

OVERVIEW AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report is submitted to the Congress by the Department of State in compliance with Section 665 of P.L. 107-228, the Fiscal Year 2003 Foreign Relations Authorization Act, which was signed into law on September 30, 2002. It requires the Department to report on actions taken by the U.S. Government to encourage respect for human rights. This report is being submitted to Congress for the first time and complements the annual *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2002*.

Unlike the 196 *Country Reports, Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2002-2003* highlights U.S. efforts to promote human rights and democracy in only 92 countries and entities -- the 92 with the most human rights abuses. References to Hong Kong, Macau and Tibet have been incorporated into the China report, and Western Sahara is mentioned in the Morocco report. Due to the rapidly evolving situation in Iraq, this report does not include that country.

The responsibility of the United States to speak out on behalf of international human rights standards was formalized in the early 1970s. In 1976 Congress enacted legislation creating a Coordinator of Human Rights in the Department of State, a position later upgraded to Assistant Secretary. This report takes the next step, moving from highlighting abuses to publicizing the actions and programs that the United States has taken to end those abuses.

Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2002-2003 reflects dedicated effort by hundreds of State Department, U.S. Agency for International Development, and other U.S. Government employees, as well as the employees of numerous non-governmental organizations. Our embassies and consulates prepared the initial drafts of the reports. After the missions completed their drafts, the texts were sent to Washington for careful review by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, in cooperation with other State Department offices and other Departments and agencies. As they worked to analyze and edit the reports, the Department officers drew on their own knowledge of U.S. Government programs and activities.

Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2002-2003 will be used as a resource for shaping policy, conducting diplomacy and making assistance, training and other resource allocations. It will also serve as a basis for the U.S. Government's cooperation with private groups to promote the observance of internationally recognized human rights and democracy.

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