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COUNTRY REPORTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS PRACTICES FOR 2003

VOLUME I

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COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL
RELATIONS

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

AND THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
U.S. SENATE

BY THE

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTIONS 116(d) AND 502B(b) OF THE
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FOREWORD

The *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* contained herein were prepared by the Department of State in accordance with sections 116(d) and 502B(b) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended. They also fulfill the legislative requirements of section 505(c) of the Trade Act of 1974, as amended.

The reports cover the human rights practices of all nations that are members of the United Nations and a few that are not. They are printed to assist Members of Congress in the consideration of legislation, particularly foreign assistance legislation.

HENRY J. HYDE,

Chairman, Committee on International Relations.

RICHARD G. LUGAR,

Chairman, Committee on Foreign Relations.

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
Washington, DC, February 25, 2004.

Hon. HENRY J. HYDE,
Chairman, Committee on International Relations.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: On behalf of Secretary Powell, we are pleased to transmit to you the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2003*, prepared in compliance with Section 665 of P.L. 107-228, the Foreign Relations Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2003, and Sections 116(d) and 502B(b) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended.

We hope this report is helpful. Please let us know if we can provide any further information.

Sincerely,

PAUL V. KELLY,
Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs.

Enclosure:
As stated.

PREFACE

HUMAN RIGHTS REPORTS

The expansion of democracy and respect for human rights throughout the world is at the core of U.S. foreign policy. The yearly release of the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* is an occasion to assess the state of human freedom around the world and the challenges faced by those seeking to improve it.

Putting together the *Country Reports* is a multi-stage process. Throughout the year, our embassies collect the data contained in it through their contact with human rights organizations, public advocates for victims, and others fighting for human freedom in every country and every region of the world. Investigating and verifying the information requires additional contacts, particularly with governmental authorities. Such inquiries reinforce the high priority we place on raising the profile of human rights in our bilateral relationships and putting governments on notice that we take such matters seriously. Compiling the data into a single, unified document allows us to gauge the progress that is being made. The public release of the *Country Reports* sharpens our ability to publicize violations and advocate on behalf of victims. And submission of the reports to the Congress caps our year-round sharing of information and collaboration on strategies and programs to remedy human rights abuses—and puts us on the path to future progress.

We have found that reporting on human rights is useful not only for addressing violations by governments in power, but also for the recovery and reconstruction of societies where a repressive regime has departed the scene. We learned this in the early 1990s as we assisted the new governments emerging from the collapse of the Soviet Union and its satellites in Eastern Europe. Today, we are helping the people of Iraq and Afghanistan, long oppressed by despotic leaders, to establish the rule of law, guarantee basic freedoms, and build democratic institutions. Our experience of monitoring human rights abuses in those and other countries has given us a richer understanding of the challenges faced by peoples struggling for democracy and human rights. Decades of reporting violations and voicing concerns signal our continued commitment to fulfill the promise of freedom for ourselves and for the world around us.

With confidence that we have upheld our high standards of accuracy and comprehensiveness, which have made past breakthroughs possible and future gains within our grasp, I am pleased to submit the Department of State's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2003* to the U.S. Congress.

COLIN L. POWELL,
Secretary of State.

OVERVIEW AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

HUMAN RIGHTS REPORTS

WHY THE REPORTS ARE PREPARED

This report is submitted to the Congress by the Department of State in compliance with Section 665 of P.L. 107-228, the Foreign Relations Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2003, and Sections 116(d) and 502B(b) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (FAA), as amended. The law provides that the Secretary of State shall transmit to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate by February 25 “a full and complete report regarding the status of internationally recognized human rights, within the meaning of subsection (A) in countries that receive assistance under this part, and (B) in all other foreign countries which are members of the United Nations and which are not otherwise the subject of a human rights report under this Act.” We have also included reports on several countries that do not fall into the categories established by these statutes and that thus are not covered by the congressional requirement.

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. In 1994 the Congress created a position of Senior Advisor for Women’s Rights. Congress has also written into law formal requirements that U.S. foreign and trade policy take into account countries’ human rights and worker rights performance and that country reports be submitted to the Congress on an annual basis. The first reports, in 1977, covered only the 82 countries receiving U.S. aid; this year 196 reports are submitted.

HOW THE REPORTS ARE PREPARED

In August 1993, the Secretary of State moved to strengthen further the human rights efforts of our embassies. All sections in each embassy were asked to contribute information and to corroborate reports of human rights violations, and new efforts were made to link mission programming to the advancement of human rights and democracy. In 1994 the Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs was reorganized and renamed as the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, reflecting both a broader sweep and a more focused approach to the interlocking issues of human rights, worker rights and democracy. The *2003 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* reflect a year of dedicated effort by hun-

dreds of State Department, Foreign Service and other U.S. Government employees.

Our embassies, which prepared the initial drafts of the reports, gathered information throughout the year from a variety of sources across the political spectrum, including government officials, jurists, armed forces sources, journalists, human rights monitors, academics, and labor activists. This information-gathering can be hazardous, and U.S. Foreign Service Officers regularly go to great lengths, under trying and sometimes dangerous conditions, to investigate reports of human rights abuse, monitor elections and come to the aid of individuals at risk, such as political dissidents and human rights defenders whose rights are threatened by their governments.

After the embassies 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. As they worked to corroborate, analyze and edit the reports, the Department officers drew on their own sources of information. These included reports provided by U.S. and other human rights groups, foreign government officials, representatives from the United Nations and other international and regional organizations and institutions, experts from academia, and the media. Officers also consulted with experts on worker rights issues, refugee issues, military and police topics, women's issues and legal matters. The guiding principle was to ensure that all relevant information was assessed as objectively, thoroughly and fairly as possible.

The reports in this volume will be used as a resource for shaping policy, conducting diplomacy and making assistance, training and other resource allocations. They also will serve as a basis for the U.S. Government's cooperation with private groups to promote the observance of internationally recognized human rights.

The *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* cover internationally recognized individual, civil, political and worker rights, as set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These rights include freedom from torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, from prolonged detention without charges, from disappearance or clandestine detention, and from other flagrant violations of the right to life, liberty and the security of the person.

Universal human rights seek to incorporate respect for human dignity into the processes of government and law. All persons have the inalienable right to change their government by peaceful means and to enjoy basic freedoms, such as freedom of expression, association, assembly, movement and religion, without discrimination on the basis of race, religion, national origin or sex. The right to join a free trade union is a necessary condition of a free society and economy. Thus the reports assess key internationally recognized worker rights, including the right of association, the right to organize and bargain collectively, prohibition of forced or compulsory labor, the status of child labor practices and the minimum age for employment of children, and acceptable work conditions.

Within the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, the editorial staff of the *Country Reports* Team consists of: *Editor in Chief*: Cynthia R. Bunton; *Deputy Editor-in-Chief*: LeRoy G. Potts;

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INTRODUCTION TO THE COUNTRY REPORTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS PRACTICES FOR THE YEAR 2003

Promoting respect for universal human rights is a central dimension of U.S. foreign policy. It is a commitment inspired by our country's founding values and our enduring strategic interests. As history has repeatedly shown, human rights abuses are everybody's concern. It is a delusion to believe that we can ignore depredations against our fellow human beings or insulate ourselves from the negative consequences of tyranny. The United States stands ready to work with other governments and civil society to prevent the abuses of power and the proliferation of dehumanizing ideologies that produce misery and desperation and lead to devastating international political, economic and humanitarian consequences.

Threats to human rights can take various forms. They range from large-scale abuses like genocide, slaughter of innocents and forced migration to chronic, systemic problems that deny citizens the basic rights of freedom of religion, speech and assembly, and protections against the arbitrary exercise of state power. The United States cannot afford to ignore either type of human rights problem, or to excuse them as cultural differences.

Begun in 1977, the annual *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* are designed to assess the state of democracy and human rights around the world, call attention to violations, and—where needed—prompt needed changes in our policies toward particular countries. They are an expression of U.S. vigilance in monitoring other countries and holding leaders accountable for their treatment of fellow citizens.

Each year's *Country Reports* identify gaps between principles and practice, between espoused standards on the one hand, and actual performance on the other. Examined retrospectively, a quarter century of reporting shows that many countries have begun to close those gaps and turned horror stories into success stories. Their examples have helped us understand how gains can be made in protecting human rights and expanding freedom.

For the last two and a half years, we have taken those lessons and applied them to a new world. After September 11, 2001, some observers questioned whether the United States could afford the "luxury" of concern about human rights and democracy abroad, and whether we might sacrifice our principles for expediency in the global war on terrorism. Within days, National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice provided a clear answer:

"We are not going to stop talking about the things that matter to us—human rights and religious freedom and so forth. We're

going to continue to press those issues. We would not be America if we did not.”

In his January 2002 State of the Union Address, President George W. Bush underscored the unequivocal U.S. commitment to human rights:

“. . . America will always stand firm for the non-negotiable demands of human dignity: the rule of law; limits on the power of the state; respect for women; private property; free speech; equal justice; and religious tolerance. America will take the side of brave men and women who advocate these values around the world, including the Islamic world, because we have a greater objective than eliminating threats and containing resentment. We seek a just and peaceful world beyond the war on terror.”

Later that year, Secretary of State Colin Powell backed these words by unveiling the U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), a program designed to assist political, economic and social reforms in that region. Henceforth, those seeking freedom in the Middle East can count on the same support long provided to Latin Americans, Central Europeans, Asians, Africans and others. The United States is now working across the Middle East to enhance the skills and opportunities of men and women who wish to compete for office, administer elections, report on political events and influence them as members of civil society. We have reinforced MEPI programming with unprecedented diplomacy to remedy problems described frankly in the *Country Reports*.

Some worried that our new focus on the Arab world would leave us without time to address human rights and democracy elsewhere. In early 2002, the President announced creation of the Millennium Challenge Account,

“a new compact for global development, defined by a new accountability for both rich and poor nations alike. Greater contributions from developed nations must be linked to greater responsibility from developing nations.”

Nations that invest in their people’s education and health, promote economic freedoms and govern justly—defined by the prevalence of civil liberties, political rights, rule of law and a government’s accountability and effectiveness—will be rewarded. The Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) will rely on sound human rights reporting to evaluate conformity with basic standards of democratic governance and economic freedom. MCA will also provide another vehicle for reducing the gap between human rights ideals and actual practices.

Other efforts to remedy problems outlined in the *Country Reports* have intensified. For the first time, the United States has a substantial program to assist structural changes, promote human rights awareness, and support legal and administrative reform in China. In Central Asia, we have mounted an unprecedented effort to support the development of representative political parties, human rights organizations and independent media. The United States has also worked more actively to contribute to the promotion of freedom in Burma, Zimbabwe, Cuba, Belarus and elsewhere.

These efforts to advance freedom have often been enhanced by partnerships with other members of the Community of Democracies, a growing organization composed mainly of nations that over the past quarter century have made the transition from dictatorship to democracy.

America's post-9/11 foreign policy has increased our scrutiny and activism in whole regions on the issues of human rights and democracy. Not surprisingly, some authoritarian governments—from the Middle East to Central Asia to China—have attempted to justify old repression by cloaking it as part of the new “war on terror.” Knowledgeable observers note that authoritarianism existed in such areas before September 11, 2001. American policymakers rejected and rebuked, often publicly, such attempts to label those peacefully expressing their thoughts and beliefs as “terrorists.” In some but not all instances, we were able to contribute on a case-by-case basis to freedom for such individuals. Over time, the increased activism described above will help change national structures that allow such abuses, and will contribute to freedom for all.

THE YEAR IN REVIEW: DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS AND LABOR

Where we are vigilant, through such actions as compiling these reports and implementing an agenda that make the *Country Reports* more than a rote recitation of evidence, we advance U.S. interests. In 2003, we saw many developments covering the whole range from the dramatically uplifting to the disappointing. The countries and concerns mentioned below represent areas that define our engagement with human rights issues worldwide.

In Afghanistan, the Constitutional Loya Jirga (CLJ) brought together 502 delegates, including 89 women, to craft a new constitution. This process culminated in the adoption of a new, moderate constitution in January 2004. Key social issues that were debated in the CLJ included the rights of women and minorities, the role of religion, education, jobs and security. In addition to encouraging responsible implementation of the new constitution, in 2004 we are dedicated to expanding and continuing our commitment to helping Afghans realize their vision for a country that is stable, democratic and economically successful after 30 years of war. The last two years have seen dramatic improvements in democracy and human rights since the days of the Taliban. However, terrorist attacks and severe violence, including a reviving drug trade, add to the sense of lawlessness and insecurity, slowing the process of reconstruction.

The liberation of Iraq by Coalition forces in April ended years of grave human rights violations by Saddam Hussein's regime. Hussein's rule resulted in a climate of fear and repression in which arbitrary arrests, killings, torture and persecution were daily facts of life. Since April, the world has discovered overwhelming evidence of a totalitarian and capricious brutality that terrorized individuals in unimaginable ways. One indication, in a nation of 24 million people, are mass graves in which as many as 300,000 Iraqis are buried. The record of horror under Saddam Hussein is still unfolding. Building democracy and a culture of respect for human rights after 36 years of tyranny will be an arduous task, but it is an effort that has the support of the overwhelming majority of the Iraqi people.

We began 2003 with hopes that the incremental but unprecedented progress in China seen in 2002 would be continued and expanded; however, throughout the year, we saw backsliding on key human rights issues. Arrests of democracy activists, individuals discussing subjects deemed sensitive by the Government on the Internet, HIV/AIDS activists, protesting workers, defense lawyers advocating on behalf of dissidents or the dispossessed, house church members and others seeking to take advantage of the space created by Chinese reforms increased. Harsh repression of the Falun Gong continued, and the Chinese Government used the war on terror to justify its continuing crackdown on Muslim Uighurs.

The Chinese Government's record in Tibet remains poor and ongoing abuses include execution without due process, torture, arbitrary arrest, detention without public trial, and lengthy detention of Tibetans for peacefully expressing their political or religious views. In January 2003, Tibetan Lobsang Dondrub was executed for alleged involvement in a series of bombings in Sichuan Province in 2002. The death sentence of Buddhist teacher Tenzin Deleg Rinpoche on the same charge was deferred for two years. The trials of the two men were closed to the public on "state secrets" grounds, and they were reportedly denied due process of law. Lobsang Dondrub's execution the same day he lost his appeal to the Sichuan Provincial Higher People's Court, as well as the failure of the national-level Supreme People's Court to review the case as promised to foreign officials, raised serious concerns in the international community.

After the stunning July 1 demonstrations in Hong Kong by approximately 500,000 people and intense public debate about civil liberties and fundamental freedoms, the Government of the Hong Kong SAR withdrew proposed national security legislation in September. The people of Hong Kong took advantage of their right to free speech and assembly as guaranteed under the Basic Law and urged the Government to abide by democratic processes. Public demands also increased for the implementation of universal suffrage in the 2007 Chief Executive election and the 2008 Legislative Council election. However, following consultations with the PRC Government, Hong Kong did not announce a timetable for public consultations on democratization by year's end.

Reports from North Korea continue to paint a bleak picture of one of the world's most inhumane regimes. Rigid controls over information, which limit the extent of our report, reflect the totalitarian repression of North Korean society. Basic freedoms are unheard of, and the regime committed widespread abuses of human rights. This year's report details—among other abuses—killings, persecution of forcibly repatriated North Koreans, and harsh conditions in the extensive prison camp system including torture, forced abortions and infanticide.

Burma's extremely poor human rights record worsened in 2003. On May 30, government-affiliated forces attacked a convoy led by National League for Democracy (NLD) party leader Aung San Suu Kyi, leaving several hundred NLD members and pro-democracy supporters missing, under arrest, wounded, raped or dead. Egregious abuses of ethnic minority civilians continued.

In Cuba, human rights abuses worsened dramatically: 75 peaceful dissidents were sentenced to prison terms averaging 20 years for trying to exercise their fundamental rights, while the Castro regime ignored petitions containing thousands of signatures which organizers of the Varela Project had collected from Cuban citizens exercising their constitutional right to petition for a referendum on political and economic reform.

The Government of Zimbabwe continued to conduct a concerted campaign of violence, repression and intimidation. This campaign has been marked by disregard for human rights, the rule of law and the welfare of Zimbabwe's citizens. Torture by various methods is used against political opponents and human rights advocates.

In Russia, the Government manipulated the October presidential polls in Chechnya and parliamentary elections held on December 7; both failed to meet international standards. The OSCE monitoring mission's assessment of the parliamentary elections criticized extensive use of the state apparatus and media favoritism that biased the campaign. Government pressure on the media continued, resulting in the elimination of the last major non-State television network. Criminal prosecutions and threats of prosecutions against major financial supporters of opposition parties and independent NGOs undermined the parties' ability to compete, weakened civil society, and raised questions about the rule of law in Russia. A series of "alleged espionage" cases continued to raise concerns about the rule of law and influence of the FSB (the federal security service). The conflict in Chechnya continued to have serious human rights implications. Reports of continued violence and human rights abuses in Chechnya persisted. These reports included evidence that some among the federal and local security forces, as well as some of the separatists, are still resorting to unacceptable methods of resolving the conflict.

Many republics of the former Soviet Union have mixed or poor human rights records. We continue to work with governments and nongovernmental organizations in the region to identify areas where our assistance can have significant impact. The threats to stability are varied, and our insistence on accountability for human rights violations and adherence to democratic norms is bringing progress to the region, as demonstrated by the developments in Georgia.

The Government of Georgia allowed several major protests to proceed without violence or arrests. President Eduard Shevardnadze resigned on November 23 allowing for new leadership to assume power and the Supreme Court subsequently annulled the results of the proportional parliamentary contests. Georgia's January 4, 2004 presidential election showed significant improvements over previous contests. But elsewhere in the Caucasus, fraud and serious irregularities marred the other presidential and parliamentary elections held during the year. In Armenia and Azerbaijan, authorities arrested and harassed hundreds of opposition party demonstrators protesting the conduct of these elections. There were credible reports that Azerbaijan authorities also tortured a number of opposition members to coerce confessions.

Progress in Central Asia continued to come from dedicated activists and nongovernmental organizations. Governments were mov-

ing slowly, but have shown signs of recognizing the importance of human rights. The Media Support Center in the Kyrgyz Republic, which was registered in 2002, opened an independent printing press on November 14. The Turkmenistan Government intensified its harsh crackdown on political opponents and their families with widespread reports of abuses, including torture, arbitrary arrests of hundreds of relatives of suspected plotters of the November 2002 armed attack on the president's motorcade, and lack of fair trials and freedom of movement. Restrictions on freedom of religion, speech, association and assembly became more severe. In Uzbekistan there were at least three new torture deaths in custody during the year and continued reports of torture with impunity and unfair trials. Harassment and arrests of political opponents, including independent journalists and activists, continued, as did registration problems for opposition political parties and nongovernmental organizations. Prominent opposition leaders remain imprisoned in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

In Belarus, the Lukashenko Government continued to restrict freedom of speech and press and took further measures to restrict freedom of association and assembly. The Government increased pressure on human rights and other NGOs, interfering with their work and closing many down. The Government failed to suspend or take any other action against senior regime officials implicated in the disappearance of opposition and press members. Addressing abuses in Belarus became a priority for the United States as we returned as a member of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR).

During its 2003 session, the UNCHR adopted a U.S.-sponsored resolution on Belarus for the first time, as well as resolutions on Turkmenistan and North Korea. A resolution on Cuba was also adopted by a formal vote, and resolutions on Burma and the Democratic Republic of the Congo were approved by consensus. In addition, the Commission decided not to hold a special sitting on the situation in Iraq during the height of military action.

With Libya in the Chair and such countries as Zimbabwe, Cuba, Sudan, China and Syria, which fail to protect their own citizens' rights, as members, the 2003 session of the UNCHR fell short in several respects. Resolutions on the human rights situations in Zimbabwe, Sudan and Chechnya were defeated. The United States continued to emphasize the need to improve the functioning of the Commission, primarily by supporting the membership of countries with positive human rights records. We began to discuss the formation of a democracy caucus with interested governments. We envision this as a group of like-minded countries that would coordinate more closely in multilateral settings to advance goals consistent with democratic values.

The United States was deeply saddened by the death of U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Sergio Vieira de Mello in August 2003. Mr. Vieira de Mello assumed this position on July 22, 2002, and during his tenure, he undertook important reforms of the Office of the High Commissioner. He was well respected in the international community for his extensive work within the United Nations and for his humanitarian fieldwork. Secretary Powell noted on August 19, 2003,

“Sergio Vieira de Mello was a consummate professional who devoted his life to helping others, particularly in his decades of distinguished service to the U.N. . . . In my book, Mr. Vieira de Mello was a hero, who dedicated his life to helping people in danger and in difficulty. His loss is a terrible blow to the international community.”

Institutional changes:

Notable progress in Africa included the beginning of the second half of a three-year transitional power-sharing government in Burundi: Domitien Ndayizeye, a Hutu, succeeded Pierre Buyoya, a Tutsi, as president in April. In addition, the Transitional Government negotiated a future power-sharing agreement with the main rebel group; however, another rebel group remained outside negotiations and continued to conduct attacks on civilians and government forces. Madagascar stabilized after a 2002 political crisis in which the presidency was disputed, and President Ravalomanana has continued his anti-corruption campaign, which resulted in the suspension of 18 mayors and the conviction of 12 magistrates.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, various armed groups continued to commit massacres and other atrocities, but the poor human rights situation improved slightly. After five years of war, a Transitional Government was inaugurated, a vital step in starting the country on a path toward democracy. Uganda withdrew its forces by June, and, following the adoption of a transitional constitution, a transitional power-sharing government was established on June 30. In Liberia, a cooperative transitional power sharing agreement emerged between civil society, former government forces and the rebel groups, “Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy” (LURD) and “Movement for Democracy in Liberia” (MODEL), with elections scheduled for October 2005. However, numerous abuses occurred in the context of the conflict, and sporadic fighting, looting and human rights violations continued in remote areas where peacekeepers from the U.N. Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) have not yet reached.

Change continued across much of the Arab world. In Qatar, voters approved a new constitution by popular referendum held in April. That same month, Yemen successfully held open parliamentary elections for the second time in its history. In Oman, approximately 74 percent of registered voters participated in October elections for the 83 seats in the Consultative Council. In Jordan, King Abdullah appointed a new 55-member Senate in November, increasing the number of women members from three to seven. In Morocco, 2002 voting for a parliament was followed up with 2003 elections for municipal councils.

Turkey passed extensive human rights reform packages that covered a broadening of laws on torture, impunity, access to attorneys, fair trials and freedom of speech, although not all of these reforms were fully implemented during the year. As part of a wide-ranging judicial reform program, Bosnia and Herzegovina adopted new Criminal Codes and Criminal Procedure Codes at the state and entity levels. For the first time, the Bosnian police forces were fully accredited under the U.N. accreditation program. A European Union Police Mission, responsible for developing professional stand-

ards and accountability in senior police ranks, began operating on January 1, 2003.

In Egypt, State Security Courts were formally abolished in May; however, the Government retained and continued to use Emergency Courts, and most observers noted that this was not a substantial improvement. The Emergency Law, extended in February for an additional three years, continued to restrict many basic rights. The Government passed legislation establishing a National Council for Human Rights; initially dismissed as window dressing, the naming of a number of independent thinkers to the Council led to hopes in early 2004 that the Council could contribute to a betterment of Egypt's civil life. Security forces continued to torture prisoners, arbitrarily arrest and detain persons, and occasionally engaged in mass arrests.

Political rights:

Six nations in the Western Hemisphere—Argentina, Barbados, Belize, Grenada, Guatemala and Paraguay—held elections for their chief of state or government that were deemed to be free and fair. The Organization of American States promoted democracy, observed elections and used the principles of its Inter-American Democratic Charter to ensure broad, free and fair access to the democratic process in Venezuela, Haiti and Bolivia.

Positive signs in Africa included developments in Kenya, where the new Government acted to establish an autonomous national human rights commission to investigate abuses and educate citizens. A ministry of gender affairs was also set up; three bills to protect women's rights were submitted to the parliament but they still await passage. The Government also took several steps to curb corruption, including the establishment of an anti-corruption authority to investigate and prosecute cases of corruption and the dismissal of 38 magistrates and transfer of 40 others on official accusations of corruption. In Rwanda, a new constitution was adopted, ending a nine-year transitional period, and the country held its first post-genocide presidential and legislative elections in August and September. However, the right of Rwandan citizens to change their government was effectively restricted, and government harassment of the political opposition continued.

Elsewhere in Africa, international and domestic election monitors reported that in some states during the Nigerian presidential elections, they witnessed widespread voting irregularities, as well as procedural flaws, particularly in the collation and counting of votes. However, election-related violence at the levels predicted did not occur. An attempted coup occurred during the year in Mauritania, and the presidential election held in November generally was not considered free and fair by many international observers.

In Saudi Arabia, citizens do not have the right to change their government. In October, the Government announced that it would hold elections within the year for half the members of municipal councils; however, it has not yet provided specific information about the conduct of the elections. There were credible reports that security forces continued to torture and abuse detainees and prisoners, arbitrarily arrest or detain persons, and hold them incommunicado. The Government restricted freedom of assembly, asso-

ciation, religion and movement. Violence and discrimination against women, discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities, and strict limitations on workers rights continued. The Government established a National Dialogue Center intended to address religious extremism and problems facing women and the country's Muslim minorities. Government officials also met with organized groups of reform advocates and permitted Human Rights Watch to visit the Kingdom for the first time.

The Syrian Government's human rights record remained poor and it continued to commit serious abuses. The Government used its vast powers to prevent any organized political opposition activity. Security forces committed serious abuses, including the use of torture and arbitrary arrest and detention. The Government significantly restricted freedom of speech and the press. Freedom of assembly does not exist under the law, and the Government restricted freedom of association. The Government also placed some limits on freedom of religion and suppressed worker rights. In Tunisia, although the Government continued to improve the economy and provide opportunities for women, continuing abuses included torture of detainees by security forces, violations of privacy rights, significant restrictions on freedoms of speech and press, and harassment of judges as well as human rights and civil society activists.

The Iranian Government's poor human rights record worsened, and it continued to commit numerous, serious abuses. The Iranian people's ability to assert their democratic will continued to be hindered by a structure that exerts undue influence on the electoral and legislative processes by regime hardliners. The clerical regime stifles open debate through such tactics as intimidation, violence and imprisonment of opposition activists, on matters ranging from freedom of expression to appropriate social behavior. Reformist members of Parliament were harassed, prosecuted and threatened with jail for statements made under parliamentary immunity. Last summer the Government beat student protestors and arrested thousands. The Government arrested several journalists, banned reformist publications, and beat a Canadian-Iranian photographer to death while in custody.

Cambodia's record remained poor. During the National Assembly elections in July, politically motivated violence, including killings, was lower than in previous elections and political parties and candidates' access to the media was greater in these than in previous elections; however, voter intimidation by local officials in addition to technical problems with the registration process and preparation of voter lists effectively disenfranchised many citizens. A coalition government had failed to form by year's end.

Concerns about the path to democracy and stability in East Timor, now known as Timor Leste, are raised by numerous reports of excessive use of force and abuse of authority by police. Prolonged pretrial detention was a problem. Due process and fair trials often were denied or restricted, largely due to severe shortages of resources and lack of trained personnel in the legal system. Countries in the Balkans continue to become more stable and further their efforts to protect the human rights of their citizens. The OSCE and other international observers judged Albania's local

elections in October to be an improvement over previous elections, with a few isolated incidents of irregularities and violence.

Internal and other conflicts:

Abuse caused by both government and rebel forces marked the internal conflict in Côte d'Ivoire. There were numerous reports of politically motivated killings by pro-government death squads during the first half of the year. The rebels agreed to join the Government and declared the war officially over in July, but an end to violence has proved elusive as the rebels pulled out of the Government in October. By mid December, both the Government and the New Forces took positive steps toward ending the violence, and New Forces ministers noted they would attend the first government meeting in 2004.

Far more encouraging are developments in Sierra Leone, where the Government continued efforts to stabilize the country and repair the damage caused by 11 years of civil war. During the year, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission held public hearings to air the grievances of victims and the confessions of perpetrators, and the Special Court of Sierra Leone indicted 13 persons.

Although there was considerable progress in the peace negotiations in Sudan between the Government and the rebels in the south, the conflict in Darfur resulted in numerous human rights violations by government and government-supported militias, including the killing of civilians, the destruction of villages and large-scale displacement of persons.

Israel's human rights record in the occupied territories included continuing abuses, the use of excessive force by security forces, the shelling, bombing and raiding of Palestinian civilian areas, and demolitions of homes and property. Israel continued to impose strict closures and curfews on the occupied territories.

Many members of Palestinian security services and the FATAH faction of the PLO participated with civilians and terrorist groups in violent attacks against Israeli civilians inside Israel, Israeli settlers, foreign nationals and soldiers. Palestinian extremists targeted Israelis in drive-by shootings and ambushes, suicide and other bombings, mortar attacks, and armed attacks on settlements and military bases. Palestinian security forces used excessive force against Palestinians during demonstrations, abused prisoners and arbitrarily arrested and detained persons, and provided poor prison conditions.

Indonesia experienced improvements in some regions, but conditions in Aceh Province deteriorated rapidly. Various reports indicate that Indonesian security forces murdered, tortured, raped, beat and arbitrarily detained civilians in Aceh, under martial law since May 2003, as government forces sought to defeat the separatist Free Aceh Movement (GAM) following failed peace negotiations. GAM rebels also carried out grave abuses including murder, kidnapping and extortion. During most of the year, inter-religious violence subsided in the provinces of Maluku and North Maluku, although there were brief but dramatic upsurges in violence in Central Sulawesi at the end of the year. Two hundred thousand civilians remain displaced due to violence in these three provinces.

Political and drug-related violence continued in Colombia, but kidnappings, killings and forced displacements declined. The Government offered formal peace negotiations to disband the various terrorist groups and several factions entered into talks. The Government captured guerrilla leaders, and former military commanders were prosecuted and convicted of human rights abuses.

The political impasse continued in Haiti, where President Aristide frustrated efforts to form a legitimate Provisional Electoral Council, and his supporters, henchmen and civilian attaches associated with the national police killed members of opposition parties and violently disrupted their demonstrations. Elections planned to take place during the year were not held.

On October 17, protesters forced elected Bolivian President Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada to resign from office. After a vote in Congress, Vice President Carlos Mesa Gisbert assumed office and restored order. Mesa appointed a nonpolitical cabinet and promised to revise the Constitution through a constituent assembly.

In Guatemala, the Government accepted a proposal developed by the Human Rights Ombudsman and nongovernmental organizations to create a U.N. commission to investigate clandestine groups. Work to conclude the agreement was coming to completion at year's end. On October 29, in compliance with the Peace Accords of 1996, Guatemalan President Portillo completed the demobilization of the Presidential Military Staff (EMP), which had been implicated in serious human rights violations during the civil conflict and its aftermath. In Peru, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission released its final report, with recommendations to heal the wounds suffered during nearly 20 years of internal conflict.

Nepal's human rights record remained poor throughout 2003. More than 8,000 people have been killed since the Maoist campaign to unseat the monarchy began in 1996. Numerous credible reports of human rights abuses by Nepalese security forces elicited condemnation and calls for accountability; the Maoists committed worse abuses in their campaign of torturing, killing, bombing, forcibly conscripting children and other violent tactics.

Integrity of the person:

Libya, despite welcome cooperation in reducing weapons of mass destruction, continued to deprive citizens of the right to be secure in their home or their person. Torture and incommunicado detention were widespread, and security forces maintained the authority to pass sentences without trial. The Algerian Government failed to investigate, account for and bring justice in as many as 18,000 cases of missing persons resulting from the darkest days of the 1990s. In Turkey, torture and impunity remained serious problems, as did harassment of journalists.

In Pakistan, abuse by members of the security forces, ranging from extrajudicial killings to excessive use of force, is widespread. The Government intimidated and arrested opposition figures. The overall credibility of the judiciary remained low. In December, Pakistan's Parliament and President Pervez Musharraf approved a package of amendments to the Constitution that consolidated Musharraf's power, included his agreement to step down as Chief of the Army Staff by the end of 2004, confirmed his presidency

until 2007, and gave him authority to dismiss Pakistan's national and provincial assemblies provided the Supreme Court agrees with the dissolution.

In sub-Saharan Africa, the Ethiopian Government security forces were implicated in the killing of 93 mostly Anyuaks in Gambella in December. In Uganda, brutal attacks by the cult-like Lord's Resistance Army increased significantly during the year, resulting in the deaths of approximately 3,000 persons, including children, thousands of internally displaced persons, numerous rapes, and the abduction of an estimated 6,800 children and young girls between January and June alone, for training as guerrillas and to be used as sex slaves, cooks and porters.

In the Solomon Islands, a once-worrisome situation began to turn around due to international intervention. The Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI), organized by Australia to address the continuing violence in that country stemming from ethnic conflict between Malaitans and Guadalcanese, arrived in the country in July and made substantial progress during the remainder of the year in restoring law and order. RAMSI removed approximately 3,700 weapons from circulation, began reform of the police, and arrested and charged numerous persons implicated in human rights abuses and other criminal acts.

In many places, violence was perpetrated, condoned or went unchecked by government authorities. In the Philippines, local government leaders at times appeared to sanction extrajudicial killings and vigilantism as expedient means of fighting crime and terrorism. In Thailand, the security forces were responsible for numerous instances of extrajudicial killings. According to press reports, more than 2,000 alleged drug suspects were killed during confrontations with police during a three-month "War on Drugs" from February to April, while the Government reported that out of a total of 2,598 homicide cases during this three-month period, there were 1,386 narcotics-related deaths.

Freedom of the press:

Respect for freedom of speech and press in Sudan appeared to decline during the year. Government detentions, intimidation, surveillance of journalists and an increased number of suspensions of newspapers continued to inhibit open public discussion of political issues.

Freedom of the press suffered in Tanzania, significantly restricted on Zanzibar by the Government's indefinite ban of *Dira*, the only independent newspaper on the archipelago, and by the Zanzibar News Act, which allowed authorities to harass and detain journalists.

Controls on the press and public expression of political opinions continued in Kazakhstan, as the Government selectively prosecuted political opponents in trials with serious irregularities. The Government's harassment of independent media included the conviction, with no due process, of two prominent independent journalists. In Turkmenistan, the Government completely controlled the media, censored all newspapers and access to the Internet, and never permitted independent criticism of government policy. In Kyrgyzstan,

honor and dignity lawsuits filed by government officials against newspapers bankrupted two leading independent newspapers.

In Ukraine, authorities continued to interfere with news media by intimidating journalists and taking a direct role in instructing the media on what events and issues should be covered. The Government failed to render justice for murdered journalists Heorhiy Gongadze and Ihor Aleksandrov. After new developments in the investigation of the Gongadze case, which had been deemed credible by the Council of Europe and had led to an arrest of a government official, the Government fired the prosecutor general and released the accused.

In Venezuela, threats against the media continued, and government pressure against the media increased, as did legislative efforts to limit the media's exercise of freedom of expression.

Political expression remains significantly curtailed in Malaysia, where the Government acknowledges that it restricts certain political and civil rights in order to maintain social harmony and political stability.

Freedom of religion:

These issues are discussed in depth in the *Annual Report on International Religious Freedom*, published in December 2003, but the *Country Reports* also highlight and update important developments.

The status quo in Vietnam remained poor. The Government restricted freedom of religion and operation of religious organizations other than those approved by the State. Many Protestants active in unregistered organizations, particularly in the Central Highlands and Northwest, faced harassment, pressure to renounce their faith and possible detention by authorities. Incidents of arbitrary detention of citizens for religious views continued. In Burma, the Government imposed restrictions on certain religious activities and promoted Buddhism over minority religions.

Kazakhstan's President Nazarbayev began an initiative to promote dialog among religions; an international conference drawing regional dignitaries and religious figures was held in February. No further attempts have been made to incorporate restrictive amendments into Kazakh law. Elsewhere in Central Asia, the Government of Turkmenistan continues to restrict all forms of religious expression and interpret the laws in such a way as to discriminate against those practicing any faith other than government-controlled Sunni Islam or Russian Orthodox Christianity. In Uzbekistan, the Government permitted the existence of mainstream religions but invoked the Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations, which is not in keeping with international norms, to restrict the religious freedom of other groups.

In Saudi Arabia, freedom of religion still does not exist by any internationally recognized standard. The Government continued to enforce a strictly conservative version of Sunni Islam and suppress the public practice of other interpretations of Islam and non-Muslim religions.

The Government in Eritrea continued to seriously restrict religious freedom. The Government harassed, arrested and detained members of non-sanctioned Protestant religious groups locally re-

ferred to collectively as “Pentes,” reform movements from and within the Coptic Church, Jehovah’s Witnesses and adherents of the Baha’i faith.

Treatment of minorities, women and children:

Morocco enacted a new family code that revolutionizes the rights of women. By raising the age of marriage for women, strengthening their rights to divorce, child custody and inheritance, and placing stringent restrictions on polygamy, the new law sets an example for the African Continent and the Arab world.

Emerging from Rwanda’s transition, the Rwanda Women’s Leadership Caucus (RWLC) is becoming an increasingly powerful voice for women in the political process. Several members serve on the constitution drafting committee and were the impetus for the 30 percent increase in representation by women in the legislative branch and executive branch. President Kagame has responded by appointing several women to “non-traditional” roles in the Cabinet.

Human rights abuses in North Korea take many particularly severe forms. Among the violations in this area of concern, pregnant female prisoners underwent forced abortions and, in other cases, babies reportedly were killed upon birth in prisons. There also were reports of trafficking in women and young girls among refugees and workers crossing the border into China, and children appear to have suffered disproportionately from famine.

Egyptian police have continued to target homosexuals using Internet-based sting operations.

In November, the Chinese Government relaxed its policy of tightly controlling information about the extent of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and announced plans to provide antiretroviral drugs to millions of people, including rural residents and the urban poor. New Chinese treatment efforts, however, have brought the issues of stigma and discrimination to the forefront as obstacles to long-term success in prevention or treatment. The effective delivery of AIDS messages and drug treatment programs will depend on effective protection of legal and civil rights for all those affected by the disease. It remains to be seen whether the PRC authorities will recognize and effectively address these issues.

Worldwide, violence against children continued to be a problem and trafficking in persons claimed many women and children as victims, forced to engage in sex acts or to labor under conditions comparable to slavery. These problems are discussed in depth in the annual *Trafficking in Persons Report* issued in June 2003, but they are also covered by the individual country reports in this volume.

Worker rights:

China’s global economic presence continues to focus attention on worker rights as a priority in bringing China into compliance with international standards. Economic and social changes affecting workers produced a growing number of labor-related disputes, most of them directed at state-owned enterprises, regarding conditions of work or management corruption. The Government responded by arresting and prosecuting labor activists. Freedom of association, the right to organize and collective bargaining continued to be denied

to Chinese workers. Trade unions at all levels were required to affiliate with the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, which is controlled by China's Communist Party.

In Cambodia, there were improvements in compliance with laws on wages and hours, greater respect for freedom of association, improvements in labor-management relations, fewer illegal dismissals of union leaders, fewer illegal strikes, the successful establishment of Cambodia's first labor arbitration council for resolving industrial disputes, and the negotiation of the garment sector's first true collective bargaining agreement.

In the Americas, obstacles for worker rights persist in several key countries. Seven independent trade unionists were among the 75 peaceful human rights advocates tried for "provocations" and "subversion" by the Cuban Government in April. Conditions for organized labor deteriorated in Venezuela, where the Government refused to recognize the elected leaders of the Confederation of Venezuelan Workers and ordered the arrest of its Secretary General, forcing him to flee the country. Colombia remained the most dangerous country in the world for trade unionists, although fewer trade unionists were killed in 2003 than in 2002.

In Russia, the Moscow representative of the American Center for International Labor Solidarity continued to be denied permission to return to her work after being denied reentry to the country in December 2002. With respect to neighboring Belarus, the Governing Body of the International Labor Organization decided in November to appoint a Commission of Inquiry to investigate allegations of government violations of freedom of association and the right to organize and bargain collectively.

In Zimbabwe, representatives of organized labor continued to be targeted for harassment, detention, beatings and other harsh treatment. The response of the Government to worker demands has been to place limits on the ability of unions to communicate or meet with their own constituencies, to make it virtually impossible to have a legal strike, and to arrest labor activists who demonstrate their disagreement with policies. On October 8, police arrested more than 150 ZCTU members at protest gatherings in several cities throughout the country. Most of those detained were released the same day; however, many were forced to sign admissions of guilt and were fined.