

Introduction to the 2010 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices

This report provides encyclopedic detail on human rights conditions in over 190 countries for 2010. Because we are publishing this report three months into the new year, however, our perspectives on many issues are now framed by the dramatic changes sweeping across countries in the Middle East in 2011. At this moment we cannot predict the outcome of these changes, and we will not know the lasting impacts for years to come. The internal dynamics in each of these countries are different, so sweeping analysis of the entire region is not appropriate. In places like Tunisia and Egypt, we are witnessing popular demands for meaningful political participation, fundamental freedoms, and greater economic opportunity. These demands are profound, they are homegrown, and they are being driven by new activists, many of them young people. These citizens seek to build sustainable democracies in their countries with governments that respect the universal human rights of their own people. If they succeed, the Middle East region, and with it the whole world, will be improved.

The United States will continue to monitor the situations in these countries closely, knowing that the transition to democracy is not automatic and will take time and careful attention. In Egypt, we await the lifting of the state of emergency, which the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces has promised to do prior to parliamentary elections. In Tunisia, we are encouraged by the creation of a fact-finding committee to investigate human rights abuses that took place during the uprising.

While we address these and other short-term repercussions, historians will have the benefit of time and perspective to help us understand what triggered these popular movements. But three trends clearly contributed to their development and to other changes that occurred throughout the world in 2010. The first is the explosive growth of nongovernmental advocacy organizations focused on a wide range of democracy and human rights issues and causes. Fifty years ago, when Amnesty International was created, few countries outside of North America or Western Europe had any locally based human rights organizations. Today, local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) exist in almost every country in the world. The growth of these organizations has been dramatic, and in many countries such citizens' organizations have been created against great odds and only because individual human rights activists were willing to face great personal risk. Secretary Clinton highlighted the importance of these organizations in a speech she gave in July 2010 in Krakow, Poland, to the Community of Democracies. As she said, "societies move forward when the citizens that make up these groups are

empowered to transform common interests into common actions that serve the common good."

In closed societies, where repressive governments seek to control and stifle the debate on sensitive political and social issues, governments view these independent local citizens' organizations as a threat rather than a resource, and democracy and human rights defenders are singled out for particularly harsh treatment. For example, in Belarus, over 700 prodemocracy activists, including seven presidential candidates, were arrested during public demonstrations following the flawed December 2010 presidential elections. In the weeks that followed, the offices and homes of civil society representatives, independent journalists, and political activists were raided as part of an effort to stifle independent political activity and free expression.

In the last several years, more than 90 governments have sought to pass restrictive laws and regulations, hampering the ability of organizations to register, operate freely, or receive foreign funding. A proposed NGO law in Cambodia, introduced in December, is emblematic of these efforts. The law would impose burdensome reporting requirements on NGOs, erect significant barriers to the registration of foreign NGOs, require foreign NGOs to collaborate with the government, and outlaw unregistered NGOs. In Ethiopia, a new civil society organization law entered into force in February, following a one-year grace period. The law prohibits charities, societies, and associations that receive more than 10 percent of their funding from foreign sources from engaging in activities that promote human rights and democracy; the rights of children and persons with disabilities; equality among nations, nationalities, people, genders, and religions; conflict resolution or reconciliation; and the promotion of justice. During the grace period, Ethiopia's leading human rights defender organizations adjusted by re-registering either as local charities, meaning that they could not raise more than 10 percent of their funds from foreign donors, or as "Resident Charities," which allowed donations but prohibited activities in the enumerated areas. There were 3,522 registered organizations before the civil society organization law was adopted; after the law only 1,655 remained.

Secretary Clinton acknowledged these troubling restrictions on civil society in her speech in Krakow, when she identified a "group of countries where the walls are closing in on civic organizations" and cautioned that when "governments crack down on the right of citizens to work together, as they have throughout history, societies fall into stagnation and decay." As we have seen in the Middle East and elsewhere, governments cannot suppress civil society indefinitely, and they can never suppress it legitimately.

A second important trend is the dramatic growth of the Internet, mobile phones, and other connective technologies that allow instantaneous communications to billions of people across the globe. As Secretary Clinton observed in a recent speech on Internet freedom, the Internet has become the town square of the 21st century. Much has been said and written about the effects of these connective technologies in allowing Egyptians and Tunisians to mobilize in the weeks and months before demonstrations actually began. While it is the courage of the people themselves that led the way and was the driving force, the amplifying impact of these new technologies, coupled with the power of television stations and the Internet to broadcast videos obtained by citizens using these mobile phones, cannot be denied.

Today there are more than two billion people with Internet access spread across most countries of the world, and around five billion mobile phone subscriptions. These numbers are projected to grow dramatically in the next 15 years. And as more people gain access to these remarkable technologies, and use them both to gather and impart information on human rights and to communicate with other activists, an increasing number of governments are spending more time, money, and attention in efforts to curtail access to these new communications outlets. More than 40 governments are now using a combination of regulatory restrictions, technical controls on access to the Internet, and technologies designed to repress speech and infringe on the personal privacy of those who use these rapidly evolving technologies.

In Saudi Arabia in 2010, the government restricted access to the Internet and interfered with citizens' privacy while online. The official Communications and Information Technology Commission (CITC) improperly monitored e-mail and Internet chat rooms and blocked sites, including pages about Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, and certain forms of Islam deemed incompatible with Sharia law and national regulations. In Sudan, the government monitored Internet communications and, during the elections, blocked access to the Sudan Vote Monitor Web site. The Government of China tightly controlled content on and access to the Internet and detained those expressing views critical of the government or its policies. In Vietnam, the government orchestrated attacks against critical Web sites and spied on dissident bloggers. Police arrested 25 dissidents over the course of the year and forcibly entered the homes of a number of others to remove personal computers, cell phones, and other material.

A third trend, and one that points in a negative direction, was the continuing escalation of violence, persecution, and official and societal discrimination of

members of vulnerable groups, often racial, religious, or ethnic minorities or disempowered majorities. In many countries this pattern of discrimination extended to women; children; persons with disabilities; indigenous; lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons; and members of other vulnerable groups who lacked the political power to defend their own interests. Often members of these groups were denied economic opportunity or the ability to abide by their social or cultural traditions or practices or were restricted in their ability to speak freely, to assemble peacefully, or to form associations or organizations.

In Pakistan, religious freedom violations and violence and discrimination against religious minorities continued. The blasphemy laws were used to harass religious minorities as well as vulnerable Muslims or Muslims with minority views. (In the first two months of 2011, two senior government officials who publicly challenged these laws were brutally killed.) In Saudi Arabia, there were severe restrictions on religious freedom and discrimination on the basis of religion was common. In China, the government continued to demonize the Dalai Lama and harshly repress Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang and Tibetan Buddhists. There were reports of increases in anti-Semitic acts around the world, including the desecration of cemeteries, graffiti, and blood-libel rhetoric, as well as Holocaust denial, revisionism, and glorification. There have also been spikes in expressions of anti-Semitism during events in the Middle East.

Persons around the world continue to experience discrimination and intimidation based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. Honduras saw an upsurge in killings of members of the LGBT community by unknown perpetrators. Meanwhile, in many African, Middle Eastern, and Caribbean nations, same-sex relations remain a criminal offense, and through such laws and other measures the state reinforces and encourages societal discrimination and intolerance. In Uganda, for example, intimidation and harassment of LGBT individuals worsened during the year, and some government and religious leaders threatened LGBT individuals.

Exploitation of laborers was also a problem in many countries, often compounded by threats against workers for attempting to unionize. Again in 2010, the government of Uzbekistan mobilized thousands of adults and children as forced laborers during the annual cotton harvest. In Bangladesh, poor working conditions caused needless deaths, notably in the garment industry. Bangladesh was also the site of frequent and at times deadly labor unrest during the year, particularly in the Ready-Made Garment Sector and Export Processing Zones.

These trends are further illustrated below by the thumbnail sketches of 27 countries (listed alphabetically by region). The section on country highlights provides

illustrative examples of the human rights trends in 2010. In some of these countries there have been negative developments or the human rights record has been a mix of positive and negative developments. In other countries highlighted below, we reflect on positive trends in 2010. The body of this report is a much more detailed examination of these and an additional 167 countries.

2010 marks the 35th year that the State Department has produced the annual *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*. This year's report covers human rights conditions in 194 countries. What began as the response to a Congressional mandate to report on the human rights situation in those countries that were receiving U.S. assistance in the mid 1970s has blossomed into a detailed analysis of human rights conditions in all countries that are members of the United Nations. The country reports provide an overview of the human rights situation around the world as a means to raise awareness of human rights conditions, in particular as these conditions affect the well-being of women, children, racial and religious minorities, trafficking victims, members of indigenous groups and ethnic communities, persons with disabilities, sexual minorities, refugees, and members of other vulnerable groups.

As the scope of the State Department's reporting has increased, so has the use of these reports around the world. In addition to providing data to Congress to inform their funding and policy decisions, these reports are used throughout the U.S. government and by many foreign governments. And, importantly, they are increasingly being used by individual citizens and NGOs as critical sources of information on what is happening in the world. To facilitate the sharing of this information, reports are translated into over 50 languages and made available online.

The U.S. government compiles the human rights report because we believe it is imperative for countries, including our own, to ensure that respect for human rights is an integral component of foreign policy. We provide these reports as a form of comprehensive review and analysis.

The reports do not cover human rights in the United States, although this Administration has made a commitment to take a close and critical look at our own performance on these issues even as we cast a spotlight on the practices of other countries. In November, the United States presented its first report on human rights in the United States to the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in Geneva through the Universal Periodic Review. In preparation for that report we conducted extensive consultations in the United States with a wide range of civil society organizations and Native American leaders. Last month we appeared again at the

UNHRC meeting in Geneva to report our response to the recommendations made to us by other governments.

We also continually report on our human rights record pursuant to our treaty obligations. In January 2010, we submitted periodic reports on our implementation of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In 2011 we will be submitting periodic reports regarding implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention Against Torture, and the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. In 2010, for the first time, a section on the United States was included in the State Department's *Trafficking in Persons Report*, and the United States was ranked based on the same standards to which we hold other countries.

A final word about the production of these reports. These 194 country reports are comprehensive, if not exhaustive. Their production is a Herculean endeavor requiring extra-ordinary efforts by a team of talented and committed human rights officers at U.S. Embassies around the world, and by their counterparts in Washington, D.C., including the dedicated staff in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. Each country team collects, analyzes, and synthesizes information from a variety of sources, including domestic and international human rights organizations, other governments, multilateral organizations, and members of civil society. Once the reports are drafted, they are rigorously edited, reviewed, and fact-checked, to ensure accuracy and objectivity.

Country Highlights

In 2010, governments around the world continued to commit severe human rights violations and abuses. The paragraphs below describe the human rights situation and key trends in specific countries where abuses were especially serious. We also highlight Ukraine, where in 2010 there was backsliding after positive developments in previous years. The section begins with a discussion of several countries – Colombia, Guinea, Indonesia – that are highlighted for notable positive human rights developments in 2010.

Colombia is a country where there were notable improvements in the human rights situation in 2010. Soon after taking office in August, President Santos and his administration strengthened the government's relationship with civil society and human rights defenders, holding high-level consultative sessions, publicly expressing support for human rights defenders and engaging them in dialogue, and supporting efforts to increase penalties for threats and violence against human rights defenders. The government advanced a Land and Victims' Law to provide

for land restitution and victims' reparations. Extrajudicial executions decreased substantially from 2008 and 2009, and several senior military officers were convicted of human rights abuses. Some human rights abuses continued, such as some threats against human rights defenders and trade unionists. The Ministry of Defense began implementing an agreement with the office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to monitor ministry measures to improve adherence to human rights.

In December 2010, **Guinea** inaugurated its first democratically elected president since independence from France in 1958. The people selected longtime opposition leader Alpha Conde, the candidate of the Rally of the Guinean People Party, as their president following two rounds of elections. Although there was some violence following the second round, the elections generally were regarded as free and fair.

Respect for human rights in **Indonesia** continued to improve in 2010, 12 years after the country's transition to democracy. While weaknesses in the justice system persisted, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, democratically reelected in July 2009, remained a strong proponent of the rule of law and accountability and civil society, and the media remained among the most vibrant in Asia.

Professionalization of the military continued, although some serious human rights abuses by military personnel occurred, particularly in Papua, and punishments, when imposed, were often not commensurate with the crimes committed.

AFRICA

Cote d'Ivoire ended 2010 in a standoff over the presidency, following October elections in which incumbent President Laurent Gbagbo, candidate of the Ivoirian People's Front, and opposition party leader Alassane Ouattara, candidate of the Rally for Republicans, advanced to the November 28 presidential run-off. On December 2, the Independent Electoral Commission declared Ouattara the winner with 54.1 percent of the vote as compared with 45.9 percent for Gbagbo. The election was declared fair and democratic by the UN and international and domestic observer missions. Gbagbo refused to accept the results, alleging voter fraud and intimidation in several regions, and both Ouattara and Gbagbo took oaths of office on December 3. At year's end, President Ouattara operated his government from the Golf Hotel in Abidjan under a blockade from pro-Gbagbo forces. Gbagbo retained control of state resources including the national television station, the security forces, and the treasury. There were credible reports of human rights abuses during this time. On December 16, security forces fired on supporters of President Ouattara during a demonstration march. At least 20 persons were

killed, many more wounded, and hundreds arrested. In the one week period from December 15-22, the UN Operation in Cote d'Ivoire human rights division reported 173 persons killed, 90 subjected to torture and ill-treatment, 471 others arbitrarily arrested and detained, and 24 persons missing. The overwhelming majority of these cases of extrajudicial killings, torture, detention, and disappearance, were committed by security forces loyal to Gbagbo. Human rights violations which took place after December 31 are not documented in the 2010 report.

Serious human rights abuses continued throughout the **Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)**, particularly in the mineral rich, conflict-affected eastern and northeastern regions, where state authority remained non-existent or extremely weak. Human rights defenders have been intimidated, beaten, and, as in the case of prominent activist Floribert Chebeya, even killed. Armed entities—including elements of state security forces—perpetrated abuses with impunity and engaged in the illegal exploitation and trade of natural resources, particularly minerals. Revenues derived from the illicit trade in minerals, some of which supported armed conflict, fueled the continued insecurity in eastern DRC, aggravating an already precarious human rights situation. Rebel and militia groups in eastern DRC continued to engage in rape and looting campaigns in efforts to control communities residing near lucrative mining areas, and to reap mining-related profits that sustained the conflict and attendant abuses. Credible sources such as the UN Group of Experts on the DRC presented information indicating that some Congolese and international corporations' supply chains originated with suppliers who traded with armed entities—including elements of the state security forces—that committed serious human rights abuses.

Nigeria continued to be plagued by serious human rights abuses during the year. Security services personnel, including police, military, and State Security Service officers, committed extrajudicial killings and tortured, beat, and abused demonstrators, criminal suspects, detainees, and convicted prisoners. The Joint Task Force, formed in 2003 to address the instability in the Niger Delta and consisting of military, police, and security services, conducted raids on militant groups and criminal suspects, resulting in numerous deaths and injuries to both alleged criminals and civilians. Corruption was pervasive at all levels of government and throughout the security forces. Ethno-religious violence also resulted in deaths and displacement during the year. Jos and the surrounding farmlands were the site of two major attacks in January and March. Up to 1,000 individuals, mostly women, children, and the elderly, were murdered, hacked to death, or burned alive.

Violence continued in **Sudan** throughout 2010. Nationwide elections held in April were not deemed fair and free by the international community, and observers noted numerous problems throughout the process. In Darfur, fighting involving government, government-aligned militias, rebel groups, and ethnic groups continued to kill, injure, and displace civilians. This violence killed 2,321 persons during the year, according to the UN, an increase compared with the 875 persons killed in 2009. The government continued to conduct aerial bombardment. Gender-based violence, the use of child soldiers, and the obstruction of humanitarian organizations and the United Nations-African Union Hybrid Mission in Darfur continued to be problems. The government harassed, arrested, and beat civil society members in the north. In Southern Sudan, interethnic fighting and Lord's Resistance Army attacks continued to kill and displace civilians. According to UN estimates, violence in the south resulted in an estimated 986 deaths and the displacement of 223,708 persons during the year. Registration for the 2011 Southern Sudan self-determination referendum occurred in November and December. Lack of progress on preparations for a separate referendum on whether the border region of Abyei should be part of the north or the south led to sporadic violence and rising tensions in the area.

In **Zimbabwe**, security forces, police, and Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF)-dominated elements of the government continued to commit numerous, serious human rights violations with impunity, including torture, against non-ZANU-PF political activists and party members, student leaders, and civil society activists. ZANU-PF's dominant control and manipulation of the political process through trumped-up charges and arbitrary arrest, intimidation, and corruption effectively negated the right of citizens to change their government. Although there were fewer incidents in the first half of 2010, expectations that elections would be held in 2011 led to an increase in the number of cases of harassment and intimidation of civil society organizations and members of the media toward the end of the reporting period. The government continued to use repressive laws to suppress freedom of speech, including for members of the press, assembly, association, and movement. Military forces and other government agents also continued abuses in the Marange diamond fields.

EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Despite the release of Aung San Suu Kyi, over 2,100 political prisoners remained in custody in **Burma** at the end of 2010. Many civil society activists were detained indefinitely and without charges, and regime-sponsored organizations engaged in harassment and abuse of human rights and prodemocracy activists. The government routinely infringed on individual privacy and restricted the freedoms

of speech, press, assembly, association, religion, and movement. The government did not allow domestic human rights NGOs to function independently, and international NGOs encountered a difficult environment. The fall 2010 elections were neither free nor fair. The government continued its tight control of the activities of Buddhist clergy. Military forces in Burma continued to commit egregious abuses and violations against civilians in ethnic minority regions. These abuses included rape, torture, forced relocation, and forced labor. Violence and societal discrimination against women and minority religious communities continued, as did unlawful recruitment of child soldiers and trafficking in persons, particularly of women and girls. Workers' rights remained restricted and forced labor, including that of children, also persisted.

In **Cambodia**, members of security forces, acting with impunity, committed arbitrary killings. Human rights monitors reported arbitrary arrests and prolonged pretrial detention, underscoring a weak judiciary and denial of the right to a fair trial. Restrictions continued on freedom of assembly and expression, including for members of the press, and there was a growing abuse of defamation and disinformation lawsuits targeting opposition voices. Civil society expressed significant concern that the draft Law on Associations and NGOs could, if adopted, seriously constrain the ability of NGOs to operate. The draft law released in December included provisions that would impose burdensome reporting requirements on NGOs, prevent associations with fewer than 21 (later reduced to a still-onerous 11) members from attaining legal status, erect burdensome barriers to the registration of foreign NGOs, require foreign NGOs to collaborate with the government, and outlaw unregistered NGOs. Anti-union activity by employers and weak enforcement of labor laws continued, and exploitative child labor in the informal sector remained a problem.

In **China**, the negative trend in key areas of human rights continued. The government stepped up restrictions on lawyers, activists, bloggers, and journalists; tightened controls on civil society; and increased attempts to limit freedom of speech and control the press, the Internet, and Internet access in 2010. Authorities also increased the use of extralegal measures, including forced disappearances, strict house arrest, arbitrary detention in "black jails, and other forms of "soft detention" to silence independent voices and punish activists and their families. Legal activist Chen Guangcheng, along with his wife and child, remained under house arrest, as did other released political prisoners. Public interest lawyers, who operated within China's legal framework, were disbarred, beaten, or "disappeared" for taking on the defense of clients and issues deemed sensitive by the government. Bloggers and Web masters have been arrested and charged with "subverting state power" for re-tweeting a post or operating a Web site where others posted

comments. The government also continued its severe cultural and religious repression of ethnic minorities in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region and Tibetan areas.

In **North Korea**, the human rights situation remained grim. During the year, the government maintained tight control over the flow of information into and out of the country. The government denied its citizens the right to due process and arbitrarily arrested and detained individuals, including for political crimes. Defectors and NGOs indicated that severe and systematic human rights abuses occurred throughout the country's extensive network of prisons and detention centers. In addition, the government continued to enforce rigid controls over the freedoms of speech, press, assembly, association, religion, and movement and worker rights. There were no independent domestic human rights monitoring organizations, and the government denied international organizations and foreign NGOs access, making it impossible to assess accurately the true scope of the abuses occurring in the country or the validity of these reports.

The government of **Vietnam** continued to suppress dissent, tightened controls over the press, and limited the freedoms of expression, assembly, movement, and association. Individuals were arbitrarily detained for political activities and denied the right to fair and expeditious trials. The government arrested at least 25 political activists, convicted 14 dissidents arrested in 2008, 2009, and 2010, and denied the appeals of another 10 dissidents convicted at the end of 2009. The judicial system was strongly distorted by political influence, endemic corruption, and inefficiency. Freedom of religion continued to be subject to uneven interpretation and protection, particularly at the provincial and village levels. Internet freedom was further restricted as the government orchestrated attacks against critical Web sites and spied on dissident bloggers. The government limited workers' rights to form and join independent unions.

EUROPE

Authorities in **Belarus** arbitrarily arrested, detained, and imprisoned prodemocracy activists, journalists, and civil society representatives. In the wake of December 2010's flawed presidential election, authorities initiated a broad crackdown against demonstrators, detaining close to 700 persons and raiding offices and apartments belonging to members of independent media, NGOs, and the political opposition. Over 40 individuals, including several presidential candidates, now face up to 15 years in jail. Through its detentions and trials, the government of Belarus continually is creating new political prisoners. The judiciary lacked independence and suffered from corruption, inefficiency, and political interference; trial

outcomes were often predetermined, and many trials were conducted behind closed doors. Official corruption throughout the government continued to be a problem.

In **Russia**, the government infringed on freedom of expression, assembly, and association, detaining certain demonstrators and continuing to pressure select NGOs, independent media, some religious minorities, independent labor unions, and political opposition. Attacks on and the murder of journalists and activists continued. There were reports of physical abuse by law enforcement, military hazing deaths, and harsh prison conditions. Rule of law and due process violations remained a problem, and government corruption was widespread. Xenophobic, racial, and ethnic attacks and hate crimes continued to be a significant problem. The conflict between the government and insurgents, Islamist militants, and criminal forces in the North Caucasus led to numerous human rights violations by all parties, which reportedly engaged in killing, torture, abuse, violence, and politically motivated abductions.

In **Ukraine**, despite beginning with free and fair presidential elections, the overall trend for 2010 was negative due to problematic local elections, intimidation of the media, and perceived selective prosecution of opposition figures. International and domestic observers found the October local elections did not reach the same standards of the presidential election, citing the registration of fraudulent opposition candidate lists, government pressure against election monitors and candidates, and election officials selectively barring or removing candidates from ballots— all prompting concern about the government's planned next steps for election reform. In addition, there were numerous reports that authorities attempted to direct media content and intimidate journalists. Although the government took steps in 2009 to better combat corruption, the international community expressed concern that politics motivated the new government's 2010 criminal investigation of 30 members of the previous government for alleged corruption; several of these people were detained and subsequently charged.

NEAR EAST

Political tensions flared in the weeks preceding the October elections in **Bahrain**. The government arrested more than 200 Shia men it accused of inciting or involvement in street violence. Those arrested included some, but not all, of the leaders of two groups, Haq and Wafa', which reject the monarchy and had called for a boycott of the elections. The government charged 23 of those arrested with involvement in a "terror network" pursuant to the 2006 counterterrorism law. The electoral process also was marred by the government's banning of the two main legal opposition parties' Web sites and newsletters. The government did not allow

international observers to monitor the elections. The government also continued to restrict freedom of assembly and association. Security forces intervened in demonstrations and limited and controlled political gatherings during the year. NGOs and civil society groups were required to register with the government and provide membership lists. In September, the Ministry of Social Development effectively shuttered a local human rights organization, Bahrain Human Rights Society, when a ministerial decree ordered the dissolution of the society's board of directors and appointed a ministry employee to be the group's interim head.

According to multiple sources, the Government of **Iran** executed approximately 312 persons in summary executions during the year, many after trials that were conducted in secret and/or did not provide due process. In many cases, persons executed supposedly for criminal offenses such as narcotics trafficking were actually political dissidents. Authorities held political prisoners and continued to crack down on women's rights reformers, ethnic minority rights activists, student activists, and religious minorities. There was little judicial independence and few fair public trials. The government severely restricted the right to privacy and civil liberties, including freedoms of expression, including for members of the press, assembly, association, and movement, and it placed severe restrictions on freedom of religion. Vigilantes continued to attack young persons considered "un-Islamic" in their dress or activities, invade private homes, abuse unmarried couples, and disrupt concerts. Violence and legal and societal discrimination against women, children, ethnic and religious minorities, and LGBT persons persisted.

While the credible and legitimate national parliamentary elections in all 18 provinces on March 7 reflected a significant achievement in advancing the exercise of human rights, extremist violence, coupled with weak government performance in upholding the rule of law, resulted in widespread and severe human rights abuses in **Iraq**. There were reports that the government or its agents committed numerous arbitrary or unlawful killings, arbitrary detentions, and acts of torture connected to its security operations, often with impunity. Attacks by al-Qaida in Iraq and other extremists continued against Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), government officials, and civilians, often targeting urban areas, Christian churches, Shia markets, and mosques. On May 10, coordinated bombings and shootings resulted in at least 119 fatalities, including ISF and law enforcement personnel. On August 17, a suicide bomber blew himself up in a crowd of army recruits in Baghdad, killing 61 persons. During the year, 962 Ministry of Interior personnel were killed and 1,347 were injured. Police officers, in particular, were targeted.

In **Libya**, Colonel al-Qadhafi and his close associates monopolized every aspect of decision-making in the government. Continuing human rights problems included

torture, arbitrary arrest, official impunity, and poor prison conditions. A large but unknown number of persons remained in detention or prison for engaging in peaceful political activity or for belonging to an illegal political organization. The government significantly restricted media freedom and continued to restrict freedom of expression, and routinely monitored telephone calls and Internet usage, including e-mail communication with foreign countries. There also was physical surveillance of political activists and foreign organizations. The government owned and controlled virtually all print and broadcast media, and government-controlled media neither published nor broadcast opinions inconsistent with official policy. The Internal Security Organization routinely harassed journalists, and overly broad provisions of the penal code served as the basis for frequent charges of criminal defamation. The government severely restricted freedom of assembly and permitted public assembly only with advance approval. The government restricted the right of association and generally only allowed institutions affiliated with the government to operate; no NGOs functioned in the country. In the early months of 2011, protests erupted across Libya. Because they occurred outside of the reporting period, they are not documented in the 2010 report.

In **Syria**, security forces committed unlawful killings, detained political and human rights activists, and tortured and physically abused prisoners and detainees with impunity. The government also imprisoned several high-profile members of the human rights and civil society communities, in addition to the estimated 2,500 – 3,000 political prisoners previously detained. Lengthy pretrial and incommunicado detention remained a serious problem, and the courts systematically used "confessions" extracted under duress as evidence. Defendants' claims of torture were almost never investigated. The government severely restricted universal freedoms of expression, assembly and association, religion, and movement.

SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA

An increasingly difficult security situation in **Afghanistan** resulted in a number of serious human rights abuses. Civilians continued to suffer from intensified armed conflict as conflict-related deaths increased by 15 percent during the year compared to 2009. Government and progovernment international forces were responsible for civilian deaths, specifically 16 percent of total civilian deaths. Human Rights Watch reported that timely and transparent inquiries or accountability of forces in the event of wrong-doing were often lacking when civilians were hurt or killed. Taliban and insurgent attacks, including politically targeted killings, escalated in both number and intensity. At least 30 individuals were killed on September 18, the day of parliamentary elections, and the Taliban

claimed responsibility for killing three candidates during the campaign period between July and August. In August, five campaign workers supporting Fauwzia Gilani in Herat were abducted and killed. There were also attacks on election officials. The elections themselves were marred by electoral fraud and widespread irregularities, including the establishment of a special tribunal to investigate the election results and complaints; low voter turnout; and insufficient conditions for participation by women. The government was plagued by official impunity and corruption and often failed to conduct effective investigations of human rights abuses committed by local security forces. Arbitrary arrest and detention remained a problem, and the judiciary lacked independence. Freedom of religion, including the right to change one's religion, was severely restricted. Women continued to face pervasive human rights abuses, including violence, insurgent attacks on girls' education, limited access to justice, and other limitations on their rights.

In **Pakistan**, allegations of extrajudicial killings and detention of civilians by the security forces were reported by several media outlets and NGOs. During the year, there was a significant increase in the total number of reported torture and rape cases of individuals in custody, almost double as compared to 2009. The Society for Human Rights and Prisoners' Aid reported 72 civilian deaths after encounters with police and 168 deaths in jails, an increase from the previous year. Militant and terrorist bombings in all four provinces and in Federally Administered Tribal Areas continued to result in deaths and injuries. According to the report, terrorist and extremist attacks and operations to combat terrorism and extremism resulted in 7,400 deaths, of which nearly 1,800 were civilians, over 450 were security forces, and over 5,100 were terrorists or insurgents. There were numerous reports of politically motivated killings in Karachi and Balochistan. According to a report by *Dawn*, 1,981 persons were killed in political violence in Karachi, of which 748 were targeted killings. According to Human Rights Watch, the targeted killing and disappearance of Baloch leaders, activists, and civilians increased in 2010. Religious freedom violations and violence and discrimination against religious minorities continued. Some people accused of blasphemy against Islam were sentenced to life imprisonment or capital punishment. One of them was Aasia Bibi, a Christian woman, who was sentenced to death in November, becoming the first woman to receive such a harsh sentence for blasphemy.

Uzbekistan continued to incarcerate individuals on political grounds. While one political prisoner, human rights activist Farhad Mukhtarov, was released during the year, 13 to 25 political prisoners remained in custody, and family members reported that many prisoners were tortured. Human rights activists, their family members, and members of certain religious groups reported harassment and arrest by police and other members of the security forces. Freedom of expression was

severely limited and harassment of journalists increased during the year. Police and security services subjected print and broadcast journalists to arrest, intimidation, and violence, as well as to bureaucratic restrictions on their activity. The criminal and administrative codes imposed significant fines for libel and defamation and the government used charges of libel, slander, and defamation to punish journalists, human rights activists, and others who criticized the president or the government. Freedom of association also was restricted. The government tightly controlled NGO activity and regulated Islamic and minority religious groups with strict legal restrictions on the types of groups that could be formed and registered. Forced adult and child labor was used during the cotton harvest.

WESTERN HEMISPHERE

The government of **Cuba** released more than 40 political prisoners during the reporting period, including many notable human rights activists arrested in 2003, although most were released on the condition that they leave the country. Cuba continued to hold dozens of other political prisoners. The government suppressed human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of speech, the press, assembly and association, movement, and religion. Human rights groups noted a marked increase in the use of short-term detentions designed to disrupt the work of civil society and harass activists. In addition, the government continued to stage public protests to harass and abuse activists and their families, particularly the Damas de Blanco ("Ladies in White"). Although the government characterized the mobs as spontaneous, participants frequently arrived in government-owned vehicles or were recruited by local Communist Party leaders from nearby workplaces or schools. In extreme cases, government-orchestrated mobs assaulted these individuals or damaged their homes or property. Members of the security forces monitored, harassed, and sometimes physically assaulted human rights and prodemocracy advocates, dissidents, independent journalists, detainees, and prisoners, and did so with impunity. The government did not recognize independent journalism, and subjected some independent journalists to travel bans, detentions, harassment, equipment seizures, and threats of imprisonment. Unauthorized assemblies of more than three persons can be punished by up to three months in prison and a fine, although these meetings were more likely to be broken up than prosecuted.

Respect for human rights and democratic institutions deteriorated over the past year in **Nicaragua**. Protesting opposition party members were denied freedom of assembly. March 2010 regional elections on the Caribbean coast were marred by allegations of widespread irregularities, and credible domestic NGOs were denied permission to monitor the election. Other issues include politicization of the

judiciary and other government organs, substantial government interference with media freedom, and harassment of NGOs and journalists. Police did not protect demonstrators who protested government policies and allowed progovernment groups to engage in violent activities. The government continued to criticize religious leaders who expressed concerns about government practices and policies that affected public participation and democratic freedoms. Government officials publicly excoriated Catholic Church officials who denounced the manipulation of the electoral process.

In **Venezuela**, the government used the judiciary to intimidate and persecute individuals and organizations that criticized government policies or actions, including peaceful protesters, journalists, a judge, members of opposition political parties, NGOs, union and business leaders, and ordinary citizens. Government officials also restricted freedom of expression, harassing and intimidating privately owned television stations, media outlets, and journalists through threats, property seizures, targeted regulations, and criminal investigations and prosecutions. In late December the National Assembly adopted a package of laws that further undermined democratic principles and practices in Venezuela, including a law delegating legislative authority to the executive that extended beyond the term of office of the outgoing National Assembly, in violation of the shared values of the Inter-American Democratic Charter, and laws imposing new restrictions on the independent media, the Internet, political parties, and NGOs.