prosperity. I am convinced that today there are many more governments that are beginning to see that they cannot neglect people’s rights and that these have to be respected because there is a huge demand for it. ”

Asma Jahangir

The current UN Special Rapporteur on Religious Freedom and leading human rights activist from Pakistan



SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA

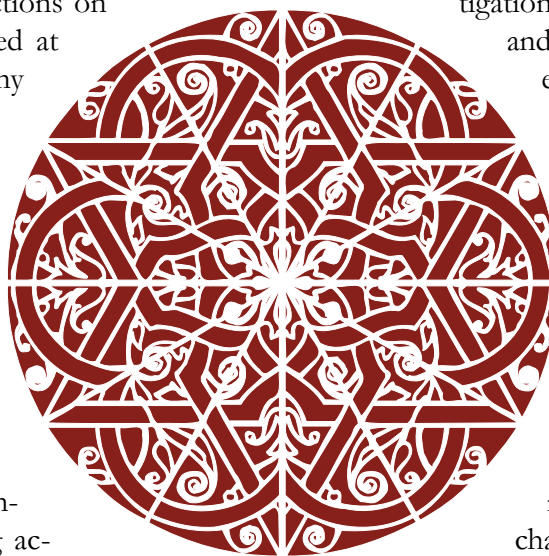
Throughout South and Central Asia the United States persisted in urging governments to promote a vibrant civil society as the backbone of democracy. We maintained our robust support of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and human rights defenders through both programs, where possible, and diplomacy.

The goal of our democracy assistance programs in the region was to empower local citizens in their efforts to participate fully, fairly, and peacefully in a democratic society that respects human rights and the will of voters.

In Central Asia, restrictions on civil society and opposition political parties that began after the so-called Color Revolutions remained and in some cases increased. Government restrictions on civil society were often directed at US implementing partners, many of which had to shut down their operations during the last two years. The Government of Uzbekistan sought to control all NGO activity and closed down over 200 civil society organizations; the Government of Kazakhstan restrictively interpreted Article 5 of the constitution to suspend foreign-funded, non-partisan political party training activities; and even in Kyrgyzstan, which enjoys a relatively open civil society and active opposition movement, the government increasingly harassed foreign-funded NGOs.

In the midst of these repressive environments, US programs helped hundreds of NGOs in the region build their capacity to investigate human rights abuses, corruption, and political repression, to advocate more effectively for reforms, to strengthen legal and regulatory frameworks, and to improve their organizational capacity. We provided timely assistance

to individual human rights and democracy activists, journalists, and members of NGOs that were victims of government-sponsored persecution as a result of their work. The United States, with other diplomatic missions and multilateral organizations, monitored the cases and trials (when permitted) of members of civil society and human rights defenders and in the cases of physical assault or vandalism, pressed foreign governments to conduct impartial investigations, hold perpetrators accountable, and ensure the safety of NGO leaders.



The United States trained activists to better investigate human rights abuses and advocate for improved respect for human rights; offered assistance to victims of abuses; trained government officials—particularly security forces and police—on human rights through education and exchanges; and worked with government and civil society to combat discrimination and violence against women and minorities. In several countries, such as Afghanistan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, the United States helped establish or provided technical assistance and diplomatic support to national human rights commissions.

Many governments in South and particularly Central Asia continued to restrict media freedom or harass journalists and media outlets. In Kazakhstan, the government used restrictive libel laws to fine, convict, and suspend media outlets, journalists, and critics. In



Turkmenistan, government agents subjected journalists to arrest, harassment, intimidation, and violence. In Pakistan harassment, intimidation, and arrest of journalists also increased during the year, resulting in self-censorship in media outlets for fear of retribution by government agents. However, newspapers were free to criticize the government, and most did.

In the face of such restrictions and harassment of the media, the United States maintained robust support for media freedom urging governments throughout the region to respect media freedom and free speech and speaking out strongly against censorship and harassment of journalists. US assistance programs provided training and support for local and regional media outlets to improve their effectiveness and financial sustainability, journalist training and legal support in Kazakhstan, community radio stations in Afghanistan, the first news syndicate and independent printing press in Central Asia, and the first television program focused on rule of law, human rights, and legal education in Pakistan.

US officials and programs also promoted increased political participation of women, developed the capacity of female political leaders, and provided training and exchanges for female elected officials and party leaders. Other women's programs in the region included assistance to local NGOs to conduct training on women's issues and support to female survivors of abuse in Afghanistan and Tajikistan, funding of legal aid clinics and other legal support for women in India, Afghanistan, and Turkmenistan, and public education efforts focused on increasing women's awareness of their rights in Afghanistan and Kyrgyzstan. In December, following approval by the Pakistan National Assembly, Senate, and signature by the President, a new "Women's Protection Bill" became law, marking the first time in three decades that a Pakistan government successfully rolled back laws detrimental to women's rights. In India the United States provided support for the protection of women's legal rights in the areas of domestic violence, dowry, divorce, and inheritance.

The United States encouraged governments and their citizens in South and Central Asia to respect rule of law and promoted judicial reform. US assistance helped modernize the justice sector in several countries, provided training and exchanges for judges, expanded access to justice to the poor, enhanced legal protections for women, supported anticorruption efforts, and strengthened bar associations. The United States worked with other donors to rebuild the justice system in Afghanistan, including infrastructure and the equipping and training of judges, attorneys, and administrators. We provided training for government officials in Sri Lanka to investigate corruption and supported regional corruption awareness workshops in tsunami-affected districts; a series of anticorruption public service announcements on national television; and, with other donors, several International Anti-Corruption Day events.

Free and fair elections and active political parties are a cornerstone of any healthy democracy. In countries like Pakistan, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Nepal, US assistance helped election officials get better training; increased transparency in elections through financial and technical assistance to local observer organizations, participation in and support for international observation, funding of parallel vote counts, and media support and journalist training on election coverage; increased informed participation through support for voter education and election debates; ensured the integrity of the electoral process with assistance for improving voter lists and registration, transparent ballot boxes, and indelible ink; and furthered electoral reform through new legislation.

The United States urged governments and opposition groups throughout the region to play by democratic rules of the game and exercise their political rights peacefully. In Nepal, the United States played an active role in pressing the king to turn over power to legitimate political parties during the April People's Movement. Following the declaration of a ceasefire between the government and the Maoists, civilian casualties in the conflict dramatically declined, as did



human rights abuses such as extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detention, and torture. In Bangladesh, US officials routinely highlighted the importance of democratic practices and the protection of human rights during senior-level visits and through discussions with Bangladeshi officials, members of civil society, and the press. The United States urged the opposition to peacefully exercise its rights and pressed the government to allow lawful opposition activity.



Women's Legal Advocacy and Resource Centers



A local attorney speaks to a women's council meeting. (ABA photo)

In Central Asia, the United States funded a program to promote women's rights and rule of law in Tajikistan through the American Bar Association/Central European and Eurasian Law Initiative (ABA/CEELI).

The program, *The Women's Legal Advocacy and Resource Center Project*, established support centers in Dushanbe and Khujand staffed by eight attorneys who provided free legal advice and court representation to indigent and vulnerable women and developed curriculum and training programs for the broader legal community. The program also fostered an increased public awareness of women's rights in Tajikistan and worked to increase the number of decisions on legal issues favorable to women's rights.

Throughout the duration of the program, staff at the women's legal support centers provided nearly 1,500 consultations, represented 65 clients in court proceedings, prepared over 500 legal documents, and organized numerous trainings in Dushanbe, Khujand, and outlying regions. Program attorneys empowered women to resolve civil and criminal matters relating to family conflict, housing, labor rights, inheritance disputes, land rights, and pension rights. The attorneys also assisted victims of trafficking and domestic violence to obtain legal redress and successfully advanced prosecution of sexual assault crimes against women.

In one sexual harassment case, the center attorneys reached an out of court settlement with a private company in which the victim was successfully reinstated in her position and received the maternity benefits to which she was entitled. Center attorneys represented seven trafficking victims in a prosecution that led to the conviction, sentencing, and imprisonment of five trafficking perpetrators. A center-supported hearing and prosecution of a domestic violence case resulted in the perpetrator receiving a one-year prison sentence for middle-injury assault—an extremely rare outcome in a case of this nature in Central Asia.

Town-hall discussions were held on legal issues of paramount importance to women, including property, family, housing, and inheritance law. Over 60 judges at the government's Judicial Training Center received training on international and Tajik gender equality standards—the first time gender issues have been addressed in the mandatory training program for judges. ABA/CEELI also led a group of international and local organizations in support of a women's committee and parliamentary initiative to advance implementation of Tajikistan's 2005 gender equality law.

This program ensured that many women were able to obtain financial assistance and secure housing after abandonment by their husbands, to receive compensation following inheritance disputes, to return to employment after being illegally pressured to resign, and to hold trafficking and domestic violence perpetrators accountable for their crimes. The impact of this program is far-reaching and will be felt for years to come, both in the realm of women's rights and in the general development of Tajik civil society.



Afghanistan

Afghanistan is an Islamic republic. In October 2004 Hamid Karzai was elected president in the country's first presidential election under its January 2004 constitution. The country's human rights record remained poor due to a deadly insurgency, weak central institutions, and ongoing recovery from three decades of war. Despite these challenges, the country continued to make progress toward reconstruction, stability, and the protection of human rights. However, serious human rights abuses continued, including acts of terrorism by insurgents, as well as situations in which local security forces and police abused their authority, committed extrajudicial killings, used excessive force, and looted private homes and offices while conducting searches. Officials abused and tortured detainees. Efforts to bring to justice serious human rights offenders were often ineffective, and impunity under the law remained a serious concern. Prolonged pre-trial detention and poor prison conditions led to deteriorating health conditions and the deaths of some prisoners. The constitution provided for freedom of speech, press, assembly, association, and movement; however, serious problems remained. The year witnessed a trend toward increased government control of the media. Violence, including rape and the abduction of women and children, domestic violence, and societal discrimination against minorities, continued. Internationally-recognized workers' rights were ignored, and workers were abused. Child labor was widespread, and there was no evidence that labor laws were enforced. Trafficking in persons remained a problem.

The United States worked with the government to overcome the continuing Taliban insurgency by promoting good governance, respect for rule of law, and the protection of human rights. The United States supported the country's efforts to respect human rights, promote tolerance, and govern democratically, including through the conduct of free and fair elections. The US human rights and democracy strategy assisted the government in building democratic national institutions and infrastructure, including judicial institutions, rule of law, electoral institutions,

local governance, and civic participation. While publicly launching the Peace, Reconciliation, and Justice Action Plan, President Karzai declared December 10—International Human Rights Day—a National Day of Remembrance for the victims of past human rights abuses in the country. Throughout the year senior US officials met regularly with President Karzai and others to underscore the US democracy, human rights, and good governance message. President Bush and the First Lady traveled to the country in March and stressed the importance of education and political participation for women and girls. During the year the secretary of state and other senior US officials traveled to the country and delivered the message that the United States remains firmly committed to helping Afghans build a secure, democratic, and prosperous future in which the rights of all citizens are respected.

US government support for transparent and fair electoral processes during the year included assistance to build the capacity of the Independent Election Commission to carry out future elections that meet international standards with minimal assistance from the international community. The US provided training and assistance in the field of information technology and set up a pilot voter registry project. Technical assistance was also provided to the commission on possible improvements to the draft elections law. The United States continued to support the country's nascent democracy by sending 15 current and future leaders to the United States to attend workshops focusing on state and local government for legislators and administrators, the rule of law, and civic leadership. US assistance to the newly elected National Assembly included an orientation session for the members of the newly elected body and training for six critical committees. All members were trained in computer basics to facilitate their access to a wide information base. The United States also played a key role in strengthening the structures of provincial governments and provided training and mentoring to the newly elected provincial councils in all 34 provinces. In an exchange program, 18 parliamentarians traveled to Washington, DC, and Texas to learn about the US judicial system.



Afghan men and children take part in a training session on their legal rights under the Afghan Constitution. (USAID photo)

During the year the United States promoted independent press and electronic media by assisting with the completion of independent community-based radio networks and investing in training and business plan development for sustainable independent media organizations. The US Government helped create 32 independent community-based radio stations, nine of which are generating over half of their own revenue due to business management training. US assistance helped renovate and expand domestic radio stations throughout the country, especially in the south, where media freedom was severely restricted. The United States funded three new FM stations in the border region with Pakistan, which is a critical area due to cross-border extremism and insurgency. One US-funded project produced an original radio series in Dari and Pashto in order to address principles of respect, human rights, and democracy as they relate to rights within Islam. It combined drama segments and interviews with religious scholars about human rights within Islam and the role of women in Islam using examples from the Koran. The United States also supported an initiative to unite journalists through a

professional association. This was an important step toward ensuring press freedoms and informing the emerging regulatory framework for the media sector. Journalists traveled to the United States for an International Visitor Leadership Program sponsored by the US Government. Workshops during the visit focused on the role of professional print and broadcast media in a democratic society. The United States also aimed to advance freedom of expression through grants supporting programs helping to revive literary and theatrical traditions.

The United States supported domestic civil society and NGOs. Assistance was provided to establish a legal and regulatory framework for NGOs. Help was also provided to the Ministry of Economy to create and maintain a public registry of NGOs, which will help the government ensure accountability of the sector through effective implementation of the NGO law. The United States increased the presence of civil society in the provinces and fostered its development through direct partnership and coaching of domestic organizations. In the last two years, subgrants have

been provided to more than 200 domestic NGOs for capacity building, vocational training, community development, and advocacy in the provinces; 57 percent of the grants went to women-led or women-focused domestic NGOs. One US-funded project convened women's and human rights NGOs to develop grassroots leadership training specifically for women from regions severely impacted by human rights abuses.

To strengthen the rule of law, the United States worked with other donors to rebuild the justice system, including building infrastructure and equipping and training judges, attorneys, and administrators. The United States rehabilitated 40 judicial facilities, trained more than 600 judges, supported the Supreme Court in establishing its own judicial education and training committee, and continued training for employees in the legislative drafting unit of the Ministry of Justice. To help disseminate basic information on the country's new laws and constitution, the United States supported development of a ministry website, compiled and disseminated in both digital and print formats the entire corpus of law from 1964 to the present, and printed and distributed a combined total of nearly 17,000 copies of select basic laws and

the constitution for distribution to courts, prosecutors' offices, and ministry branch offices throughout the country. The United States also funded English and computer literacy classes for judges, prosecutors, and law faculty from four universities in Kabul and the provinces. A US-funded grant helped a US-based university develop a law degree program specifically designed for citizen legal educators to improve the institutional capacity of this critical sector.

The United States supported the country's efforts to protect human rights through diplomacy and assistance programs. The United States educated the public about the role of the legal system by distributing approximately 72,000 sets of comic books on legal rights. The United States trained police on community-based policing and the protection of human rights, with an emphasis on women's and children's rights. The United States, with other elements of the international community, assisted the Ministry of Interior in developing a transparent selection process for officers in the Afghan National Police, for which candidates for senior appointments were subject to human rights vetting. When 14 police officers were appointed to leadership positions outside of this



Afghan Provincial Councilors take part in a workshop on their roles and responsibilities as councilors. (NDI photo)



process, the United States and international partners participated in a probation board to review the cases. Based on the recommendations of the board, 11 of these police officers were removed from office, one was transferred, and one was cleared of allegations. The last was dropped from the process due to illness. A dozen citizens from all walks of life participated in programs targeting human rights, as well as programs examining humanitarian response to crises, community approaches to social issues, and the role of women as leaders in the public and private sectors.

The United States continued to prioritize the protection of the rights of women and support their active participation in government and community activities. US-funded NGOs held workshops and educated women on their legal rights and the justice system, the new constitution, and the National Assembly and Provincial Council Elections. The United States integrated women's issues into virtually all of its programs, aiming to increase women's political participation, education, economic opportunities, and their role in civil society. The United States continued to provide support for capacity building to the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the provincial departments of women's affairs to facilitate the role of the ministry as an effective advocate for women. During the year US assistance ensured the participation of girls in the World Cup Soccer Delegation and arranged for the manager of a successful women's literacy program to address the Global Conference on Literacy in New York. The US-Afghan Women's Council, a public-private partnership established in 2002 by Presidents Bush and Karzai to mobilize private sector resources to empower Afghan women, continued to thrive under the leadership of Under Secretary for Democracy and Global Affairs Dobriansky, Afghan Foreign Minister Spanta, and Minister of Women's Affairs Ghanzafar. Private sector individuals' and corporations' sponsorship helped women in four key areas: microfinance and entrepreneurship; education and literacy; legal awareness and political participation; and access to health care.

The United States was the single largest donor to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees' repatriation program, which assisted more than 3.6 million

refugees to return to the country since March 2002—139,804 of whom returned in 2006. The United States also assisted returnees by providing NGO grants that facilitated the provision of shelter, water and sanitation services, education, health care, and livelihood opportunities.

US support helped the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission build its capacity and monitor and investigate human rights violations. US officials worked with the commission, NGOs, and local officials to identify areas of particular concern and encourage wider reforms within the government. The commission regularly monitored the human rights situation, published findings, and worked closely with the international community to resolve human rights issues, including those in government-run prisons. The commission has 10 offices, and its responsibilities as mandated by the constitution include human rights monitoring, investigation of human rights violations, and development of domestic human rights institutions. The United States continued to fund the building of six commission offices around Kabul and in the provinces of Kandahar, Bamyan, Herat, Kunduz, and Gardez, as well as the salaries of commission staff. The United States sponsored training programs for middle and high school teachers on human rights, including the rights of women and children.

US officials worked with civil society organizations to promote religious tolerance. Several influential clerics and provincial religious scholars participated in an International Visitor Leadership Program examining the role of religious leaders in a democracy, which enabled them to see first-hand the expression of faith in a multi-denominational society, observe the practice of Islam in the United States, and participate in inter-faith dialogues to strengthen mutual understanding.

The United States consistently raised human trafficking issues with the government and civil society. In past years the United States developed a national anti-trafficking action plan with the government to combat human trafficking in both the short- and long-term. The United States also funded return and reintegration programs, capacity building, campaigns against trafficking in persons, and the training of govern-



ment officials. The US supported a project focused on preventing and responding to incidences of child trafficking, including a review and extension of the National Plan of Action on Child Trafficking.

Bangladesh

Bangladesh is a parliamentary democracy governed by a prime minister who has strong executive powers. The president is elected by parliament every five years and holds a ceremonial role as head of state. The country's elections were generally free and fair, but politics were traditionally hostile. Violent protests continued to be a pervasive element in the country's politics during the year. The opposition Awami League-led alliance threatened to boycott the parliamentary elections scheduled for January 2007 unless the Bangladesh Nationalist Party accepted its demands for major changes in the caretaker regime and electoral systems. Weak political and governmental institutions, pervasive corruption, and general government indifference to human rights continued to be problems. Extrajudicial killings, torture, and other widespread abuses by law enforcement personnel, including the police and members of the paramilitary Rapid Action Battalion, went largely unpunished, and a culture of impunity remained pervasive in the police force. Trafficking in persons and other abuses against women and children remained serious problems. Criminals and political or religious activists threatened and occasionally attacked journalists. While the constitution guarantees freedom of religion, Islam is the official state religion. The government's record of protecting religious minorities was inconsistent, and the police were often ineffective in assisting members of religious minorities who were victims of crime.

US human rights and democracy goals in the country include full participation by political parties in free and fair national elections in 2007 and greater protection of human rights. The United States promoted democracy and human rights by supporting democratic institutions and practices, encouraging transparency and accountability in government actions and policies, endorsing respect for the rule of law, and encouraging the government to hold perpetra-

tors of political and extremist violence accountable for their actions.

US officials routinely highlighted the importance of democratic practices in the country during senior-level visits and through discussions with government officials, members of civil society, and the press. The United States urged opposition parties to exercise, not surrender, their rights and pressed the government to allow lawful opposition activity.

The United States funded numerous projects to promote democracy in the country and to lay the foundation for 2007 elections. A US-sponsored program on professional leadership included 353 midlevel leaders from all major parties, and a similar program focused on youth issues reached 8,000 members of those parties' student wings. A US-funded survey on the integrity of the new voter list became an important part of the public debate on how to correct the list for the 2007 elections. US-sponsored long-term international election observers were deployed late in the year to observe election preparations. The United States also funded selected domestic groups as long-term observers. The United States chaired a local consultative working group of international donors to coordinate programs and initiatives in support of elections.

During the year the US-supported civic education programs in Bangladeshi schools encouraged the active participation of the next generation of citizens in their communities. The United States supported a civic education curriculum in 20 schools in Dhaka and Gazipur and a lecture program on constitutional reform in 41 schools in Khulna and Rajshahi.

The United States promoted media freedom and freedom of speech within the country. US efforts focused attention on the security and freedom of journalists, who continued to face pressure from political activists. The US-sponsored training focused on investigative reporting skills for more than 100 journalists. Specific programs targeted broadcast journalists, early career journalists, and reporters preparing to cover the elections. Training programs were conducted by visiting specialists and by local partner organizations. These organizations began to develop the capacity to



Bangladeshis take part in a training seminar to improve election monitoring and media coverage of elections. (IRI photo)

conduct such training independently. US officials also closely monitored the sedition trial of a local journalist and met with government officials to discuss his case on numerous occasions.

US diplomacy efforts continued to promote respect for freedom of association and assembly for all participants in the democratic process. The United States promoted the development of stronger local government associations to act as advocates for enhanced local governance. Both the US-supported Bangladesh Union Parishad Forum and the Municipal Association of Bangladesh began to implement strategic plans for short and long-term policy goals. The United States supported the formation of women's caucuses within both organizations to deal more directly with issues of gender representation, reserved seats for women, and the responsibilities of female council members. US programs strengthened the roles of locally elected women by providing leadership skills training to female council members in 65 localities.

During the year the United States remained committed to promoting rule of law in the country. The United States supported the draft national integrity strategy, which served as the basis for donor interaction with the government by setting bilateral agendas to combat corruption. The United States continued to promote anti corruption activities by funding 11 NGOs to produce a "Rights Resource Manual." This research initiative combined the efforts of local partners across different sectors. The pilot project, known as the "Zone of Good Governance," sought to use the rights manual as a way to increase citizens' knowledge of their rights and to inform them of how to channel complaints or grievances within the government system to request resolution. The manual also contained contact information for civil society advocacy and support groups.

The United States continued to support locally elected bodies. In 55 localities, citizens had the opportunity to scrutinize the budgets of local governments,



prioritize development projects, and review reports of public expenditures. As a result, local revenue collection increased approximately 10 percent on average compared to previous years.

The US Government supported a coalition of human rights organizations focused on advocacy for the criminalization of domestic violence. This coalition drafted legislation making domestic violence punishable with prison terms, which it planned to present to the next parliament for action. The United States provided funding to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees for its activities to assist over 20,000 Burmese Rohingya refugees in the country. The United States actively supported the High Commissioner's efforts to encourage the government to permit improvements to living conditions in the camps and to seek progress on other concerns facing the refugees, such as access to education and permission to work. US officials visited the camps to emphasize US concerns about conditions and met frequently with the government to urge them to improve conditions in the camps. By the end of the year, the relationship between the High Commissioner and the government had markedly improved, and several pilot programs

to renovate shelters and other camp facilities had been initiated.

The United States continued to support religious freedom in the country. The International Khatme Nubawat Movement continued its campaign to force the government to declare members of the Ahmadiyya sect as non-Muslims. The government took concerted steps to protect Ahmadiyyas, due in large part to US and other diplomatic pressure. During the year, US officials recognized police efforts to successfully block several attempts by the International Khatme Nubawat Movement to seize Ahmadiyya facilities in Dhaka. Because minorities, especially Hindus, were subjected to intimidation and other forms of pressure during previous election campaigns, the United States increased support for long-term election observers to monitor the rights of minorities leading up to the 2007 elections.

The United States advocated for the adoption of international labor standards in the country's export processing zones. In anticipation of future Worker Association elections, the first to be held under 2004 law, the United States supported training for workers



Bangladeshi workers stand in front of a garment factory demanding better pay. (AP photo)



on their legal rights and responsibilities. The United States supported workers who engaged with export processing zone officials and individual factory owners to increase respect for workers' rights. US officials raised allegations of intimidation of trade unionists by security forces with the government.

The United States worked closely with the government to combat trafficking in persons. US officials met monthly with the government to monitor the progress of the antitrafficking police unit and to discuss strategies for improving the government's ability to prosecute human trafficking cases. During the year, the United States conducted the country's first-ever training programs on trafficking investigations for prosecutors and police. An innovative US-funded imam outreach program trained 2,794 imams on the risks, threats, and modalities of trafficking. As a result, these imams delivered specific antitrafficking messages during Friday prayer services, reaching millions of people.

The United States assisted 390 female trafficking survivors during the year. In close coordination and consultation with the government, the United States also provided significant training efforts aimed at police and security personnel. A total of 530 officers-in-charge out of 583 police stations throughout the country were trained on the basics of human trafficking, victim care, and support. The United States provided support to a shelter for child trafficking victims who were repatriated after working as camel jockeys in the Middle East. All but a few of these children have been reunited with their families. The United States supports a comprehensive approach to enhancing victim care services offered by the government and NGOs. These services included primary health care, counseling, safe shelter provisions, and the promotion of alternative livelihood options for trafficking victims.

A US-funded three-year project strengthened local capacities in South Asian countries to address trafficking and violence against women, improve the implementation of legal norms and policies, foster safe migration, and raise the standards of care for survivors of trafficking and violence. US funding provided

counseling, information, and support to more than 39,000 people to help ensure safe movement and protection from forced labor and trafficking. Approximately 2,700 trafficking victims were rescued by community vigilance cells working with local police at the Indo-Nepal and Indo-Bangladesh border.

India

India is a stable, multiparty, federal, parliamentary democracy with a bicameral parliament. Manmohan Singh became the country's prime minister following the victory of his Congress Party-led coalition in the 2004 general elections. The elections were considered free and fair, despite scattered episodes of violence. The government generally respected the rights of its citizens; however, numerous, serious problems remained. A widespread culture of impunity among police and security forces and pervasive corruption continued to be the principal obstacles to improving human rights. Extrajudicial killings, torture, custodial deaths, arbitrary arrest, disappearances, and other abuses by law enforcement personnel went largely unpunished, especially related to combating insurgencies in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, and in the northeast. Although the country has numerous laws protecting human rights, enforcement was lax and convictions were rare, except for a few instances highlighted by the media. While religious tensions persisted, sometimes breaking out into communal violence, the diverse religious backgrounds of the country's leadership reflected the country's religious pluralism. At the national level, there is a Muslim president, Sikh prime minister, and Christian head of the governing parliamentary party. Five of the country's 28 state governments were headed by Christian chief ministers, one by a Sikh, and another by a Muslim. Social acceptance of caste-based discrimination remained a problem and was used by some to excuse human rights violations involving persons belonging to lower castes. Attacks against religious minorities and anti-conversion legislation were concerns. Domestic violence and abuses against women, including dowry-related deaths, honor crimes, and female infanticide and feticide (sex selective abortions), remained significant problems. Significant trafficking in persons and the



People stand in line to cast their votes at a polling booth in Calcutta, India. (AP photo)

exploitation of indentured, bonded, and child labor continued in spite of repeated media exposure and calls by NGOs for government intervention.

US human rights and democracy initiatives in the country focused on the promotion of good governance and the rights of vulnerable groups, especially those of women and children. US engagement on the full range of these initiatives included diplomatic interaction at the highest levels, information sharing, public diplomacy, and funding of projects to encourage respect for democracy and human rights. US officials met regularly with the National Human Rights Commission and government ministers to discuss human rights. In addition, the United States sponsored numerous conferences, lectures, and seminars on religious and racial tolerance, development of civil society and democracy, good governance, interfaith relations, multiculturalism, and peaceful conflict resolution.

The United States strengthened its bilateral partnership with the country on democracy promotion. Dur-

ing a March visit, President Bush and Prime Minister Singh highlighted efforts to deepen democracy and meet mutual international challenges. This included joint efforts through the UN Democracy Fund and the International Centre for Democratic Transition. The undersecretary of state for political affairs met with government officials throughout the year to discuss the US-India joint partnership, which involved an array of initiatives. As part of the joint partnership, the undersecretary of state for democracy and global affairs engaged government officials at the Global Issues Forum on various issues including democracy, combating trafficking in persons, and other areas of cooperation.

The United States continued its active engagement with the country's large, lively, and independent press. In May the United States organized a series of workshops on the ethics of journalism for entry-level and mid-career journalists in Agra and New Delhi. In October the United States conducted programs with a senior producer from a major US network in cities throughout the country focusing on new media



technologies and their impact on modern journalism. Other programs and lectures covered topics such as journalistic integrity, objectivity, and the role of investigative journalism in exposing corruption. The United States expanded its Urdu and Hindi editions of SPAN magazine and explored issues such as conflict resolution, academic freedom, and the rights of women and minorities. The United States provided support to 47 Indian officers and soldiers to attend training courses with the US military that included human rights components.

The United States provided assistance to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to support refugee protection and assistance in India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. The United States also supported the Tibet Fund in order to provide reception, health, and education services to Tibetans in India and Nepal. The United States funded assistance to 145 Tibetan torture victims residing in the country, including medical care and rehabilitative services, including social support and resettlement allowances. In addition, the United States provided 240 Tibetan community leaders with information on how to identify traumatized refugees and create awareness among the general public about torture and its consequences.

The United States funded programs promoting the rights of women, including the establishment 38 legal aid and counseling centers in Rajasthan and Karnataka. The program established lawyer, paralegal, and community support networks in both states to expand outreach to women and provided approximately 40,000 women with information, advice, referrals or legal support. Dalit and Muslim women also benefited from this support. In addition, a network of approximately 500 community-based groups monitored violence against women at the community level while a partner NGO provided counseling, mediation, and legal support to women. US funding helped replicate a program in Rajasthan to develop modules to train prosecutors on the roles women can play as witnesses.

US assistance to NGOs and research institutions helped these groups conduct assessments on the prevalence of dowry deaths and female feticide. US

efforts supported research, advocacy, and outreach initiatives in the state of Rajasthan against female feticide. In Karnataka, US funding supported youth forums where young boys and men collaborated with women's self-help groups working to combat violence against women. In addition, US funding continued to help concerned NGOs with the organization known as Women Power Connect. During the year the organization continued to actively represent the interests of women to politicians, parliamentarians, journalists, and civil servants. It assisted in advancing the stalled domestic violence bill and began focusing on its effective implementation. Women Power Connect continued to organize state chapters and lobby on issues of quotas for women in parliament, gender budgeting, sexual harassment, and feticide.

The United States supported NGO efforts to increase Muslim women's awareness of their rights under the Koran and the constitution. The program organized a series of interactions at different levels that promoted dialogue between religious leaders, members of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board, women's rights activists, academics, and NGO representatives. The program led to the formation of women's self-help groups and also promoted information about women's rights to young adults through madrassas. In addition, US-funded education programs and the madrasa education program provided services to children from vulnerable communities, including Dalits and Muslims. Services included programs to prepare out-of-school children for entry into formal education, building the capacity of inexperienced local organizations to develop effective strategies for enrolling and keeping vulnerable children in school, and improving teacher skills.

A US-funded project worked with employers, trade unions, and the government to create awareness and encourage companies to adopt workplace policies to end discrimination against workers suffering from HIV/AIDS. Through the project nearly 300,000 workers in 60 companies spread over four states were trained on issues relating to HIV/AIDS in the workplace. The project helped more than 20 large companies develop workplace policies. In addition, the United States addressed issues of stigma and discrim-



ination in training programs supported through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief.

The United States supported a wide range of initiatives to encourage religious and communal tolerance and freedom. During Ramadan, US officials hosted several Iftar dinners to reach out to the Muslim community and continued to meet with religious leaders of the Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Sikh, and Buddhist communities. In April the US hosted a conference for 75 Muslim educators from all over the country who had participated in public diplomacy visitor exchange programs in the United States. The theme of the conference was perspectives on Islamic education in the 21st century. US officials raised concern about anticonversion legislation with high ranking officials of the central and state government, as well as with the National Human Rights Commission and the National Commission for Minorities.

The United States continued to support a joint US-India child labor project to bring children out of the workplace and into school. The project has removed

more than 80,000 children from hazardous work situations over the past four years.

The United States raised trafficking issues on numerous occasions with senior government officials and collaborated with state and municipal officials, international organizations, and NGOs. The United States emphasized the importance of national efforts to rid the country of human trafficking, including problems such as bonded labor and forced labor. The government cooperated with a US-funded partner to present 20 country-wide workshops on trafficking prevention. The United States supported a total of 24 antitrafficking initiatives including projects to prevent trafficking in persons, establish shelters, and set up female protection programs to help reintegrate victims into the local economy.

During the year the United States, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, and the government continued to train and sensitize law enforcement officials and prosecutors throughout the country about victims of forced labor and human trafficking and bring-



Women stand in line to cast their votes at a polling station in Singpora, Tammu and Kashmir, India. (AP photo)



ing abusers to justice. Training material developed through the project was used to conduct courses for law enforcement officials in target states. The first three Anti-Human Trafficking Units were launched in Andhra Pradesh, where they will serve as focal points for law enforcement coordination with other governmental departments and civil society and for intelligence gathering. Each unit has an NGO assigned to it, which will provide support to the unit's operations, especially as they pertain to care and support of trafficking victims. Police trained in this project conducted 43 operations in which 275 victims were rescued and a total of 256 traffickers were arrested in a period of a few short months

A US-funded three-year project strengthened local capacities in South Asian countries to address trafficking and violence against women, improve the implementation of legal norms and policies, foster safe migration, and raise the standards of care for survivors of trafficking and violence. US funding provided counseling, information, and support to more than 39,000 people to help ensure safe movement and protection from forced labor and trafficking. Approximately 2,700 trafficking victims were rescued by community vigilance cells working with local police at the Indo-Nepal and Indo-Bangladesh border. US funding, through these projects, provided interventions for victim witness protection in Mumbai and for combating sex tourism in Goa. At the national level, the National Law Commission of India accepted the Regional Victim-Witness Protection Protocol that was developed with US funding. This protocol, along with the protocol on minimum standards, served as monitoring tools for many of the state- and NGO-run shelter homes.

Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan has a multiparty parliamentary system dominated by President Nursultan Nazarbayev's Otan Party. Nazarbayev was re-elected to another seven-year term in December 2005 in elections that fell short of international standards. The government's human rights record remained poor despite some modest improvements. Democratic institutions remained weak.

Since its independence from the Soviet Union, the country has not held an election that met international standards. The constitution concentrates power in the presidency, permitting the president to control regional and local governments and to exercise significant influence over the legislature and judiciary. The media climate remained hostile for independent and opposition press, which were subjected to restrictive criminal and civil libel penalties for criticizing the president and other government officials. Legislation enacted during the year tightened government control over the media and the government continued to restrict freedom of assembly, association, and the activities of NGOs. The government also restricted and interfered with activities of opposition leaders and parties and suspended non partisan political party building activities conducted by foreign NGOs. Military hazing, detainee and prisoner abuse, unhealthy prison conditions, and arbitrary arrest and detention, particularly of government opponents, continued to be problems. The judiciary was not independent, and there was pervasive corruption. The society is ethnically diverse with a high degree of interethnic tolerance. Despite a somewhat less favorable legal environment for religious freedom and some interference from local authorities, religious communities continued to report general government support for the rights of religious communities, including minority religious groups. Trafficking in persons remained a problem, although the government enacted a comprehensive set of legislative amendments to strengthen its ability to investigate, prosecute, and convict traffickers, and to increase the amount of resources devoted to victim protection and prevention. There were reports of societal discrimination and violence against women.

The United States vigorously advocated progress on human rights and democracy as an integral component of bilateral engagement and an essential complement to economic and security cooperation. In keeping with this integrated approach, numerous US assistance and training programs in the country had a human rights component, including programs involving the military, law enforcement, and other government agencies. Support for the rule of law, civil society, and independent media remained priorities.



The United States continued to encourage the government to live up to its human dimension commitments as a member of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

During the year, officials traveled to the country to raise democracy and human rights concerns at the highest levels. President George Bush met with President Nazarbayev on September 29 and pressed for progress on democracy and human rights. On the same day, a joint US-Kazakhstani statement was issued in which the country pledged democratic reforms and human rights progress. The ambassador conducted press conferences and media interviews throughout the year, during which he reiterated the US policy of promoting democratic reform and supporting human rights and civil society.

The December 2005 presidential election failed to meet international standards. President Bush sent a letter to President Nazarbayev who subsequently promised President Bush that he would ensure the thorough investigation of and redress for electoral violations. The government conducted an investigation and acknowledged some violations. Overall, however, the government refuted many alleged electoral violations and failed to investigate them fully. At numerous bilateral and multilateral meetings, high-level US officials encouraged the government to bring electoral laws and practices in line with international standards and to hold direct elections for local leaders.

The United States remained committed to and engaged the government at every level on the non partisan promotion of political pluralism and governance that reflected the political will of citizens. US officials urged the government to rescind restrictive political party registration requirements; to register opposition parties; and to cease harassment of opposition parties and their leaders, including ending arrest, detention, and travel restrictions.

US-funded projects provided non partisan, capacity-building support to improve political party, civil society, and independent media participation in the electoral process. US partners trained 42 political party members in organizational techniques. However, the

government suspended the program during the year due to legal objections, and intense US engagement to resolve the issue was unsuccessful. The United States designed an exchange program for a leading television station to observe and videotape the US midterm election campaign, which was later aired as a documentary in the country.

Other US programs promoted good governance, citizen participation in the decision-making process, and civic education. The United States issued several small grants to independent, grassroots NGOs for projects encouraging local self-governance, including a grant to teach elderly citizens to assert their property and consumer rights. During the year, the US Government completed a six-year program focused on secondary school civic education, which reached more than 44,000 students in 670 schools. In addition to supporting the development of a civics textbook, the program introduced interactive learning methodology and complementary extracurricular activities such as local government days, student action committees, and summer camps.

To promote media freedom, US officials pressed the government on media freedom, urging it to bring its media laws in line with the standards of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. In June the ambassador met with high-level government officials to express US concerns over proposed restrictive media amendments and criticized the amendments during a press conference following their adoption. US officials continued to urge the government to rescind media restrictions. US-funded media programs provided professional, legal, and technical support for media outlets and media-related organizations on a variety of issues, including libel, advertisement, language requirements, labor legislation, election law, licensing, and intellectual property. An ongoing US-funded program provided a legal support network for journalists. Through US programs, seven private media outlets received production grants, 130 media professionals were trained via seminars and workshops, and nine broadcast media and two print media outlets benefited from onsite training. Over 20 current and 100 future judges received training on the



rights of journalists and the media under domestic law and international norms.

The United States continued its support for an Internet-based “news factory” that enabled journalists and media outlets to learn how to use software that enabled them to share and publicize news reports and data. US funds launched the first independent Central Asian news syndicate providing objective news on a wide range of topics. A US grant helped support a popular and well respected independent news website. The United States also maintained its support for a domestic media advocacy NGO engaged in monitoring and publicizing abuses of journalistic rights and freedom of speech. A US partner continued to produce the biweekly TV program Aina (“Mirror”) with the help of a network of regional TV journalists who contributed reports. During the year, the journalists produced stories on students in Pavlodar facing solitary confinement as punishment for drug use, brutal beating of inmates by Pavlodar prison officials, labor migration and local attitudes towards migrants, and a high school course on the dangers of terrorism.

The United States continued to support civil society development and civic activism, funding 79 training events for 209 NGOs during the year. US-supported NGOs initiated 25 new advocacy campaigns during the year. The United States funded a series of democracy information centers in the country, providing human rights and democracy information and training, offering Internet access, and hosting discussion clubs. The US Government supported a multilateral NGO initiative to promote greater local government transparency through the Open Budget Initiative. The program promoted civic engagement in the development of local government budgets to promote those that were effective and responsive to citizens’ needs.

A US-supported civil society association continued its active role in policy dialogue, advocacy, and representation of broad NGO interests. The United States also continued its support for a well-known civil society discussion forum in Almaty, and in May the forum opened an affiliate association in Astana. The forum’s activities included programming on freedom and security of the Internet, social democracy in

modern Kazakhstan, modernization of the country’s political system, and effective political activities for political parties.

Through the US-funded Community Connections Program, ten youth NGO leaders from four regions of the country traveled to the United States in April to engage with their US counterparts and learn best practices. The exchange program focused on developing NGO capacity to support youth activities and development. Upon their return to the country, the participants conducted presentations to introduce their partners to advocacy techniques, public political issues, and volunteerism.

To promote freedom of assembly, US officials urged the government to rescind the ban on public rallies between the end of voting and the announcement of the official election results. In December the ban was removed.

Support for the rule of law, including an independent judiciary, remained a fundamental goal of US-funded programs. To support judicial transparency and accountability, the United States cooperated with the government on a successful program that utilized a video and audio recording system for court proceedings. The system gained significant support from all users, including judges and citizens, and surveys revealed increased confidence in judicial outcomes among judges and defendants. In addition, US partners trained judges on crafting well reasoned and written judicial decisions, worked with the judiciary to prepare a revised code of judicial ethics based on international norms, and provided training and technical assistance for improving the capacity of the national judges association to lobby for judicial independence and the rights of judges.

To assist the judiciary in preparing for the introduction of jury trials in January 2007, the United States partnered with the country’s Supreme Court to support a study tour in Moscow for 18 judges to watch jury trials, meet with jury trial judges, and receive training at Russia’s premier judicial training centers. With US support, a mock jury trial was recorded for broadcast on national television to educate citizens,



the judiciary, and lawyers about the new jury system. Advocacy by a US-funded NGO resulted in the re-institution of legal ethics as part of the mandatory curriculum for law students, and a US partner developed a legal reasoning and writing curriculum that was taught in a top law school. A US partner NGO produced a highly rated nationally televised forum on the problem of corruption in higher education, specifically focusing on the issue in law schools and its effect on the legal profession. The US also supported a training program for judges, journalists, and court press secretaries designed to increase the transparency of courts. During the year, the US sponsored the translation of a book on endemic corruption in the former Soviet Union, followed by author-led panel discussions in Astana and Almaty. The ambassador and several renowned scholars and human rights activists participated in the discussions, and the events received significant media coverage. In November US officials publicly criticized the demolition of several Hare Krishna homes near Almaty, and the ambassador met with government officials to express concern over the treatment of the Hare Krishnas in their long-running property dispute with local government officials.

The US included mandatory human rights components in all bilateral military training. With US technical assistance, the country continued to reduce incidents of military conscript hazing and abuse through ongoing reforms to its non commissioned officer system.

The United States raised concerns about the government's treatment of refugees in a March 1 statement to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Permanent Council. During the year US officials encouraged the government to uphold its international anti torture and refugee commitments.

The United States funded a project that increased women's participation in policymaking and promoted government accountability at local levels through the creation of unprecedented public advisory councils that worked with six local governments.

Throughout the year, the United States brought specific concerns regarding religious communities to the attention of the government; limits on the practice of religion were usually corrected by government officials. On September 11, the United States hosted a well-publicized interfaith appeal for tolerance and observance for victims of terrorism with leaders from a variety of religious faiths.

The United States supported its bilateral cooperation with the government on combating human trafficking with a broad civil society assistance strategy. Ongoing US assistance programs focused on continued support and capacity building of crisis centers, hot lines, and shelters, including preventative and rehabilitative vocational training for vulnerable groups. The programs supported nine countertrafficking hot lines, a network of antitrafficking NGOs, consultation centers for labor migrants, dissemination of information among risk groups in vulnerable populations, education of teachers, shelters for victims of trafficking, and repatriation of victims of trafficking. Approximately 6,500 people made calls to antitrafficking hot lines during the year. The US Government, through a local partner, also supported a number of antitrafficking training programs for law enforcement officers and judges in several regions. The United States also worked to launch a broad outreach program to raise law enforcement officials' awareness and knowledge of trafficking crimes and how to collaborate with NGOs to combat trafficking. Finally, the US Government sponsored a liaison program between law enforcement and migration officials of transit and destination countries to encourage efficient and effective international cooperation in detecting, investigating, and prosecuting human trafficking cases.

Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan has a multiparty parliamentary system led by President Kurmanbek Bakiyev, whose July 2005 election marked tangible progress towards meeting international standards. On November 9, following a week-long opposition-led street protest, the country adopted a new constitution which held out the possibility of greater checks and balances between the



branches of government. On December 30, the parliament adopted a revised version of the constitution that restored many powers to the president. The new constitution envisages a greater role for political parties, with half the seats in the next parliament to be elected by party lists. The government's respect for democracy and human rights improved in several areas, including freedom of assembly, fewer incidents of military hazing, improved prison conditions, some accountability for abuses by law enforcement officials, and modest anticorruption efforts. Despite these improvements, serious problems remained. Members of the security forces at times tortured or abused persons, often with impunity. Arbitrary or unlawful killings, arbitrary arrest and detention, and the disappearance of and failure to protect refugee and asylum seekers were problems. Prison conditions remained very poor, contributing to prison riots and attempted suicides. Restrictions on citizens' rights to change their government persisted, but were less severe than in previous years. There was an increase in government harassment of the opposition and independent media. Physical attacks on opposition leaders and vandalism of media outlets by unknown assailants also occurred. The lack of judicial independence amid pervasive corruption continued to be a serious problem, limiting citizens' rights to due process. Trafficking in persons, violence against women and children, child labor, and discrimination against ethnic minorities were also problems.

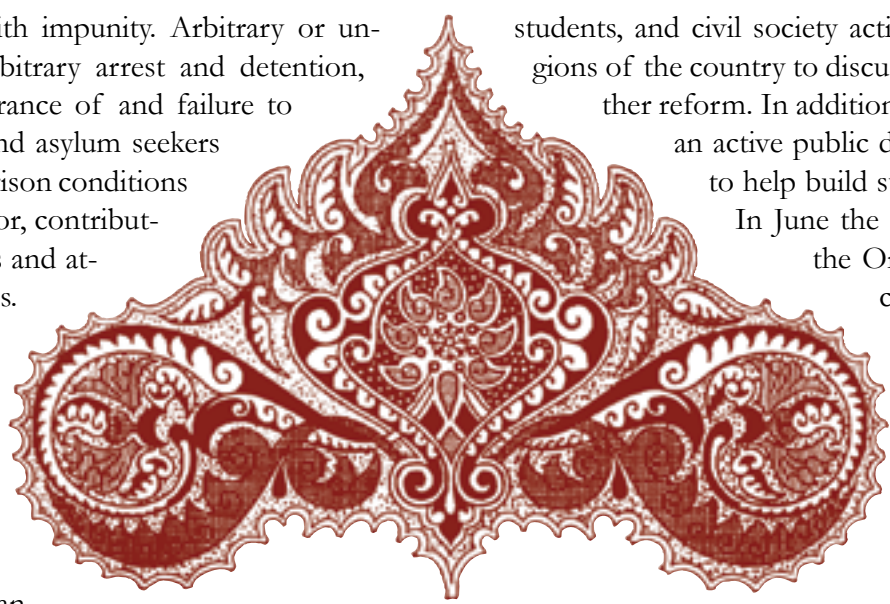
The US strategy to promote democracy and human rights focused on strengthening democratic institutions, including constitutional reform, increasing observance of human rights, combating corruption, supporting civil society, and promoting independent media. The United States maintained close contact with independent journalists, human rights activists,

and politicians from across the political spectrum while encouraging dialogue between the government and civil society. The ambassador and visiting senior US officials met frequently with members of the government, civil society, and human rights groups to encourage reform. During April and August visits to Bishkek, the assistant secretary of state for South and Central Asian affairs met with parliamentarians, religious clerics, government officials, and civil society activists to discuss democratic and constitutional reform. Another senior official followed up with similar meetings during an October visit. The ambassador also held a series of roundtables with journalists, students, and civil society activists in several regions of the country to discuss the need for further reform. In addition, she implemented an active public diplomacy program to help build support for reform.

In June the US ambassador to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe led a roundtable discussion with civic society leaders on constitutional reform.

The United States continued its support for training poll workers on the use of indelible ink as an effective antifraud tool for parliamentary by-elections. As with the 2005 presidential and parliamentary elections, the ink proved to be an effective measure in combating multiple voting, which had been a serious problem in previous elections. The United States provided financial and logistical support for monitors of the parliamentary by-elections and financed parallel vote tabulation. The US-funded studies to improve electoral processes included accurate voter lists.

In preparation for the proposed referendum on a new constitution, three US-supported NGOs carried out public education campaigns during the year. The three NGOs provided much-needed information and analysis on the draft constitutions under consid-





eration, which were disseminated widely throughout the country. When the proposed referendum on constitutional drafts was not held, the public education campaigns were revised to focus on providing information and analysis of the December 30 constitution that was adopted by the parliament and approved by the president.

The United States continued its support for political party development through projects implemented by civil society organizations at the national and regional levels. These projects provided training and consultation to political parties on party platform development, constituent service provision, legislative advocacy, and communication skills.

The United States continued its support of civic education programs, supplying a total of 160,634 civic education textbooks to students around the country. Over 260,000 students in all 2,061 schools in the country benefited from US-sponsored civic education program that promoted greater understanding of civic responsibility, women in political life, and international human rights.

Promoting media freedom and freedom of speech remained a US priority. In bilateral and multilateral meetings, US officials encouraged the government to bring its media laws in line with international standards, in particular by rescinding criminal penalties for libel and transforming state-owned television into an independent entity. During the year the United States continued to provide training to journalists from electronic and print outlets in an effort to improve professional standards and clarify the legal framework for media operation. The US Government funded a group of media professionals to travel to the United States to learn about the role of the media in a democratic society. The United States continued its support for a local NGO that provides alternative dispute settlement for journalists. Throughout the year, the United States continued its support of the Media Support Center, which is the only independent printing press in the country and Central Asia. The first independent Central Asian news syndicate was launched with US funds. The United States also supported media resource centers in the Ferghana Val-

ley and over 20 information centers throughout the country with libraries and diverse media publications. US-funded projects increased the professionalism of women journalists and coverage of women's issues and human rights. The United States also provided small grants to support independent media, Internet and information centers.

US officials persistently encouraged the government to curb and publicly denounce NGO harassment. When an NGO leader was assaulted by unknown assailants and sustained a serious head injury, the ambassador visited him in the hospital and pressed the government to conduct an independent investigation, hold the perpetrators accountable, and ensure the leader's safety. The United States continued its strong support for a wide variety of programs designed to strengthen civil society and advocacy through a network of nine support centers that provide training, grants, legal assistance, and other services to NGOs all over the country. These centers are joined into the country-wide Association of Civil Society Support Centers that advocates at the national level on civil society issues. During the year 97 organizations participated in a total of 31 advocacy campaigns, including four at the national level. The association implemented a successful national-level advocacy campaign to oppose the Ministry of Justice's initiative to investigate local NGOs funded by international organizations.

The Coalition of Communication Operators, with US support, successfully advocated fair tariffs in the communications market by convincing the government to adopt a law and documents for calculation of tariffs for all communication operators. This new law provides equal conditions for independent and government-funded media outlets and thereby helped level the media playing field.

The United States and the European Union jointly and successfully pressed the government to exercise restraint and respect freedom of assembly during the numerous rallies and protests throughout the year which, by and large, took place peacefully. A US grant enabled a local foundation to monitor respect for freedom of assembly with the goal of supporting



citizen activism and increasing awareness of democracy and human rights.

The United States continued programs to promote judicial reform and transparency and provided strong diplomatic support to anticorruption efforts. High-level US officials visited and stressed to the president and prime minister the need to make anticorruption initiatives the centerpiece of their reform programs. The government continued implementation of a US-sponsored pilot project to improve the effectiveness of the Bishkek traffic police and root out corruption within its ranks. The United States sponsored judicial training for commercial, criminal, and non-commercial civil judges, while a US-funded local watchdog group continued monitoring courtrooms. The United States also continued programs promoting greater local government transparency. Several representatives from the Ministry of Justice visited the United States through the International Visitors Leadership Program to study the US judicial and legal systems. The United States also provided grants to student groups at 12 universities and four teacher groups to combat corruption within the educational system. One of these grantees, a civil youth movement, increased students' awareness of their legal rights, improved the quality of university services, and promoted budget transparency and self-governing student bodies in two of the country's largest universities.

The United States supported a project to promote legal reform. A legal education clinic received a grant to assess legal clinics, recommend improvements, conduct seminars for legal clinic staff throughout the country, and provide the clinics with the latest materials on methodology, international standards, and teaching approaches.

Throughout the year, a US-supported human rights defenders' network monitored prisons and pretrial detention facilities in an effort to prevent detainee abuse. The network also reported on human rights abuses around the country and worked with authorities at the local and national levels to prevent further abuses. The United States provided a series of 28 small grants to local NGOs to protect human rights, provide civic education, foster the rule of law, and

promote the use of conflict prevention and resolution techniques.

During the year the United States continued to urge the government to turn over to UNHCR for third-country resettlement the four Uzbek refugees and one Uzbek asylum seeker who remained in detention after having fled the 2005 violence in Andijon. Following continuous advocacy efforts by US authorities in both Bishkek and Washington, the secretary of state sent a letter to President Bakiyev in January reiterating the US position. On August 9, against US recommendations, the government forcibly returned these individuals to Uzbekistan. The United States publicly denounced this in Bishkek, Washington, and at the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. US officials also called on the government to conduct an impartial investigation into the disappearance of other Uzbek asylum and refugee seekers.

To promote religious freedom, the United States maintained regular contacts with representatives of various religious communities and funded several Muslim religious leaders to visit the United States through IVLP. The ambassador hosted Iftar dinners for Muslim leaders in Bishkek and Osh, sponsored a roundtable on religious freedom, and visited the Islamic University and regional mosques. A US official addressed a crowd of over 50,000 worshipers in Bishkek's main square on the Feast of Eid, which marks the end of Ramadan.

The United States continued to play a leading role in combating human trafficking. On numerous occasions US officials lobbied the government to employ more effective means to combat trafficking. The US Government supported a three-year project to combat trafficking in the country, with a particular focus on labor trafficking. The United States also sponsored antitrafficking information campaigns as well as seminars and training sessions aimed at law enforcement officials involved in antitrafficking efforts. The United States also continued to support the Sezim shelter for trafficking victims.



Maldives

The Republic of Maldives has a parliamentary style of government with a strong executive branch, headed by President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom. President Gayoom announced a process to strengthen democracy and introduce political reforms in 2004, and the government's human rights record has improved slightly since that time. In 2005 the parliament unanimously agreed to recognize political parties. Freedoms of expression and assembly expanded, and prison conditions improved. In March the government published a "Roadmap for the Reform Agenda" and introduced several bills in parliament to address significant structural difficulties; however, none of the bills had passed at year's end. Serious human rights problems remained. The president's power to appoint members of parliament constrained citizens' ability to change their government. Freedom of the press, religion, and expression continued to be limited.

US human rights and democracy goals in the country included encouraging the continuation of the reform agenda to improve awareness of and respect for human rights and democratic institutions, such as political party development, voter education, an independent media and judiciary, and respect for the rule of law. The United States worked to promote human rights and democracy through bilateral discussions, public statements, and training security forces.

In July the United States sponsored a Fulbright specialist who developed a journalism curriculum for the country's first university. The government committed to sending two individuals to the United States to obtain master's degrees in journalism and return to teach the curriculum as prepared.

The United States promoted a robust civil society and called for respect for freedom of assembly. Prior to a planned November 10 opposition demonstration, the ambassador commented at a press conference in Malé that freedom of assembly should be permitted within the bounds of the constitution. However, when the government made a series of preemptive arrests and

took other actions to limit the demonstration, the opposition canceled it.

US diplomats engaged in discussions with officials to encourage the fair treatment of detainees, advocated for increased freedom of the press, and urged expanded rights of expression and assembly. High-ranking US officials, including the secretary of state, sent letters to President Gayoom encouraging him to continue the reform process. During multiple visits to the country, US officials raised human rights as a key area of concern. US officials visited opposition leader Mohamed Nasheed when he was under house arrest.

Human rights training was a key component of all military-to-military programs. With US funding, military officers participated in training programs, professional military education courses, and senior service schools, where they received training on respect for human rights. The US military also conducted joint exercises with local armed forces and promoted further professionalism and human rights awareness.

US officials advocated for labor legislation reforms, offering to fund training on implementing labor laws. Government officials drafted improved labor bills, but parliament did not enact them by year's end.

Nepal

Nepal's democracy took a large stride forward after the People's Movement in April, which led to the king's reinstatement of parliament. After the People's Movement, the country's poor human rights record improved. In November the governing alliance of seven political parties signed a Comprehensive Peace Agreement with the Maoists, setting the stage for the Maoists to enter into an interim parliament. Members of the security forces and the Maoist insurgents committed numerous grave human rights abuses throughout the year. Before the transition of power in April, security forces engaged in serious human rights abuses, including arbitrary arrest, torture, disappearance, and arbitrary and unwarranted lethal force; Maoists systematically employed violence and committed serious human rights abuses, including torture, extra-



judicial killings, bombings, and extortion. After the cease-fire declaration, government abuses decreased substantially, although there were still some reports of arbitrary detentions or torture by security forces. Maoist abuses such as abduction, extortion, violence, and conscription of child soldiers continued relatively unabated. The government attempted to address some human rights violations after the People's Movement but did not respond appropriately and effectively to human rights violations, partly due to institutional weaknesses and a lack of political will. Trafficking in persons and the rights of women, children, and refugees remained serious human rights problems.

The United States pursued two main goals in the country: preventing a violent Maoist takeover and promoting responsible multiparty democracy. Specifically, the United States supported the establishment of a government with representation from the country's legitimate, peaceful political parties based on reinstatement of the parliament elected in 1999. The United States urged the king and his government to turn over power to the legitimate political parties. The US worked with the government, the international community, the media, and civil society to facilitate a common vision for a peaceful, prosperous, and democratic country, and encouraged all actors in the country to put principles of democracy and human rights into practice. Areas of engagement included electoral and political reform, good governance, security sector reform, and rule of law. The United States also supported efforts to promote conflict management and mitigation, international humanitarian law, anti-corruption, rehabilitation of torture victims, women's political participation, support for refugee communities, civil-military relations, and efforts to combat child labor and trafficking in persons.

Senior US officials urged the government to restore rule of law and security in the country and to accept responsibility for past and present human rights abuses. The US Government repeatedly emphasized the importance of protecting human rights, promoting true multiparty democracy, encouraging Maoist to abandon violence and extortion, and promoting a sustainable peace process. US officials, in public and private settings, urged political parties to act as re-

sponsible partners in the peace process and to ensure accountability for human rights abuses—both by the government and the Maoists. The United States also publicly encouraged the Maoists to renounce violence and intimidation. The US reported on Maoist abuses and encouraged domestic and international organizations to ensure that Maoist violence and other abuses were publicly noted.

The United States provided assistance for democratic electoral processes such as political party development and electoral reform. The United States urged the king to incorporate the political parties into the election processes more fully. US officials criticized the municipal elections after they were held without the participation of the political parties as they did not meet international standards. The United States assisted the country's major political parties to develop healthy and transparent internal processes, represent their constituencies effectively, and expand internal opportunities for women, youth, and disenfranchised groups. The United States also supported the formation of a women's caucus at the national level, which advocated for increased women's participation in politics, government, and business sectors. The United States supported formation of a civil society alliance for political reform, incorporating five national civil society organizations, which continued to advocate for and report on political reforms. The United States supported natural resource management groups in the country to promote good governance and encourage democratic practices at the local level. These groups also sought to increase local political participation by women and minority groups.

In support for media freedom and freedom of speech, the United States spoke out strongly against the government's censorship of the press and arbitrary arrests of journalists before the cease-fire. The United States encouraged the media to report openly during the April People's Movement and provided information to both domestic and international media to ensure that US views were reported in an accurate and timely fashion. In November and December the United States hosted seminars highlighting the lack of investigative journalism in the country and the challenges that many journalists confronted throughout



the year. The United States sponsored international exchanges for five journalists during the year.

The United States promoted respect for freedom of assembly and association. US officials condemned the king's banning of demonstrations and preemptive arrests of political party leaders before the People's Movement. US officials publicly attempted to meet with arrested political leaders on a weekly basis, putting pressure on the government for their release. US officials also met regularly with NGOs and members of civil society to provide public support for their activities and urged the royal government to release members of civil society held for peacefully protesting. During the People's Movement, the United States pressed the royal government to release thousands of arrested political leaders and civil society members.

The United States worked with the judiciary, the Supreme Court, appellate and district courts, and civil society to modernize the justice sector, expand access to justice for the poor, strengthen capacity to combat corruption, and enhance legal protections for women and the disenfranchised. US assistance efforts helped the courts to promptly schedule habeas corpus petitions filed on behalf of disappeared persons. The United States sponsored training abroad programs for members of the judicial community, including district and Supreme Court judges, and members of the bar association. Programs involved judicial training, long-term technical assistance, and small grant disbursements to NGOs working on judicial sector reform. During the year the United States sponsored government officials and media personnel to participate in rule of law programs in the United States.

US assistance to the country's principal anticorruption body, the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority, helped to increase its investigative and prosecutorial capacity. US assistance to media and civil society groups helped increase coalitions and networks for anticorruption awareness across the country, which resulted in formation of regional anticorruption forums among public-private-civil society partners.

US officials worked closely with the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Kathmandu and provided funding to the office to monitor and improve the human rights situation in the country. The United States also provided funding to the National Human Rights Commission to strengthen its capacity to investigate alleged human rights abuses across the country and to provide key services to victims of the conflict. The United States encouraged government efforts to provide better government services. The US Government supported programs that provided basic health care, income generation opportunities, job training, and psychological and legal counseling for victims of conflict. The United States also provided support to build the capacity of the government's Peace Secretariat to manage the peace process. With US assistance, the Peace Secretariat took on a key role in the peace process, and after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed, the Peace Secretariat focused its efforts on supporting national reconciliation efforts.

US officials publicly pressed the royal government and the Royal Nepalese Army to respect and protect human rights and to avoid a breakdown of law and order. After the cease-fire declaration, the United States hosted a civil-military expert-exchange program on military legal reform that included a section on human rights and the rule of law. Representatives from the Ministry of Defense, the Army's Judge Advocate General, Military Police, and Military Command attended the event. The United States funded seminars focused on operational law for armed conflicts and investigative human rights reporting and sponsored 33 soldiers to attend military education and training programs, all of which included instruction on respect for human rights. The United States also sponsored a civil-military relations program, which brought together, for the first time, members of political parties, civil society, human rights NGOs, and the military to discuss the future of the Nepal Army and the importance of civilian control of the military. The United States also arranged a seminar on democratic civil-military relations for civilian instructors at the Nepal Military Academy and sponsored five citizens, including two army officers, to participate in a two-week civil-military program in the United States.



The United States worked with the government, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the Tibet Fund, and the Tibetan community to support Tibetan refugees transiting to India through Nepal. The United States also urged the government to allow a group of nearly 200 Tibetans with US immigration benefits to exit the country. In addition, the United States made significant contributions to efforts by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and World Food Program to assist nearly 100,000 Bhutanese refugees. US officials encouraged the government and other interested parties to promote a durable solution for the country's Bhutanese refugee population.

The United States promoted religious freedom through diplomacy and exchanges and supported participation by the country in the International Visitors Program on "Religious Diversity in the US." US officials met regularly with religious leaders to demonstrate public support for their activities.

The United States supported a four-year program to combat trafficking in persons. The program included conducting awareness activities, strengthening networks and advocacy, providing economic alternatives for vulnerable groups, education programs, and rights-based training for the government's antitrafficking task force members. The awareness and advocacy program reached over 300,000 beneficiaries. As an economic strategy to prevent trafficking, US assistance provided informal educational and vocational training to 717 at-risk girls and trafficking survivors, 60 percent of whom subsequently found gainful employment. During the year there was an increase in the number of convictions of traffickers and victim rescues at the community level. The United States continued to sponsor participants to attend conferences on human trafficking. The United States also worked on a multi year project to combat exploitive child labor through education.

Pakistan

Pakistan is a federal republic. President Pervez Musharraf, who is the head of state and the chief of army

staff, assumed power after overthrowing the civilian government in 1999. He was elected president in a controversial referendum in 2002, in which he secured a five-year tenure that ends in 2007. The international community judged the October 2002 general elections for the National and Provincial Assemblies and the Senate to be seriously flawed. The next round of national and provincial elections is expected in the fall of 2007 or early 2008. The elected head of government is the civilian Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz; however, all opposition parties boycotted the 2004 vote because opposition candidates were not allowed to appear at the assembly after having been convicted of sedition. Opposition parties criticized Aziz's election and claimed his two elections to the assembly were fraudulent. Domestic and international observers found irregularities but concluded the elections were generally free, fair, and credible.

Prime Minister Aziz generally focused on technical and economic matters, whereas President Musharraf wielded considerably more power and influence. Legislatures at all levels debated freely and took action on a wide range of issues, often in opposition to the stated policies of the executive. The judiciary was subject to political influence and corruption, and it lacked public confidence. The High Court was respected and generally acted independently. The government's human rights record remained poor with serious concerns, including abuses by security forces such as extrajudicial killings, torture, and rape. There were instances when local police acted independently of government authority. The country witnessed an increase in disappearances of provincial activists and political opponents, especially in provinces experiencing internal turmoil and insurgencies. While harassment, intimidation, and arrests of journalists increased during the year, newspapers were free to criticize the government, and most did. Condemnation of government policies and harsh criticism of political leaders and military operations were common. However, media outlets practiced self-censorship for fear that government agents would engage in retribution against papers and journalists critical of certain governmental policies. Corruption was widespread in the government and police forces, and the government did little to combat the problem. Do-



mestic violence and abuse against women, such as honor crimes, and discriminatory legislation that affected women and religious minorities remained serious problems. Widespread trafficking in persons and exploitation of indentured, bonded, child labor, and worker rights were ongoing problems.

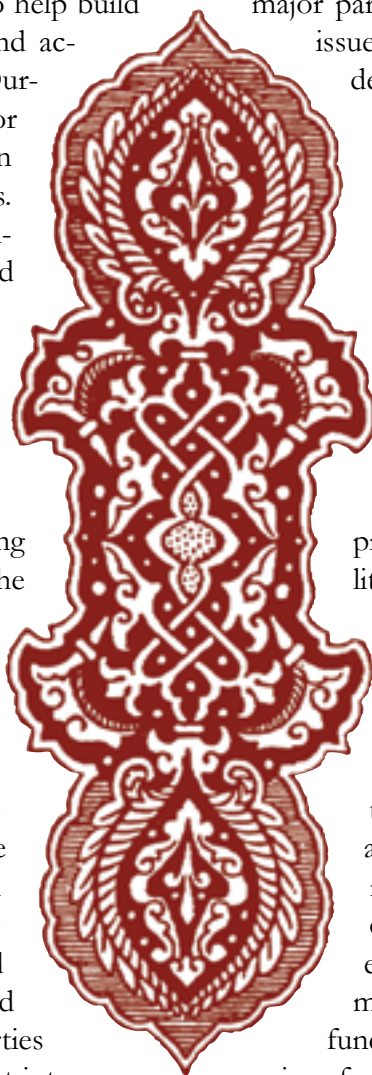
The country's transition to a full and functional democracy is critical to the strength of our long-term relationship. The United States seeks to help build a more participatory, representative, and accountable democracy in the country. During the year the United States pushed for democratic and transparent elections in late 2007 or early 2008 general elections. The US also pressed for stronger national and provincial legislatures, increased democratization and institutional strengthening of political parties, and accountability in local governments. The United States also supported respect for the rule of law by building the capacity of a more professional law enforcement cadre and promoting an appropriate role for the military. The United States continued to work with the government, civil society institutions, and international organizations to strengthen the media and combat violence and discrimination against women and religious minorities, trafficking in persons, and child labor. The secretary of state and other high-level US officials repeatedly raised the importance of democracy. They stressed the importance of holding free, fair, and credible elections; allowing political parties to operate; and ensuring no government interference in the process.

In August the United States affirmed its commitment to a multi-year strategy to help support democratic institutions in the country by signing a bilateral agreement with the government to strengthen national and provincial parliamentary institutions; build responsive, accountable local governments; and improve electoral processes within the country. The funds were used

for building a research library in parliament; providing training for legislators; developing a functional committee system in the parliament; and improving the performance, development planning, and service delivery capacities of six local government districts in the country.

Through the political party strengthening program, the United States worked with the leadership of all major parties to train future political leaders in issue-based campaigning, grass-roots party development, and internally democratic mechanisms for platform development and candidate selection. A separate program focused on emerging female party leaders provided training and assistance to improve their capacity to campaign for elected office and serve the public as elected officials. The program developed the local capacity of female political leaders to train other female members and elected officials. Through the program, 1,100 women from five political parties received training on public speaking, lobbying, networking, advocacy, and fundraising and were motivated to seek out positions on their parties' executive committees. Other programs worked on building the skills of newly elected mayors (with a focus on female mayors and young first-time mayors) and developing the capacity of young political party leaders within party youth wings to play a more significant role in their parties. US funding helped facilitate orientation trainings for newly elected union councilors on the roles and responsibilities of their office and helped them develop mechanisms to facilitate citizens' involvement in local government.

A wide range of senior US officials engaged their counterparts during the year to encourage the government to ensure free, fair, and credible elections. The United States funded the computerization of the country's voter rolls, provided transparent bal-





lot boxes, facilitated a dialogue between the Election Commission and political parties to address concerns during the election process, and trained polling officials. The United States also directly urged the election commissioner to address specific concerns about the election process.

The United States promoted media freedom and regarded strengthening the media as critical to the long-term development of democracy in the country. The United States expressed concern regarding specific disappearance cases and attacks against journalists. In meetings with the government, senior US officials routinely raised the need to respect press freedom and pressed for redress in specific high-profile violations of press freedom. The United States funded training for radio and print journalists and supported community radio stations in key areas such as the rural North West Frontier Province and the adjoining Federally Administered Tribal Areas. The project helped create the country's first television program focused on rule of law, human rights, and legal education. It also trained journalists in legal and political reporting to improve journalistic coverage and public knowledge of political and legal issues, with a focus on coverage of elections, courts, human rights, and rule of law issues. The program helped create a resource center that served as a monitor and source of expertise on media rights and media development. Another program the United States funded aimed to strengthen the role of the independent media by providing journalists training on investigative journalism and developing documentaries on human rights and the rule of law in collaboration with an independent television station. The United States maintained an active dialogue with journalists and advocated for improvements in journalism standards. Moreover, the United States supported the participation of 13 journalists in International Visitors Leadership Programs.

The United States promoted respect for rule of law in the country. Through engagement with senior government leaders, the United States pressed for broader judicial reform, encouraging the government to augment judicial independence.

During the year the United States continued efforts to develop competent, professional security forces in the country to help end human rights violations by these organizations and contribute to greater respect for rule of law in the country. The United States worked with the National Police Academy and all five provincial police colleges to develop and implement new training curricula for law enforcement personnel. The curricula focused on criminal investigation techniques, strategic planning, and law enforcement management and included courses in developing professional standards and appropriate use of force. Courses stressed the rule of law, respect for human rights, and how to handle gender crimes. The US Government also regularly sent law enforcement executives to a 10-week- university-level program in the United States to develop their investigative and management skills and educate them on ethics and civil rights.

As an ongoing part of its democracy and human rights strategy in the country, the United States advocated for the elimination of discrimination against women. US officials met with local women's rights NGOs and supported their advocacy efforts to strengthen penalties for domestic violence and honor killings and to reform discriminatory provisions of the nation's legal system. As part of a US-sponsored media project, women developed a radio program called "Meri Awaz Suno" (Hear My Voice), focused on groundbreaking topics affecting women such as health and education, HIV/AIDS awareness, women's political participation, and violence against women, including honor killings. Senior US officials repeatedly raised the need to do more to end violence against women and to protect victims of such violence. US officials continued to encourage the country's politicians to expand legal protections on an array of women's rights and rule of law issues.

The United States supported programs to uphold the human rights of millions of Afghan refugees in the country and built capacity within local organizations and the government to assist refugees. The United States was the largest contributor to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees' assisted repatriation program, through which approximately 2.9 mil-



lion Afghan refugees have left the country since 2002. The United States also supported programs to alleviate gender-based violence and provide education, health, water, and sanitation services in refugee and host communities.

The United States worked to combat religious discrimination and victimization of religious minorities. As part of its advocacy, the United States pressed the government to reform discriminatory legislation such as the anti-Ahmadi laws and encouraged efforts to prevent misuse of blasphemy laws. US officials spoke out against sectarian violence in the country's majority Muslim community and urged the government to continue its efforts to dismantle organizations responsible for such violence. The United States maintained close ties with all religious communities and raised cases of discrimination and violence against minority religious groups with the government. The United States actively engaged with the country's religious leadership to advocate tolerance. As part of its education program the United States provided funding to the government to improve the quality and availability of public education as a viable alternative to religious schools.

During the year the United States supported several programs aimed at the elimination of child labor. One program placed former child laborers in informal education centers to learn basic literacy and math skills, with the goal of mainstreaming them into government schools. Another US-funded program was initiated after the country ratified the International Labor Organization's Convention 182, which aims to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. During the year US officials pressed for the revision of labor legislation to ensure that it complied with international standards. The United States funded work with local labor unions to strengthen their ability to advocate effectively for increased labor rights, to protect workers' interests and rights through workplace policy changes, and to improve women's rights in the workplace. US officials also continued to urge the government to allow workers in the Karachi export processing zone and other such zones the right to organize and bargain collectively. The United States also urged the government to address the issue of the

broad application of restrictions on unionization in certain sectors under the provisions of the Essential Services Maintenance Act.

The United States continued to assist the government in combating trafficking in persons, emphasizing prevention, prosecution, and protection of victims. The United States provided training to the antitrafficking unit within the federal law enforcement agency, which reportedly resulted in increased arrests and prosecutions of human traffickers. US funding also assisted the operation of a shelter for trafficking victims. Other projects improved the capacity of the antitrafficking unit by providing technical assistance and building awareness in vulnerable communities through community-oriented activities, use of radio and cassette media, and interactive theater performances.

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka is a constitutional, multiparty republic that continues to be fractured by the ethnic conflict between the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), an organization advocating a separate ethnic Tamil state. President Mahinda Rajapaksa, elected in November 2005, and the parliament share constitutional power. The election was generally considered technically sound; however, in both government and LTTE-controlled predominantly Tamil areas, the LTTE enforced an electoral boycott. During the year violations of the cease-fire accord, signed by both the government and the LTTE in 2002, increased in frequency and seriousness. This led to a de facto breakdown of the agreement.

As a result of the escalating hostilities between the government and LTTE and numerous violations of the cease-fire agreement by both sides, overall respect for human rights declined in the affected areas. There were numerous, credible reports that armed paramilitary groups, suspected of being linked to the government and security forces, participated in armed attacks during the year. Human rights monitors also reported arbitrary arrests and detention by security forces, poor prison conditions, denial of fair and public trials, corruption and lack of transparency,



Members of a women's organization distribute a peace emblem to a soldier in Trincomalee, Sri Lanka. (USAID photo)

infringement of religious freedom and freedom of movement, and discrimination against minorities. Trafficking in persons also remained a serious issue affecting women, children and men for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor. The LTTE engaged in politically motivated killings, suicide attacks, disappearances, torture, arbitrary arrest and detention, interference with privacy, denial of freedoms of speech, press, assembly, and association, and recruitment of child soldiers. Since the August 2005 killing of Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar, the government has regularly renewed emergency regulations that permitted arrests without warrants and unaccountable detentions. In December parliament toughened these regulations to give security forces even broader arrest and detention powers. These regulations restrict the media's ability to report on the conflict. The new rule also establishes an appeals process for detainees, but gives civil servants, rather than judges, the right to adjudicate the cases.

US efforts to promote human rights and democracy focused on working with allies to broker a lasting peace agreement between the government and the LTTE, urging both sides to uphold the cease-fire; pressing the government to curb and render justice for human rights abuses, and promoting freedoms of the press and religion, fair labor practices, and the rights of women and children.

The United States promoted a democratic political process and good governance. A US-funded transparent and accountable local governance project aimed to strengthen local government's management capacity, service delivery, and increase citizen participation in decision making. During the year the program supported 35 local government partners in six provinces. Following local government elections during the year, the project supported a national conference on local government and the training of newly-elected mayors and local officials. The United States continued



to engage participants in the youth parliament project through a series of regional discussions and skill development programs, which helped the students to develop and implement action plans addressing community needs. One major democracy initiative during the year included technical assistance and material support provided to the Elections Commission to computerize the National Voter Registry.

US efforts to promote freedom of speech and the media included diplomacy and technical assistance programs. Given the country's highly-centralized media environment, the United States initiated a regional media program that gave citizens and local government authorities a voice on local issues of national concern, including internal displacement, devolution of power, and human rights. Media houses in both the south and east provided training and production support to district-based journalists and staff of community-based organizations. Real Voices Radio current affairs programs in both vernacular languages were broadcast weekly on three regional radio stations in the south, east, and central hill country.

The United States supported rule of law, judicial reform, and anticorruption efforts. A US-funded anticorruption program continued to provide training and technical assistance to staff from the commission to investigate allegations of bribery or corruption in the auditor general's department. Training programs targeted mid-level managers from the auditor general's department. The program supported a series of regional workshops for civil society organizations to raise awareness about corruption in tsunami-affected districts; a series of public service announcements on national television on corruption; and, in collaboration with other donors, several awareness-raising events on International Anticorruption Day. Another US-supported project continued to train mediators from the Ministry of Justice's Community Mediation Board's Program and support NGOs working with marginalized communities to train informal paralegals to represent the interests of their communities.

The United States continued to press the government and LTTE to resume negotiations, uphold the ceasefire and find a political solution to the conflict. US

officials consistently urged the government to halt all human rights abuses and hold perpetrators accountable; the United States hosted a meeting of the co-chairs of the Tokyo Donors Conference late in the year to that end. The United States also provided technical assistance and training to the Ministry of Constitutional Affairs and the Secretariat for Coordinating the Peace Process on conflict resolution and analysis. The United States funded meetings, workshops and publications that discussed human rights and peaceful coexistence. In the conflict- and tsunami-affected east, for example, community leaders from local government and civil society underwent training in nonviolent communication skills. The United States hosted a series of debates through the traditional form of sung limericks, which offered a viable means to address sensitive issues such as inter-ethnic relations and the cost of war.

The United States assisted in retraining the police to focus on community-oriented policing. US law enforcement professionals led courses on basic investigation and interrogation techniques aimed at reducing the use of torture. US officers led a course entitled "Human Dignity and Ethics" and worked with their domestic counterparts to integrate these skills and techniques into the local law enforcement curriculum. A US grant supported the Sri Lankan Human Rights Commission's efforts to process more than 16,000 complaints of disappearances and to establish a national database on disappearance cases. Human rights training was a key component of all joint military programs.

In the eastern province, incidents of violence and general strikes were common, and there was mutual suspicion between communities. In speeches, media roundtables, and opinion pieces, the ambassador, the under secretary of state for political affairs, the assistant secretary of state for South Asian affairs, and other senior officials condemned human rights abuses committed by the LTTE and pressed the government to investigate allegations of human rights abuses by authorities. To address a core issue of the conflict, the United States supported local efforts to promote language rights and pluralism through implementation of the 1987 Official Language Policy. Based on an



audit of local practices, the United States supported advocacy and awareness through a concerned citizens group comprised of 18 eminent personalities, provided trilingual notice boards and documents for seven government institutions, and commissioned a study to identify more effective ways to implement the language policy.

The country is predominantly Buddhist but also has sizeable Christian, Hindu, and Muslim populations. US officials regularly met with representatives of all religious groups to review a wide range of human rights, ethnic, and religious freedom issues. The United States discussed religious freedom issues with the government in the context of its overall dialogue and policy of promoting human rights. During the year the ambassador held high-level meetings with the current and former presidents of the country to express concern about the negative impact that anticonversion laws could have on religious freedom. The assistant secretary of state for South Asian affairs and the ambassador discussed the anticonversion issue with Sri Lanka's ambassador to the United States. The United States continued to encourage government and religious leaders to find nonlegislative means to address religious issues.

The United States provided assistance to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to support refugee protection and assistance in India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka and support to the Tibet Fund to provide reception, health, and education services to Tibetans in India and Nepal.

The United States has funded a four-year program in the country to help create a National Plan of Action for Decent Work designed to promote good governance of labor standards and protection of labor. The United States also funded the Factory Improvement Program, a multi-supplier training program to develop local factories' capacity to improve industrial relations; health, safety, and working conditions; and productivity and quality, which ended during the year. The United States began a program to promote the rights of the country's workers in the Persian Gulf and a program to enforce codes of conduct and promote workers rights in the country as well.

Tajikistan

Tajikistan is an authoritarian state; President Emomali Rahmonov and an inner circle of loyal supporters dominated political life. The country has a constitution and a functioning multiparty political system, but, in practice, democratic progress was slow and political pluralism limited. The November presidential election lacked genuine competition and did not fully test democratic practices. The election was flawed and did not meet international standards, although there were some improvements on voting procedures. The executive branch continued to exert pressure over the judicial system and dominated the legislative branch. The government's human rights record remained poor. Corruption hampered democratic and social reform. The government restricted civil society and denied visas and registration to some international and local democracy and human rights nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). The government refused to register, harassed, and censored independent media outlets. There were reports of torture, abuse, and extortion by security forces that acted with impunity; harsh prison conditions; restrictions on religious freedom; violence and discrimination against women; and child and forced labor. Trafficking in persons remained a problem, but the government made some improvements in this area.

The US democracy and human rights strategy aimed to promote a strong and transparent democracy with independent and effective legislative and judicial branches and an accountable executive branch, which respect the rule of law. The strategy focused on advancing an active and free media, civil society, and the human rights of all citizens by reinforcing positive developments and engaging the government, the international community, and the public, despite the very controlled post-Soviet atmosphere.

The United States regularly advocated for democracy and the guarantee of human rights in public and private meetings. The United States took every opportunity to speak to students, journalists, and local officials about the importance of strengthening democracy and upholding universally recognized freedoms.



The United States operated three American Corners, which served as resource centers for literature on democracy and human rights. The United States also funded the publication of over 50 analytical articles and a book about America and democracy. US-organized student and leadership exchanges exposed citizens to democratic values, inspiring and providing resources to participants to adopt democratic ideas in their own communities. In the past year, parliamentarians and military and law enforcement officials were among the many that traveled to Western Europe and the United States to learn about a myriad of subjects, from the history of democracy to how to manage armed forces in a modern democracy.

US democracy promotion efforts largely focused on encouraging a free and fair presidential election in November. US officials met regularly with election officials, as well as with other diplomatic and international missions, to emphasize the need for transparent elections, build election-monitoring capacity, and coordinate activities. US advocacy resulted in an amendment of the election code to improve the playing field for all political parties. US-funded NGOs published an election manual and conducted procedural and ethical training for members of the district and precinct electoral commissions, and provided voter education to the general public. The United States supported the development of civic and election textbooks for NGO resource centers and school curricula. Senior-level officials, including the assistant secretary of state for South and Central Asian affairs, met with political party leaders and encouraged them to pursue democratic reforms and voice their opinions. Through local NGO partners, the United States fostered dialogue among citizens and local politicians and mobilized young adults, women, and the general public to participate in the presidential election. US-supported training and seminars targeted journalists, women, and local officials on proper voting procedures, and trained thousands of people on correct voting methods, leading to fewer incidents of voter impropriety. The United States observed the November presidential election in cities and villages throughout the country as part of the observation mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Officers reported improvements over the

previous election in voting/tabulating procedures at polling stations and district election commissions, but also noted incidents of fraud and rules' violations. These findings contributed to the Organization's final assessment was that the government did not adequately implement improvements in the legislative and administrative framework.

The United States focused on improving media freedom and access to information, despite government resistance. The government refused to register several independent media organizations and broadcast stations, and journalists critical of the government faced harassment and legal charges. US officials publicly and privately pressed for greater freedom of the press, improved access to independent media, and freedom of speech. The United States directly supported partner NGOs and radio and television stations to develop the capacity of independent media and enhance local media's ability to provide accurate and responsible journalism. The United States trained journalists in management, investigative journalism, and technical aspects of media. The United States also trained military officials on the importance of engaging a free media. US programs facilitated greater access to information by establishing a country-wide network for the exchange of news among independent TV stations.

The United States continued to support the establishment of a community radio program to equip and train remote communities to launch their own radio stations. The radio stations aimed to distribute news freely to independent and state media for broadcast; however, the government refused to register and license all radio stations for operation. The United States monitored violations of freedom of speech and also supported NGOs that monitor and raise awareness about freedom of speech issues.

With the government continuing to hinder international NGOs and their local partners, US officials regularly met with representatives of these organizations and urged the government to treat them fairly. US officials encouraged all implementing partners and grantees to remain transparent. The United States advocated for organizations' rights and assisted NGOs



with growing problems and pressure from the government. The United States also provided assistance to develop a comprehensive legal and fiscal framework that will support and strengthen the NGO sector.

To promote a strong civil society, the United States funded civil society support centers that provided training seminars, technical support, information resources, and professional services to NGOs and public associations. Local governance programs have provided technical assistance to 11 small towns and regional centers to improve municipal services, budget planning, and transparency, among other activities crucial to building civil society. The United States monitored and reported on issues of freedom of assembly and association.

To support adherence to the rule of law, the United States worked with partner NGOs to train lawyers in human rights law, as well as to develop their trial advocacy skills and establish legal-information centers throughout the country. A US-funded NGO continued operating the Citizen's Rights Advocacy Network in the Ferghana Valley. The network trained advocates and lawyers and developed advocacy campaigns on citizens' rights, including human rights. The network also promoted the rule of law and educated the public on their legal rights. The United States worked with the government to reform the criminal code and the criminal procedure code.

US training programs for military officials included courses discussing the importance of the rule of law. The programs aimed to impart the significance of the rules governing military-civilian interaction and civilian authority over the military. The United States monitored allegations of human rights abuses and raised concerns about the abuses and lack of due process with authorities and international organizations. The United States collaborated closely with law enforcement and security ministries to train law enforcement and military officers in human rights regulations. As a result of US and other international efforts, the government institutionalized a mandatory two-day human rights course for all law enforcement recruits. The United States sponsored local and fed-

eral government employee training in the country and abroad to instill good governance practices.

The United States routinely participated in Human Rights Thematic Group meetings, Penitentiary Reform Working Group meetings, and other human rights-focused forums with the UN Tajikistan Office of Peacekeeping.

Although the law affords women the same rights as men, many women did not know about their rights and faced abuse and harassment. Through local partners, the United States sponsored programs to educate and support women in both urban and rural areas and helped raise their status through education about microfinance opportunities, the market economy, and legal rights. The United States raised awareness of domestic and spousal abuse through its NGO partners. US-funded NGOs advocated for the rights of vulnerable populations including women, children, and minorities. US-funded Women's Legal Advocacy Centers in Dushanbe and Khujand identified and trained lawyers and law students to empower women to defend their legal rights and provided legal services. The centers also served as repositories for legal material on women's rights for research and dissemination purposes and conducted monthly training programs for the public. The United States also worked to draft legislation to improve women's rights. US-funded NGOs, in collaboration with UN agencies and local partners, took steps to encourage implementation of the country's 2005 Gender Equality Law and provided training to judges on international and national gender equality standards. The United States funded several programs to ensure that people with disabilities had an equal opportunity to vote in the presidential election.

Nine Tajik leaders working in the area of religious freedom went to the United States on a US-funded program entitled "Religion in a Secular Society," designed for participants to gain an understanding of religious and cultural diversity in the United States and the role of NGOs, special interest groups, and religious institutions in promoting ethnic and religious tolerance. Participants returned with a greater enthusiasm to advance religious tolerance and free-



dom of religion in a secular society. The United States organized the first regional conference for religious leaders since the breakup of the former Soviet Union, which outlined a blueprint for future cooperation among Islamic leaders in the region to find solutions for contemporary problems faced by Muslim communities. Political party leaders and government officials also participated in the discussion on “The Role of Religion in Promoting Peace and Social Partnerships.” When the government introduced a new draft law on religion that would restrict religious practices, particularly in Islam, the United States promoted religious tolerance and plurality in meetings with religious leaders and government officials from the State Committee on Religious Affairs and urged lawmakers to consider rewriting the draft legislation, which has not yet been formally proposed to parliament. The United States also assisted religious organizations on a case-by-case basis and continued to monitor and report on religious rights violations throughout the country.

A US grant helped a local NGO educate labor migrants about their rights and responsibilities in order to protect themselves while working abroad. Up to one million Tajiks are migrant laborers and often faced hardship abroad, particularly in Russia. The country is one of the major source countries of forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation for Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, the United Arab Emirates, and other countries. The United States and the government worked closely to implement strategies to combat human trafficking. US-funded NGOs trained lawyers and judges to increase trafficking prosecutions. The United States assisted in developing a National Strategy Against Trafficking in Persons to promote greater coordination among government bodies and antitrafficking efforts. The United States supported the Special Division for Combating Trafficking in Persons and Racketeering responsible for investigating and arresting trafficking perpetrators. The United States also worked closely with international and local partners to operate a border checkpoint to interdict trafficking operations. The United States funded and established two operational shelters for trafficking victims that provided security, health care, psychological counseling, and reintegra-

tion assistance. US partner organizations raised public awareness, trained law enforcement authorities, and provided social and legal support for victims.

Turkmenistan

Turkmenistan is an authoritarian state that was dominated by president-for-life Saparmurat Niyazov until his December 21 death. Niyazov became president after Turkmenistan gained independence in 1991 and consolidated his monopoly on political and economic power, controlling the parliament, judicial system, and the Democratic Party, which remained the sole legally recognized political party. The Halk Maslahaty (people’s council) decided on December 26 to select Niyazov’s successor through public elections on February 11, 2007. Under the constitution, Parliament Chairman Ovezgeldy Atayev should have become the interim president, but Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, the deputy prime minister, was named instead, allegedly because of an ongoing criminal investigation against Atayev. On December 26, the Halk Maslahaty selected six presidential candidates and changed the constitution to allow the candidacy of Interim President Berdimuhamedov. The government continued to commit serious abuses, and its human rights record remained extremely poor. Authorities severely restricted political and civil liberties. Niyazov stifled political dissent and freedom of the press and eroded the educational system. In July and December elections for members of people’s councils at the village, city, and district level took place; contrary to previous elections, independent candidates could run for office with community support. During the 2004 parliamentary elections, only members of the Democratic Party could run. Torture and mistreatment of detainees; incommunicado and prolonged detention; arbitrary arrest and detention, including family members of accused criminals; and denial of due process and a fair trial continued. The government continued to restrict freedoms of speech, press, assembly, travel, and association. While serious violations of religious freedom continued, the government has noticeably reduced harassment of registered minority religious groups since 2004. The government continued to restrict registration of civil society groups, and harass-



ment of NGOs and community activists who were in contact with foreign embassies became more noticeable later in the year.

The United States maintained a multi-pronged strategy to support the development of democracy and human rights in the country. Throughout the year senior US officials urged the government to promote democratic reform at every opportunity in bilateral meetings with President Niyazov and other senior officials, as well as through multilateral institutions and public statements. Senior officials regularly reiterated the message that respect for human rights is the highest priority of the US Government. The United States regularly advocated on behalf of individual cases of abuse and coordinated closely with other diplomatic missions and international organizations. The United States funded a wide range of programs designed to strengthen civil society and respect for human rights.

During the year the United States used public statements and a range of speaker and exchange programs to convey the importance of freedoms of information, media, and speech. The United States funded seven speakers, including an expert on Islam in America; the author Paul Theroux, who spoke about the importance of self-expression; and a criminal justice and law expert. The United States brought two local journalists to the United States on the Edward Murrow Journalism program and supported programs by US Government exchange program alumni and civic groups that highlighted the importance of media freedom and freedom of speech. In addition to regularly scheduled speakers, a US official addressed 40 state library professionals and administrators on the need to provide public access to government information. The US Government again supported a Model United Nations conference in Ashgabat for more than

100 youth from each of the country's five provinces, as well as one national and multiple regional debate tournaments.

During the year American Corners collectively attracted more than 48,500 visitors. However, in the spring outreach was hampered when the government closed the American Corner in Turkmenbashi and three Internet Access Training Program sites in Dashoguz, Balkanabat, and Ashgabat's National Library. US efforts to reopen all sites continued throughout the year. Despite these pressures, programming in the remaining four American Corners, the American Center in Ashgabat, two Internet Access Training



Program sites, and the Alumni Resource Center in Ashgabat continued to expand, which provided citizens a critical link to the outside world by offering access to independent sources of information. Outreach in Turkmenbashi continued in a local polyclinic's classroom, with the help of alumni of US Government exchange programs. The remaining Internet Access Training Program centers supported the Global Connections and Exchange Program, an information technology training program for teachers

and students, after the host government rejected efforts to implement the program in state schools. The program trained approximately 81 teachers and 300 students during the year.

The United States opened an enlarged Information Resources Center with high-speed Internet, which had registered more than 1,400 users by the end of the year. The center used its conference space to accommodate partner organizations' and individual programs, including efforts by state teachers to provide Internet and computer training to their students.



US English-language programming and outreach expanded significantly during the year, providing essential support to democracy programming by providing local audiences access to print and electronic materials in English. Moreover, the US Government's first resident English Language Fellow, based at the state-run Azadi World Languages Institute, was able to reach audiences usually barred from interaction with US officials—teachers and current students.

Although the United States continued to urge government officials to register NGOs throughout the year, the Ministry of Justice registered no new NGOs. US-funded civil society development programs supported a network of four Civil Society Support Centers that provided training seminars, technical support, information resources, networking opportunities, and professional services to NGOs and grassroots activists to build their capacity in the civic sector. The United States also provided direct legal support and services for NGOs through the network. US-funded civil society development programs focused on grassroots community development and advocacy. During the year these programs implemented 133 community projects with funding from the US Government.

To promote the rule of law, a US-funded program supported the Legal Resource Center at Turkmen State University. Since January 2004, the center has organized training programs on the country's labor legislation, the development of its criminal legislation, legal guarantees of women's rights, and the development of civil legislation. More than 1,500 students participated in extracurricular activities during the year, and more than 3,700 visited the center's facilities and benefited from access to legal information via the Internet. The civil law clinic operating at the university, which was one of the first clinics in the country, provided individual consultation on both civic and criminal legal issues and promoted legal, professional, and ethical standards through seminars and workshops for law faculty and students. Program staff provided ongoing training to clinic staff attorneys on managing a student-run clinical program and addressing practical and pedagogical issues surrounding clinical legal education.

US-funded programs continued to sponsor student participation in national moot court competitions. A program developed in cooperation with Turkmen State University offered young people the opportunity to learn about the law and basic principles of human rights and democracy. Law students involved in the program learned techniques for teaching primary and secondary school students about their rights and responsibilities under the law. The program's objective was to sensitize students at a young age to the ways in which the law can help solve critical family, social, and political issues. The program effectively promoted practical skills and enhanced the legal knowledge of law student participants and provided legal information to members of the general public. In addition, a Fulbright conference drew more than 110 citizens and highlighted rule of law and criminal justice, international relations, and education.

The United States promoted respect for human rights through diplomacy and programs. The United States actively supported efforts to gain access to all prisoners, including those detained following the armed attack on President Niyazov's motorcade in 2002. The United States also advocated for improved treatment of relatives of those implicated in the 2002 attack, and urged the government to cease systematically harassing them. The United States continued to promote the rights of women, minorities, and persons with disabilities through programs. The US Government funded a ground-breaking program that offered training to communities, NGOs, and activists for dealing with family abuse. A US program funded training for youth and the disabled on their rights under international and domestic law.

The United States continued to monitor the government's compliance with its international obligations on freedom of movement. The government formally lifted its exit visa regime in 2004 to avoid Jackson-Vanik sanctions; however, it continued to maintain a "black list" of individuals barred from international travel. During the year the United States raised individual freedom of movement cases with the government, advocated on behalf of relatives of prisoners, and strongly urged the government to allow a noted



author to travel to the United States to receive an award.

The United States continued to urge the host government to respect religious freedom. As a result of US efforts, the government further reduced harassment of minority religious groups. In addition, scholars from the United States conducted two outreach meetings on the topic of “Islam in America.” The meetings attracted representatives from the Council of Religious Affairs and individual Imams from all five provinces.

US funding to combat trafficking in persons supported the International Organization for Migration’s work with the State Border Service on a Ministry of Justice-approved program that worked to ascertain the extent and patterns of human trafficking in the country. The US also supported an antitrafficking public education campaign and provided training to help the Border Service to better combat human trafficking. In addition, the US funded a “Rule of Law” study tour to the United States for ten officials, during which participants met with their counterpart US officials from five law enforcement agencies.

Uzbekistan

The directly elected president, Islam Karimov, has led the government since 1990. His current term in office expires in 2007. Past elections were neither free nor fair. The president dominates the government, and the bicameral parliament has no independent authority. The government of Uzbekistan’s human rights record remained extremely poor. There were no independent political parties, and the few opposition groups faced official harassment. The judiciary was under government control, and trial verdicts were usually predetermined. In 2003 the UN’s special rapporteur on torture concluded that torture was systematic in prisons and other places of detention. The government has taken few steps to address the rapporteur’s concerns, and prison conditions continued to be harsh. With the exception of one visit by European Union officials, the government did not admit independent observers to monitor prisons. It

was impossible to estimate the number of political prisoners, but as of 2004 there were an estimated 5,000 to 5,500 such prisoners in the country. Other than a few often-blocked Internet news sites, there were no independent media, and self-censorship was widely practiced.

The government continued to resist international calls for an impartial investigation into the violence that took place in Andijon in May 2005. However, officials discussed their investigation of the Andijon events in meetings with European Union representatives in December, and they indicated willingness to resume dialogue on human rights issues. The government continued to convict and imprison individuals for alleged involvement in the Andijon tragedy. The government pressured other countries to return refugees who had fled the country and jailed several who were returned. All Andijon-related trials during the year were closed and failed to meet international standards. The government exerted relentless pressure on local and international NGOs, ordering many to close voluntarily. Unregistered religious activity was outlawed, and legal religious activity was tightly controlled. Trafficking in persons to other countries for labor and sexual exploitation was an ongoing problem. The government conducted an array of prevention programs to raise awareness of trafficking in persons. However, due to weak legislation, few traffickers were jailed, and most of those convicted were later amnestied.

US democracy and human rights goals are to promote a strong civil society sector and encourage political pluralism, legal reform, and accountability. During the year the United States, in cooperation with other diplomatic missions, international organizations, and human rights groups, encouraged transparency in human rights practices and urged the government to allow an international investigation of the 2005 Andijon violence. The United States pressed the government to end harassment of US implementing partners and local NGOs and to eliminate restrictions on US grants to local NGOs. The United States also supported democracy and human rights through diplomacy and programmatic support to activists and



disseminated democracy and human rights materials to the media, civil society, and government.

US democracy and human rights efforts suffered serious setbacks as opportunities for US-sponsored organizations and local partners significantly decreased. The government reacted to US criticism of its human rights record by severely restricting contact with US officials. The government also closed down six out of 12 US-supported democracy promotion programs. Those programs that were not shut down experienced varying degrees of government interference and pressure. The government prohibited some organizations from operating in certain regions and refused others registration. Some expatriate staff were denied entry visas, and officials threatened or otherwise pressured local staff members of some organizations. Local experts estimated that government pressure forced between two-thirds and three-fourths of local NGOs to cease operation. With some exceptions, US funding to local NGOs remained paralyzed, subject to approval or denial by a government-appointed banking commission. The government hampered the operation of US-funded student educational and other exchange programs, although most exchange programs continued. The United States continued to withhold funding to programs involving the government because the secretary of state could not certify that the country had made progress on commitments it made to the United States in 2002, including on human rights. Exceptions were made for government participation in US-supported programs to promote democracy and human rights and to prevent trafficking in persons. The United States invited military officials to take part in training programs at the George C. Marshall Center in Germany that were focused on human rights and rule of law issues, but the government refused to participate.

Despite these obstacles, the United States continued to engage with the government where possible and to support human rights and democracy programs. At meetings of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), US officials decried human rights abuses and called on the government to cease them and to hold perpetrators accountable. In statements to the OSCE's Permanent Council on No-

vember 9 and December 14, the United States criticized government restrictions on human rights and civil society programming by international organizations, including the OSCE and US-supported NGOs. The Ambassador and officials in Washington consistently delivered the message that respect for human rights is a crucial element of the bilateral relationship. In August the assistant secretary of state for South and Central Asian Affairs met with President Karimov and emphasized that the bilateral relationship must include a dialogue on democracy and human rights. US officials in Tashkent frequently attended trials of human rights and religious figures that were open to observers. The United States monitored human rights abuses, maintained contact with human rights organizations, and supported those organizations with small grants.

During the year opportunities for political party development were significantly reduced. While the law prohibited registered parties from participating in foreign-sponsored training programs, a US-sponsored program maintained contact with independent political parties and provided them with informal advice. The US-sponsored organization cooperated with the country's Regional Policy Fund to organize a forum on issues relating to a draft law on political parties. When the government prosecuted opposition party members, US officials coordinated with other diplomatic missions and human rights groups to monitor their cases and to press the government to hold trials meeting international standards.

The United States supported freedom of the press through a variety of programs and activities. However, the government forced the US-supported primary implementer of independent media development programs to close in 2005, thus severely complicating further programming during the year. Despite government pressure, the United States supported the production of informational programs on events in the country as well as a report on the situation of its print media. Journalists continued to participate in US-sponsored training sessions and exchange programs focused on media freedom. The United States also supported Internet access and training programs in several cities.



In the face of relentless government pressure, the United States continued to support the development of civil society in the country. During the year, four out of seven US-supported resource centers that had closed in 2005 resumed limited activities after being registered as commercial entities. Before the US-sponsored civil society support program was closed down in the middle of the year, it provided institutional and advocacy grants to 18 civil society organizations, and trained 16 civil society groups. The United States also rendered legal assistance to NGOs and civil society groups through a cadre of professional nonprofit lawyers. During the year, the United States awarded small grants to 33 NGOs for projects designed to develop civil society institutions and mass media. These grants supported reporting and advocacy work in the regions. The United States also supported programs in rural communities that enabled citizens to take collective responsibility for management of resources at the local level, sowing the seeds of civic responsibility and accountability. By the end of the year, however, the government closed two of three US programs providing support to rural communities.

US programs to promote the rule of law significantly decreased, and activities were severely limited due to the government crackdown on NGOs. The government denied accreditation to the Embassy's resident legal adviser, forcing him to leave the country. The American Bar Association's Central European and Eurasian Law Initiative supported legal resource centers in the Ferghana Valley and Samarkand that conducted education and training programs for young lawyers; however, the government forced the organization to close during the year. The United States sponsored a delegation of legal specialists to a regional legal conference at the Central European and Eurasian Law Institute in Prague to promote awareness of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and support the incorporation of its standards into national legislation.

Combating torture, which continued to be frequently alleged in pretrial investigation, remained at the top of the US human rights agenda. The United States continued to support a project to foster dialogue between civil society actors and law enforcement agen-

cies responsible for many human rights abuses. The program maintained working relations with law enforcement agencies, despite government harassment and hostility toward international organizations and civil society. The program trained and supported human rights activists, lawyers, doctors, educators, and others attempting to engage the government in a dialogue on human rights issues. In Bukhara and the Ferghana Valley, with US assistance, local groups monitored the human rights situation and collaboratively resolved some human rights issues with local authorities.

To promote the rights of the disabled, a US-funded program sponsored local participation in two study tours to Turkey focused on advocacy for the rights of the disabled. US small grants supported local and national NGOs dedicated to promoting the rights of the disabled.

The United States actively engaged in highlighting respect for religious tolerance and pluralism through exchanges, contact with religious leaders and institutions, and distribution of informational materials. These efforts were hampered by the government's closure of NGOs, as well as its denial of accreditation and visas to Embassy employees responsible for monitoring and promoting religious freedom and tolerance. Despite these difficulties, the United States continued to advocate for religious freedom by maintaining contact with imams, priests, educators, journalists, and independent religious leaders and actively monitoring the state of religious freedom. US officials raised issues of religious freedom with their local counterparts, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Muslim Board, and the Committee on Religious Affairs. US officials consistently emphasized that religious tolerance and political security should be complementary goals. On November 13, the secretary of state designated the country one of particular concern for religious freedom violations; following the designation, the US ambassador at large for international religious freedom renewed discussions with senior officials to seek greater religious freedom.

US-funded exchange and educational programs promoted religious tolerance and religious freedom. A



three-year University Partnership Program, which organized exchanges of experts and professors from local Uzbek universities and institutes, culminated in a September conference that summarized the work done under the partnership. The project developed school curricula to promote religious tolerance through instruction in comparative religious studies. The United States sponsored training in three cities for defense advocates and human rights activists on international religious freedom standards, as well as a follow-up roundtable. A religious leader participated in a regional conference in Tajikistan; the conference focused on the role of religion in promoting peace and social partnerships. The United States also sponsored locals' participation in the "Law, Religion and Social Change" conference at the National University in Canberra, Australia.

The United States continued to support programs to prevent trafficking in persons and provide shelter for trafficking victims. The United States, in cooperation with the government and local and international NGOs, supported several public awareness campaigns on trafficking. With US funding, a nationwide NGO network provided counseling and information on human trafficking through 10 public hotlines, which received more than 16,000 calls, as well as through seminars and discussions in schools, religious communities, and neighborhood committees. Official television regularly aired documentaries aimed at raising public awareness; antitrafficking messages and public service announcements appeared frequently in newspapers and on radio and television broadcasts. During the year US-supported NGOs provided repatriation assistance to 368 trafficking victims. A second US-funded shelter was opened to provide medical, psychological, legal, and educational assistance to repatriated human trafficking victims. The United States assisted in establishing a network of 10 NGOs which provide shelter, counseling, and other services to trafficking victims. The United States also supported the establishment of a Central Asian regional NGO network to facilitate cooperation and information exchange on cross-border trafficking issues. US-supported programs provided training in trafficking issues to more than 30,000 participants, including religious leaders. The United States sponsored a visit by

local officials and NGO activists to the United Arab Emirates, a major destination country for Uzbek victims of trafficking. The visit resulted in the identification of 206 trafficking victims. US-sponsored partners worked to persuade government officials to classify labor exploitation, including the procurement of labor through force, fraud, or coercion, as human trafficking.



SOUTH & CENTRAL ASIA

WESTERN HEMISPHERE





“... we began to move around the dials on some of the radios that get into the prison, and we successfully tuned into Radio Republica. And what a wonderful thing!... the best thing about Radio Republica...is that what you talk about is what is happening here at this moment. You know, that gave me such encouragement.”

Hector Palacios,
*Prominent Cuban dissident intellectual, arrested
in March 2003*

A UN soldier with children in Marmelade, Haiti, the day after elections. (AP Photo)



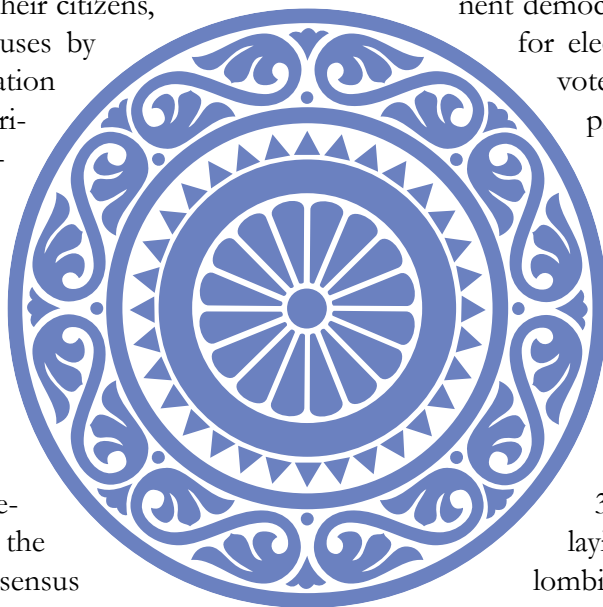
WESTERN HEMISPHERE

Throughout the hemisphere, the trend toward consolidating democratic institutions and processes continued during 2006. In many countries, civil society was relatively strong and vocal, providing an important check on government powers and an open space for public discourse. With a few notable exceptions, governments in the hemisphere generally respected human rights, although societal violence by non-state actors continued to be a significant problem in several countries.

The region faces a number of challenges that threaten to erode citizens' confidence in the benefits of democracy. These include the expanding gap between rich and poor, corruption and inefficiency in governance, high rates of crime and states' inability to provide adequate security to their citizens, weak judicial institutions, abuses by security forces, and discrimination against ethnic and racial minorities. US programs and activities in the hemisphere are designed to strengthen the capacity of young democratic institutions, to foster civil society's ability to play an active role in shaping government, and to cooperate with the Organization of American States (OAS) to safeguard against backsliding on the hemisphere's democratic consensus and to reinforce the commitments of the Inter-American Democratic Charter.

There were important elections throughout the hemisphere in 2006, marked by vibrant political competition, strong voter turn-out, and the effective adjudication of the results by democratic institutions. These included presidential elections in Mexico, where a challenge by the losing candidate was peacefully resolved by the Federal Electoral Tribunal after a two-month review; Ecuador, where a closely contested presidential race was settled through a free and fair

runoff election; and Haiti, where presidential, parliamentary, and local elections were successfully concluded for the first time in a decade, restoring elected governance throughout the country and facilitating important progress in consolidating stable and permanent democratic institutions. US support for elections in the region included voter registration and education programs, technical assistance to electoral commissions, and support for monitoring missions.



In Colombia, with over 30,000 paramilitary members laying down their arms, the Colombian government succeeded in demobilizing almost all United Self Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) paramilitary groups, representing an unprecedented opportunity for progress in bringing peace and stability. The Colombian government is working to implement the Justice and Peace Law, which requires former paramilitary members to disclose all crimes and make reparations to victims in exchange for reduced prison sentences. Although NGOs remain concerned that the law falls short of completely dismantling paramilitary organizations and some are critical of the reduced sentencing provisions, the government has



begun taking statements from demobilized paramilitaries, established a witness protection program, and ordered the seizure of all property illegally held by AUC members. The Secretary of State approved \$48 million from FY 2005-2007 funds for assistance to demobilization and reintegration programs, and to support the work of the OAS in this program.

In Central America, the United States supported projects to strengthen civil society, including programs to advance press freedom and develop a professional press corps, and to encourage greater civic participation in governance. The United States also committed \$21.1 million in 2006 to support programs to strengthen the capacity of signatories to the Central American – Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras) to implement the labor rights provisions of the agreement, including the creation of worker support centers, administration of labor justice projects, and projects to eliminate gender and other forms of discrimination.

Venezuela and Cuba remained isolated from the democratic norm in the hemisphere. Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez accelerated his drive to consolidate control in the executive branch and to take aggressive actions to restrict freedom of expression, and introduced legislation to restrict the activities of non-governmental organizations. US programs and activities in Venezuela continued to focus on strengthening civil society and NGOs working on democratic reform, including labor rights and freedom of expression. The OAS served as a forum for NGOs to express their views and critique the Chavez government. In Cuba, the transfer of authority over day-to-day affairs from Fidel Castro to his brother Raul did not represent a lessening of totalitarian rule, but did underscore that change is underway. The United States is taking a pro-active approach to ensuring a genuine democratic transition through support to independent civil society leaders and democracy advocates, so that Cubans can, in the future, determine their government through free and fair elections.



Activists from Oaxaca take part in a hearing on the situation of prisoners. (Freedom House photo)

Mexico: Defending Human Rights

Human rights defenders play a fundamental role in advocating for the rights of civil society and ensuring that the voices of the weakest in society are heard. In an effort to advance the work of human rights defenders in Mexico and increase public awareness and support for their work, Freedom House, with U.S. funding, implemented a program in 2006 to strengthen the capacity of Mexican human rights NGOs (particularly those dealing with violence against women and discrimination against indigenous peoples) and enhance the mechanisms for monitoring, investigating, and documenting human rights violations.

Working with a range of human rights NGOs and lawyers in the states of Oaxaca, Guerrero, Chihuahua, and Mexico, Freedom House constructed a database and legal manual to document human rights cases. The manual covers human rights legislation, including international, regional and national instruments protecting human rights laws, and serves as an essential tool to assist human rights workers who often lacked legal expertise. Over 30 human rights workers in diverse organizations were trained on both the management of the Human Rights Database and the use of the Human Rights Manual. The project also provided technical advice, grant funding, and support for legal interns to work with local counterparts, and media-awareness training events to enhance mechanisms for human rights NGOs to monitor, investigate and document human rights violations.

Throughout the project, seven human rights workshops were conducted, which included training in such themes as legal strategies, international systems of human rights protections, and tactics for



enhanced human rights investigations that enhanced participants' roles as public watchdogs. In addition, Freedom House provided technical assistance and co-sponsored eight representatives of Oaxacan human rights organizations, including two organizations from the database pilot group in Oaxaca, to appear before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in Washington, DC on March 6, 2006 to present a special analysis of the situation of women in the state of Oaxaca and a petition to release over 60 indigenous people detained without benefit of translators or timely trials.

Through a combination of technical and financial support, Freedom House effectively strengthened and enhanced mechanisms for Mexican human rights NGOs to identify and denounce human rights violations. The creation of a human rights database transformed the systems and capacity of 12 organizations to monitor, document and report on human rights violations. To date, the database includes over 200 cases of alleged human rights violations. One project grantee, the Center for the Defense and Promotion of Human Rights, investigated and documented over 46 cases of disappearances in the state of Guerrero and presently serves as the legal co-representative for many of the victims' families at the Office of the Special Prosecutor for Crimes of the Past to obtain redress.

The project improved the capacity of human rights defenders as public watch-dogs by strengthening their techniques for building public constituencies for human rights in order to reduce the tolerance and incidence of human rights violations.



Human rights lawyers from Oaxaca and Chihuahua meet in Mexico City for a training conference. (Freedom House photo)



Bolivia

Bolivia is a constitutional, multiparty democracy. In December 2005, in a generally free and fair process, citizens elected Evo Morales Ayma, an indigenous politician and coca union leader, as president. Morales took office January 22. On July 2, citizens elected a Constituent Assembly to rewrite the country's constitution, and Morales' party won 137 of the 255 available assembly seats.

While the government generally respected the human rights of its citizens, there were problems in some areas. The most significant human rights problems were abuses by security forces, including several deaths; harsh prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention; threats to civil liberties, including the right to a fair and public trial, press and religious freedoms; corruption and a lack of transparency in government; discrimination based on gender and ethnicity; trafficking in persons; child labor; and brutal working conditions in the mining sector.

The United States' human rights and democracy strategy in the country focused on the promotion of democracy and political and social stability. The United States worked to ensure that government security forces respected human rights and cooperated with investigations and prosecutions of alleged human rights violations. The United States sought to increase citizen participation in democratic processes, trained future indigenous leaders, improved local government, and bolstered the judicial system and rule of law. The United States also promoted women's rights and assisted in combating corruption, child labor, and trafficking in persons.

To support democratic political processes, US officials routinely highlighted the importance of democracy and rights-based practices during senior-level visits and in discussions with the government, members of civil society, and the press. Working through the Organization of American States and with other international partners, including Brazil, Argentina, and Spain, the United States sought to build international support for democratic institutions. Throughout the

year the United States worked closely with key government institutions, including the Ministry of Justice, the Office of the Attorney General and other executive branch institutions; the judiciary; the congress; police authorities; and regional governments to increase effectiveness and transparency and enhance citizens' participation in decision-making.

US activities sought to improve access to balanced information on issues of national importance, promote peaceful participation and economic opportunity in marginalized areas, and conduct civic education and leadership training in support of the country's emerging indigenous leadership. US programs supported established democratic institutions and new bodies, such as the Constituent Assembly charged with writing a new constitution. US efforts sponsored a network of 3,000 local volunteer election observers consisting primarily of local NGOs for the July Constituent Assembly election.

In all nine departments, the United States promoted dialogue among indigenous leaders and civil society at-large on matters of national interest, such as decentralization, the assembly, and economic reform. The US programs sponsored hundreds of workshops on principles including democratic representation, tolerance, conflict resolution, and leadership, in which 60,000 persons participated. For example, in the largely indigenous city of El Alto, more than 1,200 youth leaders were trained in leadership and conflict management. US funding enabled dissemination of approximately 145,000 booklets on other countries' constitutional conventions to raise citizen awareness of democratic principles.

In support of established democratic institutions, the United States provided training and technical assistance to improve their responsiveness to citizens' needs. The United States worked with a group of foreign donors to provide training for all members of congress on the functions of legislators, the structure of congress, and congressional procedures.

To support media freedom, the United States sponsored 15 workshops on freedom of the press and expression. Through a US program sponsoring lectures



and discussions focusing on responsible television journalism held in El Alto, La Paz, Santa Cruz, and Sucre, the country's journalists and journalism students discussed professional ethics, good reporting practices, and the media's role in a democracy. Radio workshops trained indigenous radio journalists from the Yungas, the Chapare, and the Altiplano in professional practices, journalistic ethics, and the public service role of journalism. Another series of workshops with at-risk indigenous youth produced public service radio spots that addressed topics such as democratic values, antidrug messages, health, and literacy.

US funding also supported creation of radio news programs in Quechua, Aymara, and Guarani, the country's most common indigenous languages. These programs were sent out to 200 radio stations in remote areas throughout the country. During the year indigenous and civil society groups participated in workshops on democratic values and in a US program to promote improvements in political access and responsible civic and political participation among rural and indigenous populations.

In the area of judicial reform and the rule of law, US officials worked with a network of more than 100 local NGOs to strengthen civil society advocacy and oversight of the justice system reform process and to promote public awareness. The United States sponsored several visits by prominent US academics who held workshops with civil society organizations on themes such as youth participation in democracy, respect for diversity, and developing consensus.

The United States continued to work closely with civil society to educate citizens about their rights under the reformed criminal justice procedures. The United States also supported the establishment of conflict mitigation and resolution systems in La Paz, Cochabamba, and Chuquisaca prefectures to enhance regional governments' capacity to manage conflicts.

The United States worked to expand access to justice services for the poor through continued support to Integrated Justice Centers in El Alto and the coca-growing regions of the Chapare and Yungas. These centers provided citizens with access to mediation

and other legal services and established a positive government presence in areas where respect for the rule of law is fragile. During the year these centers resolved approximately 5,000 cases.

Underscoring the importance of protecting human rights, US officials routinely raised human rights conditions in US security assistance programs that trained the country's police and military personnel on topics such as internationally accepted principles of nonlethal crowd control and basic criminal investigation. To promote respect for the rights of women and minorities, the United States assisted the Women Legislators' Caucus to develop a gender-focused legislative agenda. The United States also provided training to indigenous representatives to help make them effective legislators. Through a US program sponsoring visiting lecturers, a leading African-American academic gave several seminars on promoting tolerance, respect for diversity, and recognition of the country's Afro-Bolivian minority. As part of its outreach to the indigenous population, the United States sent two indigenous leaders to participate in International Visitors Leadership programs focusing on congressional elections and indigenous advancement. The United States also sent 15 indigenous leaders to participate in a four week US studies and leadership training program.

In support of religious freedom, US officials routinely emphasized to the government the need to respect the rights of religious organizations and private schools to adopt their own educational curricula.

The United States promoted respect for labor rights by funding a project to improve workplace safety and to encourage tripartite dialogue among workers, employers, and the government. The dialogue emphasized resolving child labor problems in the sugar cane industry. US officials also traveled to the Chaco region and met with Guarani families who were living in indentured servitude. Additionally, a US grant helped an NGO to complete a project to keep the children of Potosi miners in school and out of the mines; the grant ended in 2006.



To assist the government in combating trafficking in persons, the United States provided technical assistance for the government's January 10 antitrafficking law, which brought the country into compliance with relevant international conventions. The law specifically criminalizes trafficking in persons for the purpose of prostitution and provides for prison terms of four to 12 years when the victim is less than 14 years of age. In conjunction with the French government and international organizations, the United States sponsored a regional conference on trafficking in persons.

Colombia

Colombia is a constitutional, multiparty democracy. On May 28, independent presidential candidate Alvaro Uribe was reelected in elections that were considered generally free and fair. Although serious problems remained, the government's respect for human rights continued to improve, which was particularly evident in actions undertaken by the government's security forces and in demobilization negotiations with one major paramilitary group. While civilian authorities generally maintained effective control of the security forces, there were instances in which elements of the security forces acted in violation of state policy. The majority of human rights violations were committed by illegal armed groups. Violations included unlawful and extrajudicial killings and kidnappings, forced disappearances, torture, forced displacement, impunity, and harassment of human rights groups.

The US human rights and democracy strategy for the country focused on strengthening democratic processes and institutions by enhancing oversight entities, supporting civil society organizations, providing short-term emergency humanitarian assistance, increasing access to the justice system, supporting peace initiatives, and protecting vulnerable populations.

The US Government supported several efforts to strengthen the rule of law and the criminal justice system through the government's efforts to further implement a new accusatory justice system. The new system, which the government began implementing

with US assistance in January 2005, is expected to be enacted throughout the country by 2008. To date, US assistance has trained more than 30,000 justice officials including prosecutors, judges, public defenders, police, and forensic experts. The US Government trained approximately 11,000 judicial officials in the new system and monitored its implementation in certain regions. US programs also helped major universities adjust their law school curricula to teach the new criminal procedure code and supported the judicial branch's efforts to phase in new public hearing courtrooms and administrative spaces. With US financial support, the government has constructed 45 courtrooms since the inception of US justice assistance programs. The United States provided the Judicial Police and Office of the Attorney General with advanced computer forensic training and equipment, including two state-of-the-art computer forensic labs. By year's end this program had trained 48 computer forensic investigators. Additionally, the multimillion dollar SIIES Case Management System project was turned over to the government, and the United States trained approximately 800 users on the system.

Other US-funded rule of law programs continued strengthening the capacity of the Human Rights Unit of the Office of the Prosecutor General to investigate and prosecute human rights cases. These programs included training and technical assistance for prosecutors, investigators, and forensic scientists. The United States conducted the first forensic anthropology course for anthropologists who will work with the Human Rights Unit to identify victims from mass graves. The US Government enhanced forensic laboratories in the areas of DNA use, ballistics and fingerprint identification, forensic imaging, and document analysis and installed a wireless network to improve interagency communication. Through this funding the Office of the Prosecutor General conducted major investigations and was able to bring charges for murder, assault, extortion, and drug trafficking against guerrilla and paramilitary criminal organizations.

To address concerns about human rights abuses, US assistance provided security protection through the Ministry of Interior and Justice to approximately



1,581 persons under threat from terrorist groups. Threatened human rights workers, union leaders, journalists, former members of the Patriotic Union Party, ex-mayors, and ex-city council members benefited greatly from this program.

To promote respect for minority rights, the United States supported the IV Afro-Colombian Institutional Conference in which mayors of municipalities with large Afro-Colombian populations, represented by AMUNAFRO, developed common recommendations to improve their participation in national decision-making. As a result AMUNAFRO is serving as an important interlocutor for the government's Agency for Social Action (Accion Social) in attracting support for these municipalities. US funding continued to support social organizations dedicated to promote and protect Afro-Colombian rights and interests and strengthen networks of Afro-Colombian women's organizations. At the institutional level, the United States also supported Afro-Colombian interests by

providing technical assistance to the Ministry of the Interior and Justice's Afro-Colombian Office. The United States also funded the Martin Luther King Fellow's program, which provides English-language scholarships, educational advising, and leadership training to Afro-Colombian university undergraduates to prepare them for US post-graduate educational opportunities.

In support of the demobilization process and reintegration of ex-combatants, the United States funded the legal processing and effective monitoring of ex-paramilitaries, as well as institutional strengthening of the government's reincorporation program and the Office of the Presidential Advisor for Reintegration. The US Government expanded the tracking and monitoring database for individuals who demobilize, increased the number of Reference and Opportunity Centers to nine regional offices and three mobile units, and supported programs to promote the social and economic integration of adult ex-combat-



A woman lights candles during a demonstration against abuse and violence against women in Bogota, Colombia. (AP photo)



ants. US funding continued to support the Organization of American States' mission, which monitored the cease-fire and security conditions in regions with large demobilized populations.

The United States offered technical assistance to the National Reparation and Reconciliation Commission to identify and promote victims' participation in the reparation process and to manage asset claims. US funding helped the Colombian Family Welfare Institute's efforts to reintegrate the more than 570 former child combatants who left illegal armed groups.

In support of elections, the United States sponsored training for political parties and voter education. US technical assistance and training led to internal political party reforms designed to attract and include more underrepresented sectors of society, such as women, youth, and ethnic minorities.

The United States sponsored visitor programs for journalists to visit the United States to observe the role of the media in civil society and human rights in a democracy, as well as programs that provided training in investigative journalism. The United States also utilized Voice of America programming and Newsfiles, a 30-minute news summary broadcast into areas of conflict, to promote media freedom.

During the year the United States launched a radio/television program throughout the country encouraging citizens to protect human rights defenders. This program highlighted professionals and individuals at the greatest risk, including journalists, ombudsmen, religious and community leaders, and others who lead the country's fight for respect of core human rights. In addition, over 100 journalists received direct protection measures through the US-supported Ministry of Interior and Justice's Protection program, in response to credible threats against their lives. The United States continued to financially support activities of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, including those related to freedom of the press such as protection of journalists and support for the country's journalist network. In an effort to reach threatened populations, the UN program in-

cluded a civil society grants program to support media and press efforts in the human rights arena.

Through the International Organization for Migration (IOM), US funding supported a temporary relocation program for 13 members of the judiciary and their families whose lives and safety were at risk. While temporarily relocated to another country, they were trained in human rights and administration of justice.

The US Government helped to establish three additional Justice Houses, including a new regional justice house and satellite offices to better serve rural citizens in the Tolima area, raising the total number of Justice Houses to 44 at year's end. These one-stop legal assistance centers handled 1,096,276 cases during the year and have fielded more than 4.7 million requests since the program's inception in 1997. In general, these centers are established where there had previously been minimal government services. In addition, US funding certified 389 dispute resolution experts during the year, bringing the total trained with US Government support to 2,107.

The United States also aided efforts to improve the capacity of municipal governments by involving citizens in local decision-making, assisting local governments to manage resources more effectively and transparently. At year's end 25 citizen committees (assisted with US-financed technical support and responsible for one or more projects) were overseeing 27 local infrastructure activities.

As in previous years US funding for the Early Warning System operated under the auspices of the Office of the National Ombudsman, supporting 21 authorized regional Early Warning offices, whose main duty was to prevent massive human rights violations. By year's end the system issued 54 risk assessments and 20 alerts that helped prevent or mitigate human rights violations by providing local civilian and military authorities with recommendations to take preventive actions.

The United States supported a variety of international organizations and NGOs that provided social



and economic assistance to meet the short- and long-term needs of displaced persons. Short-term assistance included food, temporary shelter, hygiene and household kits, psychological counseling, health care, and temporary employment. Long-term assistance focused on reintegration, including a program to return displaced persons to their original homes. Activities included income generation programs such as vocational training, job placement, seed grants, health care, shelter, access to education, and community infrastructure. By year's end the United States assisted 500,000 internally displaced persons through these programs.

To promote respect for the rights of displaced persons, the United States provided funding to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to promote the protection of displaced persons from violence; this included working with the government to improve its humanitarian response.

To address the serious problem of child labor, the United States funded basic educational services to children in the municipalities of Funza and Madrid to prevent children from entering the worst forms of child labor and withdraw others already involved. US assistance supported funding a regional project through the International Labor Organization to prevent domestic labor and commercial sexual exploitation of children. The project prevented 293 children from entering child domestic labor, withdrew 186 children from child domestic labor, and saved 118 children from commercial sexual exploitation.

The United States also supported programs against trafficking in persons, working with the International Organization for Migration and local NGOs, such as Fundacion Esperanza, to improve call centers for victims' assistance and prevention and support public awareness campaigns. US assistance helped fund a Web site with prevention and assistance information through Fundacion Esperanza. The United States additionally funded a program through the International Organization for Migration on law enforcement for trafficking violations, in order to create a specialized center to coordinate the work of the Counter Trafficking Task Forces of the Administrative Depart-

ment of Security, the National Police, and the Criminal Prosecution Office.

Cuba

Cuba is a totalitarian state led by an acting president, General Raul Castro. Citizens do not have the right to change their government and therefore could not challenge the July 31 announcement that Fidel Castro was "delegating" authority to his brother.

The government's human rights record remained poor, and the government continued to commit numerous, serious abuses. There were at least 283 political prisoners and detainees at year's end. Thousands of citizens served sentences for "dangerousness," in the absence of any criminal activity. Beatings and abuse of detainees and prisoners, including human rights activists, were carried out with impunity; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions included denial of medical care. The government retaliated against those who sought peaceful political change through frequent harassment, beatings, and threats against political opponents by government-recruited mobs, police, and state security officials; frequent arbitrary arrest and detention of human rights advocates and members of independent professional organizations; denial of fair trial, particularly to political prisoners; and interference with privacy, such as pervasive monitoring of private communications, including use of the Internet. There were also severe limitations on freedom of speech and press; denial of peaceful assembly and association; restrictions on freedom of movement, including selective denial of exit permits to thousands of citizens; and refusal to recognize domestic human rights groups or permit them to function legally. Sex tourism, discrimination against persons of African descent, and severe restrictions on worker rights, including the right to strike or form independent unions, were also problems.

The priorities of the US Government are to hasten a transition to democracy, to break the government's information blockade, and to call international attention to the chronic human rights problems on the island. Given that the regime tolerates no attempt at po-



The “Ladies in White,” wives of Cuban political prisoners, meet in Havana, Cuba. (AP photo)

litical reform, significant human rights improvements or movement toward an open society and democratic political processes are extremely difficult to achieve under current conditions. Nevertheless, on July 10, the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba released its second report, with recommendations for accelerating a peaceful democratic transition in the country and coordinating US support for a free and democratic government. The report’s recommended actions are intended to empower Cuba’s civil society, give its citizens access to information, and deny revenue to the Castro regime. Also on July 10, President Bush announced his approval of the “Compact with the People of Cuba,” which outlines how the United States will support the country’s citizens, if they ask for US assistance, in their transition from the Castro regime to freedom and democracy. To support a democratic transition government, the compact pledges, among other things, to help rebuild the shattered economy and to provide emergency food, water, fuel, and medical equipment throughout the country.

During the year US officials in Havana also worked with like-minded diplomatic colleagues to support prodemocracy advocates. This cooperation included collaborating with these other diplomats on outreach activities, such as providing dissidents with a secure venue where they could hold uncensored discussions without fear of being arrested. Cooperation also included the sharing of press clips and other information about developments throughout the country via the Internet. The United States also issued high-level public statements about the country’s very poor record of respect for democracy and human rights and encouraged other governments to do the same.

US officials in the country informed citizens about democracy, fundamental rights, and a multiparty system by holding dozens of workshops, briefings, videoconferences, and teleconferences; interacting extensively with human rights activists and prodemocracy advocates; distributing large numbers of publications; providing support and training for in-



dependent journalists and librarians; observing rare public demonstrations; and conducting outreach to civil society.

To address government restrictions on free speech and freedom of the press, US officials in the country provided two free Internet centers in a secure location, which represented the country's largest Internet cafe and featured 23 computers serving approximately 200 visitors per week. These centers were key tools for US efforts to promote media freedom. Human rights activists could use the Internet to expose human rights abuses to an international audience. Through these centers, independent journalists were able to have their articles published overseas. US officials also held more than a dozen press workshops to improve the professionalism of independent journalists and continued to operate the country's only electronic news billboard, featuring news headlines and other materials, including passages from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

To break the government's stranglehold on public discourse and promote freedom of speech, US officials in Havana continued to increase citizen access to information about events inside and outside the country. During the year the United States distributed 287,931 books, articles, and pamphlets. US officials also distributed several thousand short-wave radios, which enabled citizens to obtain information from the BBC, Radio Prague, or Miami-based stations, including Radio Marti. Over the past four years more than 133,000 citizens who have entered the US diplomatic facilities were able to view the Spanish-language version of Cable News Network, read and take home press clips and other informative materials, and learn about their government's incarceration of citizens who sought peaceful change. US programs also supported approximately 300 independent libraries throughout the country. The United States also delivered books, articles, pamphlets, and other reading and electronic materials, including DVDs, to these libraries. US officials in the country made follow-up visits to ensure that the materials were in fact being offered to the public, as intended. US officials also held training sessions to enhance the professionalism of independent librarians, thereby allowing them to provide

citizens with wider access to information than would otherwise be available.

The United States supported the country's NGOs and other members of independent civil society in numerous ways. US officials met frequently with activists and with relatives of incarcerated political prisoners, providing moral and limited material support, gathering and reporting information, and relaying important messages to US officials in Washington. This interaction helped the United States inform and empower prodemocracy groups, opposition parties, labor unions, independent library networks, youth organizations, independent press agencies, groups working for the release of political prisoners, and other grass-roots organizations, allowing them to work for democratic change. On November 24, US officials helped three opposition youth groups hold an unprecedented forum that brought together 64 young activists, two of them from Mexico. On December 10, when government officials and their militant supporters attacked 12 activists who were carrying out a silent march to mark International Human Rights Day, US officials witnessed and documented the attack, to remind the activists and the regime of US concern. On the same day, Chief of Mission Michael E. Parmly met with leading dissidents and relatives of political prisoners.

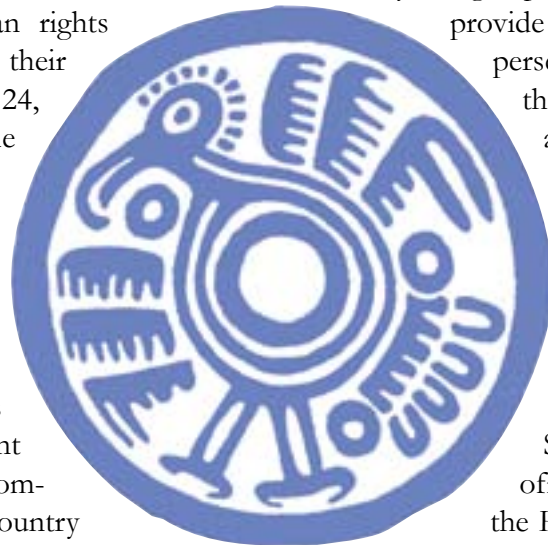
To increase the flow of accurate information concerning democracy and human rights to, from, and within the country, the US Government also provided grants to US universities and NGOs to undertake direct outreach to citizens in the country. These outreach efforts helped build solidarity with democracy and human rights defenders in the country. US officials in the country also provided briefings and arranged other events to help visiting groups of US university students understand the human rights situation on the island, thus countering disinformation and contributing to heightened awareness among Americans regarding human rights violations in the country.

The United States used venues such as workshops, briefings, teleconferences, and videoconferences for citizens to share ideas about the rule of law, judicial independence, and key political and economic free-



doms. On October 23, a video-link connected human rights defenders in the country with civil rights campaigners in Mississippi to celebrate the life of Rosa Parks and discuss life at present for citizens on the island. On December 8, a videoconference enabled economists in the country to interact with experts from the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and InterAmerican Development Bank to discuss possible roles for these organizations in helping the country transition to a market economy. This helped familiarize the Cuban economists with the critical role that international financial institutions can play in countries transitioning to democracy and how these institutions' work in other countries has helped promote economic freedom. US officials in the country also focused on women's rights, press freedom, youth activism, and cultural ties. US officials held teleconferences to connect human rights groups in the country with their counterparts overseas. On May 24, a conference call enabled some of the country's human rights defenders to exchange views on promoting democracy and human rights with the "Group of Friends for a Democratic Cuba," an alliance of US lawmakers, European diplomats in Washington, and prominent members of the Cuban exile community. US officials in the country also regularly distributed copies of the US Constitution to prodemocracy advocates and lawyers in the country who were interested in rewriting the country's constitution during a transition period.

US officials in the country monitored the cases of hundreds of political prisoners and met frequently with their families and organizations. US officials helped deliver medicines to sick political prisoners and met frequently with individuals who had been harassed, attacked or detained in connection with their prodemocracy activities, including a man and his wife who were assaulted in October by government-supported militants after attending a peaceful discussion on human rights. US officials kept in contact with high-profile dissidents, such as hunger-striking journalist



Guillermo Farinas, and with youth activists, members of religious organizations, the "Ladies in White," and others. US officials in the country frequently invited human rights activists and relatives of imprisoned activists to representational events to underscore their legitimate place in the country's civil society.

The US Government continued to deny visas to those implicated in human rights violations, including those involved in the show trials of the 75 activists jailed in March 2003. Membership in a totalitarian party was also taken into consideration in visa denial decisions, in accordance with the US Immigration and Naturalization Act.

The United States continued to operate an in-country refugee processing program in Havana to provide relief to those suffering from persecution or a well-founded fear thereof. More than 6,000 individuals were approved for refugee status during the year. Under the US-Cuba Migration Accords, the country's government pledged not to retaliate against any citizen returned to the island after attempting an illegal voyage to the United States. To verify compliance, US officials conducted interviews in the Havana homes of returned "rafters" and gathered information on job dismissals, harassment by the government's state security institutions, and other reprisals. To help protect repatriated rafters, US officials informed all such individuals of their rights under the Migration Accords.

To promote religious freedom, US officials engaged a broad range of religious leaders in discourse and on many occasions invited them to representational events. During the year the US Government continued to issue travel licenses to US-based religious representatives whose work in the country promoted religious freedom.



US officials promoted respect for labor rights in the country through frequent meetings with labor activists and the families and organizations of labor activists imprisoned on political grounds. To demonstrate that the United States regards labor rights as very important and supports worker rights, in May a US official attended an inaugural labor-rights training session. The United States also provided limited material support and information to labor activists to increase awareness of fundamental labor rights and international labor laws.

Ecuador

Ecuador is a constitutional republic. In November Rafael Correa was declared the winner of presidential elections that the Organization of American States (OAS) considered generally free and fair, and assumed office on January 15, 2007. While the government generally respected the human rights of its citizens, there continued to be serious problems in the following areas: isolated unlawful killings and use of excessive force by security forces; occasional torture, abuse, and killing of suspects and prisoners by security forces, sometimes with impunity; poor prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention; a high number of pretrial detainees; and corruption and denial of due process within the judicial system. Members of the National Police were accused of murder, attempted murder, rape, extortion, kidnappings, and alien smuggling. Societal problems continued, such as violence against women; discrimination against women, indigenous people, Afro-Ecuadorians, and homosexuals; trafficking in persons and sexual exploitation of minors; and child labor.

The US strategy in the country for supporting democracy and human rights focused on election support, strengthening the judicial system and the rule of law, promoting human rights education, assisting Colombian refugees, and combating child labor and trafficking in persons.

To support democratic political processes for ensuring free and fair elections, the United States contributed to election-support programs for the October

and November rounds of the presidential elections. This funding provided technical assistance to the Supreme Electoral Tribunal to design and develop a training program for election officials and to design a special national plan for voters with disabilities. The plan called for the collection of data to assess physical conditions for persons with disabilities at polling stations and recommend improvements and the production of materials to encourage persons with disabilities to vote.

The US Government also financially supported and participated in the OAS election observation mission, providing 35 observers for the first round of presidential elections on October 15, and 19 observers for the second round of elections on November 26. In addition, the US Government funded election observation efforts by local civil society organizations. With US support, these groups developed a national public awareness campaign to promote informed voting, monitor campaign spending by the candidates, conduct a national survey on satisfaction with the electoral process, and establish an electronic news system linked to major international media outlets. The US Government also funded election observation by indigenous groups who fielded 186 observers covering 524 voting stations in six provinces where most indigenous people lived.

Throughout the year the ambassador and other US officials publicly advocated for respect for the integrity of government institutions and constitutional processes. The US Government also began a program that assisted political parties in the national parliament, which focused on strengthening political parties and the responsiveness of individual parliamentarians toward their constituencies.

The United States also funded a program that worked with local Afro-Ecuadorian organizations to provide political leadership training, increase voter participation, promote dialogue with political parties, monitor the participation of Afro-Ecuadorians in elections, especially women, and increase awareness of Afro-Ecuadorians among the general population.



To promote media freedom during the year, the United States supported professional development by funding the participation of 63 journalists in three training seminars in the United States as well as specialized training in the country. The US Government also trained three journalists in professional journalism standards through the International Visitors Leadership Program, and hundreds at local seminars, and through free research support to investigative journalists through a US Government information resource center in the country.

To support respect for the rule of law, the United States funded 30 training events that were attended by 700 officials from public and civil society organizations, including reporters on public defense, human rights, and other topics related to criminal justice. US programs also trained 30 lawyers to promote more effective application of criminal procedure laws. By year's end these 30 lawyers trained an additional 320 members of the country's bar associations on criminal procedure and related rule-of-law topics. A US-funded program provided training in conflict resolution to indigenous human rights ombudsmen and bilingual education supervisors throughout the country.

To help contain and reverse inefficiency and corruption in the judicial system, the US Government funded a thorough evaluation of the application of the criminal procedures code in three major cities. The report revealed major bottlenecks that undermined the operation of the criminal justice system. As a result of this evaluation, judicial institutions took important and immediate administrative actions, including a decision by the National Judicial Council to assign a judicial official to coordinate the scheduling of pre-trial and trial hearings in the city of Guayaquil. The United States continued to support due process through legal defense services by improving the capacity of legal defense clinics to provide adequate legal defense for indigent persons and to track cases of persons assigned to the legal defense service more effectively. As a result of this program, during the year 1,766 indigent persons from vulnerable groups received legal defense services, and another 1,539 were provided legal counsel in eight cities throughout the country.

To advance good governance, the US Government sponsored visitors to the United States to learn about transparency, good governance, human rights in a democracy, combating corruption and trafficking in persons, and the role of the media in a democracy.

The United States also expanded its program to increase effectiveness and transparency in government, working with 64 local governments and four additional provinces. US funding facilitated the consolidation of citizen participation processes in 934 local governments, and citizen oversight mechanisms monitored service improvements in 36 local governments. The program also assisted with the development of legal proposals to decentralize the government. Eight municipalities issued ordinances reorganizing management systems to permit the assumption of newly transferred responsibilities and to increase local revenues. In addition, 30 parish (district) governments were trained in public management.

A national justice sector NGO network, established with US Government support, continued to play an important oversight role regarding judicial performance. US funding also helped establish four new local citizen oversight groups to measure the quality of administration of justice in the cities of Ibarra, Manta, Azogues, and Guayaquil. Universities, NGOs, community-based organizations, and other civil society groups participated in the establishment of these groups.

Throughout the year the United States funded a number of programs to support civil society and NGOs. One of these programs supported civil society efforts to facilitate discussion, dissemination, and increased public awareness about the need for a public defender law. The US Government also funded the implementation of seven civil society grants for antitrafficking, legal defense, and human rights, including the establishment of an Afro-Ecuadorian network of human rights defenders. During the year this program developed a comprehensive selection process that identified 40 Afro-Ecuadorian leaders from nine provinces who received training in proper and legal processing of human rights complaints, alternative dispute reso-



lution methods, communication skills, and leadership techniques.

The US Government expanded its outreach to religious groups, including the Catholic Church and indigenous and other evangelical associations, to promote religious tolerance and freedom.

To address concerns about human rights abuses, the United States continued to fund human rights training for military personnel selected for US military exercise and operational training. To promote respect for the rights of refugees, the United States provided funding to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Organization for Migration, the American Red Cross, and the Pan American Health Organization to support refugee centers and provide infrastructure, such as potable water, and public health projects for approximately 7,500 Colombians seeking refugee status in the country.

To support the government's efforts to combat child labor, the United States funded three major programs during the year. These programs focused on indigenous children at risk of engaging in the worst forms of child labor, meeting the educational needs of child laborers, combating child labor in the agricultural and construction sectors, and combating the exploitation of minors in the commercial sex industry.

To promote general respect for labor rights in the country, the United States made diplomatic efforts to strengthen labor laws and practices, including reform of the labor code to ensure the right of association without fear of retribution.

To assist the government to address the serious problem of trafficking in persons, the US Government helped support an antitrafficking strategy that was signed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in July. Specifically, the US Government provided the Ecuadorian Inter-Institutional Committee technical assistance and training, and supported the promotion of the regional antitrafficking awareness campaigns. Additionally, the United States supported national police efforts specifically targeting trafficking in persons. The United States also conducted several programs

that increased awareness about trafficking, including providing a grant to the NGO Friends for Life, which trained 96 teachers and 3,000 children in six schools in Quito on the dangers of human trafficking. The trainers employed storytelling, puppet shows, and skits to convey the difficult topic of trafficking to children. The training program was accompanied by an art contest in June for which students submitted drawings and other works that portrayed the dangers of trafficking.

Guatemala

Guatemala is a democratic, multiparty republic. In 2003 national elections, generally considered by international observers to be free and fair, Oscar Berger of the Grand National Alliance coalition won a four-year term, which began in January 2004.

Although the government generally respected the human rights of its citizens, serious problems remained. Human rights and societal problems included the government's failure to investigate effectively and punish unlawful killings committed by members of the security forces; widespread societal violence, including numerous killings; corruption and substantial inadequacies in the police and judicial sectors; police involvement in kidnappings; impunity for criminal activity; harsh and dangerous prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention; failure of the judicial system to ensure full and timely investigation or fair trials; failure to protect judicial sector officials, witnesses, and civil society organizations from intimidation; discrimination and violence against women; discrimination and violence against gay, transvestite, and transgender persons; trafficking in persons; ethnic discrimination; and ineffective enforcement of labor laws, including child labor provisions.

The US strategy for promoting human rights and democracy in the country focused on helping the government strengthen its democratic institutions while encouraging transparency, accountability, and respect for human rights and the rule of law. US Government efforts supported the training of police to better protect society and respect human rights, and the



strengthening of civil society's capacity to partner with the government to consolidate democracy.

One of the challenges to the country's democratic system is low citizen participation in the political process. The United States, together with several other donors, implemented a project through the Organization of American States to help the country's Supreme Electoral Tribunal implement new reforms for the Electoral Law. Those reforms included decentralizing poll centers for the 2007 general elections to encourage broader citizen participation. The project also supported civil society initiatives to monitor the electoral process. The United States expanded its Decentralization and Local Government Program, primarily in the Hurricane Stan-affected San Marcos area bordering Mexico, to strengthen decentralization, citizen participation, and transparency in local governance in 29 municipalities and municipal associations. This program assisted local governments in citizen participation, leadership, conflict resolution, and participatory planning, with particular emphasis on including women and indigenous communities. The program also strengthened local government associations and promoted national policy reforms in favor of decentralization.

Although the government generally respected freedom of speech and press, in practice the press has not always enjoyed a productive working relationship with government institutions, particularly the National Civilian Police. The United States continued to provide training to the country's print and broadcast media to improve relations. The United States also sponsored for radio journalists a three-day course on interview techniques and news transmission.

The United States supported training for 969 law enforcement officials at the National Civilian Police Academy, including 86 police personnel specifically trained in crime scene management. This US-funded training included crime scene protection, evidence gathering, preservation of evidence, and the proper chain of custody. The United States worked with the government to develop human rights courses that became mandatory components of all basic police training, supervisory training, and specialized courses for

police officials. US programs also funded a consultant at the National Civilian Police Academy to continue developing a training curriculum that included a human rights component. In addition, 423 counternarcotics police officers each received approximately 24 hours of US-funded human rights training at the Central American School for Canine Training in Los Pinos.

The country has a strong and diverse civil society that played an important role as watchdog and advocate for supporting respect for human rights and democratic principles. During the year US Ambassador Derham and other representatives of the US Government met frequently with journalists, human rights defenders, NGOs concerned with violence against women, representatives of indigenous communities, labor leaders, and other members of civil society to express publicly support for their work. US officials continued to urge the government to investigate adequately threats and attacks against human rights defenders and other civil society leaders and to provide security protection for persons whose lives were threatened.

As in previous years, several NGOs reported burglaries of their offices and expressed concerns that those committing these acts were seeking sensitive information about human rights and democracy promotion activities. US officials met regularly with civil society representatives and encouraged the government to devote adequate resources and personnel to carry out thorough investigations of these reported incidents.

The United States endorsed government efforts for the UN to deploy a team of investigators and prosecutors to help dismantle criminal organizations. The government and the UN signed an agreement in December to establish the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala. If the congress ratifies the agreement, the UN-led commission would operate under the Public Ministry's prosecution authority and focus on criminal organizations that have penetrated state institutions.

A serious threat to democracy in the country is its weak judicial system. The United States provided sub-



Forensics specialists at the Guatemala Foundation for Forensic Anthropology examining the exhumed remains of victims of the 1960-96 internal armed conflict. (Photos by Gregory Maggio)

stantial material and technical assistance to continue building the capacity of justice sector institutions and to consolidate reforms initiated under the Peace Accords of 1996. In an effort to improve prosecution of serious crimes, the United States provided technical assistance in implementing improved pretrial procedures and case management. The most notable example was the design and implementation of a 24-hour criminal court in Guatemala City. The program dramatically improved adherence to due process by reducing instances of arbitrary detention and enabling prosecutors and defense lawyers to take immediate action in cases. It provided technical assistance, refurbished offices, and facilitated dialogue among the Supreme Court, the Office of the Attorney General, the Office of the Director of Public Defense, and the Ministry of Interior to improve the criminal courts' quality of service. The program also helped redesign the organization of the Office of the Prosecutor against Homicide to implement methodologies for case organization, monitoring, and supervision.

In October the government ratified the UN Convention on Anti-Corruption. Since January 2005, US programs had provided technical assistance to the government and civil society to develop a national anticorruption agenda as a means to support

the government's implementation of the convention. In November the United States provided technical and financial support to the government and a local NGO to host Transparency International's 12th International Anti-Corruption Conference and to implement an executive decree on freedom of information. To increase the capacity of the National Civil Police to investigate police officers implicated in crime or corruption, the US Government assisted the new Inspectorate General in defining its mandate, structure, and operational guidelines to oversee the Office of Professional Responsibility. The United States supported government efforts to pass anticrime legislation, including a law against organized crime that became effective in August. It designates as new crimes conspiracy and obstruction of justice and provides for the first time in the country the use of plea bargaining.

US programs provided material support and training to the Special Prosecutor for Human Rights and the Special Prosecutor for Crimes against Women, Children, and Victims of Trafficking in Persons. As in previous years the United States also continued to assist the government's Public Defense Institute to monitor adherence to due process standards by security, investigative, and prosecutorial authorities.



In May the government's Office for the Coordination of Modernization of the Justice Sector absorbed a network of 15 Justice Centers. For several years the United States had been funding these centers as a means for modernizing and streamlining judicial processes and bringing them within reach of more citizens. The notable success of the network produced a multiplier effect through promoting local initiatives, such as a shelter for domestic violence victims, a legal aid office at the University of San Carlos for non-criminal cases, and improvements in administrative services provided by other justice sector institutions. By year's end all of the Justice Centers were integrated into a national system to promote access to justice and coordination of justice sector institutions.

Unresolved issues arising out of the country's 1960-96 internal armed conflict continued to undermine respect for human rights and the rule of law. Many victims of political crimes and human rights abuses remained missing while alleged perpetrators continued to enjoy impunity. To support respect for human rights, the United States funded a project that collected testimony and other evidence related to past human rights abuses and that established a working group among civil society groups and government institutions to develop and prosecute cases related to killings and other human rights abuses committed during the conflict. The project aimed to overcome institutional obstacles to prosecution that permitted impunity and established the groundwork for future prosecutions in other human rights cases.

By year's end the Forensic Anthropological Foundation of Guatemala had undertaken ground-breaking forensic work regarding persons killed during the armed conflict at 147 sites, primarily in the Western Highlands. The US Government-funded foundation conducted approximately 90 percent of all exhumations during the year. US officials witnessed a number of these exhumations. Ambassador Derham visited the laboratories of the foundation to demonstrate support for its forensic workers and the families of victims killed during the armed conflict. The National Reparations Program, created as a result of a three-year human rights project sponsored by the United

States, continued making reparation payments to civilian victims of the internal conflict.

As a result of US technical assistance and dialogue with the Ministry of Defense to incorporate human rights training into its curriculum, during the year 12,066 military personnel received formal training in human rights. All military personnel are required to receive human rights training as a standard part of the curriculum in all of the country's military schools.

Historically, women and indigenous persons have been largely excluded from positions of influence in politics and business. To encourage greater representation, the United States actively recruited women and indigenous persons to participate in its International Visitors Leadership and Fulbright Programs. Beneficiaries of these efforts included an indigenous woman in the Huehuetenango Office of Municipal Planning who participated in the Voluntary Visitors Program for Provincial Mayors, and another indigenous woman in the president's office who attended the Vital Voices Women's Leadership Summit for Latin America.

Land conflicts, one of the sources of broader political conflict in the past, remained a serious problem in Alta Verapaz. As in the previous year US programs funded a local NGO to mediate land conflicts and introduce its methodology for mediation to local authorities. US funding also continued to provide training to Public Ministry staff in women's rights, to launch a public awareness campaign in several indigenous languages, and to develop a graduate certificate program for justice sector professionals, indigenous women, and civil society advocates.

The United States focused on building the capacity of government institutions to combat child labor and trafficking in persons. Through December the United States funded projects to improve labor law compliance and reduce the incidence of child labor. Through these projects, the United States supported the efforts of the Ministry of Labor and NGOs to train labor inspectors, educate employers and workers about their rights and responsibilities, and provide



educational opportunities to children who would otherwise be forced to work.

The United States also continued to fund antitrafficking efforts. In June US programs awarded an 18-month grant to a local NGO to undertake a project focusing on trafficking victims. The project sought to rescue sexually exploited minors and prevent minors from engaging in prostitution by expanding shelter, mental and physical healthcare, and legal assistance for trafficking victims. The project focused on enhancing the institutional capacity of law enforcement officials to identify trafficking cases, build stronger cases for prosecution, and create stronger linkages with civil society. It complemented a similar program on the Mexican side of the border under a US anti-trafficking initiative.

Haiti

Haiti is a republic with a constitution that calls for an elected president and a bicameral legislature. After two years of an interim government, relatively peaceful presidential and parliamentary elections took place on February 7 and April 21. Local elections were held on December 3. In the national election voters elected Rene Preval as President and filled 129 parliamentary seats. President Preval and the new parliament took office on May 14.

Despite improvements in the democratic process, the government's human rights record remained poor. The state no longer perpetrates or supports acts of political violence, but the following human rights problems were reported: occasional extrajudicial killings by members of the Haitian National Police acting outside their official capacity; overcrowding and poor sanitation in prisons; occasional arbitrary arrests; prolonged pretrial detention; judicial backlog and a judiciary subject to significant influence by the executive and legislative branches; severe corruption in all branches of government; failure to enforce trade union organizing rights; ineffective measures to prevent violence and societal discrimination against women; child abuse, internal trafficking of children, and child domestic labor; ineffective measures to ad-

dress killings by members of gangs and other armed groups; and kidnapping, torture, and cruel treatment by gang members and criminals.

The US human rights and democracy strategy in the country focused on providing stability and assisting in the reconstruction of democratic processes, including respect for the rule of law. These efforts included securing peaceful national and local elections, reforming the criminal justice system, supporting good governance, assisting human rights organizations, and supporting reconciliation, reconstruction, and social reintegration efforts.

The United States sponsored an initiative through the UN Development Program to provide political parties access to office equipment, media advertising, and transportation to remote areas. This assistance was given to political parties that agreed to adhere to democratic practices by signing a governability pact. US officials also trained political party staff on developing sound policies and adequately managing their internal affairs.

A US program trained 8,000 party representatives to better represent their constituencies from within government and as members of a peaceful opposition. The United States also supported an elections monitoring program that helped oversee the entire electoral process. By the end of the year the program had trained 1,529 poll watcher trainers from approximately 26 political parties and 144 party monitors. With US funding, the Organization of American States helped more than 3.5 million citizens register to vote. An estimated 63 percent of registered voters participated in the elections

In January, before the first round of the presidential elections, the United States sponsored the last of a series of presidential debates among the candidates which was aired widely throughout the country. The United States also continued a successful civic education program and funded seminars, as well as a project that worked with local associations, teachers, and youth on the principles and practices of good governance.



The United States sponsored a program implemented through the UN Office for Project Services to strengthen the external communication capacity of the country's electoral council during the electoral cycle. The UN office provided assistance for the electoral council to establish a press center within the premises, including a media workspace and a fully equipped press conference room. The project fostered improved relations between the electoral council and the media and facilitated news coverage of the elections.

During the year a US program provided technical assistance, equipment, and human rights training to recruits for the national police. A contingent of 50 US civilian police assigned to the UN Mission to Haiti assisted with this program and others to improve security and respect for human rights. Another US program continued the long-term process of improving justice sector functioning, including analysis of the causes of judicial incapacity, delay, and irregular detention. The program helped develop approaches to create an independent judiciary, improve case management; institute control and oversight of justice operations; train judges, clerks and prosecutors; raise the quality of legal education; and reduce excessive pretrial detention.

To strengthen parliamentary activities, the United States initiated a comprehensive institutional strengthening effort with the newly elected parliament, successfully negotiating for the creation of a bicameral commission to provide strategic direction and oversight for the three-year project. The bi-partisan committee developed a long-term plan for improved parliamentary functioning. To promote establishment of decentralized government bodies to meet the country's constitutional requirements, in December the United States contributed funds for the administration of local and municipal elections.

US funding produced two documentaries to raise awareness of issues that impact human rights and democracy. One documentary examined growing socioeconomic polarization and insecurity and how they affected persons in all walks of life. The second documentary brought together representatives from

civil society to discuss priorities for the newly elected government and to provide guidance on fostering national reconciliation. Both documentaries were broadcast on seven television stations twice a week during the period of July and August 2006. They were also broadcast in the provinces during the same period.

To support media freedom in the country, a US program provided election coverage training for journalists and operators of a network of 40 community radio stations. In addition, seven US training programs, which included components on advocating for greater press freedom, helped journalists improve reporting on the electoral process to provide better information to potential voters. US funding also sponsored an election soap opera that relied heavily on the country's oral storytelling tradition that was broadcast by 40 community radio stations and 12 private radio stations.

During the year a US program sponsored a seminar on ethics in journalism and communication tools for press attaches and journalists. The ambassador's commentary for World Press Freedom Day was published in two newspapers in October, *Le Nouvelliste* and *Le Matin*, and other weekly publications. The op-ed piece recognized the country's press corps for their role in furthering democracy. The commentary also noted the sacrifices that the journalists had made, persecuted at the hands of the government and the gangs. US funding also enabled 12 journalists to participate in a Fulbright program on journalism and media freedom in the United States.

To support and strengthen civil society and civic education, a US program created the Civic Forum initiative to provide citizens with knowledge, skills, and encouragement to participate in democratic processes and engage their local officials in areas of common concern. Through this initiative, citizens formed local committees to propose solutions that relied on local resources and increased community participation. By year's end 47 new local Civic Initiative Committees were created to implement numerous improvement initiatives including small gardens, reforestation, sanitation, ravine conservation, road rehabilitation, and provision of potable water.



The US also supported programs to reduce corruption including training to strengthen the management capacity and financial systems in key government entities, including the Ministry of Finance, the Superior Court of Accounts, the Commission for Adjudication of Public Contracts, and the Tax Service. US assistance increased government accountability and transparency through a newly integrated financial management system that tracked and monitored government expenditures and financial operations.

To promote respect for human rights, a US program provided grants and training for local organizations that offered medical and psychological assistance to 500 victims of gang violence. The program provided civil society groups with grants to conduct training on human rights principles, with the result that approximately 50 organizations received direct training to join an assistance network of human rights groups, hospitals, and grassroots associations that supported local communities.

In December, US funding sponsored an essay contest for youth to commemorate the 58th annual International Human Rights Day. Through this funding, 11 students received certificates for their winning submissions on human rights and nonviolence.

To support the government's efforts to combat the serious problem of internal and external trafficking of children for domestic labor (restaveks), during the year US-funded programs supported a publicity campaign to raise awareness about child slavery, provided services to victims, and coordinated efforts for legislative reform. US funding also provided antitrafficking training for representatives of the Ministries of Justice, Social Affairs, Interior, Education, and Foreign Affairs. The program also briefed members of parliament on trafficking and human rights treaties and trained parliamentary candidates on trafficking issues. The US-supported program provided traf-

ficked children with food, school fees, medical aid, transportation, informal education, shelter, and their return to region of origin. It also repatriated minors trafficked into the Dominican Republic. By year's end the program had provided direct and indirect assistance to approximately 800 children.

Honduras

Honduras is a constitutional democracy with a multiparty system. In the November 2005 national elections, considered by international and domestic observers to be generally free and fair, voters elected as president Jose Manuel Zelaya Rosales of the Liberal

Party. Despite some positive steps, government

corruption, impunity for violators of the law, and virulent gang violence exacerbated serious human rights problems. The following human rights problems were reported: unlawful killings by members of the police, arbitrary and summary executions committed by vigilantes and former members of the security forces, the disappearance of a former dissident, beatings and other abuse of detainees by security forces, harsh prison conditions, failure to provide due process of law,

lengthy pretrial detention, political interference in the judicial system, judicial corruption and institutional weakness, illegal searches, erosion of press freedom, violence and discrimination against women, child prostitution and abuse, trafficking in persons, discrimination against indigenous people, discrimination against persons based on sexual orientation, ineffective enforcement of labor laws, and child labor.

The US human rights and democracy strategy in the country focused on continuing to support democratic political processes and the need to improve human rights conditions, particularly in the areas of the rule of law and combating trafficking in persons.





Ambassador Charles A. Ford and other US officials worked closely with the country's government institutions, NGOs, labor unions, and other organizations to discuss areas of particular concern related to human rights and democracy and to encourage reforms. The US Government sent nine civil society leaders and government officials to participate in the International Visitors Leadership Program where they attended workshops on topics including the administration of justice, the rule of law, anticorruption, civil society, supporting democratic institutions, and journalism.

The US Government's funding to the Civic Movement for Democracy, a broad coalition of civil society organizations, including the Honduran Federation of NGOs and the Roman Catholic and evangelical Protestant churches, continued to benefit these organizations' efforts during the year to promote electoral reforms. As a result of US assistance, this coalition of civil society organizations and the Organization of American States met with the Supreme Electoral Tribunal and the Congressional Electoral Commission to discuss electoral reforms. At year's end the civil society coalition presented electoral reform recommendations to this congressional commission. Also, the United States funded civil society organizations to address additional electoral reforms such as campaign finance and the selection of polling site workers.

As in the previous year, the United States promoted democracy through supporting the evolution of transparent and accountable democratic institutions at the local level. The United States provided funds for municipal development efforts to promote decentralization, strengthen governance through increased citizen participation in decision making, and improve management of basic municipal services such as water, refuse collection, and secondary road maintenance in 31 municipalities.

Although the constitution and law generally provide for freedom of speech and of the press, there were concerns regarding media independence, with some journalists acknowledging self-censorship when their reporting could challenge the political or economic interests of media owners. To address media freedom problems, US officials met with all the major media

to listen to their concerns and express support for an independent media. Under the International Visitor Leadership Program, the US Government sent one of the country's journalists to the United States to participate in a conference on the role of the media in US society.

US efforts continued to support the Strengthened Rule of Law Program. In its fourth year of implementation, this program continued to promote adherence to the country's criminal procedure code, including the holding of 6,824 oral trials throughout the country resulting in 951 convictions. The code provides nontrial case resolution procedures similar to plea-bargaining and dispute resolution through conciliation. The United States also provided technical assistance to the government to draft a new civil procedure code, which was to be approved by the country's congress in January 2007. This new code would modernize registration procedures for commercial and private transactions, including land tenure and inheritances.

Throughout the year US programs also supported efforts by the country's Supreme Court to clear backlogged cases. By the end of the year, the court had cleared all 256,713 backlogged cases. US-funded programs also helped develop an internal operations manual for uniform procedures in order to clear cases more efficiently and transparently. The manual also regulates potential abuses by court officials and thereby promotes accountability.

The United States also provided technical assistance to the government to draft a new organic law that would modernize the country's police force. The new law would help combat internal corruption through drug and polygraph testing; it would also help enforcement through enhanced authorization regarding wire-tapping and undercover operations.

With US support, the Honduran Federation of NGOs promoted broader and more effective civil society participation in justice sector reforms and in exercising oversight of public policy processes. For example, through US assistance the federation of NGOs participated in a consultative council, which was vital to



the distribution of poverty reduction strategy funds. Members of the federation worked on electoral and legal reforms, including the civil procedure code and transparency law. The federation also was an active member of the National Anti-Corruption Council, which led several coalitions for legal and electoral reforms and other democratic processes.

To strengthen the country's fight against corruption, the United States provided funds to increase transparency and combat corruption. US-funded programs offered technical assistance to draft a new transparency law that was passed by the congress on December 30, and was to take effect in January 2007. The new law would enable citizens to access information regarding government operations and decisions. The United States also gave financial support to improve the government's capacity to conduct audits, strengthening independent national and local anticorruption institutions, and support civil society social auditing efforts for oversight and monitoring of the use of public funds. US officials in the country encouraged the government and the Office of the Attorney General to pursue vigorously cases that involved corruption by officials. The United States revoked the US visa of a former president who had allegedly engaged in corrupt activities. The visa revocation of this person stimulated a vigorous public discussion among journalists and civil society organizations about the need for tackling corruption within the country's government institutions.

In promoting respect for labor rights, US officials regularly engaged government officials, members of the private sector, and labor union representatives regarding the importance of enforcing the country's labor laws. US funding assisted in the renovation of the Ministry of Labor's regional office in Choluteca, which was inaugurated on December 13. The United States continued its financial support for the Cumple y Gana labor compliance project, which during the year accomplished the following objectives throughout the country: improvements in inspections, resolution of a number of labor rights conflicts, and occupational health and safety training, especially in the agricultural production sector.

To address the significant child labor problem in the country, the United States supported the International Labor Organization's International Program for the Elimination of Child Labor and the efforts of other international organizations and civil society groups to combat and gather information on the worst forms of child labor, including addressing the commercial sexual exploitation of children and reducing child labor in the agricultural sector. During the year the government participated in a US-funded regional project to combat child labor through education.

To support the government's efforts to confront the serious problem of trafficking in children for commercial sexual exploitation and child prostitution, the United States provided training, technical assistance, and equipment to police investigators and prosecutors working to combat trafficking. The United States also funded frontier police efforts to prevent and interdict the transportation of illegal immigrants, including trafficking victims. In June US officials held a video conference for NGOs and government officials on the US Government's trafficking in persons report.

Jamaica

Jamaica is a constitutional parliamentary democracy; in March the ruling People's National Party chose Portia Simpson-Miller to replace P. J. Patterson as prime minister. Although the government generally respected the human rights of its citizens, there were serious problems in some areas, including unlawful killings by security force members and impunity for police who commit crimes; poor prison conditions, including abuse of detainees and prisoners; an overburdened judicial system and frequent lengthy delays in trials; violence and discrimination against women; trafficking in persons; and violence against suspected or known homosexuals.

The US human rights and democracy strategy focused on promoting democracy and good governance and increasing the government's ability to enforce the rule of law and protect the human rights of its citizens. The United States' target areas included strengthening the capabilities of existing governmental and civil



society organizations to help institutionalize democracy; instilling a sense of civic duty and national pride through information, education, outreach, and civil society engagement; and building awareness of the importance of good governance, transparency, and respect for the rule of law. These efforts included helping the government, the private sector, and other sectors of society stamp out corruption and related unethical or illicit practices and modernizing and professionalizing law enforcement institutions and the military through training, technical assistance, and engagement to enhance effectiveness and recognition of accountability to civil authority and adherence to basic human rights practices.

The United States supported the political process by providing grant funding to a local NGO to assist in the training of local volunteer observers for the forthcoming national elections (constitutionally due no later than October 2007). One person was sent on an International Visitor Leadership Program that focused on citizen participation in a democracy.

To promote media freedom and freedom of speech, a US program sponsored two speakers from the United States to participate in a three-day program designed to raise awareness of libel laws by providing examples from the US experience. The speakers also participated in discussions on issues of press freedom and freedom of expression and worked closely with the representative body for media owners to discuss a draft proposal and lobbying efforts to change the overly stringent libel laws in the country. The United States also provided funding for a US speaker to participate in a three-day journalists' workshop on reporting HIV/AIDS issues, with particular emphasis on discrimination against persons with HIV/AIDS. The workshop resulted in several major articles in local newspapers and radio spots on raising awareness and improving the level of reporting on HIV/AIDS issues.



In support of the country's civil society, the United States provided assistance to a local NGO to establish two research and documentation centers, which provided central repositories of information on citizens' rights. As a result of this US assistance, the public had broader accessibility to information on the Internet. US programs sponsored several programs on community policing, including for the Jamaica Constabulary Force, and continued to support implementation of this form of policing in the Kingston inner-city community of Grants Pen. The police reached consensus on a new operational policy to implement community policing, and US assistance developed the police academy curriculum to train new recruits.

US programs encouraged police anti-corruption work through the Professional Standards Branch. The branch consolidated several units responsible for officer conduct into one internal affairs and anticorruption unit. Specialized training and equipment enabled this new unit to investigate police conduct more professionally. Police prepared approximately 20 cases for the Director of Public Prosecutions to prosecute police personnel. Court verdicts obtained against corrupt police personnel resulted in their permanent removal from the force.

US officials frequently discussed with local officials and civil society leaders respect for the rights of women, children, and persons with disabilities. To address stigmatization of people with HIV/AIDS, the United States helped local businesses establish an HIV/AIDS Business Council to support the development and implementation of workplace policies to combat discrimination. The United States also assisted the Ministry of Health to develop systems to gain information about persons who are at high risk for HIV infection. This US assistance helped the government develop more effective outreach efforts. The Ambassador's Fund for HIV/AIDS supported educational outreach to all areas of the country, and a US grant sponsored a program aired on national



television for World AIDS Day, which focused on preventing and combating stigmatization.

The United States funded training for 84 members of the Jamaica Defense Force who participated in a variety of courses, including human rights instruction. This training prepared enlisted personnel to assist local police units in patrolling high crime areas and included topics on basic leadership, operations in urban terrain, civilian control of the military, and the role of the military in a democratic society. Courses aimed at senior military officers highlighted the impact of the rule of law on protecting human rights and the importance of incorporating human rights considerations in military operations.

To support the fight against trafficking in persons, US officials maintained an open dialogue with the government on the prosecution and criminalization of trafficking. US officials worked with NGOs and relevant government ministries to press for vigorous enforcement of the Child Care and Protection Act, particularly the sections prohibiting the trafficking or sale of children. The United States provided funding for an awareness program implemented by a local NGO that worked with young persons, ministries, and government departments across the country to educate youth about the risks of commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking. The program utilized techniques such as seminars, training sessions for police, and brochures distributed at airports and other public places to get the message to a broad range of people. Urged by the US Government, the Ministry of Justice implemented an awareness campaign to brief journalists, police, and other stakeholders in the fight against human trafficking. The campaign also informed the public about the definitions and costs of human trafficking. The United States encouraged the government to conduct police raids of businesses around the island where credible evidence of trafficking existed.

Venezuela

Venezuela is a constitutional democracy. In December voters reelected President Hugo Chavez of the Fifth

Republic Movement with approximately 63 percent of the popular vote. Official observation missions from both the European Union and Organization of American States deemed the elections generally free and fair, notwithstanding irregularities such as continued problems with the voter registries, government intimidation of public employees, a perception of progovernment bias on the part of the National Electoral Council, and questions about the role of the military in its heavy election-day presence.

The human rights situation during the year was characterized by politicization of the judiciary and harassment of the media and of the political opposition, all manifestations of the increasing concentration of power in the executive branch. The following human rights problems were reported: unlawful killings; disappearances reportedly involving security forces; torture and abuse of detainees; harsh prison conditions; arbitrary arrests and detentions; a corrupt, inefficient, and politicized judicial system characterized by trial delays, impunity, and violations of due process; illegal wiretapping and searches of private homes; official intimidation and attacks on the independent media; widespread corruption at all levels of government; violence against women; trafficking in persons; and restrictions on workers' right of association.

The US strategy for promoting democracy and human rights was to support the efforts of the country's citizens to strengthen independent civil society, particularly through assistance to groups working to deepen respect for democracy, the rule of law, and human rights.

The US strategy also included diplomatic efforts, with senior US officials speaking publicly on behalf of freedom of association, freedom of the press, and other human rights. The United States worked closely with other governments to coordinate support for democracy and human rights in the country, especially in defense of the media and civic associations facing increased government pressure and harassment, including the government's refusal to renew the license of the country's oldest independent television network.



To help strengthen the country's debilitated political parties, US funding supported projects focused on political party renewal and internal democratization. These projects provided technical assistance to enhance political parties' responsiveness to their members and constituents.

US officials continued a series of exchanges between young political leaders from the United States and Venezuela. One example was a 12-day program in three cities, Caracas, Maracaibo, and Barquisimeto, for a delegation of US citizens who met with their Venezuelan counterparts who represented a wide range of political views.

A combination of new laws governing libel and broadcast media content, legal harassment, and physical intimidation resulted in limitations on freedom of speech and of the press, creating a climate of self-censorship. The government employed a variety of mechanisms--legal, economic, regulatory, judicial, and rhetorical--to harass the private media, engendering a repressive attitude toward a free press. The United States continued to express publicly its concerns that the media law passed by the National Assembly in December 2004 threatened freedom of the press. US officials met privately with media representatives to express solidarity and to underscore the concerns of the United States regarding restrictions on freedom of speech in the country. US Embassy officials invited visitors from other countries, including judicial experts, to speak about the negative ramifications of the media law for press freedom. The United States also hosted a series of conferences and events concurrent with the Venezuelan Day of the Journalist to send the strongest possible message to the country's media that the United States supported their struggle to maintain press freedom. US programs provided grants to support media involvement in human rights reporting and to strengthen the press corps' investigative journalism skills.

The United States provided support for a broad spectrum of NGOs and civil society groups, especially those focused on encouraging peaceful debate and conflict resolution. This assistance supported a culture of democratic participation and tolerance by en-

couraging active engagement by citizens in institutions and through civic education. US programs worked to strengthen human rights NGOs in the country, some of which worked in a climate of intense government pressure and harassment. One grant provided training to human rights organizations and practitioners in successful strategies employed by human rights defenders in other countries. The program also sought to increase NGOs' institutional capacity through exchanges with other human rights groups in the region and to solidify links between the country's human rights defenders and other key human rights activists in Latin America. Four human rights activists traveled as Voluntary Visitors Program Grantees to the United States for a 10-day program to confer with jurists, NGOs, and government agencies concerned with human rights. Visiting US experts conducted programs with NGOs on anticorruption strategies and on general management issues. The United States also used video conferences and exchange visits to put civil society representatives in the country in touch with academic human rights experts from the United States and Puerto Rico. The participants at these video conferences discussed topics such as due process and the inter-American human rights system.

The United States worked closely with Hemispheric and European partners to address and raise concerns about the government's proposed international cooperation law. If passed, this law would undermine the independence and autonomy of civil society, restrict the ability to receive foreign donor support, and give the government greater control over NGOs.

US Embassy officials worked to promote respect for the rule of law and to strengthen judicial processes, including guarding against political prosecutions and ensuring due process. US officials continued to observe criminal trials of persons associated with the political opposition to demonstrate US concern regarding due process. US officials also invited opposition leaders under investigation and government supporters to US Government events in the country, to demonstrate US support for democracy, political tolerance, and rejection of judicial intimidation. US officials also delivered messages to the government



in defense of NGO leaders accused of treason for accepting US funding for nonpartisan purposes.

The United States actively engaged with a number of prominent NGOs in the areas of human rights, freedom of the press, the rule of law, prisoner rights, and women's issues. The United States also facilitated and supported several NGOs in their efforts to request audiences or present cases before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

The United States continued to stress to the government the need to do more to combat trafficking in persons. US officials attended, at the invitation of the country's government, each of the two planning sessions charged with drafting a national plan of action to combat trafficking. Through a grant, the United States supported a local NGO dedicated to the rehabilitation and reinsertion into society of trafficking victims. The grant served to expand the NGO's presence in a particularly impoverished area of Caracas and to reach more potential victims.

2006 HUMAN RIGHTS AND
DEMOCRACY ACHIEVEMENT
AWARD WINNER

The United States continues to actively support and engage in efforts to build democratic institutions and protect human rights, as demonstrated in *Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2006*. Capable and democratic governance that exercises rule of human and supports a vibrant civil society are integral to ensuring respect for human rights and basic freedoms.

The annual Human Rights and Democracy Achievement Award recognizes the exceptional achievement of officers of foreign affairs agencies posted abroad. It pays tribute to outstanding reporting on human rights and democratic developments, and to the active advancement of strategies and institutions to deepen respect for human rights and democracy.

Mr. **Joshua Morris** of Embassy Nouakchott was selected as the 2006 winner of the Human Rights and Democracy Achievement Award. Secretary Rice presented the award to him during the Department's official commemoration of Human Rights Day on December 14, 2006. Mr. **Nathaniel Jensen** of Embassy Hanoi was selected as the runner-up.

Mr. Morris made democracy promotion one of his primary responsibilities during a time when Mauritania was demonstrating significant interest in and commitment toward building a sustainable democracy following a 2005 coup. He worked with the Government of Mauritania to re-open voter registration lists, extending to an additional 85,000 citizens – including a significant number of Afro-Mauritanians – the opportunity to participate in the country's November 29 elections. Mr. Morris also developed, organized, and supervised a series of political leadership workshops to engage Mauritania's youth in the political process, helping to train future leaders in the ongoing democratic transition. His program was the largest youth-focused democracy project in Mauritania in five years.



Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice presents the 2006 Human Rights and Democracy Achievement Award to Joshua Morris of Embassy Nouakchott. (State Department photo)

In the challenging human rights environment of Vietnam, Mr. Jensen successfully advanced the human rights agenda on several fronts. He facilitated and organized the resumption of bilateral Human Rights Dialogue; pushed for the release of Vietnam's prisoners of concern; and dedicated himself to improving religious freedom in northern Vietnam, which included visiting numerous ethnic minority communities in the most rural parts of the country.

Mr. Morris and Mr. Jensen were chosen from an extremely impressive group of candidates nominated by their Chiefs of Mission. All nominees demonstrated a deep and personal commitment to advancing human rights and democracy in their host countries, and creativity and resourcefulness in developing strategies to advance these goals. They all deserve our praise and gratitude. The other nominees were:

In Georgia, Ms. **Bridget Brink** and Ms. **Deborah Miller** substantially advanced the mission's highest priority of promoting democratic reform in Georgia. They were recognized for their specific efforts to work with the Georgian government on implementing judicial reforms and promoting improvements to the prison system.

In Uzbekistan, Mr. **Baron Lobstein** demonstrated impressive human rights efforts during a period of increasing tensions between the United States and Uzbekistan, and mounting Uzbek pressure on local activists. Baron established and maintained close ties with various local human rights activists to provide them with a voice that had been silenced by the 2005 Andijon event and subsequent NGO crackdown.

In Syria, Ms. **Kari Paetzold** actively engaged with human rights and civil society activists in a country with rampant human rights abuses. Kari's efforts included working closely with activists to find the most accurate information about recent arrests and human rights abuses, helping potential grantees develop proposals for submission to the Middle East Partnership Initiative, and creating a database for tracking human rights cases.

In Tajikistan, Ms. **Uyen Tan**'s human rights and democracy promotion efforts include promoting free and fair elections through Tajikistan's Central Commission on Election and Referenda, and supporting religious freedom through her relationships with the Muslim communities.

Права человека и демократия

DIRETOS HUMANOS E DEMOCRACIA

DROITS DE L'HOMME ET DÉMOCRATIE



حقوق الإنسان والديمقراطية

HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY

人权与民主

DERECHOS HUMANOS Y DEMOCRACIA

BUREAU OF DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS AND LABOR