






MIDDLE EAST AND  
NORTH AFRICA

*“After a year of liberation, Iraqis start to think, to move, to work, to believe and to pray without any form of repression, and we are moving toward a democratic system.”*

**– Dr. Mohammed Ihassen,  
regional Human Rights Minister for the Kurdish Democratic Party  
based in Irbil, Iraq**



Promoting democracy and human rights is now a central pillar of U.S. policy in the Middle East. As President Bush stated on November 6, 2003, “the United States has adopted a new policy, a forward strategy of freedom in the Middle East.” Through the U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) and in consultation with Middle Eastern governments, civil society and G-8, European Union and North Atlantic Treaty Organization partners, the United States will continue to support reform in the Middle East to increase freedom, political modernization and prosperity.

Positive trends toward democratization and human rights protection continued in a number of countries over the past year. In Iraq, a U.S.-led Coalition has ended the brutal dictatorship of Saddam Hussein and is supporting the establishment of a democratic, pluralist government. In Morocco, parliament passed a new family law improving the status of women and creating a more egalitarian society. The citizens of Jordan and Yemen elected new parliaments in elections that were generally free and fair. More women have been appointed to ministerial positions in countries across the region. New legislation in Bahrain authorizing trade unions has resulted in a nascent labor movement, with 40 unions registering over the past year and a half. New human rights commissions have been created in Jordan and Egypt; their actions and influence bear watching. In some parts of the region, Internet access is increasing and there is a growing diversity of choice among Arabic-language satellite television broadcasters. This means that more citizens are beginning to shop freely for ideas in the world marketplace and heavy, governmental control over media is slowly being eroded.

Despite these promising steps toward greater political participation and respect for fundamental freedoms in some Middle Eastern countries, the overall trends in the region are cause for concern. Many countries still suffer from systemic denials of political freedom. Women cannot vote or be gainfully employed in some countries and some governments severely restrict free speech, religious freedom and the development of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Demographics and slow economic growth mean continued high unemployment, particularly among youth. This combination of economic and political stagnation will breed greater political instability, insecurity and poverty if not overcome. Education has also stagnated in the Middle East, leaving large numbers of illiterate adults, under-educated children and a work force that lacks the education and training required to compete successfully in global markets. Many citizens of the Middle East have also been radicalized by religious education at the expense of secular education in history, civics, economics, reading, writing, mathematics and science. Respect for the religious beliefs and practices of all citizens and groups is limited or lacking and is often manifested in economic and political discrimination.

The United States continues in its private and public diplomacy efforts to support political reform, economic growth and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in the Middle East. To reinforce our diplomatic efforts, the United States has also begun to sponsor programs that strengthen the role of independent journalists and trade unions, increase respect and safeguards for the rule of law, strengthen public participation in the political process, improve the status of women and promote a regional dialogue on democracy for members of NGOs and governments. The United States has intro-

duced two sources of Arabic-language broadcasting in the region, Radio Sawa and al-Hurra Satellite Television, with the objectives of increasing access to unbiased news as well as promoting understanding of the United States.

MEPI, announced in December 2002, is a State Department initiative funding assistance in four separate areas relevant to democracy and human rights advancement in the Middle East: economic reform, business investment and private sector development, education, development of political pluralism, including independent parties, independent judiciaries, effective legislative bodies and strong civil society, all committed to good governance and transparency with increased participation, and full and equal opportunities for women across all spheres of society. The United States is also continuing long-standing educational and cultural exchanges with Middle Eastern partners.

## THE ARAB JUDICIAL FORUM

The U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative launched its Arab judicial reform program in September 2003 at the Arab Judicial Forum, hosted by the Kingdom of Bahrain and organized by the American Bar Association's Central European and Eurasian Law Initiative. The three-day event brought together high-level government officials and non-governmental reformers active in the judicial arena from 15 Arab countries, the Palestinian Authority, the United Kingdom and the United States to discuss essential elements of sound judicial systems, identify common issues and develop plans for ongoing programs to address those issues. U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor led the U.S. delegation to the forum, which centered on four key themes:

**Judicial Selection, Ethics and Training.** Participants explored the various means by which judges are appointed, the manner in which nations ensure that judges act in an ethical manner and the need for and methods of training judges. In all of these areas, the participants considered how to ensure that judges' independence is preserved.

**Judicial Role in Human Rights.** Conference participants reviewed the judiciary's potential to play a critical role in safeguarding human rights. In particular, participants discussed courts' obligations to treat all citizens equally and to protect the rights of those accused of criminal wrongdoing. The role of nongovernmental organizations in protecting human rights was also discussed.

**Efficiency of Procedural Systems.** Throughout the world, nations are attempting to speed the efficiency and effectiveness of courts. Forum participants examined ways to streamline trials and review possible alternatives to trials, including mediation and arbitration.

**Transnational Judicial and Legal Cooperation.** The forum analyzed legal issues that reach across national borders such as international crime, money laundering and corruption, the enforcement of judgments in foreign countries and the possible benefits of uniform statutes on foreign investment.



## ALGERIA

Algeria is gradually emerging from more than a decade of civil strife between proponents and opponents of an Islamic state. Daily violence has declined and the situation in the country has improved since the 1990s when persons regularly disappeared and were brutally killed. The Algerian Government's human rights record remained poor and worsened in a few areas; however, important progress was made in some areas. Arbitrary arrests, prolonged incommunicado detentions, excessive use of force, extrajudicial killings, reported cases of torture and official impunity were problems. Short-term disappearances of prisoners deemed "threats to national security" reportedly increased. The Government imposed new restrictions on freedom of expression and demonstrated an increased willingness to implement them. Defamation laws and government actions restricted the relative freedom of the print media. However, the media continued to openly and regularly criticize the Government, despite government reprisals. The State of Emergency and improper application of laws continued to restrict citizens' right to change their government, and the Family Code continued to limit women's civil rights. Terrorist violence also deprived citizens of their fundamental right to security.

Over the last year, Algeria made some important progress in some areas. There were fewer reports of security force abuses. The incidence and severity of torture declined markedly. There were no substantiated reports of new disappearances implicating security forces. The Government created an "Ad Hoc Mechanism" to research cases of the missing and possibly pay indemnities to family members. Reform of the judiciary and legal codes began to be implemented. The Kabylie region saw little or no violence between ethnic Berbers and security forces and, by the end of the year, both parties had begun a dialogue. Also, the Government agreed to grant more visas to international human rights organizations.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy in Algeria is to press for the removal of the State of Emergency, end harassment of the media, conduct more human rights training within the security forces, implement judicial reforms and resolve the issue of the "Disappeared."

Throughout 2003 and early 2004, the United States engaged the Government and civil society organizations in dialogue and implemented assistance projects to encourage progress in these areas. U.S. officials conducted direct discussions of human rights and democracy issues with their Algerian counterparts. Secretary of State Powell, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Marc Grossman, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs William Burns and Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Lorne Craner all visited Algiers to reinforce President Bush's November call for greater freedom and democracy in the Middle East.

Because many of Algeria's human rights abuses occurred within the justice system, the United States continued to emphasize progress in that sector. One multi-year program sought to bring together the efforts of the Government, lawyers, civil society activists and media in support of judicial independence and reform. The program placed seven Algerian journalists in internships with media outlets in the United States, helped the Algerian Judges' Association draft a Code of Ethics and conducted seminars on the U.S. judicial system. A Commercial Law Development Program has helped encourage judicial reform against corruption and strengthen adherence to the rule of law.

The Disappeared remained one of Algeria's most serious human rights issues and, accordingly, the United States supported both governmental and non-governmental approaches to the problem. U.S. officials cited the need to bring justice to the missing in public statements. The Embassy established a dialogue with the head of the Ad Hoc Mechanism to help ensure its effectiveness. U.S. officials met with members of non-govern-

mental organizations (NGOs) representing the missing, and pressed them and the Government to combine and coordinate efforts. The State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor awarded more than \$400,000 in grants to support the creation of an independent coalition to monitor the Ad Hoc Mechanism and to fund training to build the capacity of human rights groups to investigate, document and advocate on behalf of the missing.

The United States continued to actively promote free, fair and transparent electoral practices, especially in advance of Algeria's presidential elections in April 2004. The Secretary and other high-level officials stressed the importance of a level political playing field, open media coverage and a fair electoral process in meetings with government officials and public gatherings. Funding was provided for education and training on political party development, coalition-building, election monitoring and comparative electoral systems.

To help promote independent media, the Embassy worked daily with Algerian journalists to strengthen professional standards and encourage increased coverage of democracy and human rights issues. U.S. officials also raised specific cases of media harassment with the Algerian Government.

The United States placed a priority on professionalizing the police, working with the Government to support an effective shift away from the use of the military for internal law enforcement toward civilian police enforcement. The International Military Education and Training (IMET) program also helped encourage increased respect for civilian control of the military and greater professionalism within the military and gendarmerie. IMET training focused on the subjects of military ethics, human rights, civilian control of the military, laws of war and the use of force. Funding for U.S.-based training of Algerian military officers increased dramatically during the year from less than \$30,000 in 2002 to almost \$600,000 in 2003.

Training also included \$150,000 for English language materials for Algeria's military academies. In compliance with the Leahy amendment, military officers who participated in training in the United States were vetted for human rights abuses. Productive liaison between the Embassy and police entities increased, facilitating expanded training opportunities in the future.

The United States used diplomacy and assistance to champion the rights of women in Algeria. The Embassy expanded its contacts among women's advocates and pressed for greater women's political participation and changes to the 1984 Family Code in regular meetings with the Minister-Delegate for Women's Affairs and Family Issues and NGOs. High-level U.S. officials also raised these issues publicly during visits to Algiers. The Embassy partnered with two Algerian NGOs to sponsor a conference on Women's Political Participation in October.

In light of recent political unrest and violence in the Kabylie, the United States continued to monitor the region. Embassy officials visited the Kabylie region throughout the year to assess the conditions of the Berber minority and the status of its relationship with government authorities. U.S. officials also visited the Sahraoui refugee camps around Tindouf to assess living conditions of Western Saharan refugees.

The International Visitor program continued to reinforce U.S. human rights and democracy objectives by promoting new, up-and-coming leaders. During the year, 11 governmental and civic leaders participated in exchanges, acquiring first-hand exposure to democratic activists and practices in the United States. The Embassy hosted a speaker on human rights issues in October as part of a new "Distinguished American Speaker" series.

Finally, the Embassy improved its base of contacts among various religious groups over the year, strengthening its capacity to report on issues relating to religious freedom.

## EGYPT

In 1999, President Hosni Mubarak was reelected unopposed to a fourth six-year term in a national referendum. The National Democratic Party, which has governed since its establishment in 1978, continues to dominate national politics and has maintained an overriding majority in the popularly elected People's Assembly and the partially elected Shura (Consultative) Council. While the Government introduced some potentially significant reforms in 2003, including the establishment of a National Human Rights Council and the abolition of one type of extraordinary court, the overall human rights situation remained poor.

The Government's human rights record remained poor and many serious problems remain; however, there were improvements in a few areas. The principal human rights problems were the continuation of the 1981 Emergency Law, trials of non-security cases in emergency courts, persistent reports of torture by police and state security officers, the use of administrative detention for indefinite periods and restrictions on religious freedom. The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy addressed these 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 press.

Human rights and political reform were prominent on the bilateral diplomatic agenda during the year. Senior U.S. officials lobbied their Egyptian counterparts to lift the Emergency Law and, after its renewal, sought to limit its application only to extraordinary cases involving dangerous individuals and violent, extremist organizations. The United States also raised concerns about torture and urged the Egyptian Government to implement the recommendations of the UN Committee against Torture, which held sessions on Egypt in November 2002 in Geneva. The United States frequently raised concerns regarding the new law on non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and pressed the Government to implement it in a flexible and liberal manner, specifically drawing

attention to issues of registration and foreign funding. Specific cases of nonregistration were also raised in diplomatic contexts. Concerns about civil society development, political participation and basic political rights were also addressed in official meetings. U.S. officials met with Egyptian civil society leaders and activists to solicit their views on how the United States might use the U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) and other initiatives to support the reform process.

In his November 2003 address commemorating the National Endowment for Democracy's 20th anniversary, President Bush proclaimed Egypt's importance to the U.S. strategy to promote reform in the region when he said, "The great and proud nation of Egypt has shown the way toward peace in the Middle East, and now should show the way toward democracy in the Middle East." Other senior U.S. officials have also urged Egypt to democratize and to strengthen respect for human rights.

The United States reviewed its democracy and governance programs during the year as part of a comprehensive assessment of its bilateral assistance to Egypt. Programs in 2003 and early 2004 focused particularly on justice sector reform, citizen participation with a special emphasis on gender equality, media independence and professionalism, and responsive local governance.

The eight-year, \$18.4 million Administration of Justice Support (AOJS) program neared completion, promoting increased transparency and public confidence in the courts. The program used two pilot commercial courts to introduce automated, streamlined administrative processes and training for judges and court staff. A follow-on AOJS II project will assist the Ministry of Justice in replicating the reformed and modernized court systems nationwide.

A five-year, \$500,000 criminal justice project with the Egyptian prosecutor general's office continued and featured a high profile conference in



September attended by the Minister of Justice, the Public Prosecutor, the Speaker of the Parliament and other distinguished participants. The conference concluded with recommendations for legal reforms for which legislation is currently being developed. Under this same program, Egyptian participants visited the United States and interacted with U.S. federal judges.

A seven-year, \$32.5 million U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) grant continued, strengthening the institutional capacity of NGOs through assistance in the areas of internal governance, financial management, advocacy for citizens' interests and participation in civic action. This grant helped women, particularly in rural areas, obtain the basic civil records necessary to access government services, protect their legal rights, and register to vote.

In other efforts to strengthen civil society, the United States supported a conference in September that afforded 200 NGO activists from around the country a forum to address issues of institutional capacity, management and the regulatory environment. At the event, Egypt's Minister of Social Affairs publicly acknowledged, for the first time, the need for legal reforms to lessen constraints on NGOs and accord them greater freedoms. Other initiatives included a model U.S. Congress at Cairo University and civic education summer camps.

USAID continued to implement a \$5.2 million experimental program to promote responsive local government by fostering new relationships between the government and citizen groups in four target communities.

Several efforts promoted greater independence and professionalism in the media. A \$1 million project with international partners and Egyptian journalist groups placed 15 young Egyptian journalists in internship and training programs in the United States. Another program provided training to hundreds of journalists on international professional standards for news reporting and

assistance in publishing fact-based, dispassionate news stories.

The State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor awarded a grant to the American University in Cairo (AUC) to expand the impact of its formal degree program in International Human Rights law by developing professional and community outreach programs.

The Embassy continued to administer an interagency mechanism that awarded numerous small grants totaling \$600,000 to support local, grassroots initiatives. These included a regional conference on the rights of women in the Arab world, a tutoring and mentoring program for underprivileged girls, a workshop to train journalists and lawyers on human rights law and a civic education program to raise awareness of the rights of disabled citizens. The 2003 International Visitor program included exchanges on subjects relating to human rights, civil society, good governance and women's issues.

The United States strongly supported MEPI pillars in Egypt. Egyptians participated in the Arab Judicial Forum and the Women in Law Program in Jordan, both MEPI regional initiatives. The Embassy maintained contact with the women parliamentarians who visited the United States in November 2002, and sponsored two participants in the MEPI Young Ambassadors Program and hosted the follow-up conference in January 2004. MEPI also worked with a local NGO to host the first session of the Arab Women's Forum in May 2003, which will be expanded in 2004.

The Embassy urged the Government to grant due process of law to all citizens and raised specific concerns about the process for those apparently arrested because of their sexual orientation. Concerns about the status of Egypt's Christians and other religious minorities were also raised, and the Embassy maintained excellent relations with representatives of Egypt's various religious communities. Embassy officers monitored some trials in cases involving human rights principles.

## IRAN

The Islamic Republic of Iran is a theocratic, constitutional republic dominated by Shi'a religious leaders. Ayatollah Ali Khamen'i dominates the legislative, executive and judicial branches, directly controls the armed forces and indirectly controls internal security forces. President Mohammed Khatami, who won a second four-year term in multiparty elections in 2001, heads the executive branch. Deeply flawed parliamentary elections, in which the Government forbade virtually all of the country's reformists from running, were held on February 20, 2004. The Government's poor human rights record worsened in 2003 and early 2004, and it continued to commit numerous, serious abuses. Summary executions, disappearances, extremist vigilantism, widespread use of torture and other degrading treatment remained problems. In 2003, a Canadian citizen photographer died from injuries sustained while in government custody, the Government beat student protesters and arrested thousands more, and also arrested several journalists and banned reformist publications. The Government continued to discriminate against and harass the Baha'i community and other religious and ethnic minority groups, including Jews, Christians, and Sunni and Sufi Muslims. The Government continued to severely restrict worker rights, including freedom of association and the right to organize and bargain collectively.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Iran centers on urging friends and allies to condition improvements in their bilateral and trade relations with Iran on positive changes in Iran's human rights policies and other areas of concern, supporting the continuing efforts of the Iranian people to institute greater freedoms and increase political participation in Iran, pushing for resolutions criticizing Iran's human rights policies at the United Nations and other international forums, and publicly highlighting the Iranian Government's abuse of its citizens' human rights.

Although the United States does not maintain diplomatic relations with Iran, the United States continues its multi-faceted effort to press the Iranian Government to stop abusing its citizens' human rights.

In Fall 2003, the United States co-sponsored and actively supported a Canadian resolution at the UN General Assembly condemning the human rights situation in Iran. The Iran human rights resolution passed in the UN General Assembly's 58th Plenary, sending an important signal to the Iranian people that the international community recognizes their suffering, and to the Iranian Government that dialogue on human rights is no substitute for concrete action to improve its record.

Calling for Iran to stop abusing its citizens' human rights is central to the U.S. overall policy approach and reflected in all public statements. President Bush and senior-level U.S. officials have repeatedly expressed their support for the Iranian people in their quest for freedom, democracy and a more transparent and accountable government, and will continue to do so. U.S. representatives regularly meet with members of various groups suffering human rights abuses in Iran. Their complaints are documented for dissemination to other governments and for inclusion in the State Department's annual Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Iran and the Report on International Religious Freedom. Secretary Powell designated Iran as a "Country of Particular Concern" for the fifth year in a row, in accordance with guidelines set out in the International Religious Freedom Act.

Iran is currently ineligible for most official programmatic assistance from the United States pursuant to U.S. law. However, the Voice of America supports broadcasts into Iran. The United States also supports a website in Persian to speak directly to the Iranian people about U.S. policy, and Radio Farda, which operates 24 hours a day to keep the flow of information open. In response to the December 26, 2003 earthquake in

Bam, Iran, in which more than 40,000 were killed, the United States quickly assembled and deployed a response team to the scene through the U.S. Agency for International Development's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance. The United States has waived relevant sanctions for a period of six months for the express purpose of aiding humanitarian response to the disaster.

## IRAQ

Iraq's human rights record prior to the fall of the Saddam Hussein regime in April 2003 was extremely poor. The Hussein regime regularly committed serious human rights abuses. Citizens had neither the right nor ability to change the government, and elections were neither free nor fair. The regime habitually and summarily executed alleged political opponents and leaders of the Shi'a religious community. The Government arbitrarily executed people because of ethnic or religious associations, political views and even as part of an effort to reduce prison populations. Until its fall, the regime was responsible for the disappearance, torture and killing of persons suspected or related to persons suspected of opposition politics, economic crimes, military desertion and a variety of other activities. By the end of 2003, approximately 250 mass graves had been reported in Iraq and some 50 had been confirmed, many relating to five major atrocities perpetrated by Saddam Hussein's regime. Preliminary reports estimate that the graves may hold the remains of as many as 300,000 victims.

A U.S.-led Coalition removed the Ba'athist regime of Saddam Hussein in April 2003. Pursuant to language in UN Security Council Resolution 1511, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) was established to administer Iraq until an internationally recognized, representative Iraqi government is established and assumes responsibility. The CPA appointed the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC), a broadly representative body of 25 Iraqis. The IGC has coordi-

nated with the CPA to oversee the rehabilitation of Iraqi governing institutions and establish policy related to Iraq's transition to democracy.

Following the liberation of Iraq and the establishment of the CPA, the United States worked through the CPA in collaboration with Iraqis, foreign governments and international organizations to address the effects of decades of political repression and human rights violations. The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy has promoted Iraqi efforts to account for past atrocities, prevent future human rights abuses and support institutions conducive to a successful transition to democracy.

The CPA worked with Iraqis to set up the new Iraqi Human Rights Ministry. The Ministry is charged with organizing policy and coordinating assistance in support of a robust effort to account for crimes under the previous regime and prevent future human rights abuses. In collaboration with the Ministry and specialists from the United Kingdom, the United States provided funding and guidance to develop a strategy to uncover mass graves, including forensic training and equipment for local communities and advocacy programs to



help families of victims. The United States also helped secure the contributions of Danish, Finnish, Dutch and Swedish forensic and logistical experts. The United States organized a project to collect, preserve and systematize documentation on atrocities perpetrated by the former regime. These efforts will support the future work of the Iraq Special Tribunal, an institution created by the IGC to try former regime members accused of crimes against humanity.

With start-up funding from the Government of the Netherlands, the United States helped establish an Iraqi National Bureau of Missing Persons. The United States is also working with Iraqis to create a mechanism to address property claims and restitution issues, launch human rights education in civil society and schools, and introduce human rights training for Iraqi police recruits and employees of other government ministries and agencies.

To support Iraqi efforts to promote human rights at the grassroots level, the United States has provided training and funding to strengthen and organize hundreds of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The United States helped create an

independent national network of human rights organizations and set up government-sponsored human rights centers at the provincial level to provide information on human rights and register claims and complaints. The United States provided basic infrastructure and support to local human rights and democracy education and training initiatives, and developed media programs to support them.

The United States played a leading role in supporting Iraqi efforts to revive justice and the rule of law. Iraqis consulted U.S. experts on the creation of the Iraqi Special Tribunal. Additionally, the United States facilitated consultations by international experts and Iraqis on transitional justice and “truth commissions.” The United States provided guidance and support to the new Ministry of Justice and is helping to establish an independent judiciary system. The United States helped draft and revise legislation affecting basic rights, for example on NGOs, judicial procedures and penal codes, and placed a priority on training Iraqi police to provide security and promote law and order in a manner consistent with international human rights standards and democratic practice.



The United States also contributed to multilateral efforts aimed at reintegrating Iraq into the international community and ensuring its compliance with international human rights standards. These included facilitating IGC contacts with foreign governments and promoting Iraq's adoption of international conventions, including those against torture. The United States helped arrange to place a permanent Iraqi Special Representative on Human Rights at the UN, successfully advocated seating the Iraqi delegation at the UN General Assembly and successfully lobbied for the participation of an Iraqi delegation in the 60th session of the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva, Switzerland, in April 2004.

The United States has promoted participatory, representative and accountable government at the local level. Accordingly, the United States helped establish interim councils in 18 governorates, 78 cities, 54 districts, 48 sub-districts and 138 neighborhoods and provided assistance to promote democratic practices within these councils and among Iraqi communities more broadly. Under the U.S. Agency for International Development's Community Action Program (CAP), Iraqi community associations developed and implemented projects that gave local citizens a direct role in defining and addressing local priorities. CAP projects included repair to local sewage systems and roads, rehabilitation of schools and renovation of health clinics, and placed a priority on the participation of women, youth and minority groups.

Civic Education Programs (CEP) also promoted democratization and civil society development. CEP activities facilitated citizen participation in public dialogues addressing political and social issues of national importance, promoted interaction between citizens and public officials aimed at encouraging responsive and accountable local government and provided start-up resources and training to strengthen the institutional capacity of local organizations. More than 1,060 rapid response grants worth in excess of \$50 million

were also awarded to increase Iraqi participation in local government decision-making.

The United States provided support to Iraqi media, training journalists to fulfill the functions of information, education and oversight that characterize a professional, independent press. The United States also funded media outlets that reported news in a fair and unbiased fashion, including Al Sabah radio and IMN/Al Iraqiya TV.

The United States has dedicated considerable effort to ensuring religious freedom in Iraq. Since the fall of the Ba'ath regime, religious rights of the people are unrestricted. The Shi'a community is able to freely and openly engage in



once forbidden religious expression, and Shi'a pilgrims from other countries are finally permitted to visit Iraq's holy sites. President Bush met with representatives of the IGC and discussed their mutual desire to see constitutional protections for minority rights and freedom of religion.

On June 30, 2004, CPA will pass authority to an Interim Government that will guide Iraq toward elections for a Transitional National Assembly and a process for drafting a permanent constitution. Iraqis drafted a Transitional Administrative Law (TAL) to govern the period between the June 30 handover of authority and the election of a representative government under a permanent constitution. The United States consulted with Iraqis on the TAL to support its conformity with international human rights language and standards of due process. The TAL accords a bill of fundamental rights to all Iraqis, regardless of gender, sect, political opinion or ethnicity. The TAL also guarantees freedom of thought, conscience, and religious belief and practice for the people of Iraq.

The United States placed a high priority on promoting equality for women in Iraq and supported

this goal through policy and programming initiatives. Three women were named to the Governing Council, and women gained seats on councils at the city, district and provincial levels. U.S. officials, including President Bush, met with Iraqi women in the United States and Iraq. Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky participated in the Voice of Women in Iraq conference on July 9, 2003. The State Department helped send a delegation of Iraqi women to the June 2003 Global Summit of Women conference in Morocco and to the 48th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women in New York. On March 8, 2004, Secretary of State Powell announced two new initiatives aimed at supporting women in Iraq. The first, a \$10 million Iraqi Women's Democracy Initiative, will provide Iraqi women with training and education in the skills and practices of democratic public life. The second, the U.S.-Iraqi Women's Network, is a public-private partnership that will bring Iraqi NGO representatives and business leaders together with American counterparts to empower them to participate in the political and economic life of their country. The IGC included a provision in the TAL calling



for the electoral law to be crafted in such a way to support a goal of at least 25 percent women in the Transitional National Assembly.

A new Ministry of Labor was created with U.S. guidance and assistance to promote and protect workers' rights and opportunities. The United States helped facilitate agreements with the International Labor Organization to reinstate Iraq as a member with full voting rights. The United States also consulted on a new draft labor code to ensure protection of worker rights in accordance with internationally recognized labor standards.

U.S. agencies acted to prevent human trafficking in Iraq. The State Department distributed information about trafficking in persons to advisors to Iraq in the Department of Defense, CPA and U.S. military police, and implemented a zero-tolerance policy with regard to the involvement of U.S. personnel in trafficking and prostitution. U.S. civilian police recruited for service in Iraq also received training to combat trafficking and other human rights abuses. U.S. officials consulted with the Ministry of Justice on a model anti-trafficking law and provided the example of U.S. legislation to ensure that the Iraqi criminal justice system addresses trafficking offenses. An anti-trafficking plan was developed for the new government that included relevant international conventions and documents and extensive educational materials were prepared and distributed to the general public to promote awareness of the crime and recommend steps to prevent and report it.

## JORDAN

Although many problems remained, the Government of Jordan's respect for human rights improved in some areas during the year. The June parliamentary and July municipal elections were generally considered free and fair. King Abdullah established official institutions to address human rights, and specifically charged the new Government appointed in October with promoting human rights and political develop-

ment. Public debate on major policy issues had increased by year's end. There was a lack of progress, however, regarding judicial independence and violations of due process rights. Members of the security forces continued to commit human rights abuses, including arbitrary arrest, prolonged detention and torture. While citizens participated in the political process through their elected representatives to Parliament, they did not have the right to change their government. Freedoms of assembly, association and the media were restricted. Academicians reported government actions that restricted their freedom, and societal discrimination against and restrictions on the rights of women continued to be problems.

Addressing a wide range of continuing problems, the U.S. human rights and democracy strategy promotes the rule of law and legal reform, civil society development, popular participation in the political process and women's rights. The United States did this through direct dialogue with the Jordanian Government at all levels, as well as programs, training and the publication of reports on human rights, labor and religious freedom.

The United States advanced its strategy by building on Jordanian government initiatives to strengthen human rights. The Embassy arranged in-kind donations to the library of the quasi-independent National Center for Human Rights and developed a cooperative relationship with the Human Rights Directorate recently set up in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A grant from the State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor provided training on international human rights law and practice to Directorate officials as well as to members of the Ministries of Education, Justice and Interior, the police, military and the National Center for Human Rights. More than half of the professional military education provided in the United States to Jordanian personnel included a human rights component.

The United States was directly involved in promoting the rule of law and legal reform. Twenty-four Shari'a law faculty members participated in International Visitor programs on religious tolerance and religion and the law. Fifteen judges participated in a 10-day mediation and case management workshop in the United States that included visits to different courts in California. The Embassy continued to work with the Ministry of Justice to extend case management and mediation reforms to increasing numbers of courts and personnel and, potentially, to implement criminal justice reforms.

The United States promoted broader participation in the political process, particularly among women. During the year, about 60 women parliamentary candidates participated in U.S. programs that afforded them individual consultation and training on campaign techniques and public relations. The Embassy provided orientation and training on parliamentary procedure and human rights issues to members of a women's network that includes the six new parliamentarians and many of the women who ran unsuccessfully. The Embassy also funded a campaign phone center for one month prior to the parliamentary elections to help women candidates contact voters.

The United States sought to promote media independence and professionalism through a workshop cosponsored by an American non-governmental organization and a Jordanian local partner that focused particularly on strengthening the skills of women journalists. The Embassy conducted three workshops for journalists on press freedom, journalistic responsibility and election coverage.

The U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative supported a pilot Arab Civitas program to introduce civic education and human rights awareness in 21 government schools. An educational initiative linking 52 Jordanian public and private schools with American counterparts enabled students to exchange ideas and information on human rights. In September, 20 students participated in a civic

awareness and student leadership program in several cities throughout the United States. In December, the Embassy hosted a delegation from the American Council of Young Political Leaders to interact with civic-minded Jordanian youth and professionals. It funded and produced Arabic translations of the book series "Foundations of Democracy."

The United States tracked and reported on religious freedom cases, and U.S. officials discussed individual cases with Jordanian counterparts at the highest levels.

The U.S. Agency for International Development's assistance program was especially structured to assist women and the sometimes marginalized poor and rural populations. A State Department grant supported the efforts of local women's groups to advocate on behalf of their needs and rights.

The United States maintained dialogue with key actors in the labor sector, including union leaders, International Labor Organization officials, industrial park managers, factory owners and government representatives. There was a special focus on the Qualified Industrial Zones, where labor conditions continued to be better than average. Three union leaders traveled to the United States in January on a Citizen Exchange Program that familiarized them with the American labor movement and provided them with an opportunity to network. On several occasions U.S. officials discussed with the Government implementation of Jordan's international commitments to fight child labor and trafficking.

## KUWAIT

Kuwait is a constitutional, hereditary emirate. The Constitution provides for an elected National Assembly; however, it permits the Amir to suspend its provisions by decree. National Assembly elections held in July 2003 were generally free and fair; however, there were some credible reports of government and opposition vote buy-



ing. Although the Government's respect for human rights has improved over the last decade, serious problems remain. Citizens do not have the right to change their government. Women, who comprise slightly more than half the citizen population, do not have the right to vote or seek election to the National Assembly. Some police and members of the security forces abused detainees during interrogation. The judiciary remained subject to government influence. The Government placed some limits on freedoms of speech, assembly, association, religion and movement. Violence and discrimination against women, especially non-citizens, persisted, and judicial authorities discriminated against non-citizens, especially foreign laborers. Some underage foreign boys were used as jockeys in camel races. Some domestic servants and unskilled foreign laborers faced abuse and worked under conditions that constituted indentured servitude. As the State Department reported in the 2003 Trafficking in Persons Report, the Government started to make significant efforts to combat trafficking in persons, but it did not meet the report's minimum standards for eliminating trafficking in persons. The Government restricted worker rights to organize and bargain collectively and form unions. Foreign workers suffered from the lack of a minimum wage in the private sector and weak government enforcement of some Labor Law provisions. As of late February 2004, a new draft Labor Law was under parliamentary review.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Kuwait targets a wide range of critical issues, including strengthening Kuwait's democratic and civil society institutions and its protections for workers, empowering women, combating trafficking in persons and improving the working conditions of domestic servants and foreign laborers. The Embassy uses the various programming tools available to the Public Affairs Section and funding through the U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) to strengthen democracy and respect for human rights in Kuwait. U.S. diplomatic, programming and advocacy efforts resulted in some positive

changes to Kuwait's overall human rights situation during the year. In early 2004, for example, the Ministry of Interior adopted a number of new measures to improve the conditions for domestic servants. The Embassy actively engages government officials, parliamentarians, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other civil society groups at all levels to advance dialogue and debate on key human rights concerns, particularly female suffrage and equal protection under the law for foreign laborers. The increased number of Congressional delegations transiting Kuwait en route to Iraq in 2003 and 2004 is also strengthening the ability to sustain this dialogue. In addition to the regular bilateral dialogue the Embassy maintains with government officials, Embassy officials frequently attend the influential evening meetings that private Kuwaitis host in their homes ("diwanias") to discuss current events and promote awareness and understanding of U.S. human rights and democratic values.

The Embassy actively encourages positive debate on the role and status of women in Kuwaiti society and the impact of women's disenfranchisement on their basic rights and protections. The Embassy also assists women's rights activists to develop effective advocacy and political action strategies. As part of these efforts, the Embassy sent three Kuwaiti women to Amman, Jordan, in February 2004 to participate in a MEPI-funded workshop hosted by the Government of Jordan entitled "Women and the Law – A Regional Dialogue: Supporting Voices of Change." Participants addressed and discussed challenges facing women in the legal and judicial system, and aspects of law that directly impact women in the region. Kuwait also participated in a U.S.-sponsored regional program to train women activists working to develop and implement an effective strategy for obtaining political rights for women, including the right to vote and run for elected office.

Women's rights activists believe apathy and disinterest among many Kuwaiti women are key factors inhibiting a more vibrant suffrage movement.

Activists hope to highlight ways in which women are economically and legally disadvantaged as a result of their disenfranchisement, in order to galvanize broader societal support for political reform. The Embassy supported these grassroots civil society efforts through various programs and exchanges during the year. In May 2003, the Embassy sent an influential Kuwaiti male businessman and supporter of women's rights to the United States to participate in a "Women as Leaders in the Public and Private Sectors" project to study American women's experiences in the U.S. political process. His participation was an integral part of embassy efforts to encourage Kuwaiti men to support women's political rights – a challenge in Kuwait's patriarchal society. Using a State Department Near East Affairs Democracy Small Grant, the Embassy is sponsoring a gender budgeting study to be carried out by a local NGO. The study will entail a gender-sensitive analysis of the most recent government budget to highlight gender inequity in government spending. In a related initiative, the Embassy brought a U.S. speaker to Kuwait in March 2004 to provide advocacy and political action campaign training to another local NGO planning to challenge an inequitable social allowance law that discriminates against women and children.

Parliamentary institutional and capacity building is another key component of the Embassy's strategy to strengthen democracy and the rule of law in Kuwait. The Embassy is working with the Parliament to encourage broader understanding of U.S. human rights and democratic values. The Embassy's Public Affairs Section has also agreed with Kuwait's National Assembly to establish a permanent "American Studies Corner" in the National Assembly's library in 2004 to provide comprehensive resource information to parliamentarians on U.S. history, law, political system and business environment, including an encyclopedia of U.S. law and CD-ROM information.

The Embassy continues its longstanding efforts to strengthen Kuwait's media and to promote more responsible journalism. The Public Affairs

Section sent a young Kuwaiti female journalist to the United States in 2003 on an International Visitor program for "Young Professional Journalists." The Embassy is also organizing a workshop for local print media representatives in 2004 on accurate, ethical and balanced reporting.

The United States raises religious freedom issues with the Government as part of its overall policy of promoting human rights. The Embassy actively encourages the Government to address the concerns of religious leaders, such as overcrowding, lack of worship space and inadequate staffing. Embassy officials meet regularly with recognized Sunni, Shi'a and Christian groups and representatives of various unrecognized faiths to hear their concerns and monitor progress on religious freedom issues.

The Embassy and senior State Department officials consistently urged the Government to strengthen legal and regulatory measures to combat human trafficking. The Ambassador hosted a roundtable discussion on trafficking in May 2003 comprising embassy officials, labor attachés and other diplomatic representatives from the major source country embassies to share ideas and propose strategies to address continued abuses. Embassy officials worked throughout the year to encourage the Government to improve protections for the estimated 400,000 to 450,000 domestic servants who remained excluded from the Labor Law, strengthen enforcement of regulations banning the employment of minors as camel jockeys and vigorously investigate incidents of human trafficking.

The Embassy also focused on labor rights and working conditions for foreign workers, and encouraged the Government to reform its outdated Labor Law to conform more closely to internationally recognized labor standards. The Embassy met regularly with government officials at all levels to promote awareness of labor problems and urge improvements in the status and treatment of foreign workers, particularly domestic servants. In January 2004, embassy officials



attended the first-ever public seminar held in Kuwait hosted by a local NGO to address the treatment of foreign workers, particularly domestic servants. The seminar brought together for the first time members of the Government, parliament, labor unions and NGOs to discuss these labor concerns. Also in January 2004, the Embassy organized a roundtable discussion on domestic worker rights with embassy labor officials from major source countries. The event has encouraged source country embassy labor officials to meet more regularly, share experiences and present their labor concerns to the Government. The Embassy maintained a close working relationship with NGOs and domestic and international labor groups, especially the International Labor Organization, to monitor labor conditions and investigate incidents of abuse.

## LEBANON

The Government of Lebanon's overall human rights record remained poor; although there were some improvements in a few areas, serious problems remained. The right of citizens to change their government remained significantly restricted by the lack of complete government control over parts of the country, shortcomings in the electoral

system, the flawed 2000 elections and Syrian influence. Members of the security forces used excessive force and tortured and abused some detainees. Prison conditions remained poor. Government abuses also included the arbitrary arrest and detention of persons who were critical of government policies. The courts were subject to political pressure, and the Government infringed on citizens' privacy rights and continued surveillance of political activities. The Government limited press and media freedom. The Government continued to restrict freedom of assembly and imposed some limits on freedom of association, movement and religion. Violence and discrimination against women, child labor and the mistreatment of foreign domestic servants remained problems.

The U.S. strategy to promote human rights and democracy consists of both diplomacy and programs to strengthen civil society, the rule of law, press freedom, judicial independence and to combat trafficking in persons. The United States engaged the President of Lebanon, the Prime Minister and the Justice Minister on these issues. Embassy officials also met regularly with non-governmental organizations and the Beirut Bar Association to monitor human rights developments. The Embassy cooperated with the Bar

and the Institute of Judicial Studies to organize two seminars by a visiting American judge on the rule of law and the use of arbitration and alternative methods to resolve disputes. Embassy officials also attended press conferences organized by human rights organizations and trials involving principles and advocacy of human rights and democracy.

The 2003 and 2004 International Visitor program reinforced U.S. human rights and democracy objectives. Eight community members and government officials participated in exchanges on such topics as democracy, women's empowerment, young leaders, media, student leadership and trafficking.

Assistance programs sought to promote participatory and accountable government and strengthen civil society institutions. The Transparency and Accountability Grants program, funded through the U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative awarded 59 grants of approximately \$25,000 each to local civil society initiatives to increase transparency and accountability in Lebanon's public and private sectors. An additional \$4 million supported a program in the Democracy and Governance portfolio to strengthen the delivery of government services to citizens and municipalities. Projects under these programs addressed such subjects as transparent government transactions, professional ethics and youth education, and reached more than 1,000 municipality presidents, vice presidents and key employees. More effective municipal governance helped ensure citizens' equal access to services, regardless of their religion, thereby promoting reconciliation among communities and strengthening popular confidence in government.

The United States initiated a regional program based in Beirut to strengthen the management and commercial base of independent media throughout the region.

The United States also conducted programs to

promote women's political participation in advance of 2004 municipal and 2005 parliamentary elections.

To address trafficking in persons, the United States funded a \$59,000 program for judges-in-training and continuing education for sitting judges to identify and successfully convict traffickers. A grant of \$330,000 helped operate a safe house for the protection of victims of trafficking.

## LIBYA

Libya has a history of summary executions, disappearances, arbitrary arrest and detention of persons, many of whom remain incommunicado, widespread use of torture and other degrading treatment, restricted freedoms of speech, assembly, press and expression, and impunity. The Government controls the judiciary, citizens do not have the right to a fair public trial or to be represented by legal counsel, and the establishment of independent human rights organizations is prohibited. Women and religious and ethnic minorities also continue to face violence and discrimination. These and many other problems contribute to Libya's extremely poor human rights record. The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Libya centers on concrete, verifiable and sustained improvement in Libya's destructive policies.

Although U.S. ties to Libya remain at a low level, Libya's December 19, 2003 commitment to eliminate all weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programs and Missile Control Technology Regime (MCTR)-class missiles has cleared a path for better relations. For the first time since 1980, American diplomats are based in Tripoli. The U.S. strategy to encourage the Libyan Government to stop abusing its citizens' human rights is multi-faceted and ongoing. Libya remains on the State Sponsors of Terrorism list and is consequently ineligible for assistance from the United States.

U.S. diplomacy played a central part in Libya's move to address its UN Security Council obligations related to the bombing of Pan Am 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland. On August 15, 2003, Libya submitted a letter to the President of the UN Security Council in which it accepted responsibility for the actions of its officials in connection with the bombing, arranged to pay appropriate compensation to the families of the victims, renounced terrorism and pledged to cooperate with future requests for information about the case. At various times, the United States reiterated the need for Libya to abandon its WMD programs and take steps to improve its human rights record. During late 2003, the Qadhafi Foundation, under the direction of Saif al-Islam al-Qadhafi, conducted a number of prison inspections and went on record about the need to improve prison conditions in Libya. On December 19, 2003, Libya announced that it would abandon its WMD and MCTR-class missile programs. In February 2004, representatives from Amnesty International were invited to Libya and met with the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Justice.

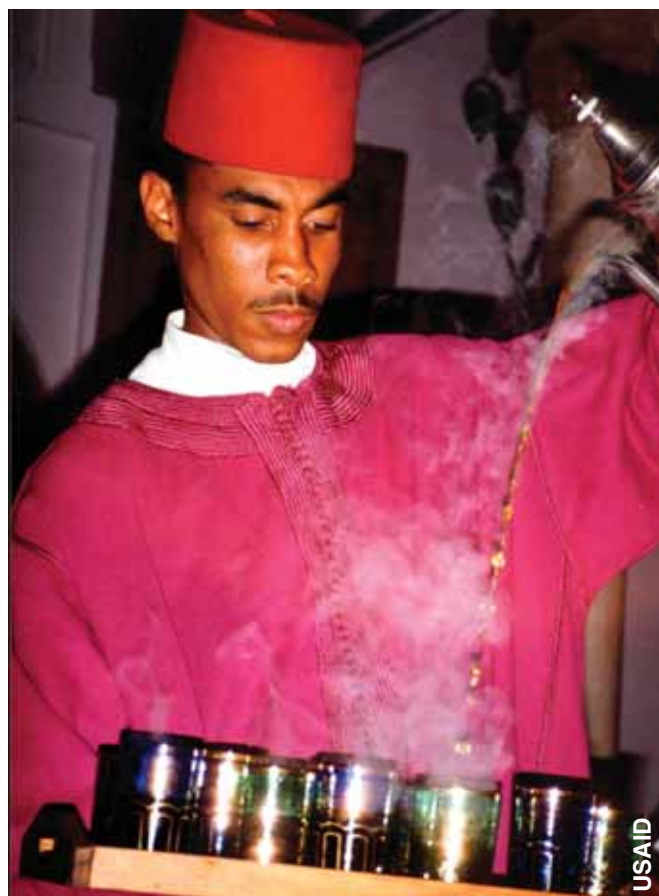
On February 6, 2004, the United States held the first bilateral talks with Libya, opening a broad political dialogue that includes human rights issues. Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs William Burns visited Libya in March. Representatives of the United States regularly met with members of various groups suffering from human rights abuses in Libya. Their complaints were raised with other governments and were included in the State Department's annual Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Libya and the International Religious Freedom Report.

## MOROCCO

Although there was important progress in some areas, Morocco's human rights record remained poor in other areas. Local elections in September were more transparent and fair than those in the past. Bold changes to the family status code, or

moudawana, which Parliament passed in January 2004, significantly increased the rights of women and children in areas such as marriage, property rights and inheritance. The King inaugurated a non-judicial Truth and Justice Commission to examine thousands of cases of alleged human rights abuses during the reign of Hassan II and consider requests for indemnification. The Government signed a memorandum of understanding with the International Committee of the Red Cross to introduce human rights training in schools. Parliament passed a new labor code that respects workers' rights to form unions and engage in collectively bargaining.

Problems remained however, including deaths in police custody and the detention of several thousand people for possible involvement with terrorist groups following terrorist attacks in Casablanca in May. International human rights groups reported a sharp rise in the number of cases of torture and ill-treatment over the last two years. Impunity remained a problem. Freedom



of the press was restricted. Seven journalists were sentenced to prison, most of them under the new anti-terrorism law, and several publications were banned for defaming the monarchy or violating the new anti-terrorism law. Two journalists were imprisoned, but all journalists were pardoned in January 2004. Police forcibly dispersed several demonstrations during the year. While there were some well-publicized prosecutions for abuses by security forces, the failure to prosecute other cases raised questions about the Government's commitment to resolving the problem. The judiciary remained subject to government influence and corruption, and prison conditions were poor. Child labor remained a serious problem, and the Government did not act forcefully to end the illegal employment of child maids.

The U.S. democracy and human rights strategy addresses many of Morocco's worst abuses. The Embassy-sponsored interagency Democracy Working Group was key to developing this portfolio, convening regularly in Rabat to consult on strategy and coordinate U.S. assistance.

During 2003 and early 2004, U.S. officials representing many federal agencies contributed to fostering progress in human rights in Morocco. In several high-level visits, U.S. diplomats applauded Morocco's achievements while conveying the importance of sustaining progress in human rights and political reform. Secretary of State Powell participated in a roundtable with 35 community and youth activists during his two-day stop in Morocco in December. He expressed strong U.S. commitment to seeing press freedom flourish and made interventions on behalf of two detained Moroccan journalists. An Associate Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development met with officials of the Moroccan Government to develop a strategy to strengthen the Parliament, increase government transparency and improve local government performance. Embassy officials regularly spoke to high-level Moroccan officials urging them to respect the rights of the media, release imprisoned

journalists, conduct honest elections and, in general, sustain forward momentum for reform. They also frequently raised the problems of child maids, child labor and trafficking in persons, which are U.S. priorities. The Embassy maintained regular contact with many Moroccan non-governmental organizations (NGOs), human rights activists and Jewish and Berber community leaders in an effort to monitor domestic developments and identify ways to advance reform. Embassy officials met with Sahrawi human rights activists, including several released from prison, in January 2004. Visiting Congressional delegations also advanced U.S. democracy and human rights objectives. Members of Congress urged the Government to free imprisoned journalists, encouraged Moroccan officials to fight corruption and pressed for greater transparency and accountability in the public and private sectors.

The State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor helped promote due process in the judicial system through a grant that enabled a coalition of government officials, lawmakers, attorneys and independent activists and groups to advocate reform of Morocco's penal procedure code. Seventy percent of the coalition's recommendations were reflected in the new Code. Additional funding helped train Moroccan prosecutors and lawyers to understand and implement the legislation.

Many activities sought to strengthen popular participation and public confidence in the political system. U.S.-funded training programs promoted political party development at the local and national levels, strengthened Parliament and the representative functions of individual lawmakers, imparted opinion and social research skills to political parties and advocacy groups and facilitated voter registration and nonpartisan citizen monitoring of elections. Programs also encouraged professional electoral conduct and provided specialized training for women.

Assistance under the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program helped address concerns relating to Morocco's security forces. In compliance with the Leahy amendment, 100 Moroccan military officers received U.S.-based IMET training in the rule of law and human rights.

To promote full democracy in Morocco, the United States dedicated considerable efforts to strengthening women's legal status and promoting women's participation in the political process. In his November 6 speech on freedom in the Middle East, President Bush stated, "Morocco has a diverse new parliament; King Mohammed has urged it to extend the rights to women. Here is how His Majesty explained his reforms to parliament: 'How can society achieve progress while women, who represent half the nation, see their rights violated and suffer as a result of injustice, violence and marginalization, notwithstanding the dignity and justice granted to them by our glorious religion?' The King of Morocco is correct: The future of Muslim nations will be better for all with the full participation of women." In fact, U.S. grants supported projects to promote advocacy and legal literacy among rural women and to combat illiteracy among women and girls. After the announcement of the reform of the family code, small grants helped local organizations raise popular awareness of women's new rights.

The United States also supported several programs to reinforce diplomacy on issues relating to child labor. These included a \$3 million initiative to broaden school access for child workers and dropouts and a State Department grant that funded a television and radio campaign addressed to parents and employers discouraging child labor. The U.S. Department of Labor awarded a \$250,000 Community-based Innovation to Reduce Child Labor through Education grant to a Moroccan NGO to provide educational alternatives to poor rural children who work on farms instead of attending school. The Office of Defense Cooperation began construction of six dormitories in rural Morocco for girls who would

not otherwise attend school because of the need to travel overnight from their homes to reach their classes.

The United States also supported workers' rights more broadly, providing a grant of \$1.52 million to the International Labor Organization to begin a dialogue project to improve labor management relations, reduce the number of strikes and inform workers and employers about their respective rights and responsibilities under the new Labor Code.

The Democracy Working Group responded to the need to promote greater tolerance in the wake of the May 16 bombing by providing eight small grants to Moroccan NGOs to conduct public campaigns against extremism, bias and stereotypes.

The International Visitor (IV) program and other outreach efforts reinforced U.S. democracy and human rights objectives. Approximately 19 Moroccans participated in IV exchanges on subjects related to free press, labor and child trafficking, and children's and women's rights. In addition, the Embassy provided funding enabling four women to attend a leadership training program for Arab women sponsored by the State Department in partnership with the Arab Women's Council Research and Education Fund. A State Department grant also enabled ten women to travel to the United States to attend an NGO-sponsored leadership training program. The Minister of Justice and President of the Supreme Court participated in the Arab Judicial Forum and five women's advocates participated in the Women in Law Program. Both were regional initiatives funded through the U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative.

## SAUDI ARABIA

Saudi Arabia is a monarchy without elected representative institutions or political parties. The Government's human rights record remained poor; although there were improvements in a few

areas, serious problems remained. Security forces continued to torture and abuse detainees and prisoners, arbitrarily arrest and detain persons, and detain them incommunicado. Mutawwa'in, religious police, continued to intimidate, abuse and detain citizens and foreigners with impunity. Most trials were closed, and defendants usually had no legal counsel. The Government infringed upon privacy rights and continued to restrict freedom of speech and the press, although there has been an increase in press freedom over a series of years. The Government restricted freedom of assembly, association, religion and movement. Violence against women and children, discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities and strict limitations on worker rights continued. The Government announced in October 2003 that it would hold the first municipal elections within one year. The Government met with organized groups of reform advocates and in public statements committed to political, economic and social reforms. The Government established a National Dialogue Center to address differences between different Muslim traditions in the country. There was an increase in press freedom, with open discussion of previously taboo subjects, and numerous foreign journalists were permitted to report freely; however, journalists were also sanctioned. In 2003, the Government permitted the first visit of an international human rights organization and held its first human rights conference. In early March 2004, the Government officially approved the country's first human rights association.

The United States addresses democracy and human rights concerns in Saudi Arabia by urging the Government to increase political participation, transparency and accountability in government, rights for women, religious freedom and worker rights, raising concerns about human rights violations when they occur, urging the Government to promote greater religious tolerance and supporting on-going reform efforts.

During his November 6 speech commemorating the National Endowment for Democracy's twenti-

eth anniversary, President Bush said, "The Saudi Government is taking first steps toward reform, including a plan for gradual introduction of elections. By giving the Saudi people a greater role in their own society, the Saudi Government can demonstrate true leadership in the region."

U.S. officials routinely highlight the need to improve human rights conditions. The Embassy welcomed the visit of Human Rights Watch to the Kingdom and has urged the Government to continue to allow non-governmental organization (NGO) involvement on human rights cases. U.S. officials raise concerns with the Government when violations of human rights occur, and have encouraged the Government to finalize its work on establishing a non-governmental human rights commission. The Embassy addresses these issues at all levels of government and the Ambassador has raised these issues with senior government officials. Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Lorne Craner visited Saudi Arabia in July 2003, and raised concerns about political reform and human rights.

The United States encourages and promotes freedom of the press in a number of ways. During 2003, the Embassy brought six Saudi reporters (three women and three men) to the United States on programs related to journalism. The Public Affairs Office organized a training workshop for women journalists including sessions on responsible journalism, investigative reporting and writing. The Embassy regularly held roundtable discussions with journalists in Riyadh and Jeddah in order to provide an opportunity for candid exchange. The Public Affairs Office expanded its outreach program to Saudi editors to encourage them to expand their coverage of human rights issues.

Using the International Visitor program, the Embassy sponsored 15 individuals to go to the United States for programs, including leadership studies. Due to security concerns in Saudi Arabia during 2003, the Embassy was unable to conduct





major projects in the Kingdom, but utilized the Fulbright program to nominate four Saudis to travel to the United States and bring three American scholars to Saudi Arabia. The U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) is the Administration's primary mechanism to support a forward strategy for freedom in the Middle East. Representatives from the Government and private sector in Saudi Arabia have participated in several MEPI regional programs, including forums on judicial reform and women and the law. Saudis also participated in Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor-sponsored training for NGOs on political participation, political party development, women and media in Yemen, and for journalists in the Gulf. The Embassy plans to expand its work with MEPI and other U.S. programs to promote human rights and promote democracy in the coming year to support the Government's announcement of municipal elections.

In Fiscal Year 2003 the United States provided \$25,000 in International Military Education and Training assistance for the Saudi military. The

program 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. In compliance with the Leahy amendment, the Defense Attaché's Office worked closely with the Ministry of Defense to vet military units for U.S. training and checked candidates with other embassy officers.

The United States encourages Saudi officials to honor the Government's public commitment to permit private religious worship by non-Muslims, eliminate discrimination against all religious minorities and promote tolerance toward non-Muslims. U.S. officials also continue to press the connection between religious intolerance and terrorism. The Ambassador called for increased respect for religious minorities in the country. Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom John Hanford visited Saudi Arabia in October 2003 and raised concerns about religious freedom issues with high-level officials. Senior embassy officers and official visitors called on the Government to enforce its public commitment to allow private religious practice and respect the

rights of Muslims who do not follow the Salafi tradition of Islam. The Ambassador protested the raids on private homes and detention of Christian worshippers in Riyadh, contributing to the successful release of several Christian detainees. In addition, embassy officers met with Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials at various other times during the year on matters pertaining to religious freedom.

To address the problem of trafficking in persons and worker rights, at the Embassy's urging the Saudi Government has implemented programs to inform incoming workers of their rights and recourse in response to abuse when they receive visas to travel to Saudi Arabia and upon arrival. The United States also urges the Government to promote public awareness on issues relating to domestic servants, and it is taking steps to do so. Finally, the United States has discussed long-term means of improving the legal rights of foreign laborers under Saudi labor law. Through engagement with Saudi officials, the Embassy has advocated protection for foreign workers under the law and encouraged the investigation and prosecution of traffickers. The United States is also encouraging NGO and private involvement and increasing public affairs efforts to highlight the dangers and vulnerabilities of trafficking in persons. Saudi officials have participated in International Visitor programs to the United States on trafficking in persons.

## SYRIA

Syria's human rights record is poor; the Government uses its vast unchecked powers to prevent organized political opposition and severely limits civil society activities and anti-government manifestations. Hopes for a more open political life, based on the public statements of President Bashar al-Asad, were stymied by the Government's continued repression of civil society groups in 2003 and early 2004, including the arrest of 14 intellectuals in Aleppo for attending a lecture, the mass arrest of suspected Islamists in Aleppo, Zabadani and Damascus, and the sup-

pression of the stateless Kurdish minority. In President Bush's November 6 speech commemorating the National Endowment for Democracy's twentieth anniversary, he stated, "Dictators in Iraq and Syria promised the restoration of national honor, a return to ancient glories. They've left instead a legacy of torture, oppression, misery and ruin." Syria's presence on the State Department's list of state sponsors of terrorism disqualifies it from receiving economic assistance from the United States.

Because of limitations on providing assistance to Syria, the United States relied heavily on diplomacy to advance human rights and democracy. U.S. officials emphasized the importance of freedom of association, speech and the press and respect for human rights in meetings with Syrian officials and during high level visits, and the Embassy established an ongoing dialogue with Syrian officials on those subjects. The Embassy also participated actively in a human rights monitoring group involving other foreign missions in Damascus that regularly exchanged information on the situation in Syria and coordinated responses and programs. The group monitors trials, makes demarches to the Syrian Government and brings high profile human rights cases to the attention of Syrian officials. The United States maintained contact with Syrian and expatriate human rights and civil society advocates, on occasion convening them to help them network and develop strategies for cooperation and support. The Congressional visits were put to use in support of U.S. human rights and democracy goals as members were briefed on the domestic situation and encouraged to pose frank questions to Syrian leaders about Syria's human rights practices.

Allowable U.S. assistance focused on public diplomacy and information rather than training. During the Syrian International Book fair, the Embassy sold books in Arabic on human rights and international law through the Arab Book Program. It also distributed copies of the Arab Human Development Report and the State

Department's Country Report on Human Rights Practices. Speaker programs focused on encouraging greater Syrian participation in public life. For example, an Arab-American political consultant spoke to an audience of prominent Syrian intellectuals and opinion-makers about ethnic outreach in American politics and ways that individuals can influence the political system. The Embassy sponsored a Women's Issues Series, in connection with which the director of a Washington-based non-governmental organization spoke through direct video conferencing about women's leadership skills.

The International Visitor program promoted U.S. objectives in the areas of human rights and democracy by exposing up-and-coming Syrians to alternative viewpoints and encouraging broader participation in civil society. Exchanges last year introduced young Syrian journalists, academicians, civil society leaders and other opinion makers to American counterparts and helped them develop new skills and contacts.

## TUNISIA

Tunisia's human rights record remained poor, and it continued to commit serious abuses in many areas; however, the Government continued to respect human rights in certain areas. Paradoxically Tunisia stands ahead of its regional neighbors on basic issues such as universal education, health care and the rights of women. Its impressive gains in these fields are undercut by an authoritarian system of government and significant limitations to political participation and freedoms of expression, association, assembly and the press. The Government remained intolerant of public criticism and used intimidation, physical abuse, criminal investigations, the court system, arbitrary arrests, residential restrictions and travel controls (including denial of passports) to discourage criticism by human rights and opposition activists. Security forces arbitrarily arrested and detained individuals and tortured prisoners and detainees. The Government did not allow international observers to inspect prisons,

and lengthy pretrial and sometimes incommunicado detention remained a problem.

The U.S. goal is to work with the Tunisian Government and civil society to increase the pace and substance of internal reform. Toward this end, the Embassy maintains a regular and specific dialogue on human rights with all levels of the Government, monitors and reports factually on important events, stays in contact with all elements of Tunisian civil society and media and develops and tailors elements from the four pillars of the U.S. primary assistance program, the U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) which will have its Maghreb regional headquarters in Tunis. In addition, the Embassy produces its annual reports on human rights and international religious freedom that describe both the overall situation in the country and notable events from the previous year.

During 2003 and early 2004, the United States pressed the Tunisian Government to match its notable social and economic progress with similarly bold steps toward human rights and political process reform. The key to this strategy was supporting a human rights dialogue with Tunisian government officials at all levels. During a four-month period, Secretary of State Powell, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs William Burns, Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Lorne Craner, and a senior U.S. Senator visited Tunisia and directly engaged senior Tunisian government officials on reform issues, including harassment of activists, media freedom, elections and prison inspections. Several U.S. officials raised the harassment and imprisonment of journalists and activists with the Government. Both President Bush and Secretary Powell raised human rights issues in their meetings with Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in Washington, D.C., in February 2004.

These initiatives built on a record of activities throughout the year that conveyed U.S. concerns regarding human rights, including demarches,

opinion pieces in the local press, inquiries regarding specific cases and a bilateral human rights dialogue that the Embassy initiated with Tunisian officials. The Embassy has assigned one officer exclusively to this portfolio.

To promote the rule of law and human rights awareness, the Embassy outfitted a “common law reading room” at a Tunisian law school and equipped it for access to U.S. legal databases. Two Tunisian women judges participated in the Women in Law Program, a regional initiative funded through the MEPI, which enabled them to share their personal and professional experiences with counterparts from other Arab countries and the United States. Tunisians also participated in MEPI’s Arab Judicial Forum in Bahrain. The Embassy funded the publication in Arabic of an election observers training manual designed to train observers in the region. Embassy officers attended trials involving prominent human rights issues and activists and requested prison access.

MEPI reinforced the U.S. strategy through projects to strengthen civil society and its ability to influence and communicate with the Government. In discussions about MEPI, U.S. officials urged the Tunisian Government to liberalize registration and funding mechanisms for non-governmental organizations. The Embassy tried to ensure active participation of Tunisian women in all MEPI programs, including sending a delegation of Tunisian businesswomen to participate in the U.S.-Arab Economic forum in Detroit. Tunisian executives and political leaders also participated in other MEPI training programs.

Several projects sought to promote media independence and professionalism. The Embassy funded English language training for 40 journalists and maintained ongoing ties with the country’s sole school of journalism, enabling discussions of U.S. foreign policy and press freedom in the United States. The Embassy also published a “daily outreach journal” to media contacts and worked to explain the U.S. approach to freedom of expression in daily interactions with the press.

Wide placement in the Tunisian press of op-ed pieces written by the Ambassador and State Department officials and distribution of articles from the International Information Program helped raise awareness of international norms and practices and explain U.S. goals. The International Visitor program advanced U.S. human rights and democracy objectives by introducing Tunisian public servants and private citizens to U.S. policies and values directly. Under the program, 35 leaders in the fields of media, local government, human rights and judicial reform visited the United States to meet their counterparts and gain exposure to U.S. perspectives.

Embassy staff maintained close contact with Muslim, Christian and Jewish religious groups.

Although trafficking in persons is not a significant problem in Tunisia, the Embassy’s Office of Defense Cooperation maintained links with and provided training and equipment to Tunisian border security forces to increase their ability to protect the country’s borders. Embassy staff contributed to the annual trafficking in persons report on Tunisia.

## WEST BANK AND GAZA

Israel’s overall human rights record in the West Bank and Gaza remained poor and worsened in the treatment of foreign human rights activists. The Palestinian Authority (PA) also had a poor human rights record. Israel’s security forces killed at least 573 Palestinians and one foreign national and injured 2,992 Palestinians and other persons during the year. Israeli security units often used excessive force in their operations that resulted in numerous deaths. Israel carried out policies of demolitions, strict curfews and closures that directly punished innocent civilians. Israeli forces often impeded the provision of medical assistance to Palestinian civilians by strict enforcement of internal closures, harassed and abused Palestinian pedestrians and drivers at the approximately 430 Israeli-controlled check-



points in the occupied territories and conducted mass, arbitrary arrests in the West Bank. Israel restricted the freedom of the Palestinian media and placed strict limits on freedom of assembly and movement for Palestinians.

The PA continued to commit numerous, serious abuses. Palestinian terrorists and gunmen were responsible for the deaths of 376 Israelis killed in the occupied territories. Many members of Palestinian security services and the Fatah faction of the Palestine Liberation Organization participated with civilians and terrorist groups in violent attacks against Israeli civilians inside Israel, Israeli settlers, foreign nationals and soldiers. Palestinian security forces used excessive force against Palestinians during demonstrations. PA security officials abused prisoners and arbitrarily arrested and detained persons. PA courts were inefficient and failed to ensure fair and expeditious trials, and PA executive and security services frequently ignored or failed to enforce court decisions. Internal closure in the occupied territories obstructed courts from holding sessions or issuing rulings. The PA security forces infringed on the right to privacy and restricted freedom of speech and the press.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for the West Bank and Gaza supported implementation of President Bush's two-state vision, the end of violence and the restart of a political process within Israel, the West Bank and Gaza. The United States utilized bilateral and multilateral diplomacy to emphasize the unacceptability of violence on all sides and demand PA actions against terrorism in the West Bank and Gaza as well as in Israel. The Roadmap explicitly calls on both parties to end incitement, and calls on the Palestinians to undertake comprehensive reforms.

U.S. programs worked to improve the rule of law in the West Bank and Gaza. Approximately \$1.9 million in assistance was provided to introduce advanced caseload management techniques and equipment to seven Palestinian courts. This same program improved the capabilities of the Palestinian Attorney General's office, helping the state prosecutor's office modernize its administrative functions and raise its technical capacity. Programs offered judicial training, specifically addressing complex areas of modern law such as international property rights, international banking, commercial transactions and ethics. Assistance further helped establish two Alternative Dispute Resolution centers that are

available to mediate and arbitrate legal claims outside the court system.

U.S. officials continued to encourage Palestinian legislators to pursue governmental reform. Video-conferencing equipment financed by the U.S. Agency for International Development enabled the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) to deliberate and conduct parliamentary sessions despite frequent closures and travel restrictions in the West Bank and Gaza. Such sessions included the historic Spring 2003 session during which the PLC revised the Palestinian Basic Law to create the position of the Prime Minister. In addition, the United States funded other programs totaling approximately \$3 million to strengthen the institution of the PLC. Assistance improved its capacity to conduct oversight of the executive branch, raised the quality of its lawmaking, deepened its management controls and capacity and extended its reach to ensure that the PLC effectively represented the interests of its constituents.

Other funding supported preparations for Palestinian elections, including assistance for women candidates and women's political organizations, and training in building and promoting political platforms. These activities offered leadership and organizational training to emerging young Palestinian activists, mid-career managers and mid-level government workers.

Support for civil society development in the West Bank and Gaza remained a U.S. priority, and its flagship program, "Tamkeen," was allocated \$33 million for 2000-2005. To date, the project has awarded 193 grants totaling \$10 million to Palestinian civil society organizations to promote democracy and provide training in advocacy, finance and strategy. A \$1 million "Moderate Voices" project supported Palestinian civil society organizations that have developed creative means, including a popular radio soap opera series, to teach non-violence, conflict resolution and mediation. The U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative

helped launch an Arab Civitas project to introduce civic education into Palestinian schools.

The United States provided assistance to strengthen media professionalism, content and independence. Programs provided instruction to print journalists on investigative reporting and trained television media professionals on the production and airing of topical talk shows.

Public diplomacy programs sought to improve human rights awareness in the West Bank and Gaza among all citizens. The Consulate General in Jerusalem hosted numerous speakers on the topics of rule of law and democratization, sponsored Palestinians' participation in international conferences addressing these topics and provided books and other publications in Arabic and English on human rights and democracy to local schools, libraries, PA officials and other contacts. Palestinians were also regular participants in the Salzburg Seminar, International Visitor and Fulbright Summer Institute programs, which focused on democracy and human rights topics.

The State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration administered \$1.4 million in special projects to promote human rights, tolerance and conflict resolution skills among Palestinian refugee children. Under a multi-year grant to the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for Palestine refugees, projects introduced supplementary educational materials and peer mediation training in all UNRWA schools in the West Bank and Gaza in grades 4 through 9. The materials included illustrated storybooks that introduce basic concepts of human rights, tolerance and responsibility for one's actions as well as worksheets that introduce human rights and tolerance concepts at pre-selected points in the Palestinian curriculum.

## YEMEN

Yemen is a republic with an active bicameral legislature. An elected President, Ali Abdullah Saleh, an elected 301-seat House of Representatives and an appointed 111-member Shura Council shared Constitutional power. International observers judged April 2003 parliamentary elections to be generally free and fair, and there was a marked decrease from previous years in election related violence; however, there were some problems with underage voting, confiscation of ballot boxes and voter intimidation. Although many problems remained, the Government's respect for human rights improved in a few areas during 2003. There were limitations on citizens' ability to change their government. Security forces continued to arbitrarily arrest, detain and torture persons. The Government sometimes failed to hold members of the security forces accountable for abuses; however, the number of security officials tried for abuses increased since 2002. Prison conditions remained poor. Despite constitutional constraints, security officers routinely monitored citizens' activities, searched their homes, detained citizens for questioning and mistreated detainees. Prolonged pretrial detention, judicial corruption and executive interference undermined due process. The Government continued to harass and intimidate journalists despite a decline in detention of journalists from last year. The Government at times limited freedom of assembly, imposed some restrictions on freedom of religion and placed some limits on freedom of movement. Violence and discrimination against women remained problems. Female genital mutilation was practiced on a limited scale. There was some discrimination against persons with disabilities and against religious, racial and ethnic minorities. The Government imposed restrictions on labor unions. Child labor remained a problem.

The United States actively encourages the Government to continue to strengthen its human rights record and enact social reforms, improve

problems within the judiciary and further the process of democratic development.

Yemen continued a long-term program of judicial reform in an attempt to counter the numerous problems within the judiciary. Yemen's Minister of Justice and other jurists participated actively in the U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative's (MEPI) Arab Judicial Forum.

The United States has been urging the Government to enact social reforms, encourage respect for human rights and foster democratic development at the highest levels. For example, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs William Burns encouraged democratic progress in a visit to the Supreme Committee for Elections and Referenda in October. National Security Council officials raised democracy and human rights with the Foreign Minister in February 2004. The Ambassador and other senior-level officials engage frequently with the Ministry of Human Rights to improve the Government's ability and willingness to redress specific human rights abuses. U.S. officials have raised the issue of corruption at the highest levels, particularly as it relates to qualification for the Millennium Challenge Account.

The United States continued several long-term National Democratic Institute and International Foundation for Election Systems projects aimed at strengthening Yemen's political parties,



improving election administration, increasing voter participation, fostering civil society and improving the country's human rights records. The United States provided technical assistance and supported election observers to the April 2003 parliamentary elections. The Ambassador, embassy staff and international election observers were present at polling places throughout the country to observe the elections.

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) reopened its offices in Yemen in 2003. The USAID program focuses on strengthening democratic institutions among other areas. In 2004, the Embassy is increasing programming designed to strengthen democratic institutions, decentralize authority and resource management, and expand opportunities for civil society in decision-making.

MEPI, the Administration's primary mechanism to support a forward strategy for freedom in the Middle East, is currently working with Yemen on a variety of programs including legislative strengthening and civic education. For example, a \$2 million MEPI-funded program aims to address the 67 percent illiteracy rate among women and girls. MEPI is also continuing its work on election assistance in Yemen. In addition, both government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from Yemen have participated in numerous MEPI regional programs.

Two Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor-sponsored regional training sessions were held in Spring 2003 in Yemen, with the strong support of the Government. The first was a training academy for NGOs on political participation, political party development, women and media. The second provided specialized instruction in fact-based reporting to journalists from around the Arabian Peninsula. In October 2003, MEPI supported a third regional forum, held in Sanaa, which brought together democratic activists from the Gulf and Iraq to improve their advocacy skills in fostering political reform in the region.

In Fiscal Year 2003, the United States provided \$638,000 in International Military Education and Training assistance for the Yemeni military, a part of which addresses 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. In compliance with the Leahy amendment, U.S. officials work closely with the Ministries of Defense and Interior to vet units for U.S. training. The Defense Department Counter-Terrorism Fellowship funds a training program in the United States for Yemeni military officers, one aim of which is to convey the importance of respecting human rights. This program, which has trained ten participants during the past year, is highly successful in Yemen and is ongoing.

In 2003 and early 2004, International Visitor programs brought NGO activists, government officials and other leaders to the United States to gain skills and knowledge in such areas as journalism, youth leadership, women's leadership in civil society and the public and private sector, and community service and NGOs. The Embassy continued to support 17 separate NGO projects in 2003. Two programs to provide training and capacity building to NGOs targeted rural areas where civil society remains nascent. Another project raised awareness of the struggles and rights of disabled children in public schools to combat discrimination. Several projects aimed to improve women's rights. Under a U.S. Department of Agriculture program, the Embassy established a project to build and furnish new primary schools for girls in isolated rural areas in order to give them access to modern education and to facilitate their inclusion within society.

A multi-year, \$1.4 million U.S. Labor Department-supported program administered through the International Labor Organization continued combating the problem of street child labor in 2003 and early 2004.