

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE



SUPPORTING HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY:

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



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

THE U.S. RECORD 2005- 2006

“All who live in tyranny and hopelessness can know: the United States will not ignore your oppression, or excuse your oppressors. When you stand for your liberty, we will stand with you.”

President George W. Bush

2005 Inaugural Address



SUPPORTING HUMAN
RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY:
THE U.S. RECORD 2005 - 2006

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“I would define the objective of transformational diplomacy this way: To work with our many partners around the world to build and sustain democratic, well-governed states that will respond to the needs of their people — and conduct themselves responsibly in the international system... Transformational diplomacy is rooted in partnership, not paternalism — in doing things *with* other people, not *for* them. We seek to use America’s diplomatic power to help foreign citizens to better their *own* lives, and to build their *own* futures.”

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice

PREFACE

Today, in growing numbers across the globe, men and women are pressing for their rights to be respected and their governments to be responsive, for their voices to be heard and their votes to count, for just laws and justice for all. Growing also is the recognition that democracy is the form of government that can, over time, best meet the demands of citizens for dignity, liberty, and equality.

As President Bush stated in his second inaugural address, "... it is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world."



In the Broader Middle East, the past year saw indigenous calls for democratic reform, the beginnings of political pluralism, unprecedented elections, and some new protections for women and minorities. The people of Iraq went to the polls three times and held to democracy's course despite high levels of violence. The men and women of Afghanistan cast their ballots countrywide in the first free legislative elections since 1969, even as the Government struggled to expand its authority over provincial centers.

The first post-conflict elections in Liberia resulted in Africa's first elected female head of state, marking a milestone in Liberia's transition from civil war to democracy. Latin American and Caribbean democracies continued to confront the challenges of strengthening weak institutions, fighting corruption, and redressing social inequality. Ukraine's new government, reflecting the democratic will of the people, made notable improvements in human rights performance. And Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim majority country, strengthened the architecture of its democratic system when, for the first time, citizens directly elected their leaders at the city, regency, and provincial levels.

Meanwhile, from Burma to Belarus, China to Cuba, North Korea to Syria, and Iran to Zimbabwe, courageous men and women suffered persecution for exercising their fundamental freedoms of expression, association, assembly, and movement, and against great odds continued to work for peaceful change.

This report describes the many ways American foreign policy helped citizens and governments around the globe turn their increasing demands for human rights and democracy into programs of action.

Condoleezza Rice
Secretary of State

U.S. HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY STRATEGY

The United States applies a wide range of diplomatic tools in support of human rights and democracy across the globe. This report summarizes our strategy in every region, and describes what we did to support indigenous reform efforts in 95 countries over the past year.

As President Bush has said in January 2005: “Freedom, by its nature, must be chosen, and defended by citizens, and sustained by the rule of law and the protection of minorities. ... America will not impose our own style of government on the unwilling. Our goal instead is to help others find their own voice, attain their own freedom, and make their own way.”

To further that goal, the United States responded to the growing global demand for greater personal and political freedom by supporting the efforts of those calling for reform. We stood in solidarity with the brave men and women around the world who were persecuted by repressive regimes for exercising their rights. By on-the-ground interaction with government officials, civil society organizations and individuals, and through multilateral engagement on the regional and global levels, we defended international human rights standards and advanced democratic principles.

So that fellow democracies can better deliver democracy’s blessings to their people, we helped them strengthen their institutions of government and sink deeper roots for the rule of law. We encouraged the full participation of all citizens, including women and minorities, in the public life of their countries. To ensure that the will of the people would prevail, we promoted political pluralism and helped to level playing fields so that elections would meet international standards. We called to account democratically elected governments that did not govern democratically. And, as they came under siege in many countries around the world, we championed the vital contributions to democracy of independent media and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

In Fiscal Year 2005, the United States budgeted \$1.4 billion for human rights and democracy programming. We also fostered democratic reform efforts through well targeted development assistance, such as the innovative Millennium Challenge Account, which links a country’s eligibility for poverty alleviation funding to good governance. At the same time, we continued to bring economic sanctions to bear on systematic human rights violators like the Burmese and Cuban regimes. In concert with the Group of 8 industrialized nations (G-8) and regional governments and NGOs, the United States launched two new institutions to foster indigenous reform in the Broader Middle East and North Africa -- the Foundation for the Future, which supports civil society; and the Fund for the Future, which supports investment. Finally, the United States sought to make international institutions more effective defenders and supporters of human rights and democracy. To that end, in Fiscal Year 2005 we provided \$10 million to the United Nations Democracy Fund and pressed for the creation of a new, credible Human Rights Council at the United Nations that excludes the worst violators.

In all of these efforts on behalf of human rights and democracy, the United States welcomed the partnership of other governments and we sought the ideas and expertise of NGOs that do the hard work of defending human rights and building democracy citizen by citizen, institution by institution, and country by country each and every day.

PURPOSE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2005-2006

This report is submitted to the Congress by the Department of State in compliance with Section 665 of P.L. 107-228, the Fiscal Year 2003 Foreign Relations Authorization Act, which requires the Department to report on actions taken by the U.S. Government to encourage respect for human rights. This fourth annual submission complements the longstanding Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2005, and takes the next step, moving from highlighting abuses to reporting the actions and programs the United States has employed to end those abuses.

Unlike the 196 Country Reports, *Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2005-2006* highlights U.S. efforts to promote human rights and democracy in only 95 countries and entities – those facing the most serious human rights challenges. References to Hong Kong and Tibet have been incorporated into the China report. To make this report consistent with the criteria in the legislation, this year's report also deletes a number of countries: Albania, Argentina, and Macedonia.

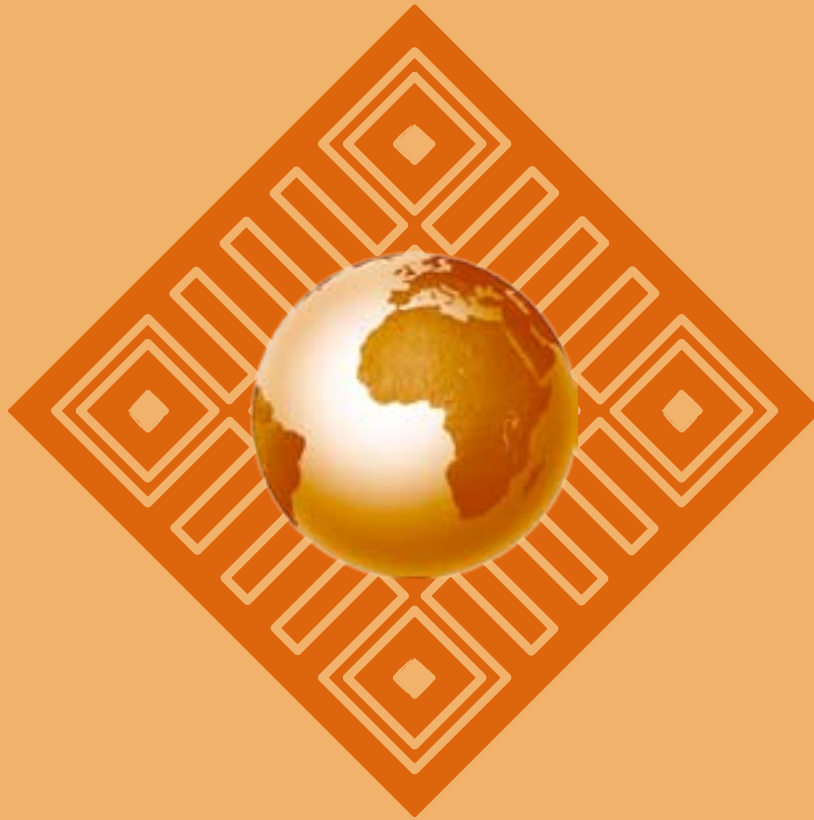
Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2005-2006 reflects the dedicated effort of hundreds of officials from State Department, U.S. Agency for International Development and other U.S. Government agencies, as well as the employees of numerous NGOs. U.S. Embassies and Consulates prepared the initial drafts of the reports. After the posts 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 bureaus and offices, and other Federal Departments and Agencies. As they worked to analyze and edit the reports, Department officers drew on their own knowledge of U.S. Government programs and activities.

Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2005-2006 will be used as a resource for shaping policy, conducting diplomacy and making assistance, training, and other resource allocations. It will also serve as a basis for the U.S. Government's cooperation with private groups to promote the observance of internationally recognized human rights and democracy. As United States officials consider how best to advance the President's foreign policy goals, they adhere to relevant legislation. A list of significant legislation can be found at www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/42314.htm.

Within the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, the editorial staff of the report consists of: Editor in Chief – Oscar DeSoto; Senior Editorial Advisors – Barry F. Lowenkron, Jonathan Farrar, Erica Barks-Ruggles, Jeffrey Krilla, Nicole Bibbins Sedaca, Lynne Davidson; Deputy Editor in Chief and Producer – Kari Johnstone; Senior Producer – Sally I. Buikema; Senior Editors and Deputy Producers – Pamela Erickson, Amy Schmisser, Rana Siu; Senior Editors: Meghan Brown, Jerome Hoganson, Ann Marie Jackson, Sandra Murphy, Julie Turner; Editors – Kent Brokenshire, Elise Carlson, Samuel Chang, Cheryl Clayton, Jeannette Davis, Caitlin Fitzpatrick, Saba Ghorri, Karen Gilbride, David Goldberg, Vanessa Golding, Patrick Harvey, Kathleen Kerr, Catherine Kuchta-Helbling, Michael Michener, Jennie Munoz, Thy Nguyen, Meagan Oates, Michael Orona, Susan O'Sullivan, Sarah Fox Ozkan, Wendy B. Silverman, Nicole Wilet; Editorial Assistants – Joseph Barghout, Philip Barth, Steven Brattain, Kara Cumberland, Kendra Davis, Douglas Dearborn, Victor Huser, Michael Mates, Julietta Noyes, Gianni Paz, LeRoy G. Potts, Vitessa Del Prete, Sarah Ryman, Deborah Schneider, James Todd; Public and Congressional Affairs Officers and Assistants – Elyse Bauer, Carol Finerty, Camille Goldberg, Eunice Johnson, Sarah Lohmann, Jeremy Moon, Sam Porter; Publication and Technical Officers – Patricia Adams, Roberta Mather, and for the Bureau of Public Affairs, Janice Clark and Monica Roll.

AFRICA





“Let us be proud that we were able to ultimately rise above our intense political and other differences in a renewed determination as a people to foster dialogue instead of violence, promote unity rather than disharmony, and engender hope rather than disillusionment and despair.”

Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf
President of Liberia

*Supporters sing and dance in Liberia following the announcement of final results that ensured the election of the first woman president of Africa.
(AP Photo)*



AFRICA

AFRICA

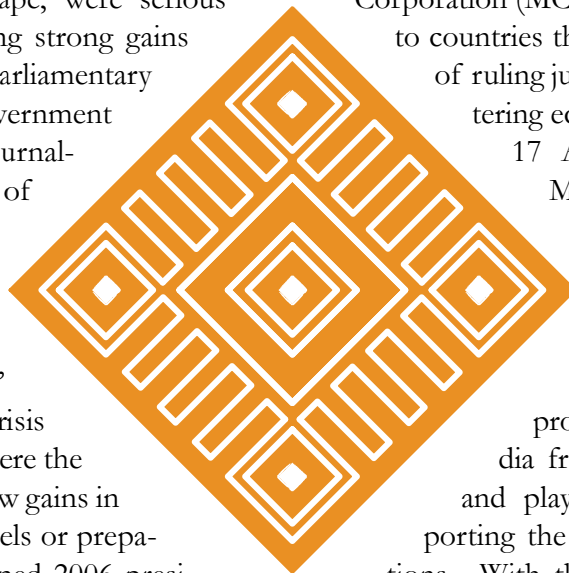
Across the political and human landscape of sub-Saharan Africa, the United States promoted human rights and democracy as its primary foreign policy objective. It advanced good governance through a variety of approaches, including strong diplomatic representation, trade incentives, and grassroots programs that carried the message of democracy to the village level. In 2005, these initiatives led to numerous gains throughout the region. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, U.S. support to the Independent Electoral Commission helped register 25 million voters across 11 provinces for the country's successful December 2005 constitutional referendum and the presidential election scheduled to take place before June 30, 2006. U.S. support for national elections in Liberia, which included strengthening political parties, promoting voter registration, and training polling officials, assisted the country's democratic development.

Despite these accomplishments, serious challenges remained and significant violations of human rights continued. In Darfur, the Sudanese Government, Government-supported militia, and Darfur rebel movements committed serious human rights and humanitarian law abuses. Violence against women and girls, including widespread rape, were serious problems in Sudan. Following strong gains by opposition parties in parliamentary elections in Ethiopia, the Government arrested opposition leaders, journalists, and prominent members of civil society. The Government of Ethiopia charged these individuals with capital offenses ranging from "outrages against the constitution" to genocide. The political crisis continued in Cote d'Ivoire, where the Gbagbo Government made few gains in either peace talks with the rebels or preparations for the country's planned 2006 presidential election.

To promote human rights in Africa, the United States

offered strong incentives for African governments to move toward political openness through the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), which carries a strong democracy and human rights component and provides significant trade benefits to eligible countries. In addition, the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) granted substantial assistance to countries that pursued reforms in the areas of ruling justly, investing in people, and fostering economic freedom. During 2005, 17 African countries qualified for MCC compact or threshold program eligibility.

To promote durable peace and free democracy in Burundi, the United States initiated programs aimed at enhancing media freedom and freedom of speech and played an important role in supporting the country's successful 2005 elections. With these elections, Burundi became the first sub-Saharan country since South Africa to move from minority rule to democratic majority rule through negotiations and democratic elections.





The United States actively supported peace talks in Sudan that led to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, ending 22 years of civil war. The United States continued to support the formation of the Government of National Unity, while vigorously pressing Khartoum and rebel forces alike to end the continuing violence in Darfur.

Many U.S. initiatives in sub-Saharan Africa were designed to chip away at the foundations of totalitarian rule, to open up political space, and to encourage silent voices to speak out. In Zimbabwe, where fraudulent senate elections further tightened President Mugabe's grip on power, the U.S. Government hosted two conferences that highlighted the lack of press freedom and provided uncensored news to the Zimbabwean public through radio broadcasts of the Voice of America. In addition, U.S.-funded NGOs

disseminated information on human rights and civil society. In Equatorial Guinea, U.S. action led to the Government's signing of a "Social Needs Fund" to accelerate the investment of the country's vast oil revenues to address health, education, women's issues, and sanitation. The United States also worked with opposition parties, civil society, youth, and media to encourage their participation in the expansion of democracy and respect for human rights.

In the struggle to promote democracy and respect for human rights and workers' rights in Africa the closest allies of the United States are the region's democratic governments themselves. The United States continues to work closely with freely elected governments everywhere to ensure that human freedom becomes an African reality.



Human rights training for future security and police officers. (U.S. Department of State)

Finding Common Ground With Angolan Civil Society

To support Angolans seeking to promote peace and reconciliation in their country following 27 years of civil war, the U.S.-funded NGO Search for Common Ground (SFCG) developed a project aimed to build the capacity of civil society and political institutions to address and resolve conflict. SFCG civil society workshops improved local groups' conflict resolution abilities by training individuals in skills needed to identify the root causes of conflict; develop strategies for appropriate intervention through mediation, facilitation, and negotiation; and craft community programs to resolve specific conflicts, including resource distribution and returnee reintegration.

In addition, the SFCG project fortified important linkages between civil society, government, political parties, and security forces. By collaborating to solve different problems affecting local communities, Angolan citizens at all levels of society worked to build peace and stability in the country.

Another essential component of the SFCG project was to provide training for Angolan high school students destined to become future police and military personnel. Workshops developed students' ability to resolve conflicts through nonviolent means and broadened their knowledge and understanding of human rights.



Angola

Since the end of its protracted civil war four years ago, Angola has experienced relative peace and social and political stability. International and domestic efforts contributed to the demobilization and reintegration of National Union for Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) combatants, and UNITA is now a disarmed opposition political party. Resettlement of internally displaced persons to their places of origin and the return of thousands of refugees from neighboring countries continued. While the Government's human rights record showed improvements in a few areas, serious problems remained. There were reports of unlawful killings, disappearances, torture, and abuse of persons. Arbitrary arrest and lengthy pretrial detention were problems. The court system did not always ensure due process and remained inefficient and overburdened. The Government continued to limit media access in the provinces and to place impediments to some political demonstrations.

The U.S. strategy for improving human rights and democratic governance in Angola focused on preparing stakeholders for upcoming elections, supporting independent media, strengthening civil society, fostering greater transparency, and supporting the rule of law. To reach these goals, the Embassy partnered with the Government and several international and local NGOs.

The establishment of strong democratic norms and institutions is a critical component of U.S. policy in Angola. During a May 2004 meeting with President Bush, Angolan President Jose Eduardo dos Santos committed to hold elections by 2006. The Government took important steps during 2005 to prepare for the elections, including the passage of electoral laws and constituting a National Election Commission; however, the electoral calendar has not been announced.

During the year, the United States supported projects to prepare civil society organizations and political parties for national elections. U.S. funds supported the expansion and consolidation of various national election networks critical to broadening citizen in-

volvement in the election process throughout Angola's 18 provinces. These networks held more than 40 town hall meetings that brought political party officials and 4,150 community members together. The United States also supported training and technical assistance for political parties at the national and provincial levels on issues such as platform development, message delivery, and constituency relations. Other U.S.-funded programs facilitated comprehensive debates over electoral rules and regulations. Both civil society groups and political parties played significant roles in these debates. Civil society organizations successfully lobbied for changes to the law on electoral observation that will allow local NGOs, as well as political parties and international observers, to serve as observers throughout electoral preparations and actual voting. Opposition parties worked with the ruling Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) party to pass a largely consensual package of electoral laws.

The United States continued to support independent media in 2005. In October, the Embassy, in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Communication, organized a high-level training program attended by more than 100 press spokespersons, senior journalists, and media executives. The training session focused on how to manage a press office and work more successfully with international and local press. The Embassy assisted the Angolan Syndicate of Journalists and the Inter-Ecclesiastical Committee for Peace in Angola to provide media training and organize community forums and radio debates in order to prepare more than 100 journalists in four provinces for upcoming elections. Three senior journalists traveled to the United States as part of the International Visitors Leadership Program. The United States supported the establishment of an independent media organization, MultiPress, to produce accurate and timely news and information broadcast by Voice of America. For many Angolans, particularly rural residents, these broadcasts are the only independent source of information on issues that impact their lives. MultiPress established correspondents in all 18 provinces and produced more than 3,060 news broadcasts, information spots, debates, and interviews on key democratic governance issues such as land rights, rights to

education, political and electoral processes, access to information, and transparency. In discussions with President dos Santos and the Ministry of Social Communications, the Embassy advocated for the expansion of independent radio broadcasts to the provinces, including those of the largest nongovernmental radio network, Radio Ecclesia. The Embassy helped local NGOs implement human rights awareness programs focusing on critical issues, including transparency, education, and democratic principles. These NGOs reached out to more than 32,000 local citizens through town meetings, seminars, advocacy campaigns, workshops, and debates. The United States funded a monthly educational newsletter on human rights with a circulation of 26,000.

The Embassy began new conflict mitigation and peace building activities at the local level. These programs helped create and train 56 community development groups to work in partnership with local government administrations to define and address their specific needs and priorities.

To foster transparency, the Embassy worked with the Ministry of Finance (MOF) to implement a Fiscal Programming Unit (FPU). The mandate of the FPU is to strengthen fiscal management in the MOF throughout the government's budgeting process. This program recruited five professional staff members, developed a detailed training program, and completed cataloging the Public Administrative Accounts, which represented more than 60 percent of the government's total expenditures.

Improvement of the legal system is a critical factor in the political and economic development of Angola. To help develop the legal system, the U.S.-funded Commercial Law Development Program (CLDP) provided training and consultative services to judges and court clerks. Over the past four years, CLDP has assisted the Ministry of Justice to improve its judicial system by focusing on procedural issues of the courts. CLDP trained 30 senior court clerks to improve court administration in the provincial and municipal courts of Benguela and Lobito, provided technical skills to ensure random assignment of judges, and helped establish a system for the tracking of cases and the con-

tinuous accountability of documents. The Embassy, the Ministry of Justice, and the Portuguese Government formalized plans during the year to provide the hardware, software, and training necessary to computerize the Angolan case management system.

The Embassy continued to focus on human rights throughout 2005, consistently underscoring the important connection between support for human rights and a strong relationship with the United States. The Embassy regularly discussed human rights issues with government officials at all levels and frequently traveled outside of the capital to discuss human rights issues.

The Embassy continued to monitor the human rights situation throughout the country, focusing on Cabinda, Lunda Norte, and Lunda Sul provinces. The Ambassador encouraged human rights training for military officials in Cabinda. The United States sent 29 police officers to International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) training and helped an Angolan ILEA alumni group conduct in-service training for colleagues. The United States also supported a program that conducted six human rights training sessions for 195 students in local high schools, whose graduates frequently join the police or military.

Burkina Faso

On November 13, President Blaise Compaore was elected to a third five-year term in elections characterized by observers as generally free but not entirely fair due to the resource advantages held by the President. The country's human rights record remained poor, but there were improvements in some areas, including significant efforts to combat female genital mutilation and trafficking in persons (TIP). The judiciary is subject to executive influence, and individual members of security forces continue to commit human rights abuses.

The United States focused its strategy to promote democracy and human rights in Burkina Faso on diplomatic and programmatic measures to support free and fair presidential elections in November 2005 and



municipal elections in March 2006, and to promote the Government's compliance with international human rights norms. The United States also emphasized accountability and transparency in governance, enhancing capacity building of political parties, and further easing political tensions.

The United States funded a program to build capacity in political parties and to promote inter-party dialogue in order to maximize the competitiveness of the 2005 presidential and 2006 municipal elections. The program targeted upgrading the political and organizational skills of opposition parties, which had captured 49% of the seats in the May 2002 parliamentary elections. This program generated good will from civil society and political parties while garnering respect from the Government and the ruling party, Congress for Democracy and Progress (CDP). The program involved participants from the entire political spectrum, including members of the CDP and members of the moderate and radical opposition.

The United States allocated funds to produce radio programs on human rights as well as television commercials to encourage voting and explain the electoral process. The United States also funded the translation of human rights declarations into local languages, the development of the judicial system as it relates to the rights of women, seminars on electoral law and the proper submission of legal challenges to dubious election results, and the promotion of tolerance through a summer camp for Koranic school students.

As part of the International Visitors Leadership Program (IVLP), the Embassy sent a number of professionals in the areas of democracy, good governance, conflict resolution, civic education, and journalism to the United States. The United States also sent three participants on an IVLP about Islam in a democracy.

The United States provided funding to three Burkinabe organizations to monitor the 2005 presidential and 2006 municipal elections. The organizations presented their reports to the public. The United States funded several workshops for children on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, and several work-

shops for women on their rights and the importance of procuring legal documents such as national identification cards.

The United States provided training to military personnel and civilians on maintaining civilian control over the military in a democracy and the legal implications of the war on terror.

The United States sponsored a number of workshops and discussions exploring different religions and the importance of tolerance. The Embassy regularly met with Burkina Faso's Muslim community for discussions and exchanges. During the recent month of Ramadan, the Embassy hosted three Iftaar dinners during which American-Muslim employees of the Embassy shared experiences as a Muslim in America.

In addition, the United States funded several projects in the fight against TIP. A Burkinabe NGO rehabilitated and reintegrated 70 repatriated children in two U.S.-funded centers. The same NGO is also producing a documentary on local anti-trafficking laws. The United States also funded the translation of already-existing French language anti-trafficking films into local languages. Additionally, the United States is midway through a multi-year project intended to reduce child trafficking by creating locally relevant curricula in rural schools. The United States funded a program to combat child labor in the mining sector with the International Labor Organization (ILO) as an implementing partner.

Burundi

In 2005, Burundi completed its political transition as the first sub-Saharan African country since South Africa to move from minority rule to democratic, majority rule via negotiations and elections. The electoral process began in February with the adoption of a Constitution, continued in May, June, and July with local and legislative elections, and culminated on August 26 with the inauguration of Pierre Nkurunziza as Burundi's first democratically elected President since 1993. International observers monitored the

elections and judged them to have been free and fair. Despite the change in government and an increase in respect for political rights following the adoption of the new Constitution, Burundi's human rights record remained poor. Security forces continued to commit numerous arbitrary and unlawful killings. There were credible reports of disappearances, and security forces continued to torture, beat, and otherwise abuse persons. Credible reports documented the rape of women and girls by security forces acting with impunity. Despite some improvements, prison conditions remained very poor. Impunity and the continuing lack of accountability for those who committed past abuses remained serious problems. Arbitrary arrest and lengthy pretrial detention were problems, and there were reports of incommunicado detention. The court system did not always ensure due process or provide citizens with fair trials. Freedom of the press worsened, primarily amid electoral tensions. Refugee and asylum seeker rights deteriorated markedly, and the Government cooperated to a much lesser extent with UN agencies and international organizations aiding refugees and asylum seekers. Rebel forces of the PALIPEHUTU-FNL, the only remaining rebel group, continued to commit numerous serious human rights abuses against civilians, including killings, kidnappings, rapes, theft, extortion, forced labor, and the forcible recruitment and employment of children as child soldiers.

U.S. human rights and democracy goals in Burundi included helping build a just and lasting peace based on democratic principles, protecting human rights, and relieving human suffering. These goals were supported by U.S. efforts to strengthen newly created and newly elected governing bodies, decrease corruption, strengthen civil society, promote ethnic, political, and regional reconciliation, support victims of torture, and reintegrate ex-combatants and former child soldiers. The United States engaged government officials and political party leaders to ensure respect for Burundi's transitional power-sharing arrangements and directly supported the conduct of free and fair elections. The United States also supported a variety of programs to promote media freedom and the freedom of speech, strengthen civil society, and mitigate local conflicts, including conflicts over national resources. To pro-

tect individual rights during the ongoing conflict, the Embassy raised specific cases and broader patterns of abuses with government leaders.

The United States supported the electoral process by providing training, electoral materials, and technical support to the National Independent Election Commission for a constitutional referendum and subsequent local and national level elections. The Embassy also helped coordinate electoral observation with international partners.

The United States advocated respect for freedom of speech and supported the strengthening of independent media organizations. When Etienne Ndikuriyo, a radio journalist and editor of an Internet-based newssheet, was arrested in June for writing that then-President Domitien Ndayizeye suffered from depression, the Embassy lobbied government officials for his release. Faced with increasing local and international condemnation, the Government released Ndikuriyo after nine days of detention.

The United States provided financial and material support to independent radio stations, as well as to the government's radio and television conglomerate. This financial and material support allowed them to produce programs focused on human rights issues, community reconciliation, conflict mitigation, and the promotion of democratic principles. In addition, U.S.-supported partners joined with other independent media to broadcast candidate debates and provide nationwide reporting throughout the electoral cycle. The Embassy also funded a series of seminars for local journalists and government officials that focused on freedom of the press, ethics in journalism, and media-government relations.

The United States funded programs to promote democracy and human rights through U.S.-based NGOs and supported local civil society organizations. These programs supported community associations that lobbied for women's rights; trained local officials and citizens in conflict prevention, mitigation, and mediation techniques; and encouraged the participation of civil society organizations in Burundi's peace process and the process of legislative reforms.



A woman casts her ballot during parliamentary elections in Burundi. (AP Photo)

In the provinces of Gitega, Ruyigi, and Karuzi, U.S. assistance to NGOs aided victims of war and former combatants returning to civilian life. Returning refugees and internally displaced persons were assisted in reintegrating into their communities. Former rebel and army soldiers, including child soldiers, were provided with vocational skills training as well as training on human rights and conflict resolution.

The United States also financed a variety of smaller projects that advanced the interests of women, children, and the Twa minority group while promoting democratic values, good governance, human rights, conflict resolution, acceptable prison conditions, peace, and reconciliation.

The United States funded programs that provided medical, legal, and psychological support to victims of torture and rape and supported human rights monitoring and advocacy on issues related to torture.

The United States regularly raised the government's poor human rights record in meetings with government officials and continued to advocate for increased respect of internationally recognized human rights on the part of the Government and security forces. The United States addressed Burundi's poor human rights record at the 2005 UN Commission on Human Rights by supporting a technical assistance (known as Item 19) resolution on Burundi.

In 2005, the United States funded a local NGO to assist child soldiers and human trafficking victims. Assistance to child soldiers included the provision of vocational training and psycho-social counseling.

To promote worker rights, the United States funded the second year of a three-year regional initiative by the International Labor Organization's (ILO) International Program for the Elimination of Child Labor with the goal of demobilizing and rehabilitating child

soldiers and reintegrating them into their former communities. The program focused on legislation, appropriate procedures, and monitoring mechanisms, along with building the capacity and expertise of government institutions to address child soldiering. The program facilitated and supported the economic reintegration of the former child combatants through education, training, financial support, and community-strengthening. It also aimed to enhance information sharing on child soldiers in the region.

Cameroon

Cameroon is a republic dominated by a strong presidency. President Paul Biya was reelected in 2004 and has ruled Cameroon since 1982. His party, the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM), has been the dominant party since its inception. Cameroon has held multi-party elections at all levels since 1992. While opposition parties have been able to win some parliamentary and local contests, they have not yet been able to mount a serious challenge to President Biya and the CPDM. The Constitution provides for an independent judiciary but the judiciary is subject to significant executive influence and has suffered from corruption and inefficiency. Despite noteworthy improvements, Cameroon's human rights record remained poor. Police continued to commit numerous abuses and to use arbitrary arrest and detention. While child labor and trafficking in persons (TIP) remained problems, the Government made some progress by passing anti-TIP legislation in December. To strengthen Cameroon's democratic institutions and improve respect for human rights, the United States has actively engaged in human rights and democracy discussions at all levels of the Government, and with local and international NGOs, members of civil society, and the media.

The U.S. strategy to promote democracy and human rights focused on strengthening the institutions necessary for a stable democratic Cameroon, such as a transparent electoral process and a free, fair, and professional press. In addition the U.S. strategy focused on assistance for the creation of a human rights education program in schools, and programs to improve

protections for human rights, including those focused on worker rights and anti-TIP. The United States also organized speakers, workshops, International Visitors Leadership Program (IVLP), and electronic conferences on protection of human rights including TIP.

In preparation for the June 2007 municipal and legislative elections, the United States continued its dialogue with key officials in an effort to encourage the creation of a truly independent National Elections Observatory (NEO). The United States supported refresher training by the NEO for all of its observers. The United States continued to work with donor states and the Government on ways to reform the electoral process, including the registration of voters, computerization of registers, and the elaboration of a new electoral code. The Ambassador attended and hosted meetings on elections and successfully lobbied other donors for additional support for electoral reform. On the legislative side, the United States worked with members of the Government and the National Assembly to strengthen the NEO and to encourage it to take an active role in overseeing future elections.

The United States met repeatedly with the President and other high-level officials to encourage concrete progress on the Government's stated objective of holding free and fair legislative and municipal elections in 2007 and presidential elections in 2011. The Embassy initiated a donors' working group in 2003 to coordinate policy and assistance expenditures in support of the election. Participants in this group include the UN Development Program, members of the EU, Canada, and Japan.

The Embassy's highest priority, in addition to promoting democracy, is highlighting the importance of good governance and the negative impact of corruption on all aspects of life in Cameroon. The Ambassador addressed the issue, and repeatedly raised the issue of governance and corruption with the Government and civil society.

In order to promote democracy and decentralization, the United States worked to develop the capacity of local government leaders. In April, the United States organized a two-week U.S. study tour for ten mayors,



six ministers, and five Members of Parliament.

The United States supported media development in Cameroon, sponsoring grants to two nationwide media associations for extended training with a Knight Fellow and a major conference on “Media and Corruption” for all media in Yaounde. The United States has been the catalyst in creating and sustaining professional structures in the media. The Embassy sponsored the creation in Douala of an independent media federation for 23 francophone countries – the Society for the Development of Media in Africa – which is becoming an important player in protecting the rights of individual journalists in the region and developing the professionalism and independence of the sector.

Following the 2000 law authorizing the creation of private radio and television stations, the United States has worked closely with private media groups and the Government to ensure the issuance of licenses and to promote a watershed labor standard agreement for journalists in Cameroon. The agreement is now under negotiation between the media industry and two Cameroonian ministries.

To complement U.S. programs with local leaders and the press, the United States supported grassroots groups in the country. The United States funded training and the publication of printed materials for local youth groups as well as a nationwide youth federation. The Embassy promoted volunteerism in the community, partnering with other embassies in a neighborhood water project. The Embassy also issued grants to a community grassroots association in Limbe, and organized shared colloquia.

The United States supported local NGOs that implemented projects on promoting good governance and the rights of children and women. One of the projects educated the people of the three Northern provinces on the consequences of corruption and engaged them in the fight against it. The resulting institution of a culture of ethics and good governance will significantly promote democracy.

The United States supported a project involved in educating teachers and parents on how to adopt pat-

terns of behavior that respect and promote children’s rights. This project was funded as a result of 2000 investigation that revealed that 90% of pupils were beaten at home and 97% at school. According to experts, violence-based education encourages, among other traits, dishonesty, corruption, and irresponsibility. The Embassy also continued its close cooperation with a federation addressing the needs of persons with disabilities and joined with the group in celebrating its tenth anniversary.

The United States worked closely with the military and police to curb abuses by these organizations, and worked to foster more professional security forces by sending members of the Cameroonian Armed Forces to military schools in the United States. These professional education courses addressed civil military relations, military peacekeeping operations, and military subordination to civilian authorities as well as a broad range of legal and human rights topics including the Law of Land Warfare.

In May 2005, the Embassy received the prestigious Vieira de Mello Grand Prize for its unstinting support of human rights, peace, and democracy in Central Africa. The jury consisted of well-known private human rights activists and academics from the region.

The United States worked to advance women’s rights throughout the year by organizing a variety of seminars that included a workshop on “Women as Political and Economic Leaders” and an African Network program on “Women Inspiring Hope and Possibilities,” which involved approximately 300 women leaders. In conjunction with the Embassy’s HIV/AIDS Task Force, the United States conducted a series of regional leadership workshops for young women. The United States funded a project to educate women and girls, and inform men, on the inheritance rights of women. Most women in the local traditional society are ignorant of the laws that protect their right to inherit property from parents and spouses and, as a result, can be deprived of their inheritance rights.

The Embassy organized a series of discussions and digital videoconferences on “Islam and Religious Tolerance” and a speaker on “Contemporary Islam

in Africa,” both of which received national media attention to promote religious freedom and tolerance. The Ambassador also reached out to the Muslim community of Cameroon by hosting an Iftaar dinner during the holy month of Ramadan. This is now an annual tradition at the Ambassador’s residence. In 2005 the event highlighted Muslim women, and included an equal number of male and female guests at the celebration. The Ambassador also engaged Muslim groups and their leadership during his frequent and extensive travels around Cameroon.

The United States funded four projects to combat TIP, including a local NGO educating people on child trafficking, labor, and violence, and two small grants projects within the Center for Rural and Urban Transformation that also focus on educating people, including policy makers and law enforcement officials, on the dangers of TIP and child abuse.

Central African Republic

The Central African Republic (CAR) held elections in 2005 that international and domestic election observers judged free and fair, despite irregularities and accusations of fraud by opposition parties. Francois Bozize was elected President in a May 2005 run-off election. In 2005, the country adopted some key legal reforms, including the abolition of prison sentences for libel or slander. Despite marked political progress, the Government’s human rights record remained poor. Security forces continued to commit extrajudicial and other unlawful killings, including government-tolerated executions of suspected bandits, and impunity remained a problem. Other abuses included harsh prison conditions, arbitrary arrest, prolonged detention without trial, and infringements on privacy. The security situation in northern CAR caused 15,000 refugees to flee into Chad during 2005. Although freedom of the press improved in some areas, the Government attempted to impose restrictions. Corruption remained a widespread problem. Violence and discrimination against women, female genital mutilation (FGM), prostitution, trafficking in persons, discrimination against Pygmies, and child labor continued to be problems.

The U.S. strategy to promote democracy and human rights in CAR focused on advancing a more active role for civil society in the political process. Among these institutions was the new National Assembly, which was susceptible to pressure from the Government to act quickly on legislation submitted to it. The United States also focused on supporting the efforts of President Bozize and Prime Minister Dote to address the issue of security and impunity for criminals in and out of military uniform. The United States encouraged the Government to allow trade unions to function independently, pushed employers to honor collective bargaining agreements, and helped build a free, independent, and professional media by supporting the local journalists’ association and newspaper owners. After two and a half years of suspended operations due to security concerns, Embassy Bangui resumed operations in January 2005.

The United States supported the National Electoral Commission and contributed to secure ballots, public information, and miscellaneous electoral equipment.

To support the parliament, the Embassy funded a specially targeted radio program to explain to voters what an elected deputy should and should not do, how to get services from the deputies, and how to contact and visit the parliament.

The United States funded a series of activities sponsored by civil society and judicial institutions. The major activities included a campaign against FGM. The Embassy supported a women’s organization that sponsored the project and developed an awareness campaign on the consequences of genital mutilation in targeted regions.

The Embassy funded the participation of two journalists in a regional conference held in Douala, Cameroon, to reinforce the capacity of the Independent Journalists Association. The conference strengthened professional ethics in journalism and established a continent-wide network. Following this regional conference, the United States sponsored a five-day workshop in Bangui for provincial journalists to discuss ethics and freedom of press.



Since the Government partially relaxed its monopoly of domestic radio broadcasting in the mid-1990s, many private radio stations are operating throughout the country. Some are affiliated with the Catholic or Protestant churches. The Embassy supported Radio Ndeke Luka that set an important precedent for independent media in CAR. The United States purchased and installed a 10 KW short wave transmitter to enable Ndeke Luka's programming to reach listeners throughout the entire country.

During 2005, the United States supported good governance, transparency, and human rights promotion in CAR by funding a post-election radio series on parliament, and the specific role of elected deputies. Under this program, a private radio station organized a series of live broadcasts called "Your Seat in Parliament" to promote open and free dialog among citizens from different rural areas and their elected deputies at the National Assembly. As the first public diplomacy radio program ever conducted in CAR, it proved to be a significant success reinforcing democracy and helping newly-elected deputies better understand their role.

The United States recruited a local researcher to explore the issue of international child labor and government effort to combat the worst forms of child labor.

Chad

The Government of Chad's human rights record remained poor. President Idriss Deby, with the support of his clan and the Patriotic Salvation Movement party, has ruled Chad since taking power in a 1990 rebellion. He was reelected president in May 2001. Fraud, vote rigging, and local irregularities marred the 2001 presidential and legislative elections. The Government staged a flawed referendum that removed presidential term limits from Chad's Constitution in June 2005. Security forces committed extrajudicial killings; tortured, beat, and raped persons; practiced arbitrary arrest and detention; and continued to intimidate the public. The judiciary was subject to executive interference. Corruption was a serious problem. Violence

and societal discrimination against women, including female genital mutilation (FGM), was common. Lack of respect for women's rights and trafficking in persons (TIP), in particular of children, were serious concerns. The Government restricted freedom of the press by harassing and detaining journalists. Civilian authorities did not maintain effective control of the security forces, and there were frequent instances in which elements of the security forces acted independently of government authority. Security forces committed or sanctioned serious human rights abuses. Chad continued to host more than 200,000 Sudanese refugees who fled the war and genocide in Darfur. During the year, the security situation in the east grew increasingly tenuous due to the conflict in the Darfur region of Sudan on the country's border, and the Government expressed concern over bandits, Sudanese militias, and growing numbers of rebels that were operating in the east.

The U.S. strategy for promoting democracy and human rights in Chad focused on strengthening the institutions necessary for a stable and democratic Chad such as civil society and a free, fair and professional press. The United States focused on government institutions by promoting a more professional military, promoting transparency in governance, engaging directly with key government officials, and improving interaction between the Government and human rights groups. Efforts were also made to strengthen the credibility and capacity of civil society groups and governmental institutions in addressing human rights abuses, including involving them in visits of high-level U.S. officials. The United States encourages human rights groups and other civil society organizations to become a resource for both the Government and Chadian people on human rights issues.

The United States sought funding from a number of sources to meet its goals, facilitated dialogue by creating opportunities for activists and government officials to interact in professional and social settings. Government ministers, human rights activists, journalists, and opposition politicians attended a reception in honor of a Chadian human rights activist, who won the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Prize.

To strengthen press freedoms and the media's ability to promote human rights and good governance, the United States provided equipment and training to print and broadcast journalists. Thirty private and public press organizations received material support including computers, generators, and motorbikes to enhance their ability to cover key events. Chadian journalists benefited from three training programs held in Chad, Nigeria, and Cameroon. The United States financed the creation of a private radio station in the far north, and promoted civil rights and civil liberties through a radio broadcast on human rights issues and civil liberties and civil rights education. This program was shared with other radio stations and translated into several local languages to help increase public awareness of basic human rights. In addition, the Embassy implemented a program to improve civic education teaching in schools. The Ambassador regularly highlighted press freedom and other human rights issues with government and civil society officials and during public ceremonies. The Ambassador's Independence Day speech emphasizing the importance of democratic ideals and our hopes of realizing them in Chad garnered applause and widespread attention throughout the country.

In 2005, U.S. support for rule of law, good governance, and transparency included a program on the management of defense resources. The United States provided technical assistance to the Oil Revenue Management College, the mechanism that reviews projects financed by oil revenues in an effort to promote accountability. In addition, the Embassy facilitated exchanges for Chadian parliamentarians with the Council of State Governments and Chadian attendance at a seminar on military budgeting. The Embassy selected an influential traditional leader, leading educator, and prominent administrator for the International Visitors Leadership Program (IVLP)

on Democratic Governance and Civil Society, Grassroots Democracy, and Conflict Resolution.

Human rights activists and some officials acknowledged that strengthening the weak judicial system was critical to addressing human rights violations in a systematic and meaningful way. The United States provided manual typewriters and copies of legal codes to the courts as well as training for magistrates. The Embassy also supported legal assistance for victims of human rights abuses through a local NGO.



The ongoing humanitarian crisis in Sudan deeply affected Chad. More than 200,000 refugees have sought safety in eastern Chad. The United States is the largest donor to the ongoing humanitarian efforts. The Embassy is an active participant in implementation of the Darfur Humanitarian Cease-fire Agreement, which includes regular meetings of a joint commission and contributes personnel to the Inter-Sudanese Peace Talks on Darfur. The Embassy remained a key interlocutor with the Government of Chad, the rebel movements, and the AU on the Darfur peace process. The United States also facilitated the work of human rights organizations and NGOs working on protection issues for refugee women and children. The Embassy facilitated the production of a "Nightline" feature called "Lessons from Rwanda" to raise public awareness of the situation in Darfur from

the perspective of Sudanese refugees in Chad.

The United States continued to provide support for the rights of women and children. The Embassy supported the elimination of the practice of FGM. Support to a local NGO resulted in the drafting and enactment of a law that criminalized FGM. And in 2004, the Embassy funded an education program to publicize and distribute copies of the law. The Embassy hosted a public forum on the impact of the



proposed Family Code on the promotion of women's and children's rights. In addition, Embassy officers hosted a child protection network that brought together concerned government officials, police and NGOs on a range of issues affecting children. Congressional visitors also met with the First Lady, key officials, and NGOs on women's issues.

The United States used direct contact with Chadian soldiers, including training and visits by U.S. officials, and the sharing of information on human rights violations with high-level government officials to emphasize the importance of working together on human rights. The annual U.S. publication Country Reports on Human Rights Practices was used as a basis for collaboration. To date, government officials have been candid and responsive. Visiting congressional and military delegations supported the U.S. human rights agenda.

The professionalization of Chad's security forces was a key component of the U.S. strategy for improving the country's human rights record. The United States funded International Military Education and Training and Counter Terrorism Fellowship programs at U.S. military facilities, where training on human rights is incorporated into the courses. The U.S. Special Forces trained 170 members of the Republican Guard. In June and July, the United States trained a Chadian Air Force unit in February. In addition, 24 Chadian police officers and immigration officials received anti-terrorism training in the United States. The Embassy hosted a reception for the Deputy Commander of U.S. Forces in Europe to bring together civil society and human rights leaders with military officials.

U.S. Muslim outreach continued with a program for bilingual education with a respected local organization that promotes cross-cultural understanding. Two members of the High Islamic Council attended an IVLP on Leadership in the Muslim Community. The Embassy actively supported the Arabic media, including three radio stations, six newspapers, and a nightly television news show.

The United States supported Chad's efforts to combat TIP and child labor, bolstering the Government's

efforts to protect victims of trafficking and enhance law enforcement's capacity to respond to trafficking cases. Embassy officers worked closely with Muslim leaders to design programs to combat the abuse of children by marabouts (Muslim teachers).

Congo, Democratic Republic of

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), which emerged in 2002 from a war that has claimed an estimated four million lives, has had a Transitional Government since 2003. The Transitional Government made significant progress in unifying the country, although there were still armed groups operating outside government control. These armed groups remained primarily in the eastern provinces of North Kivu, South Kivu, Katanga, and the Ituri District of Orientale. The human rights record of the DRC remained poor. Serious human rights violations, including massacres, executions, kidnappings, torture, and rape, were perpetrated both by armed groups operating outside government control and often by the Congolese military itself. In 2005, however, the DRC took important steps toward democratic governance by registering more than 25 million Congolese to vote in a series of elections that are intended to transfer power from the Transitional Government to a government elected by the people. Congolese voters approved a new Constitution in a referendum held on December 18.

The United States addressed the human rights and democracy crisis in the DRC by providing support to the Transitional Government and Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) to help to promote democratic elections; working to end the conflict in the eastern DRC; promoting accountability for human rights abuses; and developing the infrastructure and capacity needed to consolidate stability, deter conflict, and prepare the way for a democratic transition in 2006. The United States also provided assistance to victims of human rights violations, funded training and education programs to support a change in the prevailing social climate, and made efforts to restore the crippled justice systems.

In 2005 the United States continued to participate on the International Committee to Accompany the Transition and on several commissions to advance the transition and facilitate elections. The new DRC Constitution, drafted with assistance from U.S. technical experts and since passed by popular vote, includes 77 articles relating to human rights protection, separation of powers, and government decentralization.

The United States supported the National Democratic Institute (NDI), which held capacity-building workshops and forums to strengthen political parties and sponsored a Code of Conduct signed by 187 political parties. It also conducted seminars on internal democracy, transparency, constituency development, and communications. Seminars for 980 civil society participants (230 of whom were women) allowed direct contact with political party representatives.

The DRC's IEC, which the United States assisted by funding IFES, registered 25 million voters in 11 provinces in a country the size of Western Europe with virtually no infrastructure. IFES worked on operational functions, including the management of employees and transportation and communications capabilities for offices in each of the DRC's provinces. Voter registration officials were recruited and trained to staff more than 36,000 voter registration centers. On the day of the constitutional referendum, 55 U.S. officials served as referendum observers in Kinshasa and throughout the country.

To promote media freedom and independence, the United States provided funding to NGOs for airtime on national radio and television stations for issues dealing with human rights, elections, and democracy. With embassy support, a youth group in the turbulent eastern part of the country published a magazine on democracy, elections, and political issues. A local media partner developed and provided political and elections information through 82 community radio and television stations, print media, and theatre. Through the International Visitors Leadership Program, the president of the Congolese Radio Owners Association traveled to the United States for an internship. U.S. funding also allowed two Congolese journalists to attend a regional conference on journalism in Africa.

Five Democracy Resource Centers, funded by the United States, became hubs for civil society engagement and facilitated the participation of 350 NGOs in the election process. Partner NGOs implemented activities to resolve local conflicts and empower citizens to promote democratic change in their own communities. The United States also supported 140 community-based conflict resolution programs in seven provinces.

U.S. sponsorship assisted civil society activists in the writing and revision of 66 new articles for the draft Constitution. These articles increase human rights protections and reinforce judicial independence; they will also establish checks and balances among branches of new government, once it has been elected. The Law on Sexual Violence has been added to the list of essential legislation for 2006 as a result of U.S. and partner backing.

The United States funded a comprehensive evaluation of the justice sector through the U.S. NGO Global Rights in four eastern provinces. Multiple U.S.-funded NGOs also provided legal support in 2005 for survivors of gender-based violence. The International Rescue Committee identified more than 100 victims of sexual violence and accompanied victims through the judicial process, from filing cases through court hearings. They educated 2,000 people on victims' rights and visited more than 100 religious, judicial, administrative, civil society, and traditional institutions to promote justice for sexual violence victims. U.S. support enabled a local NGO to create a book on prisoners' rights, translated into four local languages, for distribution to prisoners, police, and military personnel at three of the DRC's notoriously deplorable prisons.

The United States provided rape/sexual mutilation victims (of whom there are estimated to be at least 60,000 in the eastern part of the country) with medical assistance and referrals for services, as well as advocacy, socio-reintegration, and judicial support. U.S.-supported NGOs facilitated more than 30 rape prosecutions in South Kivu province alone. U.S. funding also helped identify sexually abused women and provide them with counselors and transportation to services.



More than 100 human rights groups received U.S. technical assistance and training in 2005, most notably to work with stigmatized children. The reintegration of these children—whether child soldiers, street children, gang members, children accused of witchcraft, internally displaced children, disabled children, or child laborers—remained a high priority. The United States provided support to communities at risk for child separation and abuse in an attempt to halt massive human rights violations against children.

The United States supported training that provided logistical and technical assistance to local Anti-corruption Committees to engage civilian, judicial, religious, and military authorities in the anti-corruption effort and hold public officials responsible for legal taxation practices and ending abuse of public authority.

In 2005, the United Nations addressed human rights issues in the DRC. The Commission on Human Rights passed a technical assistance (known as Item 19) resolution on the DRC, supported by the United States. The UN General Assembly's Third Committee overwhelmingly adopted a resolution on the DRC, with only Uganda and Rwanda voting against it.

Labor activities were supported through the U.S.-funded Solidarity Center, which promotes industrial harmony and conflict resolution. The center worked with employers, the Government, and unions to settle differences and disputes. The United States also funded the second year of a three-year regional initiative by the International Labor Organization's International Program for the Elimination of Child Labor with the goal of demobilizing and rehabilitating child soldiers and reintegrating them into their former communities. The multi-faceted program addresses the myriad needs of child soldiers through legislation, monitoring mechanisms, and capacity building of government institutions. It also supports the economic reintegration of former child combatants through education, training, financial support, and community-strengthening. To address the issue of trafficking in persons (TIP), Embassy funding supported an NGO working with young girls at risk of, or already involved in, prostitution in the conflict-plagued east-

ern regions. The United States also established a TIP fund working through UNICEF for the reintegration of women and girls abducted by armed groups. The intent of the fund is to develop a countrywide reintegration program for abductees that parallels the national Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration program for ex-combatants.

Congo, Republic of

The Republic of Congo is ruled by a government in which most of the decision-making authority is vested in the executive branch. Denis Sassou-Nguesso was elected President in March 2002, and in May and June of that year the country held legislative elections in all jurisdictions except the Pool region, where most of the 1997-2002 civil war was fought. Independent monitors determined that the presidential and legislative elections did not contradict the will of the people.

In March 2003, the Government signed a peace accord with the Ninjas rebel group of Pasteur Ntumi, and the country has been relatively stable since that time. Uncontrolled and unidentified armed elements remained active in the Pool region, despite an ongoing demobilization and reintegration program.

The Government's human rights record improved in 2005, but significant challenges and problems remained. There were reports that security forces were responsible for extrajudicial killings, rapes, beatings, physical abuse of detainees and citizens, arbitrary arrest and detention, looting, solicitation of bribes, and theft. Prison conditions were poor. The judiciary continued to be overburdened, underfunded, and subject to political influence, bribery, and corruption. Interference with personal privacy, as well as limits on freedoms of movement and the press, continued. Discrimination and violence against women, reported trafficking in persons (TIP), ethnic discrimination, and discrimination against indigenous people were problems.

The United States focused on strengthening and building democratic institutions with the Govern-

ment, press, NGOs, and international organizations. In 2005, the United States supported numerous programs to improve human rights in the country, including programs to reduce discrimination against indigenous people, repatriate refugees, and provide medical care in the war-torn Pool region.

To build general awareness of human rights among the population, the Embassy focused its efforts on youth, women, and minorities. The United States supported programs to improve understanding and tracking of human rights issues and to train community members to be more active, informed, and engaged in democratic decision-making at the local, provincial, and national levels. Other U.S. grants supported human rights education for the minority Pygmy population and protection of their environment and way of life for future generations. The United States funded workshops on professional journalism, job training for women and orphans, food production, shelter and school supplies for internally displaced persons in the Pool region, and education projects on combating TIP.

Through demarches, discussions with the Government, and cooperation with the international community, the Embassy continued to stress the need for the Government to increase transparency in accounting for oil revenues and other public funds. In 2004, the Government met minimal requirements for a Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility designation as a Highly Indebted and Poor Country. In addition to direct engagement with the Government on these subjects, the Embassy regularly partnered with the World Bank and International Monetary Fund to promote anti-corruption programs and transparency in the budget and the use of government funds.

Through civil-military dialogue and military training exchanges, the United States encouraged greater military discipline, professionalism, and respect for human rights. The 2002 High Commission for the Reintegration of Ex-Combatants was established to reintegrate former rebel militia members into civil society and, for some, into the military. In 2005, reintegration programs continued and the disarmament program for Ninja combatants progressed, though

slowly. The Embassy continued to support an English-language training program for military officers intended to facilitate other types of training.

To promote worker rights, the United States funded the second year of a three-year regional initiative by the International Labor Organization's International Program for the Elimination of Child Labor with the goal of demobilizing and rehabilitating child soldiers and reintegrating them into their former communities. The initiative focused on legislation, appropriate procedures and monitoring mechanisms, along with building capacity and expertise of government institutions, to address child soldiering. The program continued to facilitate and support the economic reintegration of former child combatants through education, training, financial support, and community-strengthening.

Cote d'Ivoire

The Ivoirian political crisis continued throughout 2005, and the north is divided from south. The 2002 coup attempt and aftermath continued to divide the country geographically and politically. The political instability and uncertainty that led to the end of President Gbagbo's mandate in October increased tensions throughout the country. In October 2005, the AU decided to extend Gbagbo's term in office by one year. In December, a new prime minister, Charles Konan Banny was designated to lead a power-sharing government with Gbagbo that would work toward October 2006 elections and the disarmament of the rebel New Forces (NF). Little was accomplished on either task. The judiciary did not ensure due process. The 2002 rebellion reduced commerce and investment while unemployment and crime continued to increase. The Government's human rights record remains poor. Security forces continued to commit rape, torture, and extrajudicial killings, some of which were believed to be politically and ethnically motivated. Violence and threats against political opposition figures and UN peacekeepers continued during the year. The climate of political intimidation and impunity cultivated by pro-government supporters and militia groups intensified.



The NF's human rights record was also extremely poor. Rebels in the north summarily killed civilians, arbitrarily arrested and detained persons, committed rape, and conducted arbitrary ad hoc justice.

The U.S. strategy to support human rights and democracy focused on supporting national reconciliation, strengthening the democratic process and civil society, and combating trafficking in persons. In addition, the U.S. strategy addressed child labor issues by continued funding for the child labor monitoring system in order to comply with the Harkin-Engel Protocol. The Protocol certifies that cocoa beans and their derivative products have been grown or processed without any of the worst forms of child labor. The Ambassador and other senior U.S. officials frequently stressed these themes with interlocutors in the Government, the NF, and throughout Ivoirian society. The long-term U.S. objective is to help Cote d'Ivoire consolidate a democratic multiparty system in which all Ivoirians have a voice and which is characterized by good governance, respect for fundamental human rights, an independent judiciary, and a strong civil society.

The Ambassador was a key member of the UN's International Working Group (IWG), charged with ensuring that the Ivoirian parties follow through with the peace process. The Ambassador regularly engaged the Ivoirian President, the rebel NF, and all other political parties to act with good faith to advance the political process, to reconcile the country, and ensure that free and fair elections take place by October 2006.

The United States strongly supported the November 2004 UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1572 calling for sanctions on individuals in Cote d'Ivoire who undermine the peace process, are responsible for serious human rights violations, publicly incite hate and violence, or violate the arms embargo. Since then, the Embassy has closely monitored statements of the Ivoirian parties for violations of the resolution. The United States also supported the October 2005 UNSC Resolution 1633 that called for the designation of a new prime minister and the creation of the IWG to support the peace process. The United

States also funded a program in the troubled western part of the country to promote reconciliation and alternative means to resolve disputes.

To promote media freedom and freedom of speech, the Embassy co-sponsored a series of digital video conferences, book discussions, and round tables for reporters and editors that addressed the themes of press freedom and responsibilities. The Ambassador frequently met with the press to discuss these themes, as well as human rights. The Embassy funded a year-long training program for Ivoirian editors and journalists, intended to help de-politicize the country's often polarized and hate-filled press. The United States also funded an NGO in a program designed to de-politicize the media and encourage professionalism. The Embassy sent an Ivoirian journalist to a regional conference in Cameroon, where an International Association of Journalists was created to promote, protect, and professionalize media practitioners throughout Africa.

The Embassy used the International Visitors Leadership Program in 2005 to help Ivoirian public and private sector leaders working to strengthen democracy and democratic practices, develop civil society, and protect human rights and diversity. The Embassy sent four Ivoirian mayors to the United States to observe and discuss U.S. practices and policies on good governance and democratic development. Two National Assembly Deputies participated in an exchange program focused on protecting minorities, as well as the challenges and opportunities inherent in legislative duties. In 2005, other Ivoirian NGO activists, local community leaders, and professionals participated in a variety of embassy outreach programs on conflict resolution, civic education, transparency and good governance, and women and development. The Embassy's outreach also included a targeted distribution of articles and books on human rights and democracy to key Ivoirian contacts throughout the country. In February, the Embassy co-sponsored a major conference in Yamoussoukro that involved national political and civic leaders, including the President of Cote d'Ivoire, to develop proposals for strengthening Ivoirian democracy and democratic institutions.

The Embassy worked with four local NGOs in 2005 to create a counseling center for victims who were raped since the outbreak of the crisis in September 2002. The Embassy also supported a sensitization and training program for community educators to combat female genital mutilation, provide training and education for young girls in Bouake who were forced to drop out of school because of the war and a leadership development program for women who are seeking electoral office.

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respected that right. However, after 2002, the Government targeted persons perceived to be perpetrators or supporters of the rebellion, who often were Muslim. Strong efforts by religious and civil society groups have helped prevent the crisis from becoming a religious conflict. The Embassy was instrumental in helping Ivoirian religious leaders form an inter-faith collective that is aggressively working toward peace and respect for human rights in the country.

The United States continued to fund a multi-year International Labor Organization (ILO) program aimed at ending child labor in the cocoa industry. Also in partnership with the ILO, the United States helped to fund the West African Project Against Abusive Child Labor in Commercial Agriculture to help remove children from the worst forms of child labor and enroll them in school.

Equatorial Guinea

Equatorial Guinea is nominally a multiparty constitutional republic. In practice, however, the ruling party founded by President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo after the country's independence in 1968 dominated all areas of the Government. The 2002 presidential election was marred by extensive fraud and intimidation, and the international community widely criticized the 2004 parliamentary elections as seriously flawed. While civilian authorities generally maintained effective control of the security forces, there were some instances in which security forces acted independently of government authority. The

Government's human rights record remained poor, and the Government continued to commit or condone serious infractions. Physical abuse of prisoners was common, as were instances of arbitrary arrest, detention, and incommunicado detention.

The October 2003 reopening of the small U.S. Embassy, staffed by a single officer, was a tangible symbol of the growing U.S. commitment to democratic development in Equatorial Guinea. The U.S. Ambassador to Cameroon concurrently serves as U.S. Ambassador to Equatorial Guinea. U.S. officials continued to be actively engaged in all substantive and administrative areas, including the human rights agenda.

The U.S. strategy to promote democracy and human rights aimed to strengthen the key government and civil institutions necessary for democratic progress. The strategy focused on anti-corruption efforts and capacity building in the government ministries responsible for the country's vast oil wealth. In addition, the United States worked with opposition parties, civil society, and the press to strengthen their ability to contribute to the expansion of democracy and the promotion of human rights in the country. The United States pursued these objectives through active engagement with the Government, opposition parties, the media, and community representatives.

The Embassy used an active dialogue with the Government on potential actions to improve its status as a Tier 2 country under the U.S. trafficking in persons (TIP) ratings. The Embassy also used the International Visitors Leadership Program (IVLP) to address a variety of subjects that encompassed a wide cross-section of society, in addition to sponsoring a number of programs promoting human rights, democracy, and good governance. The Embassy advocated on behalf of companies and organizations subject to harassment in the country. The Embassy in Yaounde also provided frequent support to the Embassy in Malabo to strengthen its ability to effectively challenge and encourage the Government to improve its human rights record.

U.S. officials met several times with senior officials, including the Minister of Information and the Direc-



tor General of the National Radio and TV in an effort to facilitate an affiliation agreement between the Government and the Voice of America. The Minister and the Ambassador signed this agreement in 2005. This agreement will signal a significant advance in conveying U.S. viewpoints in the country, and also in diversifying the sources of information for news and entertainment over the local radio waves. In all of their meetings with Government representatives, Embassy officials reiterated the importance of enhancing the country's media profile to include independent and private media outlets and finding ways for public broadcasters to air.

For World Press Freedom Day, the Ambassador addressed an audience of 150 calling for the development of independent and responsible news sources and diversified media ownership. The Embassy in Yaounde brought two journalists to Douala in October 2005 for an international conference on "Media in Emerging Democracies," which not only exposed the journalists to media training sessions, but also created contacts with press colleagues from 23 other African countries and gave them insight on an independent media practices. The Ambassador contributed a monthly column in "La Gaceta," a Malabo-based magazine that provided a high profile voice to encourage the advance of independent media in the country.

Privately owned print media was nearly nonexistent in Equatorial Guinea. There were three general-interest periodicals that published irregularly under nominal government control. Foreign entertainment magazines were available at foreign-owned grocery stores, but not newspapers. There were no bookstores or newsstands in the country. The Government continued to restrict domestic press freedom. International journalists, however, were permitted to fully cover the trial of the mercenaries involved in the March 2004 coup attempt. Local journalists worked primarily for state-controlled media and practiced self-censorship to keep their jobs.

There were no effective domestic human rights NGOs, but the Embassy engaged actively with UN organizations promoting human rights and the Gov-

ernment's new Inter-Ministerial Commission on Human Rights. Unlike in the previous year, the Government did not deny the opposition party Convergence for Social Democracy (CPDS) permission to hold a convention. In July, the CPDS was allowed to hold a convention in Bata with relatively little harassment.

In 2005, the United States funded programs aimed at further development of the country's historically weak civil society. Embassy staff encouraged the involvement of U.S. companies and international organizations to reinforce the importance of transparency, rule of law, and respect for human rights. In 2005, the Embassy sent a member of the Ministry of Justice to the United States as part of an IVLP on transparency and good governance.

The Embassy continued efforts to actively encourage effective and transparent management of the country's oil wealth for equitable social and economic development. There were concerns regarding the use of irregular payments made by oil companies into bank accounts controlled by the President and the ruling elite; however, the Government denied any misappropriation of funds. In July 2005, the President signed a decree creating a "Social Needs Fund" to accelerate investment of government funds in health, education, women's issues, and sanitation.

In meetings with high-level government officials, the United States pressed for improved transparency in public finance and the management of the oil sector. Following high-level statements of commitment to transparency in the oil and gas sector, the Government, with technical assistance from the World Bank, declared its intention to participate in the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, but has not yet completed all of the prerequisite actions necessary to be a full participant.

In 2004, senior Government officials told foreign diplomats that human rights did not apply to criminals, and that torture of known criminals was not a violation of human rights. There were reports that officials tortured political opposition activists and other persons during 2005. The Government permitted the International Committee of the Red Cross to

access penal facilities in the country, including visits to the mercenaries held in the infamous Black Beach prison. During several months in 2005, the Embassy in Malabo was permitted access to prisoners. During that time, family visits were reinstated and general conditions improved. Progress was made before the end of the year by bringing some political prisoners into the judicial process. Visits were suspended in the last quarter, however, for as yet unexplained reasons. Through media programs, the IVLP, and active dialogue with the Government, the Embassy consistently addressed the issues of rule of law, transparency, due process, and political prosecutions.

The Embassy provided an outlet for vigorous and continuous on-the-ground promotion of respect for human rights addressing violations such as torture, extrajudicial killings, and women's and minority rights. The Ambassador regularly communicated U.S. concerns to Government officials regarding individual cases of reported abuse of human rights. In-country representation allowed the United States to observe and report local activities directly and accurately.

Staff from the Embassy in Yaounde made regular visits to the island and mainland in 2005, including frequent visits by the Ambassador to both Malabo and the mainland. The Ambassador and other U.S. officials have an ongoing dialogue with the Government on the need for development of true civic institutions and respect for justice and human rights. The Ambassador raised concerns with the President and high-level ministers over TIP, transparency, good governance, prison conditions, the role of the opposition, and fair judicial practices. He also continued to condemn torture and harsh prison practices. The Ambassador and other U.S. officials also held public and private meetings with members of the country's small opposition movement to address their concerns and subsequently challenged national security officials over unlawful detention of political activists.

Eritrea

In 2005, the Government of Eritrea's record on human rights worsened as it further restricted basic

freedoms. Religious freedom for congregations not registered with the Government was severely constrained, and the United States designated Eritrea as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) for the second consecutive year. The Constitution, ratified in 1997, contains considerable safeguards for basic human rights, but remained unimplemented. National elections have not been held since independence from Ethiopia in 1993, and the Government prohibited the existence of any political party other than the ruling party. Parliament did not meet and continued to be more of a concept than a political reality. The Government strictly controlled the media, prohibited independent press from publishing or broadcasting in the country, and continued to detain several independent journalists arrested in 2001. Torture was used as a form of punishment on members of minority religious groups, national service evaders, and government critics. Two local Embassy employees arrested in October 2001 remained in prison. Two additional Embassy employees were detained on August 1; one was subsequently released, but the other continued to be held and denied due process. Lack of due process, arbitrary, and often prolonged detention without charge or trial, and poor prison conditions remained serious problems. The Government cited national security concerns as their primary justification for arresting and detaining individuals, and security forces frequently rounded up men and women for failing to meet national service requirements. In 2005, police and military personnel also began arresting and detaining the parents of national service dodgers, requiring parents to pay fines and also threatening prolonged detention unless their children met their service obligation.

The U.S. strategy to promote respect for human rights and democracy aimed to increase access to information, provide opportunities for dialogue, increase understanding of human rights, and provide the means for citizens to have more control over their daily lives.

While there was initial optimism over the possibility of an expanded bilateral dialogue between the United States and Eritrea on human rights and democracy, this did not occur in 2005. Eritrean Government of-





ficials, including the President, unapologetically made it clear that there would be little or no change in the country's human rights practices until the border dispute with Ethiopia was resolved. In response, the United States made clear that the relationship could not progress until there was real dialogue and demonstrable progress on human rights.

In conversations with Eritrean officials at all levels, U.S. officials repeatedly stressed that addressing the Government's human rights violations – particularly widespread arbitrary arrests and violations of basic liberties – was vital to improving bilateral ties. U.S. officials also consulted regularly with European diplomats, who have undertaken a formal dialogue with the Government in the context of the EU-Africa, Caribbean, Pacific Cotonou agreement, to ensure a coordinated and consistent international message.

Since February 2004, the Government has imposed restrictions on movement outside of the Makaal region for all NGOs and the diplomatic corps. The Government seized vehicles of aid donors, including those of the UN and the United States. In July 2005, the Government requested the termination of U.S. development activities in Eritrea. The United States phased out development operations by December 2005, and only a small humanitarian liaison office remained as of February 2006.

The termination of U.S. development activities, many of which directly or indirectly supported the U.S. human rights strategy, resulted in fewer resources and opportunities to address human rights through programmatic means. However, the Embassy nonetheless increased its outreach by expanding its American Corner program, extending Internet access hours at the American Center and focusing resources more closely on women, minorities, and Muslim majority communities.

Through the American Center and two American Corners in Keren and Masawa, the Embassy provided access to materials on U.S. values, policies, and culture, as well as daily press releases and free access to the Internet. The Embassy also provided media materials to Embassy contacts. In a country with no independent media, these tools proved vital in pro-

moting democracy and appreciation of human rights through greater access to information from the outside world.

In an effort to build support for democratic reform and human rights among Eritrea's opinion leaders, the Embassy held regular functions for alumni of U.S. exchange programs to promote discussion of U.S. culture, democracy, human rights, and other issues. The Embassy arranged speaking engagements featuring U.S.-based speakers and broadcasts of the Africa Journal. The Embassy recruited Government officials and others for the International Visitors Leadership Programs.

The United States sought to increase citizens' political and economic participation. Three U.S.-funded NGOs supported community development programs that extended opportunities for grassroots participation by working with parent-teacher associations, water associations, and local health committees.

The United States funded a program to train workers to fight the stigma of HIV/AIDS in society. The Embassy also addressed Eritrea's high rate of female genital mutilation by funding high school clubs to educate and build awareness on the issue among youth through the National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students.

U.S. officials continued to engage a wide range of Government officials and members of minority religious groups in an effort to promote greater respect for religious freedom. The United States imposed sanctions in response to the Government's continuing severe violation of religious freedom. U.S. officials consistently emphasized the importance of religious liberty for all faiths, including religious minorities. The Embassy worked with Government officials to promote the creation of mechanisms promoting interfaith dialogue, and support low-key visitors who could address legal and other aspects of respecting minority religious rights; however, this did not occur.

Ethiopia

Although there were some improvements, the Government's human rights record remained poor and worsened in some cases. Ethnic conflict, lack of capacity, unfamiliarity with democratic concepts, and unrest related to the May 2005 national parliamentary elections threatened the country's nascent democracy. Inadequately trained federal and local police forces employed excessive force, resulting in unlawful killings, including alleged political killings. Police also beat and mistreated detainees and political opposition supporters. Arbitrary arrest and detention of thousands of persons suspected of sympathizing with or being members of the opposition was common. The judiciary remained overburdened and lacked capacity, resulting in lengthy pretrial detentions. The Government restricted freedom of the press, and harassed, detained, and arrested journalists, editors, and publishers for publishing articles critical of the Government, forcing journalists to practice self-censorship. Societal discrimination and violence against women, abuse of children, and trafficking in persons (TIP) remained serious problems; however, the Government formed a task force and began to address some TIP issues in 2005.

The May 2005 national elections delivered a shock to the country's emerging democratic system. The Government permitted unprecedented democratic openness, allowing opposition groups campaign freedoms and access to state media in the pre-election period. Opposition parties made an unexpectedly strong showing, increasing their parliamentary representation from 12 seats to 172. The Government subsequently rolled back elements of its pre-election openness. Opposition leaders from the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) questioned the election results, and many newly elected CUD members chose to boycott federal and regional legislatures. The CUD also called for a campaign of civil disobedience that quickly degenerated into violent protests. With most of the opposition leadership imprisoned and the Government struggling to control popular uprisings in urban areas, the environment for promoting democracy became increasingly challenging. Nonetheless, the election results themselves and the process

of political dialogue that U.S. officials promoted continued to offer opportunities to make some progress on democratization.

The U.S. human rights and democracy goals in Ethiopia included lowering political and ethnic tensions, improving human rights, broadening representation and participation in Parliament, boosting the credibility and capacity of the National Electoral Board (NEB), and increasing access to the media and the quality of public information. The U.S. strategy to achieve these goals employed a mixture of cooperation and pressure in urging the Government and leading opposition organizations to overcome political confrontation and move toward consensus. To promote democracy and political freedoms, U.S. officials, including the Ambassador, in close partnership with other embassies, engaged the Prime Minister, other senior government officials, and the NEB regarding complaints from opposition political parties about harassment of their members. U.S. officials met regularly with government and opposition party representatives regarding illegal detentions and harassment of opposition party supporters by local ruling party cadres.

In coordination with other international donors, the United States undertook a program of support for the national legislative and regional council elections held in May 2005. The program included a cooperative agreement that brought the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the International Republican Institute (IRI), and IFES to Ethiopia, a contribution to a multi-donor fund for election support managed by the UN Development Program (UNDP), and a grant to permit the Carter Center to respond to the Government's invitation to observe the elections. In addition, a grant partially funded by the United States brought Women's Campaign International to the country to provide training for women candidates.

Soon after the arrival of NDI, IRI, and IFES, the Government unexpectedly expelled all three organizations. U.S. funding for the UNDP Election Program provided an important alternative to support a wide range of preparatory and follow-up election activities. Advice and assistance were provided to



the NEB for administration of the elections and the post-election dispute resolution processes. As a result of this program, the NEB established a website, and senior NEB officials, judges, prosecutors, and police officers received dispute resolution training. Proportional financial, material, and technical assistance was provided to all political parties and independent candidates to enable improved campaigning. The UNDP program established a political party forum that became an important venue for discussion of, and compromise on, difficult electoral issues.

The Embassy used the full range of public-diplomacy programming to support media freedoms and freedom of speech. Public diplomacy funds allowed Ethiopian journalists, academics, religious leaders, and other opinion leaders to participate in Fulbright and International Visitors Leadership Program exchanges.

Through the UNDP election fund, the United States supported the development of codes of conduct to ensure balanced, non-inflammatory election reporting by both state and private media and balanced access by all political parties and candidates to state-run media. The program also provided training for private and public journalists on fair and impartial reporting and established a media-monitoring program with Addis Ababa University's new graduate School of Journalism and Mass Communication to provide analysis of media coverage during the election campaign.

In advance of Ethiopia's 2005 national elections, and again in the wake of post-election unrest, the United States funded professional development training seminars (in both English and Amharic) to state and private sector journalists with the specific goal of raising awareness among media practitioners of internationally accepted standards of reporting ethics. A senior U.S. Fulbright recipient provided expertise as acting Dean of Addis Ababa University's School of Journalism and Communications. The Embassy maintained close relationships with journalists across the political spectrum.

U.S. programs in all sectors sought to strengthen civil

society's capacity to effectively engage local government institutions to improve the planning, implementation, transparency, and accountability of development projects and service delivery. Notable was the Community Government Partnership Program through which 16,176 Parent Teacher Association (PTA) members and education officials received training in school management. The training helped the PTAs rehabilitate their schools and manage educational activities in their communities. The United States continued to provide funding through the UNDP for several civil society organizations, including a grant to the Poverty Action Network of Ethiopia to conduct Citizen Report Cards on the effectiveness of Government services delivery. As part of the U.S.-supported UNDP election program, national NGOs provided civic and voter education to over 6.7 million voters.

The United States supported community reconciliation programs in the conflict-prone Gambella Region, and Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region, which focused on facilitating the establishment and training of government-civil society conflict prevention and reconciliation partnerships. In Gambella, a series of nine dialogues between major ethnic groups (Anuak, Nuer, and Majengar) or sub-groups resulted in local peace agreements and the establishment of peace monitoring committees. The United States assisted the Government in developing the capacity to provide professional law enforcement services based on democratic principles and respect for human rights. The United States continued to fund a training and assistance program designed to enhance professional investigative and forensic capabilities, assist in the development of academic instruction for law enforcement personnel, improve the administrative and management capabilities of law enforcement agencies, improve police-community relations, and create or strengthen the capability to respond to new crime and criminal justice issues. In 2005, the penal code and the Federal Police College curriculum were amended to reflect the program's recommendations.

In 2005, the Embassy provided funding for six democracy and human rights-related projects that impacted approximately 155,000 people in five of the

country's 11 administrative regions. The projects worked to protect the human rights of several disadvantaged groups, including women and the elderly in Dire Dawa, who received free legal assistance. Disabled and homeless Addis Ababa residents also gained access to overnight shelter, wheelchairs, prosthetics, and orthopedic shoes.

Public diplomacy outreach to Ethiopia's Muslim community included a high-profile Iftaar dinner hosted by the Ambassador, and a series of events in connection with the visit of an American imam. A highlight of the imam's visit was his Friday address at Addis Ababa's principal mosque, giving an audience estimated at 100,000 a window into American Islam.

The United States funded a substantial program focused on the large numbers of citizens that fall victim to TIP. The program promoted prevention by raising general awareness of the problem and conducting anti-trafficking campaigns for the general population and government officials. Counseling services were provided for potential and actual migrants, human trafficking victims, and their families on legal, human rights, psycho-social, health, and financial matters related to labor migration. The program strengthened the institutional capacity of concerned government authorities, local NGOs, and civil society to develop a labor migration policy and anti-trafficking law for the prevention of TIP, protection of victims, and prosecution of traffickers. Shelter, medical care, counseling, clothing, and hygiene items were provided in Addis Ababa to facilitate the return and reintegration of trafficked victims.

The U.S. continued to fund a project that targets over 30,000 HIV/AIDS affected children who are subjected to the worst forms of child labor. The program aims to increase access to quality education for HIV-positive working children through awareness campaigns and support for children, their communities, and institutions.

Gabon

Gabon is a republic dominated by a strong presidency. The Gabonese Democratic Party (PDG) came to power in 1968 and has circumscribed political choice. Following a 2003 constitutional amendment eliminating term limits, PDG leader El Hadj Omar Bongo, President since 1967, was reelected for a seven-year term in November 2005. The election was marred by irregularities. The Government's human rights record remained poor. Security forces disrupted demonstrations and assaulted journalists. Arbitrary arrest and detention were problems, and the judiciary remained subject to Government influence. Opposition parties remained small, disunited, under-funded, and marginalized. Since Gabon adopted a multiparty system in 1990, the ruling party has successfully convinced most opposition parties to join the ruling coalition. The Electoral Commission rejected attempts to form new parties in advance of the 2005 election. Gabon has made some progress in combating child labor and trafficking in persons (TIP), but these issues remained areas of concern.

The U.S. strategy for promoting human rights and democracy in Gabon was targeted in part toward diplomatic engagement in view of the 2005 elections. The strategy also focused on strengthening key institutions such as an independent, fair, and professional media and professionalizing the military. The strategy included advocacy and programs to combat TIP, especially the trafficking of children.

The Ambassador met regularly with Group of 8 (G-8) counterparts to formulate a common strategy for advancing democratic reform. Embassy officials also participated in joint donor efforts to promote good governance and protect vulnerable groups.

In advance of the November 2005 presidential election, Embassy officials discussed the importance of free and fair elections in meetings with national and local election officials, ruling party and opposition leaders and supporters, and other diplomatic missions in Gabon. Embassy officials obtained official accreditation as observers and deployed in teams to major population centers in the country to observe



voting. The Embassy maintained contacts and consulted regularly with all major opposition groups.

The shortage of open and independent media sources in Gabon remained a concern. Embassy officials met frequently with members of the National Communications Council and other Government officials to discourage the closure of media outlets and to promote freedom of speech and a free and independent press. The Ambassador hosted a discussion on the life of Martin Luther King at his residence, fostering a free and open dialogue among Government and religious leaders, opposition figures, and prominent academics. When security forces beat two journalists, the Embassy met with a representative of the journalist's employer and discussed the case with Government officials.

The Embassy regularly discussed human rights with government officials and NGOs at all levels, stressing the important link between respect for human rights and the relationship with the United States. Embassy officials regularly attended seminars and conferences that promoted human rights and democracy.

To promote greater respect for human rights within the law enforcement community, the Embassy maintained regular contact with the National Police and Gendarmerie. The United States sent one official from each organization to the International Law Enforcement Academy in Gaborone, the first time Gabonese law enforcement officials attended the school.

In order to increase respect for human rights within the military, the United States worked to foster professionalism among the security forces by sending members of the Government to military schools in the United States. These professional education courses addressed civil-military relations, military peacekeeping operations, military subordination to civilian authorities, and a broad range of legal and human rights topics.

The United States launched a program to provide training for members of the Gabonese Armed Forces designated to serve in peacekeeping missions. Training for peacekeepers included a special focus on hu-

man rights issues and civil-military relations.

The alleged ritual murder of two children in February highlighted a problem in Gabon. Embassy officials met regularly with the founders of a new NGO dedicated to eliminating the tradition, and attended a seminar where a plan of action was developed to fight the practice.

The United States sponsored scholarships in Gabon to help girls from needy families complete their primary education. The program helped both urban and rural students, with a portion allocated to students from remote regions.

The Embassy maintained regular contact with all major religious groups including Muslim organizations and U.S. missionary groups, to support and reinforce the already tolerant environment in Gabon.

The United States made trafficking in persons a high priority. The Ambassador and Embassy officials approached Government officials at all levels, including parliamentary leaders, ministers, and the President, to persuade them of the need for further concrete measures to combat trafficking in persons. Recognizing the logistical difficulties faced by law enforcement agencies in housing, feeding, and eventually repatriating trafficking victims, the United States supported a television and radio public awareness campaign to announce the new anti-trafficking law and sensitize the Gabonese to the plight of trafficked children. The United States also supported the attendance of the commander of the police anti-trafficking brigade in an International Visitors Leadership Program focusing on women, families, and the law in the United States. The Embassy maintained close contacts with activists and NGOs concerned with this issue.

Labor unions are among the strongest NGOs in Gabon, and Embassy representatives regularly attended labor conferences and met union leaders to promote free association and the importance of unions in a democratic society.

Gambia, The

The Gambia is a republic under multiparty democratic rule. The Government of President Alhaji Yahya A.J.J. Jammeh, who was re-elected for a five-year term in 2001 in an election considered free and fair, generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, there were problems in some areas. Arbitrary arrest and detention and denial of due process occurred, and the courts sometimes yielded to executive branch pressure. The Government limited freedom of speech and the press by intimidation and restrictive legislation. Nevertheless, dissident voices were heard and a viable opposition movement exists. Violence and discrimination against women continued. The practice of female genital mutilation remained widespread, although the Government did not endorse the practice. Child labor persisted, mainly on family farms, as did trafficking in persons (TIP). The Government took positive steps to eradicate the problems of TIP and child labor, including passage of a Children's Act designed to promote the welfare of children.

The U.S. strategy to promote democracy and human rights was to focus diplomatic and programmatic resources to advance the three core values of democratic freedoms, the rule of law, and human dignity. To do this, the United States targeted active engagement with the Government, leveraging economic assistance with concrete improvements in democratic reform and human rights. The U.S. long-term strategy stresses anti-corruption measures for the Government and programs to strengthen civil society and the media.

Embassy officials maintained an active dialogue with all political parties and with civil society representatives, stressing the importance of free and fair elections. The Embassy also actively encouraged regular dialogue and meetings among the donor community to avoid duplication of effort and to ensure effective allocation of resources in election support.

The United States used a large grant to provide support to the relatively weak National Assembly. These funds paid for a major construction and renovation

project that dramatically improved the working spaces of the Members of Parliament. This project generated significant goodwill for the United States among the National Assembly members, providing a tangible example of U.S. support for democratic institutions.

Relations between the Government and media were strained. U.S. officials consistently stressed that a free press is an essential part of a democratic society and used grants and the International Visitors Leadership Program (IVLP) to support independent media. The Gambian Press Union used grant funds to purchase a printing press. The United States provided equipment to a city radio station and funded a program that explained the Constitution to listeners in the widely-spoken Wollof language. All media representatives, regardless of political affiliation, had access to Embassy staff for interviews and reports.

The Embassy sent the head of the Gambia Press Union to the 2005 IVLP journalism program and sent two journalists to a regional conference in Cameroon aimed at establishing an African journalism federation. These participants shared their experiences with other members of Gambian media in meetings and, in the case of the head of the Gambia Press Union, through a three-part chronicle of the IVLP published in one of the independent newspapers.

The Embassy supported the Children's Protection Alliance in its efforts to combat trafficking of children in the country by increasing public awareness and sensitization to this important problem. The Embassy funded NGOs and small cooperatives throughout the country in 2005. These programs, while small in scope, had a large impact and may have been the most popular and highly visible examples of U.S. support for grass-roots democratic development and education in The Gambia. The Embassy supported the National Council for Civic Education's program to provide civic and human rights education nationwide.

Judicial independence and due process remained areas of concern. The Ambassador took every opportunity to stress to government officials the importance of an independent judiciary in a democratic society,



while IVLP exposed promising jurists to the American judicial process.

On the anti-corruption front, the Government's "Operation No Compromise" continued in 2005, with a number of senior officials removed from office under allegations of corruption and misappropriation of funds. While encouraging efforts to combat corruption, the Embassy also stressed the importance of a transparent judicial process in prosecuting these cases.

To foster more professional security forces and reduce any tendency for human rights abuses, the United States resumed non-lethal military assistance to The Gambia immediately after sanctions, which were imposed following the 1994 coup, were lifted in 2002. In the past year, the Embassy arranged for several officers and civilian officials to attend International Military Education and Training (IMET) and expanded IMET programs in the United States. Most senior officers in the military, including the President, have participated in IMET. The United States also funded regional training and workshops for military officials. They, along with civilian officials, participated in conferences sponsored by the African Center for Strategic Studies. Finally, the Federal Bureau of Investigation funded training at their National Academy for a Gambian police officer.

Religious harmony is the norm in the country. To reinforce that harmony and bolster religious freedom and understanding, during Ramadan the Embassy hosted several Iftaar dinners that were attended by many Muslim spiritual leaders as well as members of the minority Christian clergy. The Embassy also hosted an inter-faith panel to discuss Judaism and religious tolerance.

The Gambia's TIP rating fell to Tier 2 Watch List in 2005. The Embassy responded with a robust anti-TIP program that included both financial support and guidance as the Government worked to improve its record in combating trafficking. The United States funded the Child Protective Alliance to assist efforts to protect and promote children's rights. This support contributed to the successful passage of the

Children's Act in 2005. This Act contains detailed provisions specifically dealing with the worst forms of child labor and trafficking in persons, mandating stiff penalties for offenders.

Guinea

In the last year, Guinea demonstrated achievement in political reforms and improvement in its human rights record. Sixteen of the 46 registered political parties, including all major opposition parties, participated in the December 2005 nationwide elections for municipal and local government councils. Observers noted some improvements over the 2003 presidential election. The Government continued to restrict citizens' rights to change their government. While opposition parties had more freedom to campaign and all parties had greater access to the media, numerous citizens were disenfranchised because they did not have identity cards. The authorities arbitrarily detained, and in some cases abused, more than 200 politicians and party supporters. In general, the authorities rarely held political prisoners more than a few days. Police and security forces injured several persons on election day.

The U.S. strategy to promote democracy and human rights focused on laying a foundation for a peaceful and democratic political transformation through support for constitutional processes, continued and expanded national dialogue, and liberalization of broadcast media. The United States encouraged civilian-led power transfer and constitutional succession through heightened military and diplomatic engagement; focused on the potential stabilizing role of the military through engagement across the civilian-military divide; and promoted civil-military relations, including political discussions and social exchanges. A comprehensive U.S. communication and public diplomacy strategy ensured that messages to advance freedom and democracy were included in all activities. The United States also heightened outreach to youth, women, and Muslim religious leaders.

The Embassy consistently presented democracy and human rights as the cornerstone of U.S. policy. U.S.

officials highlighted this priority in speeches and meetings with interlocutors. The United States supported democracy by training citizens, locally elected officials, and representatives of government, and by facilitating dialogue through a more informed media and electorate. This assistance encouraged citizen participation in local governance; supported improved political processes, including more transparent elections; and encouraged civil society organizations to provide civic education and advocacy for citizen interests. After consistent Embassy engagement and discussions, opposition party leaders who boycotted past elections decided to participate in the December local elections.

The local governance program and civil society activities increased understanding of the electoral process by generating interest, informed citizens of their voting rights, and equipped NGOs to act as formal election monitors. Nearly two-thirds of the NGOs independently selected to serve as Guinea's first national election observers received training and technical assistance from the local governance program. On election day, the Embassy deployed 19 observer teams comprised of American and Guinean staff to gain valuable perspectives from the field.

The importance of civilian-military relations in the development of democracy and protection of human rights in Guinea was a major component of security cooperation. In May, the Embassy sponsored a successful five-day seminar bringing together 38 high-ranking military officers and 36 civilians from the parliament, political parties, and various Government ministries to emphasize the benefits of good governance and a responsible military. Ongoing military programs emphasized appreciation for rule of law and human rights.

A presidential decree to open radio and television broadcast media to private ownership was the successful result of diplomatic and programmatic support. Through various training and capacity-building programs for media organizations, the United States worked to speed its implementation. Embassy public diplomacy programs encouraged individuals to express their views freely; utilize rights to public infor-

mation, especially information about government actions, policies, and programs; and understand and utilize their rights to change the Government. Embassy programs encouraged open discussion on all topics relating to U.S.-Guinean relations and particularly Western concepts of democracy and human rights. The United States sponsored Guineans to participate in International Visitor Leadership Programs (IVLP) with human rights and democracy agendas.

The U.S. funded two one-week journalist training workshops through a small grant to a local organization dedicated to media ethics. The first included more than 40 correspondents from the Guinean Government's Guinean Press Agency and National Radio. The second included representatives from Guinea's 12 rural radio stations. Both featured sessions on the participants' roles and responsibilities in the electoral process. The journalists developed concrete strategies to engage the National Network of Journalists for Good Governance. A digital video conference for journalists provided insights to reporting on corruption from a French-speaking, Paris-based American journalist for media capacity-building.

The United States implemented a program to strengthen NGOs that included a nationwide civic education campaign and a series of town hall meetings, trainings that focused on election procedures for political party officials in the interior, legal trainings for professional associations in Guinea, internal democratic governance, advocacy techniques, and technical training for media professionals. All U.S. activities supported working with and strengthening local organizations. In 2005, the United States trained and strengthened over 2,788 grassroots community-based organizations. In addition, the United States worked with 68 regional or national-level NGOs to help implement U.S. programs. Other donors and the Government acknowledged increased NGO capacity as a result.

The local governance program provided technical assistance, leadership development, and training to foster active citizen participation and improved performance of community management committees of local service institutions and rural organizations. Embassy intervention produced a capable and registered



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

The U.S. focus on strengthening the rule of law highlighted one of Guinea's most serious issues. As a result of a U.S.-funded program, a national association of professional organizations was created and committed itself to reviewing and revising the laws regulating professional organizations. Although new, it successfully advocated for the release of an arrested lawyer.

A February 2005 program on corruption and good governance featured a representative from the Ministry of Finance and brought together members of the National Assembly, finance analysts, NGO representatives, and the media.

The United States funded projects targeting the promotion of the rights of women, students and teachers, and victims of HIV/AIDS; combating female genital mutilation (FGM); and providing training in conflict resolution and responsible media. This year, the Embassy funded an innovative radio drama series to increase awareness and promote dialogue on human rights and protection for women and girls. The United States financed the creation of a center for conflict resolution in Macenta with a focus on the historically volatile Forest Region. To combat torture and other human rights abuses in prisons, the United States funded several workshops bringing together penitentiary security and administrative staff with selected prisoners in two of the largest prisons in the country.

Promoting the rights of women and minorities is critical. The United States funded a program to reduce FGM in the Mamou and Labe regions. To reinforce these efforts, a returned participant in the IVLP led an April colloquium on AIDS awareness and tolerance for medical practitioners, NGOs, university students, and the media. In June, a high school theater production focused on HIV/AIDS and provided a forum for youth to dispel myths about the disease and combat discrimination.

This year, the Embassy initiated a partnership with

the Ministry of the Islamic League. Representatives from both organizations met regularly to discuss issues and develop programs of mutual interest. The Director of the Islamic Center in Guinea's second largest city, Kankan, gave an interview to Rural Radio in Kankan and a lecture in his Center about his very positive experience on an IVLP in August. Another former IVLP grantee moderated a July program to introduce Hi Magazine to Imams, community leaders, and students. In September, a presentation on trafficking in persons (TIP) brought together over 40 imams and other Islamic leaders. A two-day workshop in September used the post-produced Civic Education Guide as a foundation for discussion and training of trainers and was offered for members of the Muslim Youth Association.

In 2005, the United States awarded three grants to combat TIP, in accordance with an action plan developed in partnership with Government officials to address Guinea's Tier 2 Watch List status. The projects focused on prevention through a national public awareness campaign and protection of street children and other victims. To complement these ongoing projects, in January 2006, in collaboration with the IOM, the United States brought together more than 30 participants from various Government ministries, NGOs, and civil society for an educational program on TIP. In March, the United States awarded a former IVLP participant a small grant to train social workers, police officers, human rights activists, and others on trafficking. In September, the program "Trafficking in Persons: American, Guinean, and Islamic Visions" brought together Muslim clerics, members of the Government, media, and civil society to demystify TIP issues.

Guinea-Bissau

Respect for human rights and democracy in Guinea-Bissau has increased since the 2003 removal of then-President Kumba Yala. Free and fair parliamentary elections in March 2004 re-



sulted in the election of Prime Minister Carlos Gomes Junior and a clean slate of representatives to serve in the 100-seat National Popular Assembly (ANP). Former President Yala, who ruled by decree, had previously dissolved the Assembly in 2002. During its time in office, the Gomes Junior Government actively engaged Bissau-Guineans and the international community in a dialogue aimed at restoring democracy and protecting human rights. Since assuming office in late 2005, President Joao Bernardo “Nino” Vieira and Prime Minister Aristides Gomes have continued those efforts.

The primary threat to human rights and democracy in Guinea-Bissau continued to be an oversized and outdated military that did not always respect civilian authority. Violent dispersal of demonstrations, impunity, and corruption remained problems, although less so than in previous years. Prison conditions remained poor. Violence and discrimination against women, female genital mutilation (FGM), child labor, and child trafficking occurred, but no data existed on the extent of these problems. Reportedly, traffickers convinced parents to send their children to other countries, notably Senegal, for a Muslim education, but some schools forced the children into the streets to beg and remit their meager earnings to their teachers (marabouts). The other major obstacles to human rights and democracy in the country are a weak economy and fragile democratic institutions.

There has been no U.S. Embassy in Guinea-Bissau since 1998, when civil war erupted. The U.S. Ambassador to Senegal also serves as the Ambassador to Guinea-Bissau.

The U.S. strategy for supporting human rights and democracy consists of supporting the democratic Government; encouraging free and fair presidential elections in June and July 2005; promoting economic development to improve conditions for stability; strengthening nascent democratic institutions, such as the ANP and courts; and encouraging the military to reform and respect civilian authority.

As the aggressor in the mutiny of October 2004, the military requires reform and downsizing to transform

it into a “republican army.” The United States pursued a strategy of cooperation aimed at pushing the military toward reforms and away from destabilizing activities. In September 2005, the United States held a seminar on civil-military relations and military justice that examined the military’s role in a democratic society.

The Ambassador and other Dakar-based officials met frequently with the Government. Through face-to-face contact with the leaders of Guinea-Bissau, the United States urged political, military, religious, and ethnic leaders not to interfere with the presidential election. In support of the two rounds of presidential elections, the United States carefully coordinated with the international community, especially the UN Secretary General’s Representative in Guinea-Bissau, the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries, the Economic Community of West African States, and the EU. The Embassy in Dakar sent a total of 12 observers to the two rounds of elections, and, with the National Election Commission, the Supreme Court and the international community, concluded that both rounds of elections met international standards for freedom and fairness.

The United States funded a program to strengthen Guinea-Bissau’s Parliament. A U.S. NGO worked with ANP members and staff, as well as civil society, to strengthen the ANP’s ability to execute its legislative functions.

Guinea-Bissau generally has a free media that consists of a number of small and independent print, radio, and television outlets. The United States worked with the press by releasing statements, participating in interviews, and explaining U.S. policy as often as possible despite the absence of a permanent U.S. presence in the country. To highlight U.S. policies on Guinea-Bissau, as well as on regional and global issues, the Embassy initiated production and distribution of a Portuguese-language publication that showcases issues such as human rights. The Embassy also provided a grant enabling one journalist to attend a UNESCO-sponsored forum in Dakar marking World Press Freedom Day.



Civil society organizations are free to operate, and NGOs around the country address a variety of social issues, including FGM, child labor, and micro-finance. There was no pattern of repression or intimidation of civil society by the Government. However, due in part to the small number of international organizations and diplomatic mission residents in the country, organizations are small and seriously under-funded, with little ability to tap into international cooperative efforts. Consequently, civil society has yet to have a significant impact on affecting political change or enhancing democratic freedoms.

The rule of law has improved significantly since 2003, with the presidency no longer impeding the work of the ANP, the courts, and the press. However, the judiciary remained weak in dealing with minor crimes and was completely ineffective at stamping out corruption and other crimes of a political nature. Police sometimes abused their authority with impunity, and the courts still did not have sufficient training or resources. Nonetheless, following the 1998 civil war and years of extra-constitutional rule, the judiciary was beginning to resume its role in promoting democracy and the rule of law through normal civil proceedings. To assist the judicial branch in these efforts, the United States provided a grant for the compilation, publication, and distribution of the civil code. Officials, professionals, scholars, and citizens benefited by having ready access to the code, which covers family law, urban planning, and property law.

The United States discussed religious freedom issues as part of the overall U.S. policy to promote human rights. The country has a mixture of Muslim, Christian, and traditional animist beliefs. Although the Government prohibited activity by the Ahmadiya, an Islamic religious group, in March 2005, there were no reports that the Government declined to license any other religious group. In 2005, the Embassy sent one person to the United States using the International Visitors Leadership Program to participate in a U.S. African Regional Program entitled “Leadership in a Muslim Society.” The United States also trained two English teachers from Islamic schools to increase their effectiveness as language teachers.

Kenya

Building on the peaceful political transition to the Kibaki Government in December 2002, Kenyans voted peacefully and in large numbers during the November 2005 constitutional referendum. However, voters defeated efforts to pass a new Constitution, the delivery of which was one of President Kibaki’s key pledges when he entered office. There have been no arrests or prosecution of Government ministers or assistant ministers on corruption charges. However, the Minister of Finance resigned in February 2006 amid allegations of corruption, which were also aimed at other senior level Government officials and the Vice President. Unemployment and underemployment remained close to 50 % and more than one-half of all Kenyans continued to live in poverty. While the Government made improvements in some areas, such as prison conditions, serious human rights problems remained. Civilian authorities generally maintained effective control of the security forces. Police forces, however, acted independently of Government authority in some instances resulting in abuse and unlawful killings. Female genital mutilation (FGM), child labor, and trafficking in persons (TIP) continued to be problems. Apart from establishing free primary education, the Government made only modest progress on its goals of combating corruption and improving human rights.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy focused on encouraging strong government action against corruption; increasing the effectiveness of parliament; strengthening electoral processes, civil society, and the media; reducing TIP; and mitigating regional conflicts.

Following the success of the 2002 general election, the United States supported the electoral process leading up to and during the November constitutional referendum. The Embassy engaged with political leadership throughout the referendum process and encouraged officials to ensure that campaigning and polling were peaceful, lawful, transparent, and fair. The Ambassador made public statements emphasizing the importance of a successful referendum

to Kenya's continued democratic development. Accredited U.S. observers visited over 90 polling stations and vote-tallying centers on polling day. U.S. observers, in collaboration with other diplomatic observers, submitted a report of their findings to the Electoral Commission of Kenya (ECK). The United States continued to provide assistance to improve the electoral process, including improving the administrative capacity of the ECK and, in particular, increasing the use of appropriate information technology to strengthen transparency, competition, and accountability in electoral processes.

The United States continued to support a legislative strengthening program to empower parliamentary committees to play a more productive role in legislative reform and provide effective oversight of the Executive. This program worked in conjunction with others to support key committees and promote quality legislation in the health, education, trade, environment, and agriculture sectors. To further increase legislative capacity, the Embassy sent two Members of Parliament to participate in the International Visitors Leadership Program (IVLP) in the United States. The U.S. Congress selected Kenya to participate in the House Democratic Assistance Commission peer-to-peer democracy program.

The United States supported media freedom in Kenya through outreach to mediapersons. Through the IVLP, the Embassy sent a number of print, television, and radio journalists, including an HIV/AIDS photojournalist, to the United States. The Embassy also sponsored a reciprocal visit by an American photojournalist to participate in an HIV/AIDS exhibition with Kenyan journalists. These exchanges helped to promote responsible journalism and the importance of media coverage of human rights issues.

In 2005, the United States continued to assist Kenyan NGOs that focused on conflict management and peace building, domestic violence and family protection, judicial reforms, and anti-corruption. The U.S.-funded Federation of Women Lawyers, an NGO that works to eliminate discrimination against women, succeeded in securing a legal requirement for the inclusion of women on newly established committees

charged with overseeing government funds for constituency development programs. The United States supported local women's peace-building groups and traditional structures in the drought-stricken northeast to contribute to the prevailing peace in an area where scarcity of resources such as water and pasture land has often resulted in violent conflict.

A key U.S. objective was to help Kenya make further progress in the fight against corruption. Early in 2005, the Department of Governance and Ethics (DGE), the U.S. Government's key anti-corruption partner, asserted itself as the leading anti-corruption body of the Kenyan Government. However, in February 2006, Kenya's highest anti-corruption official, the Permanent Secretary of the DGE, resigned in frustration over Government unresponsiveness. This resignation and questionable Government commitment to addressing corruption within its ranks led the United States to cease support of the DGE. On numerous occasions, the Ambassador used public events, op-eds, and speeches to speak out publicly on the critical need for firm Government action against corruption.

The Embassy continued to work with the Department of Public Prosecution's (DPP) newly created specialized unit on anti-corruption, economic crimes, serious fraud, and asset recovery. In addition to creating the specialized unit, the program provided for a secretariat to manage the training and capacity building activities and equipped research facilities. The United States hosted, in conjunction with the DPP, an investigation and pretrial issue training course for Kenyan criminal prosecutors in which a number of U.S. officials participated. As a result of U.S. support, the legislature passed the Public Procurement and Disposal Bill and the Privatization Bill, significant milestones that expand the opportunities for ensuring transparency in use of state resources.

In 2005, the United States awarded small grants to four local NGOs for projects to eradicate the use of torture by security forces, increase the participation of women in local governance, prevent women's property and inheritance rights violations, and end FGM. Trainings educated 70 former circumcisers



and secured commitments to campaign against the practice. Women's voter education programs allowed more women to vote without assistance during the November constitutional referendum.

To address the impact of HIV/AIDS on Kenyan women, the United States supported NGOs that advocate for women's property and inheritance rights and changes to other government policies that adversely affect women who have HIV/AIDS or suffer indirectly from its consequences.

Reinforcing the Government's efforts to improve prison conditions, the United States continued to support the expansion of HIV prevention and care services in collaboration with the Kenya Prisons Service. These activities included training of peer educators and medical workers within the prisons, improvement of capacity to diagnose and treat TB and HIV among prisoners, and the establishment of voluntary counseling and HIV testing centers at eight prisons, including a women's facility.

The Ambassador engaged frequently with religious leaders. The Embassy met regularly with Muslim leaders on the coast to discuss the sense of marginalization among Muslim communities in Kenya.

The United States continued annual funding for the American Center for International Labor Solidarity East Africa to promote the independence and good governance of African trade unions, national and regional democracy and anti-corruption efforts, improvement of industrial relations, HIV/AIDS workplace programs, and implementation of ILO core labor standards. Projects included training in advocacy, paralegal training for industrial disputes, programs to combat sexual harassment and workplace violence, exposure and prevention of sweatshop conditions in garment factories (especially those exporting to the United States), and country studies on human and labor union rights.

The United States supported a five-year project with the ILO's International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor aimed to reduce the incidence of the worst forms of child labor in Kenya. A total

of 20,000 children were targeted for withdrawal and prevention services. A second regional project will improve the quality of and access to basic, technical, and vocational training for 30,600 HIV/AIDS-affected children who are working or at-risk of working in the worst forms of child labor.

In 2005, Kenya improved its anti-TIP performance from Tier 2 Watch List to Tier 2. The United States hosted a conference to increase awareness of the problem and strengthen collaborative anti-trafficking efforts by the Government of Kenya and NGOs. The United States agreed to fund three Kenyan NGOs to receive small grants for projects including victims' assistance programs and public awareness of human trafficking among the vulnerable refugee populations.

Liberia

Liberia is a constitutional republic. In January 2006, the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL), the interim government since the August 2003 termination of a ruinous 14-year civil war, was replaced by the democratically elected Unity Party Government, led by Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf. Legislative and presidential multiparty elections, held in October 2005, were deemed open and transparent by a number of national and international observer organizations. During the year, the NTGL respected the human rights of its citizens and the Government passed legislation to strengthen human rights; however, the country faced serious challenges, including a weak judiciary, official corruption and impunity, and extreme poverty that led to child labor. As a result of the 14-year civil war, the roads fell into disrepair, the educational system barely functioned, and the country continued to lack basic infrastructure such as communal electric power, potable water, or sanitary sewers.

The U.S. strategy to promote democracy and human rights in Liberia included support for a wide variety of programs designed to consolidate peace and foster respect for human rights. Through these programs, the United States helped improve prison conditions,



People waiting in line to cast their votes in the presidential runoff election in Monrovia, Liberia. (AP Photo)

police professionalism, anti-corruption efforts, voter and civic education, child protection, capabilities for combating trafficking in persons (TIP), and respect for the rule of law. The United States also built local capacity by supporting Liberian human rights organizations that do public outreach and human rights education. U.S. officials routinely and publicly highlighted the need for improvements in human rights conditions, and worked privately with Liberian officials, NGOs, and international organizations to identify areas of concern and encourage systemic reforms.

In support of national elections, the United States sponsored programs designed to strengthen political parties, promote voter registration, educate citizens, train polling place officials, advise the National Elections Commission, and otherwise support preparations for the October presidential and parliamentary elections as well as for the presidential runoff election in November. The Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs led an official U.S. election observer delegation for the October elections. For both elections, the United States sent observers to a combined total of 13 of 15 counties to observe voting, counting, and tallying procedures. In addition, the United

States funded a monetary disclosure process to enable the National Elections Commission to trace the funding of presidential and senatorial contestants in a transparent manner.

During the national elections, the United States held a number of discussion sessions and programs to educate journalists on elections reporting. They included a video conference with a U.S. expert on how to report on elections, a discussion on media responsibility, and an elections media resource center open to national and international journalists. The Ambassador taped a public service broadcast for the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) radio, urging citizens to accept the results and respect the supporters of other candidates. The U.S. Deputy Chief of Mission spoke at more than 10 universities and secondary schools on the importance of voting and respecting the results. In addition to elections-related support, the Embassy used the International Visitors Leadership Program to provide a senior radio reporter with an opportunity to visit the United States for professional development. As part of civil society strengthening, the United States continued to support local radio stations. For example, U.S.-supported programs enabled the transmission of voter education messages



and calls for calm over 22 community radio stations in several counties during the election campaign.

Following the peace agreement in 2003, the United States allocated significant resources to fund relief and reconstruction and to support police and judicial reform as well as rule of law programs, in coordination with the UNMIL and other implementing partners and donors. These programs included a prison infrastructure project, support for rebuilding and training the Liberian National Police (LNP), the provision of U.S. civilian police advisors to the LNP, and support for judicial reform.

Corruption is a serious issue in the country. The United States publicly and repeatedly highlighted corruption-related issues with the National Transitional Legislative Assembly (NTLA), NTGL, and other relevant parties. In an effort to combat abuses, the United States helped frame, negotiate, and implement the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Program that placed internationally recruited financial controllers and management experts in the Ministry of Finance, the Central Bank, and other relevant ministries to encourage transparency and accountability. The United States worked with the Forestry Development Authority to ensure basic minimum labor standards for the industry, financial transparency, and conditions necessary for lifting UN sanctions on timber exports. The United States also provided a large grant to help the newly inaugurated Government comply with the Kimberly Process, an international certification process designed to prevent the trade of “conflict diamonds.”

The United States promoted several programs that assisted in the passage of legislation in support of Liberia’s Truth and Reconciliation Act. These activities included a nationwide survey on truth and justice issues, support to the Transitional Justice Working Group, an alliance of Liberian NGOs which advocates for national justice endeavors, and funding a former South African Truth and Reconciliation member to serve as a consultant to the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission selection panel.

A number of other civil society organizations received

U.S. support for human rights capacity building. The United States provided a grant to help develop the capacity of 23 Liberian NGOs to encourage transparency and good governance and to promote human rights. The United States funded a consortium of independent NGOs to work with political parties, the National Elections Commission, and the media on monitoring the parties’ compliance with campaign finance regulations and combating the misuse of state resources for electoral purposes. The United States worked to create a sustainable peace and promote community reintegration by supporting the Liberia Community Infrastructure Program (LCIP) and the Women and Child Soldier Rehabilitation and Reintegration Program (WCRR). LCIP creates jobs and provides vocational training and psycho-social counseling for excombatants and other war-affected persons. In addition, the United States supported a community-based program that provided 30,000 war-affected youth with non-formal skills training in HIV/AIDS work, conflict mediation, and human rights awareness. The WCRR was implemented through cooperative agreements with various international partners to provide child protection services.

The United States further promoted community rejuvenation by supporting the return and reintegration of approximately 43,000 Liberian refugees and over 270,000 internally displaced persons and conflict victims since late 2004. Through support to the UN High Commission for Refugees and NGO partners, the United States helped secure durable solutions for refugees by facilitating returns and creating conditions in communities that encouraged returns, including medical services, water and sanitation programs, education, support to victims of violence against women, and family tracing and reunification programs.

The United States continued publicly and privately to encourage the legislature and other government agencies to prioritize issues that primarily affect women, such as rape and female genital mutilation. Through an international NGO, the United States funded a cross-border anti-TIP awareness program that reaches out to communities in Liberia and Sierra Leone. The United States publicly voiced support for anti-TIP programs as well as the anti-TIP bill that was

passed in mid-2005 by the NTLA. Through another international NGO, the United States supported a child labor initiative to help eliminate the worst forms of child labor.

The United States launched a four-year program to contribute to the sustainable elimination of exploitive child labor in Lofa, Nimba, and Montserrado counties. It will conduct a baseline study on child labor, improve school access through scholarships, and promote family income generation. The United States seeks to improve basic infrastructure, supplies, and curricula for schools, as well as provide non-formal education programs. Initiatives target communities with awareness raising activities, and assist local partners with self-monitoring systems.

Madagascar

Madagascar has many elements of a modern democracy, but its institutions are weak and subject to executive influence. The Government generally respected the rights of its citizens; however, problems existed in some areas. A less than independent judiciary selectively enforced laws. A culture of impunity fostered public corruption. Civil society remained weak and unable to counter government excess. Access to public information remained inadequate for civil society and Government alike.

The U.S. strategy to promote democracy and human rights focused on strengthening key governmental and civil institutions. The Embassy advanced these goals in the monthly Human Rights Working Group (HRWG), democracy and governance activities, and programs financed with U.S. funding. In 2005, the HRWG conducted outreach designed to improve public understanding of fundamental human rights. Democracy and governance sector programs worked to strengthen civil society; increase access to information; promote women's rights; increase government transparency, accountability, and responsiveness to community needs; and strengthen the Government's capacity to address corruption. The Embassy worked in close coordination with the Government to combat trafficking in persons (TIP) and supported

other grassroots human rights initiatives.

The Embassy coordinated and chaired the monthly Madagascar HRWG, which remained a significant forum for officials and civil society to discuss human rights issues. Topics discussed during the year included the Government's duty to protect human rights, the position of women in Malagasy society, law enforcement's role in protecting the rights of children, fostering support for civil society, advancing the rights of the elderly, and unionization. In December, the HRWG conducted a series of awareness and educational activities for International Human Rights Week. The Malagasy Constitution requires the Government to create apolitical organizations that promote and protect human rights. However, the Government's National Commission for Human Rights has been inactive since its members' terms expired in the 2002 political crisis. Throughout 2005, the HRWG actively lobbied for the Government to reinstate the Commission.

The Embassy sent several Malagasy leaders to the United States under the International Visitors Leadership Program to study issues such as religion, conflict resolution, grassroots democracy, and NGO management.

To promote freedom of speech in Madagascar, the HRWG hosted a three-day colloquium on press freedom. The colloquium featured presentations by the Minister of Communication, journalist associations, and representatives from public and private radio, television, and daily newspapers. The event fostered debate on how to protect press freedom while instilling a spirit of professionalism and responsibility within the press corps.

The Embassy supported a Multi-Sectoral Information Service in eight focus regions to link civil society decision makers and Government partners to sector-specific information sources. The Embassy's newly hired Radio Corridor Coordinator ensured greater access to radio in remote regions of the country. The coordinator's role included the dissemination of independent radio programming that included educational programs relevant to local populations.



The United States actively worked to build the capacity of civil society groups, including organizations that dealt directly with human rights issues such as violence against women and freedom of information. In June, the Embassy helped convoke a conference for the National Platform for Civil Society Organizations in Madagascar. During the meeting more than 300 participants representing 220 organizations adopted a common charter. The platform's objective was to improve coordination and communication to strengthen civil society as an advocate and government partner. One component of the new platform dealt specifically with human rights.

In 2005, the United States funded programs to strengthen civil society and improve women's legal rights. Embassy representatives participated in the Malagasy National Gender Network (MNGN), a group of NGOs, individuals, Government officials, and donors working to promote gender equality. The United States also helped to reorganize and revitalize the MNGN, which led to the organization's first procedure manual. Madagascar was a focus country for the U.S. Women's Legal Rights (WLR) Initiative, which implemented four regional workshops during the year to help 40 women-led NGOs gain a better understanding of the Malagasy Family Code and international conventions relating to women, as well as to develop a legislative action plan. Results of a recent pilot survey on family law, violence against women, and women's participation in civil life confirmed that violence against women occurred frequently. The results will be used to develop future activities to strengthen women's legal rights in Madagascar.

An arcane system of citizenship laws and procedures has created a pool of stateless persons in the country. A large majority of these people are Muslims of Indo-Pakistani origin, many of whom have pending naturalization requests. During the year the Ambassador regularly raised this issue with the President, Prime Minister, and Minister of Justice, and encouraged them to process the pending applications.

The United States funded two anti-corruption assessments focused on the tourism and crafts sectors during the year. The Anti-Corruption High Council

(CSLCC) used the data to develop the second national anti-corruption strategy. The Embassy provided logistical support for two regional CSLCC workshops, which were part of a public consultation process to develop a revised national anti-corruption strategy document. Attendees included local government officials, CSO members, and private sector representatives. This program resulted in the completion of a feasibility study on a network of corruption observatories in three regions in Madagascar. The network will be used to monitor the evolution and mechanisms of anti-corruption reform.

The United States funded the CSLCC's Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist and the Independent Anti-Corruption Bureau's (BIANCO) legal specialist to attend the Brazil Global Forum on the Fight Against Corruption in June 2005. The forum addressed practical and effective measures for preventing and fighting corruption. Workshops stimulated discussion on a range of issues such as international conventions, money laundering, e-government, corruption measurement, conflict of interest, civil society, and local-level corruption. Funding also extended to anti-corruption "open house" campaigns in three provinces to raise awareness about BIANCO's role and mandate. The United States reinforced the capacity of anti-corruption NGOs including the local chapter of Transparency International, the Malagasy Arbitration and Mediation Center, and the Anti-Corruption Coalition to help these organizations become more sustainable. The United States hosted a special training session for the BIANCO office in Antananarivo.

In a November meeting with the Minister of the Interior, the Ambassador expressed U.S. concern over the closure of the New Protestant Church in Madagascar.

The Embassy continued to advance anti-TIP initiatives in close collaboration with the President's special inter-ministerial anti-TIP committee. During the year, the committee continued its comprehensive review of existing TIP legislation, increased enforcement of laws barring minors from nightclubs, and persisted in its efforts to rehabilitate children occu-

pied in the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation. To support these efforts, the Embassy secured support from the Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons to conduct an in-depth study of sex and labor trafficking in Madagascar as well as a nationwide information campaign. In addition, the United States provided assistance to victims of TIP in the at-risk cities of Nosy Be and Tamatave and published and distributed a training book with techniques to support investigations and trials.

Mauritania

Mauritania was a highly centralized Islamic republic dominated by a strong presidency. On August 3, military and security commanders led by Colonel Ely Ould Mohammed Fal, the Chief of National Police, seized power in a bloodless coup, established a military council to run the country, and deposed President Maaouiya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya after 21 years as head of state. The council appointed a transitional government and dissolved parliament. After a formal set of consultations in October and November with political parties and civil society representatives, the military council released a consensus timeline for a transition to democracy, culminating in a presidential election in March 2007, and the disbandment of the military council by May 2007.

The United States condemned the coup, limited its engagement with the military junta, and suspended most non-humanitarian assistance. Suspended programs include International Military Education Training, Anti-Terrorism Assistance, International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program, and Foreign Military Financing.

Both the former and transitional Government's human rights record remained poor in 2005. Although there were improvements in some areas, numerous problems remained. Democratic institutions remained rudimentary. The former Government circumscribed citizens' ability to change their government. Some members of the security forces reportedly used excessive force, beat, or otherwise

abused detainees. Arbitrary arrest, detention, and illegal searches remained concerns. While the former Government recognized several NGOs, and the transitional Government recognized one new political party, both Governments refused to recognize most political parties, NGOs, or human rights organizations. Discrimination against women continued. Female genital mutilation remained a widespread problem. Despite efforts of the former and transitional Governments, reports persist of slavery in the form of involuntary servitude, and in some areas slaves continued to work for former masters. Child labor in the informal sector was common. In a positive move, both the former and transitional Governments trained police and judicial officials on the application of the recently strengthened labor code prohibiting forced labor and related practices.

Given the extraordinary circumstances of the past year, the U.S. human rights and democracy strategy in Mauritania was primarily focused on making sure that the country moved promptly toward democracy through free and fair elections. The strategy included a robust regimen of diplomatic engagement, both with the transitional government, and with international partners and the UN. In addition to actively helping this democratization process, the U.S. strategy incorporated respect for fundamental human rights, developing civil society and responsible media, promoting religious freedom and tolerance, and combating forced labor, child labor, and trafficking in persons (TIP).

The United States repeatedly raised human rights and democracy issues at every level with the former and transitional Governments throughout 2005. During his December 2005 visit, Congressman Bennie Thompson also discussed human rights and democracy with junta leader Colonel Fal, various ministers, and representatives of political parties and civil society. The United States funded assistance projects in the areas of good governance, literacy, workers' rights, and the rights of women and children.

The United States funded and implemented programs to enhance the capacity and role of political



parties and civil society in the preparation for elections. These programs involved town hall meetings concerning the role of women in the political process, as well as various training seminars on the role of political parties in shaping Government policy, including election planning. Activities assisted NGOs in becoming more engaged in the current transition to democracy and to serve as agents of change.

In an ongoing effort to support an independent press, the Embassy celebrated International Press Freedom Day on May 3. A daylong conference attended by more than 50 journalists from a wide variety of local newspapers highlighted the rights and responsibilities of an independent press. The events included a debate on the role of the press in Mauritania. A U.S.-sponsored reporters' writing competition awarded eight local journalists for their articles on freedom of the press, human rights, development, and women's participation in the political process.

In March, the United States awarded an International Visitors Leadership Program (IVLP) grant to the Chief Editor of Mauritania's first independent French paper. The program, which focused on the role of the media, included visits to various U.S. media outlets, and with political and civil society actors and high-ranking Government officials. The United States sponsored two other independent journalists in an October seminar focusing on democracy and the press in Douala, Cameroon. In addition, the Ambassador regularly invited journalists to accompany him and provide news coverage of his regular travels, highlighting the many U.S. development and human rights promotion projects.

In an ongoing effort to protect the dignity and human rights of all Mauritians, U.S. officials visited various prisons and met with hundreds of inmates. Following these visits, the Embassy worked with prison and Government officials to improve prison conditions and press for judicial reforms to ensure that each prisoner received access to legal council and a fair and speedy trial. In July, the former Government sponsored a week-long human rights conference aimed at training attendees to detect, investigate, and try cases involving human rights abuses.

More than 60 judges, lawyers, NGO representatives, and police and gendarmerie officers attended the conference.

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

In addition, the United States provided a grant to help expand the capacity of four NGOs dealing with victims of TIP. The United States aggressively investigated reports and allegations of slavery and slavery-related practices throughout 2005. The Embassy also emphasized the need for the Government to provide statistical evidence of its anti-TIP activities to the public.

In May and June 2005, the United States sponsored Operation Flintlock, a counterterrorism training operation involving the armed forces of seven African countries, including Mauritania. The principal purpose of the training was to enhance the capabilities of participant countries to halt the flow of illicit weapons, goods, and human trafficking in the region. The United States reviewed human rights records of members of military and security forces who participated in training. Embassy personnel based in Nouakchott used the opportunity presented by these Leahy Amendment reviews to discuss with senior security and military officials the importance of protecting human rights in the conduct of law enforcement or military activities.

Mozambique

Mozambique is a constitutional democracy. President Armando Guebuza was elected in December 2004, in what national and international observers judged to be generally free and fair elections despite some irregularities. Limited Government accountability and lack of transparency, however, contributed to persistent corruption and weak human rights safeguards. The Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRE-

LIMO), the ruling political party since independence in 1975, has moved away from its Marxist beginnings to promote an increasingly open society. Press freedom continued to expand during the year. Government performance remained weak in other areas, and serious human rights problems remained. There were reports of unlawful killings, extremely harsh prison conditions, arbitrary arrest and detention, widespread discrimination against women and persons with disabilities and AIDS, and trafficking of women and children to South Africa.

In 2005, the United States carried out a wide range of programs to enhance municipal Government performance by improving accountability, responsiveness, transparency, and service provision. The United States also supported efforts by key Government agencies and civil society to draft a freedom of information bill and assisted in upgrading the police force.

To strengthen municipal governance, the Embassy invited seven mayors to the United States as participants in an International Visitors Leadership Program. As a result of this initiative, the mayors established collaborative links with American institutions to further enhance their understanding of the role and potential of local Government. In a separate initiative, the United States funded a five-year project to help five municipalities improve citizen participation, municipal management, and revenue generation. Additionally, the United States backed the first-ever Conference of the National Association of Municipalities, an organization representing local Governments which advocate for their priorities on the national stage.

Mozambique made progress on press freedom issues, as evidenced by the willingness of journalists to cover politically sensitive cases; however, some television, radio, and print media news outlets were not fully independent from Government or political party control. Additionally, the United States supported radio and print media organizations in efforts to enhance independence.

To strengthen democracy and good governance, the United States increased its emphasis on anti-corrup-

tion programs, including activities with both the Government and civil society. The United States worked to improve the performance of the recently restructured Central Office for the Combat of Corruption in the Attorney General's office by providing funds to train prosecutors in investigative skills. U.S. funds also supported technical assistance and scholarships for law and auditing degrees.

U.S.-funded anti-corruption programs supported citizen awareness campaigns, encouraging citizens to denounce corrupt behavior and publicizing the corruption reporting process. With U.S. assistance, Mozambique's only anti-corruption NGO, *Ética Moçambique*, opened Corruption Reporting Centers in seven provincial capitals. The centers received and tracked over 190 citizen reports.

U.S. officials met often with a Mozambican NGO that monitored allegations of torture and other gross human rights abuses. The United States also hosted a public roundtable on domestic violence and child abuse.

The United States supported a number of activities to increase religious freedom and toleration, particularly for the minority Islamic community. The United States funded and organized the visit of an American imam to Maputo and arranged for an inter-faith round table on religion during his stay. The Embassy also funded travel to the United States for two Mozambican imams during the year. During the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, the Embassy hosted several Iftaars (breaking of fast) to demonstrate support for and respect for religious observances.

The United States actively advocated for the formulation and passage of anti-trafficking in persons (TIP) legislation and provided technical assistance to the Government to draft the new law. Mozambique is a source country for an estimated 1,000 women trafficked to South Africa each year for the purpose of sexual exploitation. In addition, children were taken from Mozambique to South Africa to work on farms under extremely harsh conditions. Despite an interest to combat such trafficking, the Government had limited resources and lacked specific anti-trafficking



legislation. As a result, it made little progress on prevention or prosecution. Through the Women’s Legal Rights Initiative, the United States responded to a request from the Government for technical assistance in drafting an anti-TIP law. The United States also laid the groundwork for linking anti-trafficking efforts to existing HIV/AIDS activities in Mozambique’s main transit corridors.

The U.S. Government funded a program to combat exploitative child labor through education.

Nigeria

The Government of Nigeria’s record on democracy, the rule of law, corruption, prevention of internal conflict, and the welfare of its citizens remained problematic. The executive branch often hampered credible judicial reviews of challenged results from the 2003 elections with a lack of cooperation. The executive branch also ignored court verdicts related to the elections. The legislative branch passed relatively little legislation. Nigeria agreed to a G-8 Transparency and Anti-Corruption Compact at the Sea Island Summit in June 2004, and is a participant in the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI). The Government established institutions to tackle rampant corruption, but with one exception—the former Inspector-General of Police, who received a very light sentence for corruption—those institutions have not brought trials of senior officials to either conviction or acquittal. Religious and ethnic divisions beset Nigeria, and the Government sometimes was as much a part of the problem as of the solution. Growing poverty and poor governance in many areas around the country added tension to the political climate. National debate centered on whether the 2007 presidential election will be free and fair.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy targeted building an accountable, transparent democracy with a robust civil society, respect for human rights, rule of law, good governance, and conflict resolution. In addition, the strategy focused on the need for the Government to improve the environment to have free and fair elections and to strengthen rule of law.



Muslim Women’s Leadership Program in Lagos, Nigeria. (IRI)

Corruption, ethnic and religious violence, respect for the Constitution, and concerns over judicial independence were among many themes pursued by U.S. officials in Nigeria.

The United States combined programs to improve democracy and governance through increased accountability and the institutionalization of peaceful political processes. The United States also initiated programs to strengthen the rule of law through increased access to justice, revised legal frameworks and the mitigation of the causes and impact of trafficking in persons (TIP). The United States worked to improve governance by supporting fair elections, strengthening political parties and legislative institutions, and increasing civil society’s capabilities to advocate for policy reform and monitor Government operations. Activities to strengthen the rule of law included management and dissemination of court information, codification of judicial ethics, and expanded access to justice by means of alternative dispute resolution.

The United States funded an American NGO in northern Nigeria to promote sound human rights reporting. The program includes a comprehensive training regimen for selected reporters that concludes with an annual ceremony and award presentation to the reporter who made the greatest achievement in human rights reporting over the course of the year.

With U.S. support, the Publish What You Pay coalition

has been successfully engaged with the EITI process, appearing and presenting comment at several EITI secretariat-convened public meetings. In a significant effort to institutionalize civil society engagement, the secretariat has created and staffed the position of a civil society organization liaison officer.

The United States provided technical assistance to help the Nigerian Supreme Court develop a website, making available to the public critical information on the Constitution and legal precedents.

The United States continued to sponsor a successful community policing pilot project with the Nigerian Police Force. The project promoted tactics aimed at crime reduction, while improving the professionalism, responsibility, and performance of the Nigerian Police Force. A major portion of the program focused on respect for human rights, covering such topics as excessive use of force and extrajudicial killings.

The United States regularly distributes information via its Information Resource Centers (IRCs) on human rights, rule of law, and related topics. Information is distributed to targeted audiences that include journalists, academics, businessmen and women, civic organizations, teachers, students, Government officials, military, clergy, and traditional rulers. Such information may include U.S. and nongovernmental publications such as academic and think tank reports. The IRCs also distributed information throughout Nigeria via the American Corners program. American Corners are presently located in nine cities, with three more slated for opening in the near future. American Corners also serve as a venue for official and unofficial Americans to speak about human rights, good governance and rule of law, and other related themes.

The United States sponsors small-scale projects at the community level. Such projects in 2005 included a program in Kano to sensitize women on purdah (a cultural practice of keeping women segregated from men who are not their relatives), a two-day informational workshop on anti-corruption laws in Abeokuta, and a publicity campaign against female genital mutilation in Abia State.

As in previous years, the United States sponsored a Senior Leader Seminar attended by Nigerian military leaders, in which a plenary session was devoted to human rights. The “Next Generation of African Military Leaders” course, conducted in April and May, and attended by military leaders, also included a human rights component, demonstrating to participants that respect for human rights will enhance military professionalism and civil-military relations. The United States includes human rights training for all members of the military who receive military training.

The United States worked extensively on the problem of inter-religious violence and religious freedom, meeting with national and local political and religious leaders on multiple occasions to gain a better understanding of existing problems and to advocate resolution. Embassy officials gave speeches across the country calling for reconciliation and traveled extensively to work with state officials and Muslim and Christian leaders on promoting peace and ending discrimination, including holding interfaith celebrations of tolerance. A Christian pastor and Muslim imam from Kaduna, whom the United States sent for training in Vermont in 2003, in turn sensitized members of the Kaduna Peace Committee in 2004. The United States paid for radio and television programs on religious tolerance in which the pastor and imam discussed conflict issues in Kaduna and Kano. In recognition of the success of their peacemaking efforts, the pastor and imam received the prestigious Common Ground Award in 2004 from the well-known NGO Search for Common Ground. In 2005, the United States funded additional programs by the pastor and the imam.

As part of the U.S. efforts toward promoting religious tolerance, the United States sponsored some 20 Nigerian high school students from Kaduna, Sokoto, Plateau, and Taraba states for one academic year in the United States. About 32 alumni of this program have formed Peace Clubs in their respective schools in Kaduna and Sokoto, and are currently engaged in peace building efforts and community volunteerism.

Programs to manage conflict included sensitizing community and opinion leaders, youth groups, and



faith-based organizations about the virtues of peaceful coexistence, establishing conflict early warning networks, and providing humanitarian assistance for internally displaced persons.

The United States sponsored speakers on the rule of law, religious tolerance, and democratic governance at major universities, think tanks, and American Corners in major cities outside the capital. Embassy officials hosted a workshop on civic education and published a manual on citizens' rights and responsibilities in a democratic society.

Embassy officials regularly met with local, state, and federal officials to discuss human rights trends in policymaking and law enforcement. They also worked closely with civic and international NGOs on such issues as worker rights, religious freedom, prison conditions, and women's, children's, and minorities' rights. Over the last two years, numerous International Visitors Leadership Program grantees have participated in programs on human rights and democracy. Several Humphrey candidates participated in projects on the rule of law, human rights, democracy, and investigative journalism.

The United States sponsored activities to mitigate the causes and consequences of TIP, including the dissemination of anti-trafficking materials via public media. The United States held press briefings and participated in workshops to increase public awareness and societal capacity to recognize and address the dangers of TIP.

Nigeria cooperated with the International Labor Organization on a country-wide program to reduce the worst forms of child labor. Another program supported the initiative in West Africa to eliminate hazardous child labor from cocoa production. Additional funds supported an effort to help the Government-sponsored Michael Imodou Institute for Labor Studies to upgrade its capacity to train workers about their rights as citizens and employees and to help it become a center for conciliation, mediation, and arbitration training for both labor and industry representatives.

In December, the United States, along with the International Law Institute at Georgetown University, hosted a delegation of high-level judges from Nigeria. The participants were briefed on the techniques of alternative dispute resolution and met with judges at various tribunals who use mediation programs.

Rwanda

The destruction of Rwanda's social fabric and institutional capacity during the 1994 genocide continued to have an adverse impact on the country's human rights situation. Rwanda nevertheless succeeded in adopting a Constitution in 2003 and electing a president, Paul Kagame, as well as a new legislature, in peaceful elections marred by numerous irregularities. The Government's human rights record remained poor and serious human rights abuses occurred, although there were some improvements during the year. Problems included unlawful killings, the use of torture and excessive force by security forces, impunity, arbitrary arrest and detention, denial of fair trial, political prisoners, including former President Pasteur Bizimungu, restrictions on freedoms of speech, press, assembly, and association, abridgement of protection rights for refugees and asylum seekers, restrictions on civil society, violence and discrimination against women, trafficking in persons (TIP), and child labor.

The genocide of 1994 continued to drive policy. The Government did not permit organizations based on ethnicity, although it did register a Batwa advocacy organization, denied registration during the previous year. The Government closely monitored its citizens, civil society, and the public and private sectors for any sign of a return to the divisive attitudes that led to the genocide. Accusations of dissent or criticisms of the Government resulted in limitations on political activity. The Government continued to strongly support the representation of women in government.

After ten months of extensive reform in 2004, the judiciary resumed operations in 2005 as a more effective institution. In practice, however, constraints on the judiciary's independence remained. Observers closely watched the appeal trial of former Presi-

dent Bizimungu for indications of the new Supreme Court's independence. The Court's guilty verdict and ensuing 15-year sentence for Bizimungu, on what were believed to be trumped up charges, highlighted the influence of the executive branch. As a result of the Government's ongoing campaign against "divisionism" and "genocidal ideology," no domestic independent human rights NGOs were active at the beginning of 2005. Only one NGO was active and openly critical of the Government by year's end.

The U.S. strategy focused on building the capacity of the judiciary, the Ministry of Finance, and local Government and supporting the professionalization of the military and security forces. The strategy aimed to increase civil society participation in national dialogue and support the overall decentralization of local Government functions. It also supported activities designed to make Government institutions more responsive to citizens. The United States sought to promote long-term stability, both in the country and in the region, by promoting reconciliation, respect for the rule of law, and human rights.

The United States consistently supported human rights and democracy in Rwanda. Concerns about human rights abuses were raised with Government officials, NGOs, and international agencies. The United States utilized a wide range of diplomatic tools, including close monitoring and reporting of human rights abuses, technical assistance and training to promote Government accountability and respect for human rights, and capacity-building programs to strengthen Rwandan institutions, NGOs, and civil society.

The United States sponsored public outreach for political parties and university students that focused on democratic institutions and good governance, including best practices. Rwandan journalists, business leaders, and Government officials, including judges, participated in professional training and development in the United States through the International

tors Leadership Program. Training focused on print journalism, the role of the media, grassroots outreach, coalition building, democracy, transparency, and good governance.

The United States promoted rural economic growth and good governance by supporting projects that partnered NGOs with private and public sector actors. A five-year project was initiated in 2005 to support a large number of NGOs through small grants, primarily directed at service NGOs and activities for creating employment opportunities. A portion of the program was dedicated to encouraging interaction among elected leaders, NGOs, and the general population.



The United States engaged in programs designed to build the capacity of both NGOs and local government institutions. To improve community-based reconciliation efforts, the United States supported the Government's Genocide Survivors Fund, providing secondary education for approximately 2,640 students, many of who were orphaned by the genocide.

The United States provided support to the judiciary for the development of new financial management procedures and to prepare a budget with input from all levels of the judiciary. The United States funded Lawyers Without Borders to conduct a two-phase training program for judges. The program included an element to train 572 judges who, in the second phase, trained 43,288 judges for Rwanda's grassroots, community-based judicial system known as "gacaca."

On October 29, 2004, the United States resumed a limited security assistance program in Rwanda, which included an International Military Education and Training (IMET) program component. In 2005, the IMET program focused on respect for human and civil rights, civilian control of the military, and the proper role of the military in a democracy. Objectives included assisting the army in playing a positive



role in Peace Support Operations, returnee reintegration, and ethnic reconciliation, as well as overall respect for human rights.

In 2005, the Rwandan Defense Force (RDF) deployed its forces in support of an African Union (AU) peacekeeping effort in Darfur, Sudan. Rwanda also deployed troops in support of the UN peacekeeping mission in Sudan. Officers and non-commissioned officers who attended previous U.S.-sponsored training in Law of Land Warfare and respect for human rights, as well as training funded by the Global Peace Operations Initiative, were instrumental in contributing to AU efforts to promote peace and stability in Darfur. Additionally, RDF officers and soldiers attended various training courses that included human rights components and focused on the development of a professional army.

In November, the United States sponsored a Rwandan police inspector to attend a counterterrorism seminar in West Point, New York. The training included sessions on human rights and democracy.

The United States continued to fund a three-year prevention and reintegration program for former child soldiers and war-affected youth, with a special emphasis on girls. The program focused on legislation, appropriate procedures, and monitoring mechanisms. It also worked to build the capacity of Government institutions to address child soldiering. The regional program facilitated and supported the economic reintegration of former child combatants through education, training, financial support, and community strengthening. Another component of the program enhanced information-sharing on child soldiers in the region.

The United States continued to fund a project that targeted over 30,000 HIV/AIDS affected children involved in the worst forms of child labor. The project aimed to increase access to education through awareness campaigns and other support for the children, their communities, and related institutions.

The United States supported the Government's efforts to combat TIP and to protect the rights of

women and children. In collaboration with UNICEF, the Government identified the most egregious forms of child labor, sponsored three NGOs to assist children working in these sectors, and supported programs specifically designed to alleviate poverty in families where indigence was most often cited as the primary cause of child labor. The Government also offered rehabilitation programming to prostitutes, including employment training.

Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone is a constitutional republic with continuing challenges that resulted in part from the 11-year civil war that ended in 2002. The Government generally respected the rights of its citizens; however, widespread poverty, a destroyed infrastructure, and decades of bad governance contributed to numerous human rights problems. Security force abuses, police corruption, official impunity, poor conditions in prisons and detention centers, prolonged detention, restrictions on freedom of the press, societal discrimination and violence against women, female genital mutilation, trafficking in persons (TIP), and child labor were problems.

The U.S. strategy to promote democracy and human rights in Sierra Leone focused on peace and stabilization, strengthening key Government and civil institutions, increasing transparency and greater participation in the political process, and addressing the endemic corruption that continued to undermine the country's developing democracy. While engaging closely with high-level Government officials on these goals, the United States focuses many of its efforts at the grassroots level. Programs to improve human rights and democracy focused on issues such as civic education, child labor, and TIP.

An overly centralized Government, ineffective leaders, and corruption had contributed substantially to Sierra Leone's 11-year civil war. The United States strongly supported Government efforts to decentralize and to increase transparency and accountability. While district and town council representatives have been in office since mid-2004, many of them re-

mained unskilled in their roles. U.S. assistance helped 82 local communities and their local council representatives build a community framework to discuss governance issues.

The United States also consulted closely with the Government and other international donors to develop and implement a plan to strengthen the National Electoral Commission and Political Parties Registration Commission ahead of the 2007 presidential and parliamentary elections, which will be an important barometer of Sierra Leone's progress toward sustainable peace.

The United States helped to promote local governance and strengthen civil society by sponsoring over 1,200 hours of radio air time dedicated to the discussion of democracy and governance issues. For example, decisions by the majority of citizens in the Kailahun District to not pay taxes were resolved through the auspices of a U.S.-sponsored radio program. Representatives from the Kailahun District Council broadcasted the rationale for recent tax increases and how tax revenues were used. After the program, counselors, civil society representatives, and citizens successfully mobilized Kailahun residents to pay their taxes.

The criminal and seditious libel provisions of the 1965 Public Order Act remained an obstacle to media freedom. The Ambassador advocated for an alternative to the Public Order Act at a local workshop. The Ambassador also advocated for press freedom on a number of occasions, including during a trip to the town where a journalist had recently been harassed by traditional authorities and sent away from his job. The journalist had publicly criticized political manipulation during the ruling Sierra Leone People's Party convention to choose their presidential candidate.

The country's human rights oversight capacity was extremely weak. Although the 1999 Lome Peace Accords called for the establishment of a National Human Rights Commission, a civil society panel of screeners had identified no qualified applicants for presidential consideration. The UN peacekeeping mission had assumed a significant human rights oversight mandate; however, it fully withdrew from the

country before year's end. It was replaced by a much smaller peace building mission, requiring local NGOs to assume a greater oversight role. The United States also funded local NGO projects such as court monitoring and civic education on the role and activities of Parliament.

The United States is the largest contributor to the Special Court for Sierra Leone. The Court has a mandate from the UN Security Council to bring to justice those with "the greatest responsibility" for violations of international humanitarian and human rights law committed in the country from 1996 to the war's end in 2002. Successful implementation of this mandate would send a strong message throughout Africa that the culture of impunity is unacceptable. The Ambassador and his country team were in regular contact with senior Special Court officials to determine how the United States could most effectively support the Special Court.

Exceptionally poor civil-military relations were a chronic impediment to democratic governance. The United States continued to participate in the UK-led effort to remake the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces and Sierra Leone Police into effective forces under civilian authority. American military personnel embedded in the International Military Advisory and Training Team (IMATT) provided experienced military guidance and training, contributing to IMATT's capabilities. The United States also organized three conferences to promote improved civil-military relations.

One of the country's most enduring problems was the abuse of women's rights. Both civil and customary law discriminate against women, and gender-based violence was a common occurrence. The United States supported women's rights by hosting a series of events called "Women in Leadership" at the Embassy. These events were aimed at strengthening women's networks and raising awareness of women's issues. The United States supported a local NGO composed of former Sierra Leonean refugees called the Men's Association for Gender Equality to advocate for the prevention of gender-based violence in Kailahun District. The group stressed to men and



boys the negative impact that such violence had on their communities. The United States also used an IVLP to promote women's rights; in 2005, a Sierra Leonean attended an International Visitors Leadership Program in the United States on women and the law.

Bonded and child labor continued to be serious human rights abuses in the country's alluvial diamond fields. The United States continued to address these and other issues, working to make diamond mining a legitimate, more transparent, more humane, and effectively monitored activity. The United States also began an extensive, four-year child labor project to provide education to children at risk of working in or already engaged in one of the most severe forms of child labor.

The country was initially assessed as a Tier 3 country for TIP in 2004. Although the Government made significant efforts to address the problem and was able to avoid sanctions, Sierra Leone remained on the Tier 2 Watch List in 2005. The United States worked closely with Government officials and civil society to establish a TIP Task Force and to advocate for the passage of anti-TIP legislation, which President Kabbah signed into law in August 2005.

Somalia

Somalia has been without a central Government since Mohamed Siad Barre fled the country in 1991. The country's human rights record remained poor and serious human rights abuses continued. During the 1990s, Somalia slipped from 123 to 172 on the UN Development Program's Global Human Development Index, which includes 174 countries. Somalia has not been ranked on the index since 1997 as the pervasive destruction and looting of the country's infrastructure during the civil war made statistical data unavailable. Since 1991, the situation in Somalia has been characterized by clan-based factions vying for power with total disregard for the safety of the civilian population. Members of rival clans and sub-clans targeted each other for murder solely on the basis of their affiliation. Rival clans tortured and even muti-

lated young men to ensure that they would not join opposing forces. Women and girls were raped. In rural areas, clans and brigands looted crops and livestock to feed their fighters. Belligerents also prevented farmers and herders from resuming their labor, to deprive the enemy and their potential civilian supporters of food and sustenance. Once in control of territory, most of the various factional leaders made no attempt to provide for the welfare of the people in their areas or create any sort of meaningful public administration, and they demonstrated no remorse for the starvation and suffering that their actions created. Somalia has been the site of continuous humanitarian operations since 1990. Severe malnutrition is widespread, with some of the highest general acute malnutrition rates in Africa.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy in Somalia focused on achieving national reconciliation, nurturing civil society and other democratic institutions, strengthening the rule of law, and mitigating conflict. The paramount goal of U.S. policy was to encourage the return of Somalia to the international community as a legitimate and reliable member that would not serve as a haven for terrorism. The United States does not have diplomatic representation in Somalia. The U.S. Embassy in Nairobi is responsible for promoting democracy, governance, and human rights in Somalia. In 2005, the Embassy was forced to suspend programs for Somalia due to the difficulty of monitoring projects within the country.

The Somalia National Reconciliation Conference concluded in 2004 following the formation of a transitional government, the components of which are known as the Transitional Federal Institutions (TFIs) and include a President, Prime Minister, 90-member cabinet, and the 275-member clan-based Transitional Federal Assembly (TFA). Throughout 2005 the United States actively promoted the unification of the TFIs as the only available means to return governance to Somalia. In 2004, the TFA elected a Speaker of the Assembly, Shariff Hassan Sheikh Adan, and a Transitional Federal President, Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed. The President later appointed Ali Mohammed Ghedi to serve as Prime Minister. A cabinet (the Council of Ministers) was named and received approval by the

TFA in January 2005. Deep political and personal divisions appeared in the TFA and Council of Ministers in March. Roughly two-thirds of TFI members relocated from Kenya to Somalia, but were scattered around the President's and Prime Minister's interim capital of Jowhar, the national capital city, Mogadishu, and the rest of the country.

The self-proclaimed Republic of Somaliland, in northwestern Somalia, held a presidential election in April 2003 and parliamentary elections in September 2005 that were described as credible and transparent by international observers. The United States maintained informal contacts with Somaliland authorities, as it did with a number of other Somali groups, including the semi-autonomous region of Puntland in northeastern Somalia. The United States funded a program to empower political parties and candidates in Somaliland to participate in activities critical to their successful participation in the legislative elections. The program also followed up on the political process following elections, and assisted Somaliland's political parties to organize and implement an effective civic education program. U.S. officials visiting Somaliland encouraged political leaders to develop democratic institutions.

One of the U.S. strategic objectives for Somalia was to strengthen Somali capacity for local governance and conflict mitigation. In this regard, the United States sought to strengthen civil society to improve good governance and peace building at the grassroots level. In 2005, the United States supported a civil society expansion program in Somaliland designed to increase the capacity of selected civil society organizations in designing and implementing sustainable projects that improve maternal health, access to education, and livelihood security. The United States also supported the efforts of community-based organizations to develop and expand democratic institutions, build community participation in local affairs, and create the necessary ownership of local governance by the Somali people. U.S. officials encouraged participation in Somali reconciliation efforts to develop countrywide democratic institutions and addressed human rights violations on an individual basis when possible.

By supporting the engagement of a broad cross-section of Somali people in public discussion, the United States contributed to reconciliation efforts by local and international actors in Somalia. Civil society groups have become key partners in carrying out conflict awareness and management programs. In 2005, 30 consultative meetings involving more than 600 Somali stakeholders facilitated the mapping of regional and national conflicts, as well as the issues at the core of those conflicts and the key actors involved. The United States continued to support the War-torn Societies Project (WSP), an innovative field-oriented research-and-action project, which sought to help create an environment conducive to the consolidation of peace and sustainable development. This project supported three local participatory research organizations, located in Somaliland, Puntland, and Mogadishu (for south-central Somalia), designed to be successor organizations to the project. The United States funded the WSP to establish five satellite peace research centers in Kismayo, Baidoa, Beletweyne, Burao, and Galkayo.

Sudan

In 2005, the United States led international efforts to resolve the multiple conflicts plaguing Sudan and continued its role as the largest humanitarian and peacekeeping donor for the country. U.S. diplomatic engagement and financial and technical support contributed significantly to the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), ending Africa's longest running civil war. In Darfur, the United States provided life-saving humanitarian assistance, critical leadership, and financial support to address the crisis of violence against women and girls, and financial and technical support to the AU Mission in Sudan (AMIS) and the AU-sponsored Inter-Sudanese peace process in Abuja, Nigeria.

On January 9, 2005, the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) signed the CPA, ending the 22-year civil war between northern and southern Sudan and paving the way for the establishment of the Government of National Unity (GNU) and the regional Government of



Women gathering firewood in Darfur. (USAID)

Southern Sudan (GoSS). John Garang, Chairman of the SPLM, was inaugurated as the First Vice President of the GNU and the President of the GoSS. The Interim National Constitution was ratified on July 10. John Garang died in a helicopter crash on July 30. Riots erupted thereafter in Khartoum and Juba, with hundreds killed or arrested. Salva Kiir succeeded Garang as the First Vice President of the GNU and the President of the GoSS.

In Darfur, Government and Government-supported militias (Jinjaweed) continued to commit serious human rights and humanitarian law abuses. The Jinjaweed were responsible for killing hundreds of civilians, razing villages of African tribes, forcibly displacing tens of thousands, and committing acts of torture and violence against women, including rape. Then-Secretary of State Powell described the violence as genocide in September 2004. The Secretary of State has since affirmed that judgment. In January 2005, the UN International Commission of

Inquiry on Darfur concluded that the violations of humanitarian and human rights, which could be considered crimes “no less heinous than genocide,” had occurred. While large scale violence, in which entire villages were destroyed, diminished in 2005, attacks changed in frequency and type to include increased conflict between the rebel groups, violence instigated by the rebels, intertribal violence, and banditry. The World Health Organization reported that, as a result of the Darfur conflict, at least 70,000 civilians had died, more than 1.9 million civilians had been internally displaced, and an estimated 210,000 refugees had fled to neighboring Chad since the start of the conflict.

The AMIS was able to decrease instances of violence where it was present, but security remained a major problem and violence continued. The situation in Darfur received significant international attention, including visits by the Secretary of State and four visits in 2005 by the Deputy Secretary of State. Numerous

other official visitors and Members of Congress traveled to Sudan during the year and met with top Government officials in an effort to end the conflict and improve the living and security conditions of those affected. The United States led international efforts to improve the situation in Darfur through the UN, the AU, and bilaterally with the Sudanese Government. Nonetheless, the Government's human rights record remained poor, and serious abuses continued.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy in Sudan focused on supporting the implementation of the CPA; ending the violence in Darfur and urging a peaceful and diplomatic resolution to the conflict; promoting accountability for perpetrators of human rights violations; supporting conflict resolution at the community level; promoting respect for fundamental human rights; combating violence against women in Darfur; promoting press and religious freedom; and combating trafficking in persons (TIP). On February 10, 2006, President Bush met with Rebecca Garang, the Minister of Transportation, Roads, and Bridges of the GoSS and widow of John Garang, to discuss implementation of the CPA and continued violence and human rights abuses in Darfur. High-level visitors such as the Secretary of State, the Deputy Secretary, and the Assistant Secretary for African Affairs underscored the need to address human rights violations, especially against women and girls in Darfur.

The U.S. democracy assistance strategy to support the implementation of the CPA focused primarily on the power and wealth sharing protocols. The United States also provided assistance to the areas of Abyei, Nuba Mountains, and Southern Blue Nile. The Protocol on Power Sharing calls for an autonomous GoSS and general elections. The Agreement on Wealth Sharing calls for transfers of revenues from the central GNU to the GoSS, among other items. The United States supported the establishment of the GoSS by providing technical assistance for the drafting of the GoSS Constitution and training and technical assistance to the GoSS Office of the Presidency, the Cabinet, the Ministries of Finance, Constitutional and Legal Affairs, and Public Service, and the Bank of South Sudan. U.S. assistance also supported local authorities. The United States helped to lay the foundation for

democratic political processes in Sudan by providing training and technical assistance to democratic political parties and to the South Sudan Center for Statistics and Evaluation, which is charged with completing the southern portion of the Sudan census. U.S. assistance launched civic education programs on the peace agreement and citizens' rights, roles, and responsibilities and supported focus group research in southern Sudan to ensure political leaders were informed of public views on the peace process. The United States initiated a civil society program focusing on building institutional capacity, targeting organizations led by women and those that support marginalized groups. The United States opened a new consulate in Juba as part of its efforts to coordinate assistance to Southern Sudan and monitor implementation of the CPA.

The United States continued to promote increased access to independent information through funding for independent media and targeted radio distributions. Funding continued for the Sudan Radio Service, which broadcasts into Sudan in 10 local languages, providing access to news, civic education, and health messages. U.S. assistance also supported training for journalists from The Sudan Mirror and other print media. Local NGOs received support for disseminating summaries of the Protocols and for disseminating and fostering dialogue on the CPA and the Abyei Boundaries Commission (ABC) report. Pilot radio distribution was conducted in Blue Nile state.

The United States facilitated and funded the travel of two Sudanese journalists to the International Center for Journalists in Washington, DC. U.S. officials organized a reception for the editor of the independent newspaper, Maghoub Salih, the recipient of the Knight International Press Freedom Award, as well as a workshop featuring U.S. journalist Jon Sawyer, who spoke of his efforts to cover the Muslim point of view in the United States and overseas.

The Sudanese press suffered from suspensions, arrests, and harassment by the Government. The Embassy actively monitored press freedom and delivered statements to newspapers and the Government protesting press suspensions and detentions. The Embassy also conducted a series of meetings with local



media outlets to discuss freedom of the press.

The United States focused on ending both the conflict and human rights abuses in Darfur. The U.S. observer team to the Abuja peace talks played a key role in bringing the Sudanese Government and Darfur rebel groups together to sign the Declaration of Principles for the Resolution of the Sudanese Conflict in Darfur, which established 17 points that serve as the framework for negotiations on wealth and power-sharing issues. U.S. officials stressed to government officials at all levels the importance of human rights benchmarks, emphasizing press freedom and religious tolerance, an open political process, and freedom of speech, movement, and assembly. Embassy officials, in conjunction with Western donor embassies, used the Joint Implementation Mechanism to obtain commitments from the Government concerning violence against women in Darfur, access to prisons, the judicial system's handling of the Khartoum riots, and the forced relocations of internally displaced persons (IDPs). The Charge d'Affaires and other U.S. officials met regularly with opposition politicians and political leaders from around the country, as well as religious leaders, human rights activists, and members of the media.

In response to widespread violence against women and girls in Darfur, the United States supported a multi-million dollar initiative to address root causes of the violence, improve immediate protection of women and other vulnerable civilians, and provide immediate services to the victims of violence. Programs encompassed five strategic areas: (1) combating impunity/improving access to justice, (2) enhancing human rights monitoring and advocacy, (3) increasing access to accurate information/media, (4) enhancing protection and decreasing women's risk through humanitarian activities, and (5) building grassroots capacity to address these issues. As part of the initiative, the United States supported the creation of a Darfur-wide network of pro bono lawyers, the training and deployment of Sudanese human rights monitors, and many income-generation activities to reduce women's exposure to violence.

U.S. programs supported several NGOs and civil

society members in their efforts to promote human rights and democracy. The United States provided funding for human rights awareness programs, including building IDP awareness of the Sudanese Bill of Rights, the training of Sudanese human rights monitors, and supporting a human rights conference in West Darfur. The United States funded numerous projects that contributed to enhanced stability and conflict management in Southern Sudan. The projects included direct support to grassroots-based peace processes and capacity building of local peace actors in all regions of Southern Sudan and in the areas of Abyei, Southern Blue Nile, and the Nuba Mountains.

U.S. officials continued to discuss the rule of law with Sudanese officials and stressed the need to follow the human rights guarantees in the Interim National Constitution. The United States continued to provide funding and assistance for peace mechanisms in the south, such as the Civilian Protection Monitoring Team (CPMT), the Nuba Mountains Joint Monitoring Mission, and the Verification Monitoring Team. The CPMT objectively documented southern militia attacks against civilians in the south and brought them to the attention of the Government, the SPLM, and the international community. Incidents have decreased significantly since the monitoring began in 2002. The CPMT's mission officially ended in October 2005 after investigating and reporting on more than 100 incidents involving alleged attacks on civilians and civilian property over its three-year mandate. The team's presence also helped to build trust among the parties involved and the civilians. The CPMT posted its reports on the Internet and provided them to local media for publication. The 12-nation Nuba Mountains Joint Military Commission continued to monitor government and SPLM adherence to a ceasefire in the Nuba Mountains.

The AU deployed troops in Darfur in an effort to curb the violence and report on ceasefire violations, including human rights abuses. In 2005, the United States vigorously supported AMIS, providing extensive financial support and technical assistance including airlifting, training, housing, and equipping troops. The United States continued to provide substantial,

ongoing financial support for the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS). In 2005, the United States continued its substantial support for humanitarian assistance to Sudan, including Darfur, as well as support for development and governance.

The United States supported UN Security Council Resolution 1591, which authorized the creation of a Panel of Experts on Sudan to monitor and implement targeted sanctions against perpetrators of atrocities in Darfur. By not opposing UN Security Council Resolution 1593, the United States allowed the International Criminal Court process for Darfur to move forward. At the UN General Assembly's Third Committee, the United States co-sponsored a resolution with the EU condemning Sudan's human rights record. In February 2006, the United States supported a UN Security Council Presidential Statement authorizing immediate planning for the transition from an AU peacekeeping force to a UN peacekeeping operation in Darfur.

The Embassy monitored implementation of the GNU's Action Plan to Combat Violence Against Women, which was released on November 28. Under the plan, the Government agreed to disseminate widely a decree removing the legal requirement for rape victims to file a criminal report (Form 8) before seeking medical attention, create state sub-committees charged with implementing the plan, train Darfur police officers in human rights and awareness of violence against women, and increase the number of prosecutors in Darfur to improve victims' access to legal recourse. By February 2006, the Government had circulated an advisory bulletin stating that the Form 8 requirement had been rescinded; however, officials made minimal effort to enforce the change in the Form 8 requirement. Two of three Darfur states created sub-committees to address violence against women; however, these committees rarely met. While the Government deployed 15 prosecutors to Darfur for prosecuting rape cases, Government-sponsored training of police officers in Darfur on human rights did not occur. NGOs working in Darfur remained skeptical regarding full implementation of these reforms and of the extent of political will to address violence against women vigorously.

Since 1999, Sudan has been designated a Country of Particular Concern under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violations of religious freedom. U.S. officials continued a dialogue with the Government about international religious freedom, stressing the need for the allocation of land to build churches. Furthermore, U.S. officials regularly engaged the Government-supported Sudan Inter-Religious Council to push for the allocation of church land and engaged Christian and Muslim leaders about religious freedom. The Embassy held discussions on religious freedom, including a discussion on "Shari'a Law in Post Peace Sudan" by a notable American anthropologist. The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom visited Sudan from January 11-21, 2006 and met with high-level interlocutors about the status of religious freedom in Sudan, especially focusing on Christians living in Khartoum.

U.S. officials met with the Government-sponsored Committee for the Eradication of Abduction of Women and Children (CEAWAC) and other Government officials to push for the return of abducted persons in accordance with international protection principles, to promote CEAWAC outreach programs, and to encourage the Government to provide CEAWAC with needed funding. U.S. officials also continued to follow the Government's efforts to combat the problems of children trafficked for soldiering and camel jockeying. A U.S. State Department Trafficking in Persons official made two extensive visits to Sudan in 2005 to report on the status of trafficked persons as well as their rehabilitation and the scope of trafficking in the country.

The United States continues to strive for peace and stability throughout Sudan and remains committed to the protection of human rights and the advancement of democracy for the benefit of all Sudanese people.

Swaziland

Swaziland is a modified traditional monarchy with executive, legislative, and limited judicial powers ultimately vested in the King. The country faced serious problems, including drought, poverty, and an HIV/



AIDS rate of 42.6%. Despite these challenges, the Government made some progress in the areas of human rights and democracy. The country adopted its first Constitution in 32 years when the King signed the Constitution Bill on July 26. The Constitution took effect in February 2006. The judiciary was generally independent, and there have been no credible reports of abuse since the Court of Appeal was reconstituted in November 2004. The Government amended the Industrial Relations Act to increase workers' rights by strengthening the role of the Conciliation, Mediation, and Arbitration Commission. However, the Government's human rights record remained poor, and it continued to commit serious abuses. Democratic institutions were weak, and political choice was limited. The 1973 Proclamation banning political parties was still in place. Police used excessive force on occasion, and there were reports of torture and abuse. Legal and cultural discrimination, violence against women, lengthy pretrial detention, impunity, and abuse of children remained problems.

In light of these concerns, the U.S. strategy to combat human rights abuses and bolster democracy focused on highlighting the importance of respect for the rule of law, supporting the Prime Minister's anti-corruption program, strengthening the rights of women and children, and improving respect for internationally recognized workers' rights. U.S. officials worked to improve public understanding of constitutional principles in efforts to promote democracy. The Embassy disseminated NGO reports critical of the Government to all Cabinet members, Members of Parliament, and the press to enhance high-level officials' understanding of Swaziland's international image. The United States compiled and presented information on Swaziland's Millennium Challenge Account criteria ratings to officials and encouraged them to boost the country's "Ruling Justly" and "Investing in People" scores.

The international community and local civic groups representing a variety of interests criticized the new Constitution for its substance and the manner in which it was drafted and ratified. Meaningful implementation of the Constitution will be critical to addressing concerns over separation of powers in the

country. U.S. officials routinely and publicly stressed the importance of a constitution and discussed the need for the Government to address its more problematic issues, including the separation of powers and the legalization of political parties. The Embassy distributed copies of the U.S. Constitution and the Declaration of Independence to numerous civil society organizations, including labor unions.

The Government discouraged critical coverage of the royal family in the press and withheld advertising from the one independently owned newspaper. The director of the Swaziland Broadcast Information Service was able to travel to the United States on an International Visitors Leadership Program focusing on radio broadcasting. The Embassy held a seminar for the Government's public relations office geared toward running an effective press office.

The United States supported the promotion of a stronger and more robust civil society. U.S. officials met with leaders of NGOs, providing them with information and potential funding leads.

The Government issued several policy statements concerning corruption, including the King's speech at the opening of parliament in February 2005. In March 2005, Finance Minister Majozi Sithole told the parliament that experts estimated government losses at almost seven million dollars a month due to corruption. To help combat this growing problem, the United States funded a well-received study that analyzed anti-corruption legislation, due to become law in early 2006, and made recommendations for improvement of the relatively new Anti-Corruption Commission. The United States sponsored a Digital Video Conference on anti-corruption with guest speaker Robert Smolik, Deputy Chief of the U.S. Mission to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. The audience included several prominent lawyers and key government figures, including Swaziland's new Attorney General. The Embassy sent a financial sector official to the United States on a program to promote accountability in government and business.

The subordinate role of women in Swaziland led to abuse, rape, and sexual harassment. Women were le-

gally treated as minors, and a woman generally had to have her father's or husband's permission to borrow money, open a bank account, obtain a passport, leave the country, gain access to land, or obtain a job. The Embassy engaged in several activities to strengthen the role of women in society. The United States sent two prominent Swazi women, one an AIDS activist and the other the head of the Swaziland Action Group Against Abuse, to the United States on a program dedicated to leadership development for women. A lecturer at Swaziland's only university attended a program on women in the law that specifically addressed women's rights and constitutionalism. A regional NGO located in Swaziland, Women and Law in Southern Africa, collaborated with the U.S.-funded Women's Legal Rights Initiative to develop an advocacy manual and a series of workshops designed to train lobbyists and advocates.

The United States also worked to improve the rights of persons with disabilities. The Embassy contributed to a workshop hosted by the Federation of Organizations of the Disabled People in Swaziland for Members of Parliament and an 18-part educational video in sign language on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the Swaziland National Association of the Deaf.

Swaziland has a 42.6% HIV/AIDS adult prevalence rate, the highest in the world. The pandemic has left an increasing number of children orphaned and vulnerable to a host of social problems and child labor. The United States funded two important labor initiatives in the region; the first targeting the worst forms of child labor in Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, and Swaziland, and the second designed to combat exploitive child labor through education in southern Africa.

Increasing Government and business community interest in workers' rights was a vital part of the U.S. strategy to promote human rights. The United States funded the Federation of Swaziland Employers and Chamber of Commerce to update the Swaziland Labor Law Compendium (last revised in 1988). In addition, the Embassy sent a prominent rural labor leader to the United States for a program focusing on organized labor.

Tanzania

The end of 2005 saw the election of Tanzania's fourth president since independence in 1961. Though technically a multiparty state, the Government is dominated by the long-ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) party and a strong executive, headed by the popular Jakaya Kikwete, winner of 80.2% of the vote. Zanzibar, while integrated into the country's governmental and party structure, maintains considerable autonomy with its own president and legislature.

The Government of Tanzania's overall human rights record remained poor; however, there were several significant improvements in important areas. The Government demonstrated more respect for citizens' right to change their Government peacefully, took steps to reduce mob killings, and citizens perceived corruption to be less of a problem in 2005 than in 2004. Nonetheless, serious human rights abuses occurred in 2005, especially on Zanzibar. During Zanzibar's presidential, parliamentary, and local councilor elections in October, security agents used excessive force to disperse protesters angry over perceived voting irregularities; at least one protester was killed and more were injured. Independent observers of the October elections reported some administrative improvements over previous elections, but also noted serious voting irregularities, such as lack of access to voter rolls prior to election day. The December elections to elect a new Union President, representatives to the Union's National Assembly, and councilors on the mainland were primarily peaceful and judged to be freer and fairer than previous elections. On the mainland, there continued to be some limitations on freedoms of the press, privacy, speech, assembly, and association; on Zanzibar, more serious limitations occurred. Throughout the country, instances of arbitrary arrest and prolonged detention occurred, and prison conditions remained harsh. The judiciary was inefficient, understaffed, and subject to corruption, limiting the right to fair and expeditious trials. Mob justice remained widespread and resulted in several unlawful killings. Anti-refugee resentment and hostility remained high in the west, evidenced by the Government pressuring Burundian refugees to repatriate, occasionally refusing entry to asylum seekers at the



border without following procedure, and not always cooperating with the UN refugee authorities. Discrimination against women and girls, child labor, trafficking in persons (TIP), and female genital mutilation remained problems.

The U.S. democracy and human rights goal in Tanzania was to assist in the establishment of a more accountable, representative, and effective Government based on institutions that actively promote rule of law, human rights, and democratic pluralism. The U.S. strategy aimed to accomplish this goal by facilitating the Government's efforts to reduce corruption, promoting open and fair electoral systems, parliamentary independence and civil society, and increasing awareness of human rights, child labor, and TIP.

The United States sought to promote democracy in Tanzania through diplomatic engagement and financial and programmatic support in advance of the 2005 election cycle. The Embassy worked to decrease tensions on Zanzibar by meeting with Union President Benjamin Mkapa, Zanzibar President Amani Karume, and frequently with other key leaders of CCM and the main opposition party, the Civic United Front. The United States endeavored to support free and fair elections by meeting with the Zanzibar Election Commission to encourage transparency throughout the election process, and funded the purchase of equipment for the creation of a permanent voter registry. The United States supported Research and Education for Democracy in Tanzania, a local NGO which observed the registration process and the elections, as well as the National Democratic Institute's independent election observer team.

The U.S. democracy assistance program focused on long-term efforts to build civil society and parliament as foundations of a more robust, accountable democracy. The United States supported a multiyear project to strengthen the National Assembly's representative, lawmaking, and oversight functions. Members of the National Assembly more effectively exercised their oversight function by questioning and amending several requested appropriations during budget presentations in parliament.

The Embassy worked to support a free press by sponsoring an investigative journalism course for 50 journalists from Dar es Salaam, Zanzibar, and Arusha in February. The United States also donated a computer and a fax machine to the Arusha Press Club. Four journalists visited the United States through the International Visitors Leadership Program and a three-member journalist team spent two weeks in the United States on a television co-op program sponsored by the Foreign Press Center.

Judicial backlogs and limited police investigation skills hindered the right to a fair and expeditious trial, a factor that aggravates severe prison overcrowding in Tanzania. The United States provided funds to support a forensic laboratory that improved police investigation skills, sped up investigations, and reduced the number of wrongful arrests and convictions.

The Embassy also pursued more targeted outreach for Government policymakers. The Embassy honors Dr. Martin Luther King by naming a "Drum Major for Justice" laureate each year. The prestigious award receives widespread publicity and the awards ceremony attracts senior-level government attendance. In 2005, Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim, Special Envoy of the African Union and Chief Mediator at the Darfur Peace Negotiations in Nigeria, received the award for his long-standing commitment to, and work for, independence, equality, and peace.

The United States supported programs to reduce rape and other sex and gender-based violence in refugee camps in Tanzania, home to approximately 350,000 Great Lakes refugees.

Through the International Labor Organization, the United States continued to support a multiyear effort known as the Timebound program. Timebound focused on reducing the number of children engaged in the worst forms of child labor through advocacy and targeted support for vulnerable children. The educational component of the program, Mambo Elimu, is known nation-wide and is being adopted by the Ministry of Education.

The United States raised awareness about TIP through discussions with officials and NGOs. The Embassy opened and attended a three-day conference for senior policy makers, civil society, and the press. The conference laid the groundwork for a national action plan to reduce TIP. As a focus country of the Presidential Anti-Trafficking Initiative, Tanzania benefited from anti-trafficking assistance that provided a new shelter for the protection of victims as well as preventive measures and tools for prosecutions. U.S. efforts contributed to Tanzania being moved from the Tier 2 Watch List to Tier 2 in the 2005 Trafficking in Persons report.

Togo

Togo is a republic governed by newly elected President Faure Gnassingbe, son of the late Gnassingbe Eyadema, who was in power for 38 years and unexpectedly died in February 2005. Eyadema and his political party Rally of the Togolese Persons (RPT), strongly backed by the armed forces, dominated politics, and maintained firm control over all levels of the country's highly centralized Government until his death. Following some prohibited constitutional changes in the National Assembly, the military installed Faure Gnassingbe as the new President. Faure eventually bowed to sustained international pressure and stepped down to allow presidential elections. On April 24, Faure was declared President in an election marred by severe irregularities and violence. Following some initial positive steps in early 2005 and after Eyadema's death, the Government's human rights record worsened as it tightened its grip on power and cracked down on opposition voices. Security forces continued to be responsible for politically motivated killings, disappearances, rape, and other serious abuses. Because of the unstable post-election environment, 40,000 Togolese fled to neighboring countries. During the election period and in late 2005, harassment of journalists intensified. Violence and discrimination against women and trafficking in persons (TIP) remained serious problems. There were instances of prisoners dying while in detention and of security forces beating civilians without being brought to justice. The Government jailed and at times abused

political opponents and critics. Arbitrary arrest and detention were problems, and long periods of pre-trial detention were the norm. Trials were not fair or expeditious. Prison conditions remained very harsh. The Government limited workers' rights on the issue of collective bargaining, and child labor was a problem.

The U.S. strategy to promote democracy and human rights focused on strengthening key Government and civil institutions through diplomatic and programmatic engagement. The United States raised the importance of human rights through sustained communication with Government officials, opposition leaders, civil society, international financial institutions, and other international donors. The Embassy pressed the Government to fulfill 22 democracy and human rights-related commitments made to the EU, to end military impunity, and to ensure a secure environment for refugees to safely return. The United States has encouraged all principal players to constructively engage in the political process and provided technical assistance and training to promote democratic ideals. In addition, the U.S. strategy included using public diplomacy resources to work with local NGOs, develop the capacity of political parties, and improve the human rights record of the military with limited International Military Education and Training programs.

The United States used the occasion of the Togolese presidential election as a vehicle to advance democratic political processes. The Embassy organized a radio voter education program, aired once per week for ten weeks. Each broadcast addressed a different aspect of elections, from explaining the election process and electoral laws to describing the role of media, civil society, Government entities, and youth in an election. The Embassy also held a discussion, targeted specifically at journalists, Government representatives, and political parties, about the roles various actors play during an election period. The United States sponsored a conference about the role of political parties in civic education. The Embassy held a training session for international election observers, and Embassy personnel also served as election moni-



U.S. efforts to promote media liberties and freedom of speech included conferences, debates, and seminars on topics such as the role of media in a democracy, the relationship between the media and the Government, and how to affect non-violent political change. Several Togolese journalists were selected to take part in the International Visitors Leadership Program (IVLP). The United States also provided small grants to two radio stations to broadcast programming concerning democracy, citizens' rights and duties, the constitution, and women in politics. The Embassy sponsored a media workshop to promote collaboration among independent journalists.

The Embassy supported NGOs in their work to educate women about their rights and potential for leadership roles, to instruct teachers, administrators, and students about human rights and civic education, and to eradicate the practice of female genital mutilation. The United States promoted good governance by financing periodicals publicizing legal information and civil society projects on ways to combat corruption.

The Embassy also supported the Government's judicial reform project through various forms of assistance. To promote the rule of law, transparency, and the presumption of innocence in criminal proceedings, the Embassy organized discussions and presentations.

Limited security assistance allocations for Togo were dedicated to professionalizing the military and expanding its sensitivity to human rights issues.

Through educational programming, the Embassy supported various endeavors, such as campaigns to promote women's rights. The Embassy initiated seminars encouraging women to engage in the political process and sent four women to the United States on IVLPs to promote the participation of women in politics. Additionally, the United States funded a local NGO to conduct a study on the participation of women in the Togolese Government and to present its findings to the Government. Togo also participates in a joint sub-regional project with the United States and the International Labor Organization for HIV/AIDS workplace education. This multi-year

project is designed to combat discrimination in the workplace against people living with AIDS.

Togo's Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and this right is generally respected. Amicable relations among various religious groups contributed to religious freedom. The United States discussed religious freedom issues with the Government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights. The Embassy provided Muslim women and girls scholarships to learn English and about religious freedom in the United States.

Following direct U.S. encouragement, the Government passed a law against TIP in 2005. The United States subsequently sent several Government officials and members of the security forces to a training session to learn investigative and prosecutorial techniques with respect to TIP. In 2004, the United States provided financing to an ongoing project that assisted with the reinsertion of a number of trafficked children into their families.

Uganda

There were important areas of improvement as well as significant setbacks in Uganda's progress toward democratization in 2005. Ugandans voted to adopt a multiparty system of government in a national referendum in July. Participation in the referendum, however, was disappointingly low. This result was due, in part, to confusion over the referendum question and mixed messages from Government leaders who favored passage without embracing a multiparty system. Political parties, for the first time in 20 years, were fully authorized to participate in government and compete for power. During the same period, however, parliament removed presidential term limits under pressure from the executive. President Yoweri Museveni announced he would seek to extend his rule to 25 years by running for re-election in February 2006. Shortly after the President's announcement, government authorities jailed Museveni's principal challenger for the presidency, Kizza Besigye, on charges of rape, treason, terrorism, and firearms offenses. The arrest prompted two days of unrest in

Kampala, which left at least one person dead. The Government also announced severe restrictions on public assembly and public expression in relation to the Besigye case. A civilian court ordered Besigye's release from military detention on January 2, 2006, and on January 31, 2006 the Ugandan Constitutional Court ruled that a military court did not have jurisdiction to try Besigye on terrorism and firearms offenses. Museveni was reelected in peaceful elections; however, Besigye has vowed to challenge the results in court. In northern Uganda, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) killed hundreds of civilians and perpetrated horrific crimes against humanity, including the abduction, rape, and torture of women and children. Torture and lengthy pre-trial detention remained serious problems throughout the country. Corruption was a significant and growing problem, particularly in the executive branch.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy in Uganda promoted democratization, respect for human rights, honest and accountable Government institutions, and transparency. The strategy also combated child labor, trafficking in persons (TIP), and discrimination against women. The Ambassador and other U.S. officials regularly raised these issues in public speeches, interviews, and in meetings with national and local officials. The Ambassador also met with President Museveni and other senior officials to discuss democratization, freedom of speech, and corruption.

The United States strongly supported Ugandans' decision to adopt a multiparty political system and helped strengthen political parties during the transition. The United States funded programs to enhance voter participation, political pluralism, and the effective administration of Uganda's presidential and parliamentary elections. A U.S. program trained political parties to develop organizational structures, party constitutions, and campaign platforms. U.S. funds also sponsored national polls to measure Ugandan public opinion on different political issues and candidates. Workshops instructed political parties to use the polling data to focus outreach efforts and to improve party messages.

The United States supported the electoral process by strengthening the Electoral Commission. A U.S. program trained over 100 Electoral Commission staff. The Electoral Commission, with U.S. resources, developed more effective voter education manuals and leaflets. U.S. funds also helped support a national campaign to update and expand the voter rolls. This support included upgrading the Electoral Commission's information technology system. The campaign successfully registered two million additional voters, provided voter ID cards, and added photographs to the voter registrar for identification purposes.

Two U.S.-funded programs contributed to voter education in the run-up to the general election. One program organized issue-based debates featuring national politicians from different political parties. Facilitators ensured that the politicians presented and debated their plans to address poverty reduction, corruption, education, and the insurgency in northern Uganda. The debates occurred in six major Ugandan cities and were broadcast on the radio. The U.S. also funded the publication of a parliamentary report card to promote transparency in government and voter scrutiny of elected leaders. The report card scored Members of Parliament on their attendance, voting record, and participation in the debates.

Strengthening the legislature remained a focus of U.S. assistance. A U.S. program organized training for all parliamentary committee clerks on their new role in a multiparty parliament. Another program worked with the parliamentary Committee on Equal Opportunities to draft a bill on the rights of persons with disabilities. Four U.S.-sponsored consultative workshops gave persons with disabilities the opportunity to review and comment on the draft. The United States also co-sponsored a workshop on electoral law reform.

The United States viewed Uganda's independent newspapers and especially its burgeoning independent FM radio industry as key institutions of Uganda's democratization. The United States supported efforts of radio stations outside Kampala to report on issues of national and community interest. The United States also sponsors an annual radio-reporting award



to encourage media professionalism and responsibility. The United States sponsored the travel of four journalists to participate in an International Visitors Leadership Program on journalism themes, including seminars on media freedom, ethics, and operations.

The United States also funded programs designed to develop grassroots-level participation in Uganda's democratization. Local NGOs representing indigenous communities and special interest groups including women, youth, disabled persons, and workers received grants to raise awareness about their political rights and interests.

The United States supported activities to strengthen the judicial system and rule of law. One program published a compendium of judicial opinions. The report provided attorneys with a valuable reference tool for court arguments. The report also provided the judiciary, law students, and human rights organizations with up-to-date developments in Ugandan law. A human rights organization received U.S. funds to petition the legal system on the alleged mistreatment and torture of detainees awaiting trial.

A major focus of U.S. strategy to protect and strength-

en human rights has been to provide assistance to the victims of a brutal insurgency in northern Uganda. U.S. assistance helped fund child reception centers for children rescued from LRA captivity. Most children had suffered horrific abuse including torture, rape, and brutal forced labor. The reception centers provided psychosocial rehabilitation and facilitated the reunion of victims with their families and communities. U.S. assistance also supported several overnight shelters where children stay to be protected from LRA abduction. The United States continued to support efforts to promote a dialogue of peace and reconciliation among civilians in northern Uganda. One program organized four stakeholder meetings for cultural and religious leaders to discuss how to maintain harmony in communities where former rebels are reintegrated. The United States also sponsored a civil-military relations seminar to promote human rights awareness among Uganda People's Defense Forces (UPDF) officers. Seminar participants, including civil society leaders and UPDF officers, discussed methods to improve human rights protection and justice.

To promote the status and rights of women, the United States funded an extensive program to train women to compete for elected positions in government.



Local leaders meet to build a civil society coalition in northern Uganda. (P.Erickson)

The program developed a training manual used to train more than 300 women candidates for local and national offices. The program also organized mentoring sessions between women Members of Parliament and prospective female candidates. Another U.S. program funded a women's group in northern Uganda to promote awareness about gender-based violence and women's rights to justice. U.S. assistance also supported efforts to promote the awareness and protection of human rights among disadvantaged or vulnerable groups including women and children affected by conflict and HIV/AIDS.

In support of religious freedom, the U.S. Embassy sponsored digital video conferences between scholars and religious leaders in the United States and Uganda to discuss the role of religious institutions and leaders in politics.

The United States funded programs to combat TIP and child labor. Ongoing U.S. assistance in northern Uganda has helped enroll 2,403 formerly abducted children in schools or vocational training. Another anti-trafficking program organized a national working group composed of Ugandan Government officials and NGO representatives. The working group supported efforts to draft a new anti-trafficking law, coordinate NGO activities to prevent trafficking, and monitor trafficking issues in Uganda. The program also sponsored training sessions for judges, prosecutors, and police on enforcing trafficking crimes. The United States funded four extensive child labor programs that rescued children from the worst forms of child labor, reunited them with their families, and provided them with informal, transitional, or vocational training. Two of the programs also targeted educational interventions for children made vulnerable by conflict or HIV/AIDS.

Zambia

Zambia made strides toward democratic governance, but many challenges remain. The December 2001 election that brought President Mwanawasa into office faced a legal challenge that was resolved in February 2005 by the Supreme Court. The Court upheld

the results of the vote, but expressed serious concerns about the effectiveness of the Electoral Commission of Zambia, opposition access to the media, and abuse of Government resources in election campaigns. Parliamentary elections conducted in 2005 were marked by allegations of vote buying, inappropriate use of Government resources, and in some cases, violence and intimidation of voters prior to elections, although there were recent signs of improved performance by the Electoral Commission. There were frequent reports of human rights abuses committed by Zambian law enforcement officers, including unlawful killings and physical abuse of criminal suspects and detainees. Arbitrary arrests, prolonged detention, and long delays in trials were problems. The Government restricted press freedom. Violence and discrimination against women remained widespread. Child abuse, child labor, and discrimination against persons with disabilities were problems. Workers' rights were limited, and there were reports of trafficking in persons (TIP).

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Zambia focused on building the demonstrated will of leaders both inside and outside of Government to undertake reforms, improving democratic governance and increasing the professionalism of law enforcement agencies. An interagency working group chaired by the Ambassador coordinated U.S. democracy and governance activities.

U.S. efforts to foster democratic, transparent, and fair governance in Zambia included support and technical assistance for legal and institutional reform. In the area of institutional reform, the main focus was the Parliamentary Reform Project (PRP) initiated by Zambia's National Assembly. Following the successful conclusion of a one-year pilot project, the United States continued its commitment, with the Governments of four other nations, to provide funding to support this three-year project. The goal of the PRP is to help the National Assembly become an effective, independent legislature that can act as an equal partner in the governance of Zambia. The PRP strengthened the National Assembly in 2005 by introducing reforms to the standing orders governing institutional procedure, allowing members greater opportunity to question government and introduce motions. The



PRP also continued to support constituency offices in rural and urban areas, which promoted accountability by offering citizens greater opportunities to interact with their representatives in Parliament. Training, procedural changes, and increased interaction with civil society groups also improved the effectiveness of parliamentary committees, particularly with regard to oversight of the budget process. Other ongoing activities included public forums on electoral reforms, youth workshops on good governance, and empowerment of village women on land issues.

The United States sponsored training designed to promote independent media and freedom of speech. The United States funded investigative journalism training. The Embassy also hosted a workshop for video editors and technicians and helped the national broadcaster organize a live TV program discussing media reforms and press freedom. The United States supported a one-year program for an American Fulbright scholar to research press freedom in Zambia, in addition to donating books related to media freedom to the Media Institute of Southern Africa Zambia Chapter, a leading advocate of press freedom in Zambia.

In 2005, the Embassy supported the production and broadcast of 13 television programs on basic human rights. The programs covered violations of human rights, human rights as it applies to Zambian culture, and identification of specific human rights. The programs were rebroadcast due to an overwhelming demand from viewers. The United States also financed an award-winning documentary film on children's rights, which was shown on a mobile video unit in both urban and rural Zambia.

The United States provided assistance to the Task Force on Corruption, which coordinated the work of investigators and prosecutors in a wide range of landmark corruption cases. This work helped the Government and civil society establish an improved climate of accountability. In 2005, the Government continued prosecutions against former President Chiluba, former cabinet ministers and military commanders, senior civil servants, and managers of state owned enterprises charged with theft and abuse of office.

The United States supported training with significant human rights components for Zambian law enforcement officers. Nearly 100 Zambian security officials received training at the International Law Enforcement Academy in Gaborone, Botswana and Roswell, New Mexico. The United States trained an additional 133 law enforcement officers in Zambia.

In an effort to improve the professional standards of Zambia's law enforcement agencies, the Embassy continued its commitment to support the Police Public Complaints Authority (PPCA). The PPCA received 367 complaints of police misconduct during the year, yet it reviewed only approximately 50 cases from Lusaka Province. The PPCA directed the Police Inspector General (IG) to dismiss three officers in April 2005, but the IG had yet to comply with these orders at the time of this report.

Embassy officials met with a wide spectrum of religious representatives to promote inter-religious dialogue and collaboration on several issues. The United States hosted a religious pastor for a three-week International Visitors Leadership Program on religion and the community. The Embassy focused on outreach to the Muslim community, meeting with groups of Muslim women, providing Internet training, and hosting other programs.

Child labor and child prostitution were Zambia's most serious manifestations of TIP. The United States funded the second phase of an ongoing program to combat exploitative child labor through education. The United States continued to raise awareness of TIP highlighting the issue at all levels of government. The Embassy hosted a TIP awareness program that involved 90 individuals from various youth organizations and included a lively and highly informative open discussion led by three Zambian experts. Parliament enacted an amendment to the penal code that made it illegal to traffick a person for any purpose; however, trafficking was not adequately defined in the law. The Government inter-ministerial anti-trafficking committee continued to meet in order to develop an anti-TIP strategy that would focus on law and policy reform, data collection, and increasing public awareness.

Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe is constitutionally a republic that has been ruled by President Robert Mugabe and his Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) party since independence in 1980. In 2005, the political opposition and civil society continued to operate in an environment of intimidation and repression. The Government extended authoritarian rule, and its human rights record remained very poor. In March 2005, the country held parliamentary elections that were neither free nor fair. While violence during the election campaign period was lower than in previous elections, the Government and its supporters intimidated voters, constrained campaign activities of the opposition, and distributed food in a partisan manner. The Government subsequently used its control of the electoral machinery to give the ruling party a two-thirds majority in parliament, allowing it to amend the Constitution without a referendum or broad consultation.

Operation Restore Order, a Government campaign to demolish allegedly illegal housing and businesses, displaced or destroyed the livelihoods of over 700,000 persons and significantly disrupted the already deteriorating economy. Security forces selectively harassed, beat, and arbitrarily arrested opposition supporters and critics within human rights organizations, the media, and organized labor. In 2005, the Government strengthened laws restricting freedom of assembly and freedom of speech and press. In politically sensitive cases, the judiciary showed indications of being politically influenced or intimidated. The economy continued to decline, with skyrocketing prices and widespread shortages, primarily due to the Government's command and control of economic policies.

The U.S. human rights strategy in Zimbabwe focused on maintaining pressure on the regime, assisting democratic forces, strengthening independent media, increasing public access to information, promoting accountability for the regime's crimes, and providing humanitarian aid for Zimbabwe's suffering people. The United States sought to implement this strategy by supporting the efforts of civil society, democracy groups, and the media as vital checks to the regime's

power, and engaging multilaterally and bilaterally to increase pressure on the regime. Embassy officials regularly communicated to the ruling party privately and publicly the importance of improving the political situation, including cessation of human rights abuses. Underscoring this message, the United States expanded financial and travel sanctions in 2005 to include additional ruling party and Government officials. U.S. officials observed the March parliamentary elections in almost half the country's constituencies and concluded that the elections were fraudulent.

Although the ruling party maintained its monopoly on the Executive branch, other institutions, including parliament, the judiciary, and local government, at times were able to exert independent influence. The United States continued to encourage the development and independence of these branches of government and, in selected instances, supported some of their efforts. A program to strengthen parliament resulted in increased debate in parliament and in more transparency through public hearings on legislation. U.S. funding and support enabled local citizen groups and selected local authorities to improve transparency, accountability, and municipal service delivery.

The United States sponsored programs and supported organizations that promote the free flow of independent and objective information. The Voice of America's Studio 7 medium wave radio station provided uncensored news to the public. Zimbabweans had access to independent information through the Embassy, American Corners in libraries throughout the country, and a newsletter with information on world events and U.S. foreign policy. U.S. programs provided funding to NGOs that collected and disseminated information on civil society, human rights, and Zimbabwean government policy and actions. The United States sponsored a Fulbright scholar who taught a course in journalism and provided workshops on investigative reporting in different parts of the country. The United States also hosted two conferences in Zimbabwe that highlighted the importance of press freedom. Four professional journalists participated in professional exchanges in the United States.

The United States funded NGO programs on a wide



variety of issues, including social welfare, the Constitution, human rights, women's empowerment, and public advocacy. A program to support citizens' ability to combat human rights abuses in the courts promoted rule of law and judicial processes. The United States supported investigations of cases of alleged human rights abuses, and U.S. diplomats interviewed victims of political violence. The United States supported programs providing medical and psychological treatment for victims of torture. Several grants supported the efforts of organizations dedicated to educating the Zimbabwean people on peace, human rights, and development. One organization involved members of all political parties, traditional leaders, and other local leaders in its activities. Another grant supported workshops on promoting women's participation in politics.

U.S. officials continued to raise Zimbabwe's human rights record in international forums and with other Governments. Statements by U.S. officials, including highly critical commentary on human rights abuses, corruption, and gross economic mismanagement, received prominent coverage in the Zimbabwean media, but Government-controlled outlets often distorted the message. U.S. officials emphasized in all substantive contacts with Government and party officials the importance of reducing human rights abuses in Zimbabwe. U.S. officials widely circulated human rights-related reports among civil society, Government and party officials. Three opposition Members of Parliament visited the United States immediately after Operation Restore Order and shared their concerns about the wave of Government repression with key U.S. officials and members of the NGO community.

In support of religious freedom, the United States widely disseminated relevant reports on religious rights, and U.S. officials privately and publicly emphasized concern regarding intimidation and harassment of religious officials who criticized the Government. The United States supported efforts by religious leaders to highlight human rights abuses and flawed economic policies and to sustain a dialogue to improve Zimbabwe's political situation.

The United States funded programs to support work-

ers' rights to organize and participate in the political process. It further supported programs through the American Center for International Labor Solidarity aimed at assisting trade unions in Zimbabwe to respond to and represent their members' interests. The United States promoted efforts by the Government to combat trafficking in persons. U.S. officials met with government representatives to convey U.S. interest in the issue and to promote cooperation and sharing of best practices. U.S. officials widely disseminated relevant reports and participated in local and regional meetings to address the issue.

EAST ASIA & THE PACIFIC





EAST ASIA & THE PACIFIC



“From this time on, I am free, I can talk to anybody I want, I can see anyone I want. I can walk on the street with bigger steps. I can hug my relatives. I can kiss my children, I can smile at my people. I can work for my people...for the rest of my life, I will create my own history.”

Rebiya Kadeer

Supporters celebrate at a 2005 mayoral debate held in conjunction with local elections in Samarinda, Indonesia. (IFES)



EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

The United States is committed to promoting democracy throughout Asia, from calling for freedom in repressive authoritarian states to strengthening transitional democracies. Asia is home to both functioning democracies and some of the world's most oppressive authoritarian dictatorships. The spectrum of political systems and progress toward democratic change reflect the region's diversity. There have been positive democratic developments in countries such as Indonesia, now the third largest democracy in the world, while human rights abuses and lack of freedom continue in others, such as Burma, China, and North Korea. Weak rule of law, rampant corruption, and fragile democratic institutions limit progress in some countries, while a vibrant civil society and free press in other countries help push reforms forward.

In Burma, the United States continues its unwavering support of the Burmese democracy movement by upholding U.S. sanctions and continuing to call for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and other political prisoners, as well as the initiation of a credible political process. The United States continued to work with allies and the UN to press the junta for democratic change and respect for human rights. The December 16 UN Security Council discussion was a genuine success in calling attention to the urgent problems of Burma, including its dismal record on human rights and democracy. The UN characterized the situation in Burma as a looming humanitarian crisis. The United States will continue to advocate scrutiny and action on Burma within the UN system.

Progress has been made in the region during the past year in several countries, including Indonesia and Vietnam. The United States supports strengthening democracy in Indonesia, including military reform, improved accountability, respect for human rights, anti-corruption efforts, and rule of law. Following

U.S. assistance after the 2004 tsunami, the United States continued its substantial support by contributing to the Aceh peace process, particularly the reintegration of Free Aceh Movement Fighters. In May 2005, Vietnam and the United States announced the signing of the first binding agreement on religious freedom, which will ensure transparent procedures in the registration of religious groups. Recent positive steps by the Government of Vietnam led to the February 2006 resumption of the human rights dialogue, which had been suspended since 2002.

At the same time, the United States remained concerned about lack of progress in other countries, including China and North Korea. The United States employed multiple strategies to promote human rights, democracy, and the rule of law in China, including raising human rights and democracy concerns in bilateral meetings, focusing international attention on China at the United Nations and other multilateral forums, consulting with China's other human rights dialogue partners through the Bern Process, and administering a grant-making program to





encourage civil society, rule of law, and public participation in China. The near-complete control exercised by the North Korean regime continued to be of deep concern. The appointment of a Special Envoy for Human Rights in North Korea, as called for by the North Korea Human Rights Act of 2004, signals the importance the United States places on promoting democracy and human rights in one of the world's most isolated and oppressive countries.

The United States is dedicated to carrying out the President's Freedom Agenda in Asia. The United States will continue to use bilateral diplomacy, multilateral cooperation, UN mechanisms, and support for human rights and democracy projects to promote freedom in Asia.



“Projek Warga” Shines a Spotlight on Civic Education in Malaysia

The Center for Civic Education’s “Project Citizen” program (known as “Projek Warga”) strengthened civic education for Malaysian youth. Projek Warga reaches out to middle school students in an interactive format to promote competent and responsible participation in local government for all genders, ethnicities, and religions. Through Projek Warga, students develop an understanding of and support for democratic values and principles, tolerance, and feelings of political efficacy. By training teachers to administer curricula and challenging students to solve public policy problems in a democratic fashion, Projek Warga has helped to expand the civic participation and education of youth and teachers in Malaysia. After a 20-year absence, the Government of Malaysia is reinstating compulsory civic education for all secondary schools and is currently considering including Projek Warga’s subject matter as a part of the new curriculum.

Project Warga is a dynamic, interactive civic education program that challenges entire classes of middle school students of mixed genders, ethnicities, and religions to collaborate and identify a public policy problem in their community. The students then research the problem, evaluate alternative options, develop their own solutions in the form of a public policy initiative, and create a political action plan that could be employed to enlist local government authorities to adopt their proposed policy. As part of this project, students develop a portfolio of their work and present their findings during a simulated public hearing before a panel of civic-minded community members. Members of the Prime Minister’s family participated as panelists at the Malaysia National Showcase that featured these hearings. Impressed by what they saw, the family members extended an invitation for future Projek Warga students to present their findings to the Prime Minister himself.

These activities are implemented through the Center for Civic Education and the Malaysia Citizenship Initiative of Universiti Sains Malaysia.



*Project Citizen reaches out to young students to promote responsible participation in local government.
(Ron Morris)*



Burma

Burma continued to be ruled by an authoritarian military regime that enforced its firm grip on power with a pervasive security apparatus. During 2005, the Government's deplorable human rights record worsened, and it continued to commit serious abuses. Security forces continued to commit extrajudicial killings, rape, and forcible relocation of persons and use forced labor and conscripted child soldiers. The Government continued to treat any form of political opposition or dissent with hostility and repression. Citizens in Burma did not have the right to change their government. The regime barred participation of the main opposition party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), as well as other pro-democracy political parties, in its sham National Convention. The National Convention reconvened twice in 2005 and was designed to rubber-stamp a new Constitution granting the military the predominant role in any future government. The NLD's top leaders, Aung San Suu Kyi and U Tin Oo, remained under incommunicado house arrest. All of the party's offices nationwide, except its Rangoon headquarters, remained closed. Since 1990, when the NLD won over 80 percent of parliamentary seats in Burma's last democratic election but was not allowed to take office by the military regime, the United States has maintained its diplomatic representation at the Chargé d'Affaires level. The Government released 368 political prisoners in 2005, although authorities arrested approximately 200 pro-democracy supporters during the same period, including several senior ethnic pro-democracy leaders, and Shan political leader Hkun Htun Oo. Despite the release of this small number of political prisoners in 2005, harassment, arrests, and disappearances of additional political activists continued. Members of the security forces killed, tortured, beat, and otherwise abused prisoners and detainees. The Government did not allow UN Special Envoy Razali Ismail to return after his March 2004 visit; Razali resigned in frustration in January 2006. The Government has also refused to allow UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Paulo Sergio Pinheiro to visit Burma since November 2003.

U.S. human rights and democracy goals include pressing the Burmese regime to establish a constitutional democracy, respect human rights, release all political prisoners, end the military's abuses, especially in ethnic minority regions, and combat trafficking in persons (TIP). The United States worked with other like-minded countries to maintain maximum international pressure on Burma. This included robust bilateral and multilateral sanctions. The United States also pursued this goal inside Burma through vigorous public diplomacy and democracy programs.

The United States was a vocal advocate for the rights of democracy activists in Burma, including Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi. President Bush publicly condemned the human rights situation in Burma on several occasions in 2005, and spoke out on behalf of Aung San Suu Kyi and the democratic opposition on numerous occasions. During an official visit to Japan in 2005, President Bush made it clear that although the Burmese people live in the darkness of tyranny, one day they will have their liberty.

Following the regime's November 2005 announcement that it had prolonged Aung San Suu Kyi's detention for another six months, the United States publicly identified the extension as "another step in the wrong direction," and again called on the Government to release Aung San Suu Kyi and all political prisoners and to initiate meaningful dialogue with the democratic opposition and ethnic minority political groups.

The United States, EU members, and other nations have imposed a variety of sanctions on the Burmese junta. These sanctions signaled international disapproval while exerting pressure on the junta to end its human rights abuses and allow for genuine democracy in Burma. The U.S. Congress voted overwhelmingly to renew the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act for a third year on June 21, 2005.

U.S. sanctions now include bans on the export of financial services to Burma by U.S. persons, imports from Burma, and new U.S. investment, as well as an arms embargo. Sanctions also block all bilateral aid to the Government, including counter-narcotics assistance, withdraw Generalized System of Preferences

privileges, and deny funding through the Overseas Private Investment Corporation and Export-Import Bank programs. The United States maintained visa restrictions on Burma's senior military and government officials and opposed all new lending or grant programs by international financial institutions.

The United States worked aggressively and multilaterally to press for change in Burma. Such efforts included support for the efforts of the UN Special Envoy for the Secretary General and the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights, as well as the work of the International Labor Organization (ILO), and other international organizations. The United States has co-sponsored annual resolutions at the UNGA and the UN Commission on Human Rights that condemn and draw international attention to the continued systematic human rights violations in Burma.

With the strong support of the United States, the UN Security Council agreed to discuss Burma in informal consultations in December 2005. On December 16, the UN Under Secretary General for Political Affairs briefed the Council on the continued deterioration of freedoms in Burma and the regime's neglect of the country's needs. U.S. officials also consistently raised

concerns about Burma during bilateral meetings with other nations in the region. The United States urged these nations to press the regime to release all political prisoners and initiate a credible and inclusive political process. As a result of the regime's regressive steps in 2005, ASEAN broke with its policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of member states and publicly condemned the regime for its continued detention of Aung San Suu Kyi and 1,100 other political prisoners and its slow pace of reform.

The United States also supported journalist training, media development, civil society development, and scholarship programs in-country and among exile communities to prepare Burmese youth and others for leadership roles once political transition occurs. The United States promoted the rule of law and democracy by providing information exchange and civic education programs on human rights, democratic values, and governance issues. In 2005, the United States dedicated funds for democracy and human rights-themed speaker programs, exchange programs, publications, and other information outreach in Burma. The Embassy regularly disseminated news from websites blocked by the Government's censors. The United States also provided support to the Burmese



Hundreds of Burmese citizens vie for copies of the U.S. Constitution at an Embassy book fair. (U.S. Department of State)



opposition and ethnic minority groups. U.S. courses on civics and good governance inspired political activists to use these materials to create their own Burmese-language versions of the courses. These courses also increased the organizational and presentation skills of the democratic opposition, which faced daily challenges from the regime's repressive measures. The United States also funded programs focused on democracy promotion and capacity-building for Burmese exile groups, as well as for collection and dissemination of information on democracy and the human rights situation inside and along the borders of Burma. The United States also supported humanitarian assistance programs serving Burmese refugees. All U.S. humanitarian or democracy-related assistance is channeled through NGOs; none of the funding benefits the Government.

The United States also sought an end to the egregious human rights abuses perpetrated by the Burmese army, many of which were carried out against ethnic minority civilians in border regions. The Government did not allow domestic human rights groups to function independently and dismissed all outside scrutiny of its human rights record. Several U.S.-funded groups working along Burma's borders documented human rights abuses inside Burma, including rape and forced labor. During travel throughout Burma and along the Thai-Burmese and Thai-Bangladeshi borders, U.S. officials personally interviewed victims of violence. The Embassy also helped facilitate access for U.S. and UN investigations into human rights abuses and maintained close contact with influential members of the political opposition about initiatives supporting the struggle for democracy in the country.

A key aspect of U.S. advocacy was the persistent call for the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners in Burma. More than 1,100 people continued to languish in Burma's jails for the peaceful expression of their political views.

There was no change in the Government's scant respect for religious freedom. The Government continued to monitor public meetings and activities of virtually all organizations, including religious ones. It systematically restricted efforts by Buddhist clergy to

promote human rights and political freedom, discouraged or prohibited Muslims and Christians from constructing new places of worship, and in some ethnic minority areas used coercion to promote Buddhism over other religions. In 2005, the United States responded by redesignating Burma as a "Country of Particular Concern" under the International Religious Freedom Act for the seventh consecutive year. Several U.S.-funded organizations along Burma's borders provided information on the serious repression faced by minority ethnic and religious groups in Burma, including Rohingya Muslims and Christians throughout Burma, primarily in ethnic areas.

The United States continued to press the regime to respect workers' rights and unions and to discontinue its use of forced labor. The United States supported the work of an ILO liaison office in Rangoon that made efforts to bring the Government into compliance with its international labor obligations. At the ILO Governing Board meeting in November 2005, the United States emphasized the need for the Government to reengage the ILO in a meaningful dialogue, and to ensure the liaison officer's ability to safely carry out his duties country-wide.

The United States also designated Burma as a Tier 3 country in its 2005 report on TIP. To address this serious problem, the United States approved funding for NGO-implemented anti-trafficking programs intended to raise awareness among vulnerable Burmese and supported anti-trafficking efforts of local NGOs. The United States pressed the regime to cooperate with NGOs and UN agencies in the development and implementation of a stronger anti-TIP law.

Cambodia

Cambodia is a constitutional monarchy with an elected Government. The royalist National United Front for a Neutral, Peaceful, Cooperative, and Independent Cambodia party (FUNCINPEC) and the Cambodian People's Party (CPP) formed a coalition Government in 2004; however, the CPP dominated the Government, with most power concentrated in the hands of Prime Minister Hun Sen. Although there



A woman returns from voting while others view voter information. (USAID)

were no political killings in 2005, the Government's human rights record worsened, as the country's fragile democracy suffered several setbacks, particularly in the areas of political participation and freedom of speech. The Government undertook a series of actions that served to neutralize its critics through a limited number of arrests of journalists, leaders of civil society, human rights activists, and members of the political opposition. In February 2005, the National Assembly removed parliamentary immunity from three opposition Members of Parliament (MPs) in order to pursue possible criminal cases against them. One opposition MP was convicted in a questionable court proceeding. The leader of the opposition fled the country and was convicted in absentia of criminal defamation. The Cambodian Government used the weak and often politically biased judiciary to file defamation suits under the criminal code to arrest, silence, and intimidate civil society and critics of Government policy.

The United States employed multiple tactics to promote its main foreign policy objectives in Cambodia of democracy promotion, increased respect for human rights, and good governance. U.S. officials cooperated closely with civil society, international organizations, Government officials, and international and

local NGOs to monitor and promote human rights, good governance, and democratic development. U.S. officials, including the Ambassador, engaged the Prime Minister and other senior officials on numerous occasions, stressing the importance of allowing freedom of expression, even on sensitive subjects, as well as the importance of a democratic opposition. At the 2005 UN Commission on Human Rights, the United States and others worked with Cambodian diplomats to pass a resolution providing technical assistance and advisory services to implement the Khmer Rouge tribunal and improve human rights and democracy in Cambodia.

To achieve the goals of political pluralism and the transformation of political party representatives into effective legislators and leaders, the United States supported an NGO that focused on internal democratization and decentralization of political parties, and another NGO that held 60 public forums, attended by over 35,000 citizens, to increase debate on human rights and democracy. A U.S. program to broaden youth participation in political life trained over 16,000 young activists and over 160 volunteers to register voters. One U.S.-sponsored program produced a radio program on democracy that reached over 1.2 million voters in eight provinces. The United States spon-



sored the opposition party's Chief of Cabinet for the International Visitors Leadership Program (IVLP) "Grassroots Democracy," and organized a Voluntary Visitor program for a high-ranking Ministry of Interior official on "State and Local Government." Another U.S.-funded NGO supported electoral reform, a parliament watch program, NGO capacity building, constituency dialogues, and political party reform, including increasing youth and women's participation.

U.S. efforts to promote media freedom centered on programs to educate journalists on their proper role in a democratic society and to improve the quality of reporting. These programs included U.S.-funded workshops and lectures for journalists and journalism students, sponsoring a Fulbright Senior Specialist to develop teaching material on basic communication theory for the leading journalism school, and sponsoring an official of the Club of Cambodian Journalists for an IVLP on investigative journalism. In light of the numerous threats to freedom of expression, the United States embarked upon a campaign with other like-minded countries and international organizations to urge the Government to release its detained civil rights activists and drop all charges against them.

U.S. officials, including the Ambassador, also engaged the judicial sector on numerous occasions to press for strengthening the rule of law and independence of the judiciary. A Fulbright Senior Scholar on a six-month program at the Royal University of Law and Economics developed curricula and course materials on legal reasoning and analysis and international human rights law. Another Fulbright Senior Specialist at the National University of Management developed a new undergraduate law curriculum. A U.S. Federal Judge conducted workshops on judicial policies, practices, and reform for more than 355 sitting judges, prosecutors, and students in Phnom Penh and four provincial courts. A U.S.-funded anti-corruption program strengthened the ability of the citizens to hold public officials more accountable for the use of public resources.

Senior U.S. officials called on the Government to release the civil society leaders arrested in 2005 and to reverse its course of deteriorating respect for human

rights. Following a meeting with the U.S. Assistant Secretary for East Asia and the Pacific in January 2006, the Prime Minister requested that the courts release on bail the leaders of civil society who had been detained on criminal charges of defamation. The Government later requested that the courts drop charges against the men after they wrote letters to the Prime Minister thanking him for their release.

The United States condemned the convictions of two men for the 2004 killing of union leader Chea Vichea. Civil society and independent observers believe that the two men are innocent of the charges. U.S. officials also condemned the conviction of opposition Member of Parliament Cheam Channy. Serious irregularities marred all three cases. U.S. officials, meeting with the Minister of Justice and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in January 2005, outlined areas for judicial reform and programs the United States views as best practices for combating corruption.

U.S. programs promoted access to justice by providing legal assistance in nearly 3,000 cases. Approximately 55 percent of these were handled through alternative dispute resolution mechanisms and resolved successfully. Sixty lawyers, including 22 women, completed U.S.-supported clinical legal education programs to increase the quality of legal professionals. Ten legal fellows, including six women, were placed in internships to increase access to legal representation for average Cambodians.

The United States continued to support local NGOs that investigated hundreds of alleged abuses of human rights, and provided direct intervention and legal services to individuals. Local NGOs took on legal cases with high public visibility or the potential to influence policy, which helped other partners develop the will and capacity to bring more cases of human rights abuses to court. A U.S.-funded Cambodian legal defense NGO continued to provide legal aid services for the poor. Another U.S. program continued the use of class action cases on behalf of communities involved in land disputes.

U.S. support enabled key human rights NGOs to monitor, investigate, and report on human rights viola-



tions, including unlawful arrests, extrajudicial killings, abuse of power by Government officials, restrictions on freedom of speech and assembly, and intimidation of human rights workers. The United States continued to support Cambodia's only independent NGO devoted to investigating and documenting the crimes against humanity committed by the former Khmer Rouge regime to help build a record to aid in bringing those responsible for the atrocities to justice.

On numerous occasions throughout the year, U.S. officials urged authorities in both the Foreign Ministry and Ministry of Interior to meet Cambodia's obligations to permit the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to have access to and provide protection for persons seeking asylum in Cambodia. The United States sponsored a speaker who toured and conducted workshops and round table discussions with more than 200 government officials, NGO leaders, and journalists on domestic violence. The speaker also discussed domestic violence on two national television broadcasts. One local NGO received a U.S. grant to conduct training for more than 2,000 girls and young women on exercising their rights in a democratic society.

The United States continued its efforts to address the threat of radical Islam by promoting democracy education and support for the Muslim community through a combination of outreach programs and small grants. The Embassy distributed approximately 50,000 Khmer-language and 3,000 Cham-language copies of "Muslim Life in America" at mosques and Muslim community centers, in addition to distributing 20,000 education kits that included a photobook, "America 24/7," at predominately Muslim junior and senior high schools. Two Cambodian Muslim youth organizations received funding to conduct training in six provinces for over 600 university-age students on civic education, human rights, and strengthening democracy. With U.S. support, a local NGO broadcast a weekly Cham-language news and information program, the only program in the country to engage Cham Muslims in their own language. The program regularly featured U.S. stories, and could reach an audience of 500,000--roughly 80 percent of the Cham Muslim population in Cambodia. The United States

also supported train-the-trainer workshops for over 900 imams and village leaders in 10 provinces on human rights and democratic practices conducted by two Muslim NGOs.

In 2005, the United States expanded the use of English-language micro-scholarships. Seventy-eight Muslim secondary school students in five provinces participated in this in-country English-language study program. These English-language scholarships expanded the educational and economic opportunities for Muslim students, one of the most educationally marginalized populations in the country. Learning English increased the chances that these students will graduate from secondary school, attend college, find employment, and learn about civil society structures different from those that exist in Cambodia. Most participants lived near an American Corner, increasing the students' access to materials on democratic principles and practices. Through small grants, the United States partnered with four Muslim NGOs to select suitable candidates in each province and to provide a network to help ensure that students awarded a scholarship had the support they needed to succeed in their studies. Administering the program in this fashion also helped to develop institutional capacity in the fledgling Muslim NGO community.

The United States continued to fund International Labor Organization (ILO) programs to protect worker rights through monitoring labor conditions in garment factories, creating a labor arbitration mechanism, and combating the worst forms of child labor. One U.S.-supported program provided training on union building and legal aid to union leaders and activists. The Embassy sponsored the participation of the president of a major labor union in the IVLP "Organized Labor in the U.S." The Labor Arbitration Council, a U.S.-funded ILO project, continued to carry out its mandate to arbitrate labor disputes impartially, and was a model of legal credibility and transparency in an environment where the lack of rule of law continued to be problematic. The ILO garment factory project monitored and reported on working conditions and labor rights in Cambodia's 200 garment factories. This project helped the country grow economically by attracting socially conscious



garment companies to buy from Cambodia and increased respect for and protection of labor rights and standards. The United States supported an NGO to continue a project that increased school enrollment and attendance of children who were at high risk of falling into the worst forms of child labor, such as child trafficking or commercial sexual exploitation.

Combating trafficking in persons (TIP) was a vital component of the U.S. strategy to promote human rights. The United States continued to provide financial and technical assistance to NGOs focusing on the protection of victims, prevention, and prosecution of traffickers. Through an IOM grant, the United States supported an information campaign to combat trafficking in women and children. The project included a provincial and district-level multimedia information campaign, which included village-based activities designed to foster community networks to combat TIP, and the development of a counter-trafficking database. This phase of the campaign reached over 125,000 persons. A local U.S.-supported NGO launched a women's economic empowerment program, which targeted women at risk of being trafficked. U.S. programs trained 250 police in investigative techniques to improve law enforcement competency in combating TIP. The United States continued to provide financial support for local NGOs to run shelters with training and reintegration programs for trafficking victims and victims of rape and domestic violence. These programs assisted over 525 at-risk individuals and trafficking victims to obtain shelter services. U.S. programs assisted with the reintegration of 67 victims and helped 92 victims gain employment.

China

The Chinese Government continued to deny citizens basic democratic rights, and law enforcement authorities continued to suppress political, religious, and social groups perceived to be a threat to national stability. The Government did not allow social, political, or religious groups to organize or act independently of the Government or the Communist Party. Those who tried to act independently were often harassed,

detained, or abused by the authorities, including Internet writers, journalists, leaders of unregistered religious groups, political dissidents, and human rights defenders. The Government adopted measures to control print, broadcast, and electronic media more tightly and pressured Internet companies to censor and restrict the content of material available online. It increased scrutiny of NGOs, especially those perceived as promoting democratic agendas. Public protests by citizens seeking to redress grievances increased, but were often suppressed, including by security forces. In Dongzhou village, security forces opened fire on demonstrators, fatally shooting at least three protestors. The Government increasingly discussed human rights, rule of law, and democracy in its policies and public statements. However, laws that could expand citizens' rights often failed to do so in practice, especially when rights protection conflicted with the interests of law enforcement institutions responsible for maintaining social order. Local authorities who abused human rights often violated the law, but the Central Government rarely stepped in to address such violations.

The United States employed multiple strategies to promote human rights, democracy, and the rule of law in China. This comprehensive strategy included bilateral diplomatic efforts, multilateral action, and support through Government and nongovernmental channels for rule of law and civil society programs. In public statements and private diplomacy, U.S. officials continued to urge China to bring its human rights practices into compliance with international standards, to make systemic reforms, and to release prisoners of conscience. The United States sought to strengthen the judicial system and further the rule of law, encourage democratic political reform, promote freedom of religion and the press, protect human rights, including the rights of workers and women, improve transparency in governance, and strengthen civil society. Officials at all levels also worked with Chinese officials, domestic and foreign NGOs, and others to identify areas of particular concern and encourage systemic reforms.

President Bush raised human rights, democracy, and religious freedom issues when he met with President



Hu Jintao in New York in September and when he visited Beijing in November. The Secretary of State raised concerns about these issues during her March and July visits to Beijing. The Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor traveled to Beijing in August to urge China to improve human rights cooperation. Members of Congress, their staff, and staff of the Congressional Executive Committee on China traveled regularly to China to discuss democracy, human rights, religious freedom, corporate social responsibility, and rule of law concerns, often raising these issues with Chinese officials.

Chinese elections did not extend beyond village assemblies or local people's congresses, but U.S. programs offered support for grassroots democratization efforts through training for elected village officials and deputies to local legislatures. Other U.S. programs provided technical assistance to ministries and legislative bodies charged with drafting local election regulations and to those experimenting with legislative oversight and public participation in Government decisionmaking.

The U.S. Government supported seminars and training on international standards for free expression, reaching out to journalists, lawyers, judges, and lawmakers. In December, the United States brought leading constitutional scholars to China to discuss First Amendment and media issues with Chinese academics and lawmakers. Visiting officials discussed the need for greater freedom for the Internet and for the press, especially in light of increasing international attention on the 2008 Olympics, to be hosted in Beijing. The President, the Secretary of State, the Ambassador, and other U.S. officials also repeatedly raised the cases of detained journalists and Internet writers in public remarks and in private meetings with Chinese officials.

Due to Chinese Government concerns about the role of NGOs in advancing democracy abroad, international and domestic NGOs operating in China faced an increasingly restrictive environment. Nonetheless, hundreds of NGOs, mostly Chinese Government affiliated, were active in health, environment, and

other areas. The U.S. Government supported capacity building for small, independent NGOs. It also helped a major university conduct a comprehensive study of non-profit organization work in China and abroad. A nongovernmental women's network supported by the U.S. Government was a key advocate for a new law outlawing sexual harassment.

The United States funds a large program to promote legal reform and encourage judicial independence, increase popular participation in government, and foster the development of local elections and civil society in China. Under this program, more than a dozen major projects are being implemented, including projects that provide legal services, reform criminal law, strengthen legal education, and enable average citizens to seek protection under the law. Smaller U.S.-funded projects complemented these goals. For example, U.S.-supported research by the National Prosecutors College and the Supreme People's Procuratorate focused on criminal procedure issues, including the exclusion of illegally seized evidence. Another program allowed a federal prosecutor assigned to the Embassy to encourage criminal justice reform through interaction with the academic community and Government. This official lectured to numerous Chinese counterparts at law firms and universities on issues ranging from search and seizure to compelling witness testimony at trial and participated in international and domestic anti-corruption conferences. In addition, the Embassy has coordinated programs for federal and state judges, highlighted by visits of Supreme Court Justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Anthony M. Kennedy, to discuss rule of law issues with Chinese judges, lawyers, officials, and academics. Judges from Massachusetts toured China presenting a model trial program, and U.S. officials served as judges for China's first university-level moot trial competition.

Through U.S. speaker programs numerous speakers traveled to China to discuss rule of law issues. Almost 50% of Chinese citizens sent to the United States to participate in the International Visitors Leadership Program worked in democracy and rights related fields. Both the Fulbright and Humphrey exchange programs annually devoted resources to rule of law subjects. For example, a Chinese prosecutor



came to the United States for post-graduate courses and U.S. professors served in residence at top Chinese legal training institutions.

As a result of U.S. bilateral and multilateral diplomacy, the Chinese Government took a number of steps to engage with the international community on human rights. China hosted visits by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in August and the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture in November. The Government also permitted the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to open an office in Beijing in July, although the Government did not authorize the ICRC to visit Chinese prisons. U.S. advocacy helped political prisoners gain early release from prison or improved treatment. Uighur businesswoman and activist Rebiya Kadeer was released early from prison in March and permitted to travel to the United States on medical parole. In August, a team of Chinese and U.S. legal experts discussed parole and sentencing reduction for those still serving sentences for now-repealed political crimes.

The President and senior U.S. officials consistently called upon the Chinese Government to respect international standards for religious freedom for people of all faiths. U.S. officials regularly raised religious freedom issues with Chinese leaders, including calling for the release of religious prisoners, the reform of restrictive registration laws, and more freedom for religious groups to practice their faith. The President emphasized the importance of religious freedom in his November meetings with Chinese leaders and attended a church service in Beijing. The Secretary of State also attended church services during her March 2005 visit. During the year, the Chinese Government addressed long-standing international concerns by publicly stating that minors were free to receive religious education from their parents. Officials also said that “house Christians” could hold informal prayer services with friends and family members at home without needing to register with the Government. Problems continued in both areas. In an effort to extend the rule of law to religion, the Government issued new religious affairs regulations, expanding some legal protection for registered religious groups. However, the regulations continue to allow the Gov-

ernment to define lawful religious activity and to punish activity by those who have not registered.

The United States continued to urge the Chinese Government to enter into dialogue with the Vatican. President Bush stressed the importance of such dialogue in his November meeting with President Hu Jintao. After lengthy diplomatic efforts, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) visited China in August. The Commission met with a Vice Premier and leading officials of central and provincial government ministries responsible for religious, judicial, and civil affairs.

U.S. officials worked to strengthen cooperation and the flow of information about human rights issues between the United States and like-minded governments. The United States participated in the “Bern Process” with other governments that hold bilateral human rights dialogues with China to share information about human rights strategies and democracy, human rights, and rule of law programming.

The United States devoted significant resources and time to address numerous other human rights concerns. It urged the Government to put an end to its coercive birth limitation program. The United States publicly and privately urged China not to use the war on terrorism as justification for cracking down on Uighurs expressing peaceful political dissent. U.S. officials also pressed the Government not to repatriate forcibly North Koreans and to allow the UN High Commission for Refugees access to this vulnerable population, as required by international conventions China has signed.

The United States promoted compliance with international labor standards. In 2005, China ratified ILO Convention 111 on eliminating discrimination in employment, meeting a long-standing request of the international community. The Embassy worked to monitor compliance with the U.S.-China Memorandum of Understanding and Statement of Cooperation on Prison Labor and to investigate allegations of forced child labor. The United States supported programs of technical cooperation to advance labor rule of law and coalmine safety as well as exchange pro-



grams in the areas of occupational safety and health, mine safety and health, wage and hour administration, and administration of private pension programs. The United States supported programs of technical cooperation on dispute resolution. Through the Partnership to Eliminate Sweatshops, the U.S. Government supported programs that address unacceptable working conditions in manufacturing facilities that produce goods for the U.S. market. Other U.S. programs combated discrimination associated with HIV/AIDS in the workplace and improved the ability of labor institutions to combat trafficking for labor purposes. The Embassy hosted a major conference on trafficking in persons in December, which helped explain anti-trafficking strategies to Chinese law enforcement agencies and academics.

TIBET

The Government’s human rights record in Tibetan areas of China remained poor, and the level of repression of religious freedom remained high. The Government continued to view the Dalai Lama with suspicion and tended to associate Tibetan Buddhist religious activity with separatist sympathies. The preservation and development of the unique religious, cultural, and linguistic heritage of Tibetan areas and the protection of Tibetan people’s fundamental human rights continued to be of concern. The Government strictly controlled information about, and access to, Tibetan areas, making it difficult to determine accurately the scope of human rights abuses.

The U.S. Government continued to advocate vigorously for improvements in human rights conditions in Tibetan areas of China and urged the Chinese Government to meet with representatives of the Dalai Lama. Discussions between Chinese officials and envoys of the Dalai Lama were held in Switzerland in June, the fourth round of talks since 2002. President Bush specifically encouraged China to engage in dialogue with the Dalai Lama when he met with President Hu Jintao in Beijing in November.

Numerous U.S. officials visited Tibetan areas during 2005, providing opportunities to raise human rights

abuses with local officials. USCIRF commissioners and staff visited the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) in August, a visit that had been sought since the 2002 bilateral Human Rights Dialogue. USCIRF was able to meet in Lhasa with released political prisoner Phuntsog Nyidrol. A large congressional delegation traveled to the TAR in August, visited religious sites, and raised concerns about human rights violations. In November, the UN Special Rapporteur for Torture visited Lhasa to meet with officials and visit two prisons. U.S.-funded programs focused on economic and community development, mindful of the importance of preserving Tibet’s environment and religious and cultural heritage.

HONG KONG

Hong Kong is a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and maintains a high degree of autonomy except in matters of defense and foreign affairs. It has well-established institutions that support the rule of law and a vigorous civil society. The Basic Law, the SAR’s Constitution, provides for the protection of fundamental human rights and calls for further democratization after 2007, eventually leading to universal suffrage. In 2004, the National People’s Congress Standing Committee issued a controversial interpretation of the Basic Law that ruled out universal suffrage in the 2007 Legislative Council (Legco) and 2008 Chief Executive elections. The chief executive is chosen by an election committee composed of 800 directly elected, indirectly elected, and appointed individuals. The Legco is comprised of 60 members, only half of whom are elected through direct popular vote. The judiciary is independent and the Basic Law vests Hong Kong’s highest court with the power of final adjudication. However, before making final judgments on matters related to PRC central Government responsibilities or on the relationship between the central authorities and the SAR, courts must seek an interpretation from the National People’s Congress Standing Committee.

The Government generally respected the human rights of residents, and the law and judiciary pro-



vided a fair and efficient judicial process. A number of human rights problems existed, including limitations on citizens' ability to change their government and the power of the legislature to affect government policies. Violence and discrimination against women, media self-censorship, and restrictions on workers' rights to organize and bargain collectively also remained issues of concern. Despite the ban on the Falun Gong in mainland China, the Falun Gong was legally registered and practitioners continued their activities in Hong Kong.

The United States supported Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy and movement toward universal suffrage as called for by the Basic Law. The Vice President and the Secretary of State discussed Hong Kong's democratic development with Chief Executive Donald Tsang and other senior Hong Kong officials during the Hong Kong officials' visit to the United States in October 2005. The Deputy Secretary of State also raised these points during his July 2005 visit to Hong Kong, as did the Secretary of State with senior Chinese officials during her visit to Beijing in March 2005. Following a mass rally on December 4, 2005, in support of universal suffrage, and following the defeat of the Government's reform proposal several weeks later, the U.S. Government voiced support for the early introduction of universal suffrage. Additionally, the U.S. Consul General has actively affirmed U.S. support for greater democratization in Hong Kong both privately with Hong Kong Government officials and publicly through speeches and remarks to the press. Following December's pro-democracy rally, the Consul General reiterated publicly the U.S. Government's belief that Hong Kong was ready for democracy. His comments were featured prominently in local and international newspapers, reaching a wide cross-section of Hong Kong society. Democracy also figured prominently in Consulate General-sponsored speaker and International Visitors Leadership Programs. Additionally, the U.S. Government has facilitated local debate and discussion of democracy-related subjects and supported activities to strengthen civil society in Hong Kong.

Indonesia

Indonesia, the world's third-largest democracy and home to the world's largest Muslim population, took further steps to consolidate a pluralistic and representative democracy after four decades of repressive and authoritarian rule. In 2005, Indonesian voters elected seven governors, 116 regents, and 28 mayors in relatively free, fair, and peaceful direct local elections. The most significant human rights development was the end of the three-decade long civil conflict in Aceh that claimed an estimated 15,000 lives. The Government and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) signed a peace agreement on August 15, which both sides are implementing, thereby ending the once daily violent clashes between security forces and separatist rebels, and greatly reducing human rights abuses in Aceh. In Papua and West Irian Jaya provinces, the Government inaugurated the Papuan People's Assembly and took other steps toward fulfilling the 2001 Special Autonomy Law on Papua. Indonesia improved its human rights performance during the year, but significant problems remained and serious violations continued. Many of these violations were committed by security forces in areas of separatist conflict. Soldiers and police officers committed violations, including extrajudicial killings and torture, notably in Aceh before the peace agreement and in Papua. A weak and corrupt judicial system frequently failed to hold violators accountable. The military and the police took greater steps to punish human rights abusers within their ranks but, as with the civilian justice system, the punishment in many cases did not match the offense. Press freedom came under strain with orchestrated assaults on journalists and one disappearance. The Government often failed to uphold adequately the fundamental rights of children, women, peaceful protestors, persons with disabilities, religious minorities, and indigenous groups.

The United States undertook aggressive and varied efforts to promote human rights and democracy in Indonesia. The Ambassador and other U.S. officials publicly highlighted the need for protection of human rights and worked to put to counter problems such as trafficking in persons (TIP), religious intolerance, and threats to press freedom. Because many hu-



man rights violations involved the military and police, known collectively as the security forces, the United States focused human rights efforts on pushing for military reform and accountability, professionalizing the police, and developing civil society institutions essential for sustaining the democratic transition. U.S. officials frequently worked with student groups, NGOs, labor activists, representatives of religious and ethnic minorities, and leaders of indigenous groups. The United States supported the People's Crisis Center in Aceh to rescue children victimized by the conflict, particularly those with physical or mental trauma. American funding provided for a "safe house" where children could receive counseling and education. Since 2002, the United States has been funding a Survivors of Torture program, implemented by the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC), which strengthens the capacity of Indonesian NGOs to facilitate programs in awareness raising; medical, legal, and psychosocial rehabilitation services; and advocacy support for victims of torture and other abusive treatment.

Senior U.S. officials conveyed to the Government concern over the number of peaceful protesters jailed for "insulting the President" or "spreading hatred against the Government." The United States encouraged the growth and expansion of independent news radio throughout the Southeast Asia region by supporting an independent, indigenous, pro-democracy radio news program based in Jakarta. Ten Indonesian print and electronic media journalists visited the United States to report on civil society and volunteerism in America. During the two-week tour, the participating Indonesian journalists visited a number of mosques and reported on religious pluralism and tolerance in America for all major news outlets in Indonesia. The United States is also strongly supporting a more vigorous free and independent media and Indonesian efforts to pass a Freedom of Information Act. The United States is assisting Indonesian civil society groups in their review of the draft Criminal Code to ensure protection of individual rights and media freedom.

To strengthen respect for rule of law, the United States provided professional training programs to

prosecutors, police, and judges on issues including ethics, corruption, and money laundering. United States technical assistance to the Supreme Court to streamline the flow of alternative dispute resolution cases continued, as well as comparative organizational structures for a potential revision of the Supreme Court system. The United States also provided expertise to the Constitutional Court on draft procedures for handling impeachment cases and feasibility studies on human resources, case management, and tracking requirements. The United States provided training for prosecutors in the Attorney General's Office and the Anti-Corruption Commission and helped an NGO monitor court sessions and judicial selection procedures.

The United States closely followed trials involving crimes against humanity and spoke out when actions, or inaction, by prosecutors called into question the overall fairness of the judicial process, as happened at the East Timor Tribunal. The United States stressed the importance of achieving credible accountability for the crimes against humanity committed in East Timor during and after the 1999 referendum. A U.S. official traveled to Makassar, Sulawesi to witness the country's first permanent Human Rights Court hand down its initial verdict. The United States also closely followed the investigation and trial of Pollycarpus Budihari Priyanto, convicted of poisoning prominent human rights campaigner Munir Said Thalib, and publicly supported the Indonesian court's call for a continued investigation. The United States continued to help the Indonesian national police transform into a civilian law enforcement agency based on the principles of democracy and human rights through four project initiatives: an institutional transformation project, an anti-corruption project, an in-service video CD project, and a human rights training program for senior management with police in Aceh. Through these projects, the United States helped police develop transparency, accountability, and a better understanding of human rights. In Aceh, 12 senior Aceh police command staff attended the human rights seminar for senior management training. The United States encouraged the Expanded International Military Education and Training program. U.S. officials also frequently met Indonesian military of-



ficials and encouraged military reform and promoted respect for human rights.

Throughout the conflict in Aceh, the United States supported civil society organizations that assisted human rights victims, advocated peaceful resolution, and helped fund treatment of torture victims. To support implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), between the Government and the GAM to end the conflict in Aceh, the United States funded public awareness efforts and technical assistance. Activities included public forums and dialogues, peace concerts, and a new “Aceh Magazine,” the first ever Aceh-based news magazine to focus on peace development for community leaders. The United States provided two post-conflict advisors who inspired the “Joint Forum to Support Peace in Aceh,” which has become a cornerstone of the Provincial Government’s reintegration planning and implementation. The Embassy helped design and support the “Building Lasting Peace in Aceh Workshop,” which brought together for the first time all stakeholders – civilian, GAM, local and central Government, and security forces – to discuss implementation of the MOU and peace in Aceh. This set a very high and important benchmark for public participation in implementation of the MOU.

In Papua, where the military has a history of repressive responses to separatist activity, the United States took steps to improve monitoring and investigation of human rights abuses. The United States continued to demand justice for the August 2002 killings of two U.S. citizens near the city of Timika.

U.S. officials traveled to Maluku and North Maluku Province to meet with leaders and encourage continued efforts at reconciliation and effective sectarian conflict resolution. In 2005, Central Sulawesi continued to suffer sporadic outbreaks of violence, including explosions at two local markets and the brutal murder by beheading of four Christian and one Muslim teenage girl. All three provinces continued to need extensive reconciliation and reconstruction work. U.S. assistance supported inter-group dialogues in Central Sulawesi through the crisis center Gereja Kristen Sulawesi Tengah (Christian church) and Himpunan Al

Khairat (Islamic mass-based organization). Further U.S. support went to election commissions and several local NGOs conducting local election monitoring. U.S. funding supported “Search for Common Ground,” Indonesia’s peace-building program using comic books aimed at young people in conflict-affected areas of Central Sulawesi.

The United States helped raise awareness of domestic violence through the Foundation for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, supported a media campaign to inform women of their rights, sought to empower women through pesantren (Islamic boarding school) programs, and supported the creation of a national database of potential women candidates for political parties. Dozens of women took part in the International Visitors Leadership Program (IVLP), the Voluntary Visitor Program, the Fulbright Summer Institute, and other programs, many of which focused on human rights issues. Female participants on the IVLP included Dewi Hughes, Indonesia’s national spokesperson for anti-trafficking. The Embassy raised awareness about violence against women and trafficking by hosting a viewing and discussion of the film “Lilya Forever” for university law students and government officials. U.S. support of the National Commission on Violence Against Women resulted in the Government’s decision to establish regional women’s crisis centers. The U.S.-funded Women’s Journal Foundation produced a monthly magazine and weekly radio show that reached 158 stations.

U.S. officials regularly met religious and civil leaders to urge mutual respect and cooperation, while simultaneously calling for justice for those in the past who had perpetrated severe human rights abuses. In outreach efforts to the Muslim community, the United States brought speakers to dozens of pesantrens, madrasahs (day schools), and Muslim institutions of higher learning to exchange views on pluralism, tolerance, and respect for human rights. The Embassy sent 32 pesantren leaders to the United States for a three-week program on religious pluralism, civic education, and educational development. In addition, the Embassy sent 26 students and five teachers to the United States for four weeks on a Muslim Youth Leadership Program, and through the Youth Ex-



change and Study program over 89 Muslim students entered one-year programs at high schools throughout the United States. At the university level, a multi-year grant helped implement a civic education program in the private Islamic tertiary institutions affiliated with State Islamic Universities and the Muhammadiyah university system. U.S. grants strengthened curriculum and teaching materials, trained 400 high school teachers from 100 madrasahs, and helped an Islamic studies institute in Yogyakarta conduct training on human rights and establish courses promoting tolerance. The United States also provided grants to two U.S. universities to coordinate with Indonesian universities for a journalism training exchange, conflict resolution programs, and other exchanges and to assist five mediation centers at Muslim institutions.

The United States supported the Islam and Civil Society (ICS) program, which promoted messages on tolerance, pluralism, gender, and democracy to the people through religious leaders. In support of long-term engagement, five American Corners operated in Muslim institutions of higher learning across Indonesia. U.S. officials worked closely with the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The United States also funded The Asia Foundation to establish an international center to promote regional and international linkages among progressive Muslim intellectuals and activists and an international level of discourse on progressive interpretations of Islam. The United States provided funding to various Muslim organizations and pesantren to promote gender equality and women's rights by strengthening the understanding of these values among female community leaders and supporting democratization and gender awareness.

The United States worked with international NGOs, such as Save the Children, the American Center for International Labor Solidarity, and the ICMC, along with the ILO and IOM, to raise awareness of and combat the problems of child labor and TIP. The United States devoted significant funding to protect children from sexual exploitation, TIP, and employment in exploitative and dangerous jobs.

Sub-grants to 48 NGOs and community groups resulted in local anti-trafficking actions focused on

prevention, rehabilitation, and advocacy. U.S. funding supported the creation of new shelters for victims and two new hospital treatment centers and funded the safe return and reintegration of victims. The United States continued training of police officers and prosecutors, resulting in more arrests and prosecutions and longer jail sentences for traffickers. U.S. grantees continued technical assistance for the drafting of stronger and more comprehensive anti-trafficking legislation at the national and local levels. U.S.-funded NGOs quickly investigated rumors of trafficking of victims from Aceh after the December 2004 tsunami and, with supplemental U.S. funding, worked with Indonesian authorities and community groups, including Muslim communities, to respond to the increased risk of trafficking from Aceh.

Democratic People's Republic of Korea

As President Bush noted when he signed the 2004 North Korean Human Rights Act (NKHRA), the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK or North Korea) remains one of the most repressive countries in the world and stands in stark contrast to democratic governments elsewhere in Asia. The country, one of the world's most closed and militarized societies, is a dictatorship under the absolute rule of Kim Jong Il, General Secretary of the Korean Workers' Party. An estimated 150,000 to 200,000 persons are believed to be held in detention camps in remote areas, many for political reasons. Defectors report that many prisoners have died from torture, starvation, disease, exposure, or a combination of these causes. North Korean officials reportedly prohibited live births in prison, and forced abortions were performed, particularly in detention centers holding women repatriated from China. Over the years, there have been unconfirmed reports from a few defectors alleging the testing on human subjects of a variety of chemical and biological agents up through the early 1990s. The regime controlled many aspects of citizens' lives, denying freedom of speech, religion, the press, assembly, and association. The deportation of North Koreans from China to the DPRK was a matter of particular concern to the United States. A



A North Korean woman hugs her sick child at a hospital in Yomju county, North Pyongau province, North Korea. (AP Photo)

number of repatriated North Koreans faced severe punishment upon their return, including execution in some cases. On multiple occasions, U.S. officials expressed objections to any such actions to the Chinese government. The North Korean regime also severely restricted freedom of movement and worker rights. There were widespread reports of North Korean women and girls being trafficked in China. In December, the Government terminated international humanitarian assistance, including the UN World Food Program.

The 2004 NKHRA was enacted to raise awareness of the serious human rights situation in the country, and to find durable solutions for North Korean refugees. Since enactment of the law, the United States has heightened its engagement on the North Korean human rights issue. In August 2005, the President appointed a Special Envoy for Human Rights in North Korea under the NKHRA. Since his appointment, the Special Envoy has urged other countries, including the Republic of Korea (ROK) and Japan, to join the growing international campaign urging the DPRK

to address and improve its human rights conditions.

In 2005, the U.S. Government funded a series of three conferences and related programs on North Korean human rights; the NGO Freedom House held its first conference on the issue in Washington in July. The Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs and several Members of Congress addressed the conference. At the second conference in this series, held in Seoul in December, the Special Envoy for Human Rights in North Korea and the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Korea expressed concern about the human rights situation in the country, and urged the North Korean Government to respond to growing international concern about its human rights conditions. The third Freedom House conference is scheduled to take place in Europe this spring. In addition, the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor continued to support the National Endowment for Democracy to support ROK-based NGOs in their efforts to improve and expand monitoring of and reporting on the human rights situation in the country.



Numerous U.S. officials worked to raise awareness of the country's human rights abuses and humanitarian issues with the international community and before U.S. audiences. The United States regularly raised concerns about the country with other governments in both multilateral and bilateral forums. U.S. officials urged other countries to call for concrete, verifiable, and sustained improvements in North Korean human rights as an important component of their bilateral relations with the country. In April 2005, several State Department officials testified before the House International Relations Committee on North Korea's human rights record and U.S. Government efforts to implement the NKHRA. The Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs has publicly stated that dialogue on the country's human rights record and establishment of benchmarks for improvement would be necessary for the country to join the international community and normalize relations with the United States.

For the third consecutive year, the U.S. also worked with other concerned governments to win passage of a resolution condemning North Korea's human rights record at the UN Commission on Human Rights. The resolution called on the country to fulfill its obligations under human rights instruments to which it is a party. The resolution further urged the North Korean Government to invite UN special representatives to visit the DPRK, and to ensure that humanitarian organizations have free access to the country. In November 2005, the United States co-sponsored a similar resolution before the UN General Assembly that condemned the country's poor human rights record, marking the first time the General Assembly passed such a resolution on North Korea.

The United States remained deeply concerned about the plight of North Korean refugees, and continued to work to find durable solutions for this vulnerable population as outlined in the NKHRA. The United States worked with governments in the region to urge protection of, and assistance to, North Korean refugees, and to facilitate their permanent resettlement. The United States consistently urged China to fulfill its international obligations under the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, and

as a signatory to its 1967 Protocol. The United States continued to call upon China to allow the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) access to this vulnerable population to assess their needs and determine their status. The United States has addressed the issue of North Korean refugees in China with the UNHCR, and sought to coordinate our approach with allies who share our concerns.

In 2005, the Secretary of State again designated the DPRK a "Country of Particular Concern" under the International Religious Freedom Act for severe violations of religious freedom. The DPRK was designated as is a Tier 3 country in the U.S. Trafficking in Persons report and is subject to U.S. sanctions for its failure to address trafficking in women and girls.

Laos

By almost any objective measure, Laos remained one of the most repressive countries in the region and in the world. Laos is a one-party, authoritarian state and has achieved little progress in the area of democracy and human rights. The Communist Party, known as the Lao People's Revolutionary Party (LPRP), tightly controlled the population to ensure there was no domestic opposition. The Lao people had no outlets for their democratic aspirations, and the party-controlled Government denied citizens the most basic human rights, such as freedom of speech, religion, assembly, and expression. The country's media remained rigidly controlled by, and was effectively used as a propaganda arm of, the party. In 2005, the LPRP also used its authority to curtail efforts by the international community to learn more about Laos' human rights situation. Persecution and harassment of religious minorities, especially Christians and Baha'is, persisted and even worsened in some areas. Through its system of mass front organizations like the Women's Union, Youth Union, and Lao Front for National Construction, the Party retained near-complete control over its citizens at every level of society.

The LPRP repeatedly demonstrated ruthlessness in its willingness to silence or eliminate its critics, and few citizens risked publicly questioning the Party's



decisions. The Government denied the existence of a domestic insurgency, comprised largely of ethnic Hmong living in very remote areas in the north. The Government refused to engage in a dialogue with the international community on its attempts to negotiate an end to the insurgency. The Government rejected these offers of assistance, and forfeited a chance to end the long-running conflict by peaceful means. Almost without exception, senior members of the central Government, provincial administrations, and National Assembly were party members.

Improving the execrable human rights picture has been a cornerstone of U.S. policy toward this country for nearly a decade. The Government regarded any outside interest in its human rights situation as “interference,” and was openly critical of the United States in promoting human rights in Laos. In this restrictive environment, the United States had only very limited access to or dialogue with the Government on human rights. Human rights featured prominently in U.S. Government meetings with senior members of the Lao Government. The Ambassador routinely raised human rights concerns in both official and informal venues with Lao officials, and called on the leadership to do more to improve the country’s poor human rights record. The United States also used the occasion of visits from senior U.S. officials to raise human rights concerns. For example, the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs raised religious freedom and ethnic minority rights concerns with the Lao Foreign Minister during his 2005 visit to Laos to attend the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting. In 2005, U.S. diplomats traveled widely to remote parts of the country to gather first-hand information about the human rights situation, particularly pertaining to the treatment of the country’s ethnic minorities. The Ambassador visited the remote Saisomboun Special Zone, speaking with officials there about the ongoing insurgency and traveled to parts of the Zone not visited by foreign officials since 1975. Visits such as these gave the United States the information needed to draw a more complete picture of the insurgency and of Lao Government efforts to resettle former insurgents who had surrendered. U.S. diplomats also met with many senior Lao Government officials, including members of the Politburo and provincial

governors, to urge the Lao Government to develop a peaceful resolution to the insurgency. As a result of these efforts, the Lao Government permitted some international assistance to quietly reach groups of former insurgents recently resettled. In addition, the Ambassador and other diplomats met frequently with a broad range of contacts, including counterparts in the diplomatic community, on the insurgency to discuss ways of resolving the conflict.

Promoting good governance was an important element of the U.S. Government’s human rights strategy. The American Bar Association, with U.S. government funding, provided training for Lao government officials on corruption and ethics and vetted the government’s draft law on corruption. Another U.S. government-funded NGO, The Asia Foundation, assisted in the drafting of implementing regulations for the Law on Women, passed by the National Assembly in late 2004.

The United States awarded small democracy grants to Lao-based organizations to conduct workshops on independent thinking and objective journalism, and on capacity building for women. U.S. diplomats organized a seminar for law school students on regional security that emphasized the importance of the rule of law in international relations. A separate month-long seminar on international treaties and covenants focused on Laos’ responsibility to adopt and enforce domestic legislation to bring the country in line with international agreements it signed. The United States organized a training program to assist the National University of Laos to establish a broadcast department, based on an international curriculum. U.S. diplomats also used the International Visitors Leadership Program to promote human rights, sponsoring Lao Government officials’ visits to the United States to study aspects of the U.S. judicial system, grass roots democracy, and anti-trafficking programs. The Embassy’s American Center also provided information on U.S. and international practices and norms in the areas of human rights and democracy to university students and the general public.

The United States raised the need for the Government to allow international monitoring of Laos’



prison system. U.S. diplomats met frequently with members of international organizations and with other concerned embassies to discuss strategies for convincing the Lao Government to open its prison system to outside scrutiny. The United States also closely followed the cases of known political prisoners, using official meetings to raise their concerns with the Lao Government.

The United States endeavored to promote religious tolerance in Laos. The U.S. Ambassador continually raised the issue of religious freedom with top government officials, including provincial governors. In some cases, the Ambassador wrote directly to central government and provincial officials on religious freedom cases. The Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs and other senior officials also raised the issue of religious freedom in meetings with senior Lao officials. The Institute for Global Engagement (IGE) visited Laos in February 2005, and conducted a U.S. Government-funded seminar on religious freedom for local officials. This was the second seminar conducted by Mr. Robert Seiple, Chairman of the IGE Board and former Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom, and was attended by more than 50 central Government and provincial level officials charged with implementing Lao Government policy on religious practice. In addition, representatives of all the country's recognized religions attended. Mr. Seiple also visited Christian churches in Xieng Khouang province, an area that has witnessed numerous instances of religious persecution in recent years. Mr. Seiple met with senior provincial officials in Xieng Khouang and Vientiane provinces to urge greater leniency toward religious practice.

The United States pressed the Lao Front for National Construction, the Government body overseeing religious issues, to resolve cases of religious intolerance by local officials. When U.S. diplomats became aware of cases of religious persecution, they used their working relations with provincial and central government officials to bring these cases to the attention of authorities, often resulting in a quick resolution of problems. U.S. intervention led to the release of persons detained for their religious belief on several occasions.

The United States provided assistance to Laos in its effort to combat human trafficking, a serious human rights concern. The U.S. Government provided more than \$1.2 million for anti-trafficking projects carried out by locally based NGOs. These projects focused on strengthening the rule of law, public education, and alternative vocational education for those most vulnerable to trafficking.

Malaysia

Malaysia has a parliamentary system of Government based on periodic multiparty elections. Opposition parties actively contested elections but faced significant obstacles in competing with the ruling National Front Coalition, which has held power for more than 45 years. The Government's human rights performance improved during the year, though some problems remained. The Government acknowledged that it restricted certain political and civil rights to maintain social harmony and political stability. This policy resulted in some human rights abuses, including detention of persons without trial, limits on judicial impartiality and independence, and restrictions on freedom of the press, association, assembly, and religion. The Constitution provides for an independent judiciary; however, governmental action, constitutional amendments, legislation, and other factors have undermined judicial independence and strengthened executive influence over the judiciary.

While Malaysia did not receive direct bilateral economic and developmental assistance, the United States conducted a range of programs and activities to strengthen the development of civil society institutions. Areas where the United States pressed for reform included relaxing government control over the press, improving police accountability, encouraging greater independence of the judiciary, and heightening government sensitivity to human rights and trafficking in persons. U.S. Government officials regularly engaged in discussions with the Government regarding human rights concerns documented in the U.S. Government's annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices.



The United States maintained active communications with the Government, political parties, human rights NGOs, and civil society representatives. In 2005, the United States sponsored seminars and workshops to promote greater awareness of human rights issues among both governing coalition and opposition political parties. The United States also provided a grant to an NGO to conduct a preliminary assessment of election fairness conditions in the state of Sarawak, monitor an important by-election, and provide training for election monitors.

The United States facilitated civic education for Malaysian youth by providing an NGO grant to train teachers in a middle school curriculum focusing on democratic values and processes. Through the program, students learned to identify and resolve public policy issues together as young members of Malaysian civil society. The Embassy sent several key journalists to the United States under the International Visitors Leadership Program to gain an increased awareness of the challenges and benefits of a free media. The Embassy also sponsored a media training program for over 60 Malaysian journalists focusing on professional reporting techniques and investigative journalism. The Embassy also helped manage a significant U.S. Government grant to an Internet-based media development center in Kuala Lumpur. The center used the grant to enhance the capacity of independent Internet news providers in the region as they expand their content and improve the quality of regional Internet news. The center also assisted NGOs by providing e-media training, website content advice, and other consultation services.

To underscore U.S. concern about the treatment of illegal migrants and asylum seekers, U.S. officials regularly met with Government officials, NGOs, and international organizations such as the UN Human Rights Commission, the International Labor Organization, the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), and the International Organization for Migration. In response to concern from the United States and the international community, the Government delayed deportation of many asylum seekers to facilitate UNHCR review of their applications. In March, the Government agreed to provide the UNHCR with

“blanket access” to immigration detention centers, and the UNHCR subsequently conducted hundreds of visits to those facilities and met with thousands of persons of concern.

Malaysia has no independent body tasked with investigating charges of police mistreatment of detainees, fatal shootings during suspect apprehensions, or deaths while in police custody. In their meetings with senior police and Government officials, U.S. officials supported timely implementation of recommendations contained in the April 2005 report of the royal commission on police reform. To help reduce Malaysia’s lengthy civil court case backlog, the Embassy sponsored the visit of a U.S. federal judge with expertise in alternative dispute resolution mechanisms. To improve the investigative and prosecutorial techniques of key criminal justice officials, the U.S. Department of Justice sponsored three senior Malaysian police and judiciary officials to attend a regional criminal justice training conference.

Malaysian law and Government policy provide material preferences to ethnic Malays, who comprise the majority of Malaysia’s population. The United States funded the travel of two senior jurists and two local NGO officials to the United States on a program focused on minority rights, civil rights, and crime and violence issues facing the urban poor. In addition, the Embassy sponsored visits by two U.S. speakers who focused on race relations and the importance of protecting minority rights.

Focusing on the role of religion and the challenges faced in pluralistic societies, the Embassy engaged influential intellectuals, NGO leaders, and government officials to encourage interfaith dialogue and cooperation. The Embassy maintained strong relations with representatives of Malaysia’s various religious communities and met regularly with representatives of faiths and religious practices not officially recognized by the Government. The United States funded a Fulbright Scholar who lectured on interfaith issues while in residence at a public university.

The United States continued to engage the Government, political parties, and NGOs to raise awareness



and press for concrete steps to combat trafficking in persons (TIP). U.S. efforts focused on passage of specific anti-TIP legislation, improving the enforcement of existing legislation, opening victim shelters, and implementing procedures to protect and treat victims as trafficked persons rather than as illegal migrants. During the year, senior U.S. government officials urged the Government to pass comprehensive anti-TIP legislation and to provide dedicated shelter facilities for TIP victims. The United States funded a local NGO to establish a TIP victims' shelter and facilitate the timely repatriation of victims to their respective home countries. In November, the U.S. Attorney General urged his Malaysian counterpart to support anti-TIP legislation, and offered technical assistance from the Department of Justice to draft an anti-TIP statute.

Papua New Guinea

The most recent general elections in Papua New Guinea were held in June 2002. At year's end, it appeared that the coalition put together by Prime Minister Somare would remain in office for the full five-year session, the first Government to complete its term in decades. A national police force, the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary was under overall civilian authority, but it was severely lacking in resources, training, and leadership. Moreover, there were instances in which elements acted independently of government authority, and there were numerous instances of localized abuse of human rights. Officers were charged and convicted for some of these abuses, but the justice system often was inadequate to the task. A pervasive lack of law and order, continuing poor economic growth causing low national income and living standards, severely deteriorated infrastructure, and the lack of effective Government service delivery in much of the country were all barriers to progress.

In the 1990s, the United States ended most of its programs in Papua New Guinea. However, the United States remained a respected voice in the country. In frequent contacts with senior Government officials, U.S. officials advocated high standards for democratic processes and consistent respect for human

rights. Multi-regional International Visitors Leadership Programs also provided exposure to democratic systems and values to future leaders. The Embassy also sought to engage closely the fledgling local media community.

In 2005, the United States provided training emphasizing respect for human rights to defense and other police personnel through the International Military Education and Training program, Title X military conferences, and regular small-scale exercises.

U.S. counterterrorism efforts in Papua New Guinea and the region also emphasized human rights protection. In addition, the United States strongly supported the implementation of an expanded police assistance effort in Papua New Guinea by the Government of Australia, which focused on better law enforcement, strengthened court and trial operations, and improved practices in the Finance, Internal Revenue, and Justice Ministries.

Philippines

The Republic of the Philippines is a vibrant democracy with an elected president, an elected bicameral legislature, and a functioning but fractious multiparty system. The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, there were serious problems in some areas. Some elements of the security forces were allegedly responsible for extrajudicial killings, disappearances, torture, and arbitrary arrest and detention. The physical abuse of suspects and detainees remained a problem, as did police, prosecutorial, and judicial corruption.

U.S. Government efforts to promote human rights and democracy in the Philippines were numerous and broad-based. The United States focused on building respect for human rights in the security forces, promoting rule of law and transparency in government and the judiciary, and strengthening civil society.

Strengthening democracy was an essential U.S. goal. Numerous programs at both the local and national level promoted equity, transparency, and popular par-



Journalists display placards during celebration of World Press Freedom Day in Quezon City, The Philippines. (AP Photo)

ticipation – all key factors for the healthy functioning of a democracy. In 2005, U.S. Government grants assisted Philippine NGOs in conducting voter education and monitoring of the August 8 elections in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). A follow-on grant continued to help boost the capacity of ARMM NGOs to conduct voter education. The grant also supported the electoral modernization programs of the Philippine Commission on Elections.

Increasing the quality of media reporting was also a U.S. priority. The media was generally free and electronic and print media were numerous. However, reporting often lacked the journalistic standards to which the U.S. media adheres. In 2005, the U.S. Government sent two Philippine journalists on a three-week reporting trip to the United States on the subject of religious freedom in a democracy. In addition, three journalists from national newspapers were sent to Afghanistan and Pakistan to report on U.S. reconstruction and relief efforts, which resulted in several

articles on U.S. support for democracy and reconstruction in those countries. The U.S. Government also arranged training sessions for Filipino journalists on accessing government information on the Internet, an activity especially praised by reporters who cover the Department of Foreign Affairs.

Support for NGOs and civil participation in the processes of government were the foci of the U.S.-funded Transparent and Accountable Governance (TAG) program. TAG worked at the local and national levels to promote better governance, increase public participation through conferences and other public forums, and reduce opportunities for corruption. Among other activities at the national level, TAG supported implementation of the new procurement law by training NGO volunteers to observe procurements carried out by bids and awards committees. At the local level in Mindanao, TAG assisted 16 city governments to implement a range of anti-corruption and good governance reform. Between 2002 and the end of 2005, the TAG program assisted 87 municipalities



in the ARMM to reform and increase citizen participation in their budgeting and planning processes.

The U.S.-funded Rule of Law Effectiveness Program supports the Philippine Government's effort to make corruption a high risk, low reward activity. Assistance to the Office of the Ombudsman, which has responsibility for prosecuting graft and corruption by high-level government officials, included training in trial advocacy and investigation for the office's prosecutors and field investigators, and support for assessing selected government agencies for their vulnerability to corruption.

To encourage respect for due process and anti-corruption among members of the Philippine National Police (PNP) and other law enforcement agencies, the United States sent approximately 150 law enforcement officials to the International Law Enforcement Academy in Bangkok for courses with human rights, ethics, rule of law, and anti-corruption components. In addition, the United States assisted in the training of senior executives from Philippine law enforcement agencies on ethics, human rights, jail management, and U.S. law enforcement standards. The training included a visit to the FBI's National Academy in Virginia.

U.S. assistance helped institutionalize Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) systems at various levels, and improved judicial transparency and case management in the courts. At the community level, the Barangay Justice program worked in some 700 barangays (precincts) in the ARMM, and enabled marginalized groups to gain access to the judicial system. As a result, community disputes were resolved more rapidly, and caseloads were greatly reduced in municipal courts. Support for ADR in the formal courts also led to the referral of 24,000 court cases to mediation during 2005, which was instrumental in preventing the country's court backlog from worsening.

The United States worked to strengthen the Philippine Commission on Human Rights (PCHR), an independent government agency tasked to monitor and investigate alleged human rights abuses. A U.S. program provided PCHR regional offices with computer

software and other equipment in order to track cases and relay information to Manila more efficiently. The same software was available free of charge to Philippine NGOs that separately tracked human rights abuses such as disappearances and torture. U.S. officials continued to coordinate closely with the PCHR, which vetted officers for promotion and provides human rights training for members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the PNP.

The International Military Education and Training (IMET) program was an important component of United States efforts to professionalize the AFP. The IMET program strives to strengthen the AFP's professionalism, commitment to human rights, discipline, and technical expertise. IMET graduates populated top AFP ranks and actively promoted close and professional U.S. and Philippine military-to-military relationships. During political turbulence in 2005, these senior leaders remained neutral and staunchly supported constitutional processes and civilian control over the military. The AFP participates in the U.S. Defense Institute of International Legal Studies program at all officer levels in order to inculcate adherence to the rule of law. The Philippine Defense Reform (PDR), with funding from the United States, continued to work to make the AFP a more transparent, professional, and well-run institution. A major strategic benefit of the PDR was the reinforcement of civilian authority over the military, thereby strengthening the overall stability of the Government of the Philippines.

The United States also worked to assist women and the disabled. One program for women provided education and skill-building activities for survivors of prostitution. Another project addressed the needs and concerns of female migrant workers, especially those who were victims of trafficking or exploitation in Japan, and their Japanese-Filipino children.

The Philippine Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respected this right in practice. Muslims comprise a significant religious minority in the Philippines and historically have been victims of societal prejudice by the Christian majority. Making use of programming tools such as the U.S. Speaker Program, the United States or-



ganized numerous public conferences and gatherings throughout the year to promote interfaith dialogue among Filipinos. Programs to foster interfaith dialogue included a second citizen exchange program for Christian and Muslim students in Mindanao which allowed 30 high school students and teachers to travel to the Chicago area for training on dispute resolution and interethnic cooperation. Also, the Partnerships for Learning Youth Exchange and Study Program brought 40 Muslim students to the United States for a full year of academic study in 2004 through 2005. These students learned about U.S. society, developed leadership skills, educated Americans on Philippine culture, and helped to establish a common bond between Muslim communities. In addition, an NGO received a U.S. Government grant to conduct workshops highlighting democracy's full compatibility with Islam. In 2005, the Embassy brought a U.S. imam to the Philippines to discuss religious tolerance and diversity issues with large audiences of Muslims -- as well as Christians -- in Mindanao and elsewhere in the country. A separate U.S. project sent 25 young Muslims and Christians from Mindanao to the United States for a one-month program focused on conflict resolution and interfaith dialogue. Another program sent Muslim college students and young professionals to work as interns in the Philippine Congress.

In 2005, the United States sent both Muslim and Christian leaders on International Visitors Leadership Programs to the United States that covered a wide range of topics to promote human rights and democracy, including grassroots activism, religion and the community, the role and responsibility of a free press, leadership development for Muslim women, accountability in government and business, community service and NGOs, and trafficking of women and children. The Philippine International Visitors Leadership Program Alumni Association—the largest and most active organization of this type in the world, with approximately 500 members—had its own working group focusing on peace and Muslim-Christian relations.

Trafficking in persons is a serious problem in the Philippines, which was a Tier 2 Watch List country in 2005. The United States undertook efforts to assist

the Philippine Government and NGOs in the areas of prevention, protection, and enforcement. A U.S. grant strengthened efforts to provide assistance with TIP-related prosecutions to the Philippine Department of Justice. In 2005, the Philippines saw the first convictions of traffickers under a 2003 anti-trafficking law in a case conducted by prosecutors who had been trained by U.S.-funded programs. Other U.S. grants helped provide preventive anti-TIP education and assisted in the preparation of anti-TIP public information. On strengthening worker rights, the United States continued a project to develop an early warning system to prevent possible deterioration of labor standards compliance, and several other projects focused on combating the worst forms of child labor.

Solomon Islands

The Solomon Islands is a multiparty parliamentary democracy with a population of approximately 480,000. Citizens elect a single-chamber parliament of 50 members. A new parliament was elected in 2001 with Sir Allan Kemakeza of the People's Alliance party as Prime Minister, and the elections were considered generally free and fair. In 2005, the Regional Assistance Mission for Solomon Islands (RAMSI), a multinational police-centered force organized by Australia, continued arresting and prosecuting offenders from the 1998-2003 Malaitans and Guadalcanalese conflict and began the difficult task of rebuilding government institutions. With the assistance of RAMSI, the civilian authorities generally maintained effective control over the security forces.

While there is no U.S. Embassy present, U.S. government officials visited the Solomon Islands regularly. The United States voiced full support for the RAMSI assistance mission and to the Solomon Islands Government. In 2005, the United States provided training emphasizing respect for human rights to members of the police force through the International Military Education and Training program. The United States funded a program that complements RAMSI by promoting conflict resolution among communities in order to bolster national unity.



Thailand

Thailand is a democratically governed constitutional monarchy. In February 2005, Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra's Thai Rak Thai party won an overwhelming victory in national parliamentary elections. The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, there were problems in some areas. There were concerns about disappearances of ethnic Malay Muslims suspected of supporting the insurgency, as well as with some provisions of the July 2005 Emergency Decree. The Emergency Decree, which applies to the far southern provinces of Narathiwat, Pattani, and Yala, contains provisions that allow security forces to detain suspects for long periods without charge and provides immunity from prosecution for security forces. Over 1,000 people are estimated to have died in the violence in the far south since 2004, from both insurgent attacks and actions of state security forces.

In its efforts to promote and improve human rights, the United States focused its efforts on the threats against Thailand's longstanding freedom of the press, extrajudicial killings, trafficking in persons (TIP), the condition of refugees and the rights of other ethnic minority groups residing within its borders, and the increased violence in three Muslim-majority provinces in southern Thailand. The U.S. Embassy also maintained close contact with the many domestic and international NGOs in the country that seek to protect and defend human rights.

No progress was reported in prosecuting those responsible for human rights abuses occurring during the Tak Bai incident of October 2004 or the Krue Se Mosque Incident of April 2004. The National Human Rights Commission recommended that the Government prosecute those responsible for human rights violations during these incidents. Those responsible for the possible extrajudicial killings of 1,300 suspected drug traffickers during the 2003 "war on drugs" campaign have not yet been prosecuted. The United States continued to raise concerns over these and other key human rights issues with Thai officials at the highest levels and urged the Government to take appropriate legal action to punish responsible officials.

The United States supported the creation of a National Reconciliation Commission (NRC), headed by former Prime Minister Anand Panyarachun, which seeks to address underlying causes of the violence in southern Thailand. To reach out to the Muslim community in the far south, the Embassy sent 28 Thais, including five Muslims and 12 women, to the United States through the International Visitors Program to learn about issues including labor rights, TIP, building grass-roots democratic institutions, and women's empowerment. On February 11, the United States opened up its fifth American Corner in Thailand, at Nakhon Si Thammarat Rajabhat University, where Thais living outside of the capital could learn more about American society and culture. U.S. officials gave speeches on subjects such as U.S. human rights policy, American democracy, and religious tolerance during visits to Thai universities and in digital videoconferences with the American Corners. The Embassy Speakers Program also brought in speakers to address issues such as TIP and good governance. In an effort to increase outreach to the non-Thai speaking community in southern Thailand, the U.S. Embassy translated reference materials, including the Thai Bill of Rights and the booklet "Muslim Life in America," into the local Malayu dialect spoken in southern Thailand. These materials were distributed in the southern provinces, alongside English- and Thai-language versions.

Two U.S.-supported projects focused on the overall development of democratic institutions and the rule of law in Thailand. The "Colloquia for Personnel in the Judicial Process" addressed the problem of gender bias in the Thai legal system and increased the sensitivity of judges on cases involving issues important to the human rights of women. The "Human Rights Media Outreach Program" helped raise public awareness of human rights, especially among youth, and sought to empower civil society and local government to become effective advocates for human rights in their communities.

The United States helped to enhance the legal, professional, and technical capabilities of government institutions. In a unique example of bilateral partnership, the United States and Thailand co-managed



the Bangkok-based International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA), a U.S.-funded regional training center for police, immigration, customs, and other law enforcement officials. Since its inception in 1999, ILEA became an important institution for promoting democracy and good governance in the region. In fiscal year 2005, ILEA hosted 18 courses, addressing important regional issues such as TIP, combating terrorism, leadership development, police accountability, and forensic investigation, which participants from Thailand and 11 other Asian countries attended. All ILEA curricula address support for democratic institutions, the importance of impartiality and integrity in criminal law enforcement, and the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. In addition to in-country training, the United States continued to send Thai law enforcement officials for advanced training in United States, many of which included sessions about U.S. and international standards for human rights as related to law enforcement. In September, the United States signed a Letter of Agreement with Thailand, funding cooperative assistance programs for anti-narcotics and law-enforcement programs, including anti-corruption, narcotics demand reduction, and those at the ILEA.

For the 24th year, the United States and Thailand conducted their Cobra Gold joint military exercise. As in previous years, Cobra Gold offered human rights courses for Thai military personnel in conjunction with the exercises. In 2005, as part of its extensive bilateral military cooperation with Thailand, the United States augmented its human rights training efforts for all levels of the Royal Thai Army.

The United States continued to press the Government at the very highest levels to use their influence with the junta in Burma to push for positive democratic change and the release of Aung San Suu Kyi from house arrest. In September 2005, President Bush and Prime Minister Thaksin released a joint statement affirming their shared objectives of promoting democracy in Burma and agreed to have closer consultations on the matter.

The United States supported a local NGO that educated hill tribe villagers about their legal rights and

helped those persons entitled to apply for full Thai citizenship. The NGO created a comprehensive database of villagers and their biographic information in order to help track pending cases and also began to print and distribute Thai-language pamphlets to help inform local people of their rights. The education campaign has resulted in a decrease in corruption at the local level. Under current law, more than 60,000 hill tribe individuals are estimated to be eligible for, but do not have, citizenship. These individuals have limited access to primary and secondary education, and are not legally entitled to higher education, health care, work permits, or freedom of travel. As a result, these individuals are particularly vulnerable to exploitation, such as government corruption and TIP.

The United States supported an ambitious five-year program aimed at improving education and health services and generally attending to the humanitarian needs for Burmese refugees and migrants in Thailand. U.S. aid also provided food, health care, water and sanitation, and other support to refugees in camps along the Thai border.

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

The United States also provided funding for UNHCR operations in East Asia that included protection of Burmese individuals in Thailand recognized as refugees. The United States also advocated for the humanitarian treatment of ethnic Hmong from Laos living in Northern Thailand. U.S. officials urged Thailand to allow UNHCR access to the Hmong



to determine whether any have valid refugee claims. The United States also continued its program to resettle Burmese refugees living in Thailand and ethnic Hmong, who had been living with unofficial status in Thailand for several decades, in United States.

On numerous occasions, U.S. officials urged Thai Government officials to support Burmese migrant workers' rights. In January 2006, the Ambassador and the U.S. Assistant Trade Representative met with the Minister of Labor and urged the Government to uphold international labor standards for Burmese migrant workers and to extend existing Thai legal protections to those workers.

The United States funds an NGO program to train women in the poorer Northeast region on women's legal rights when pursuing work or marriage opportunities abroad and legal resources to exploited women migrant workers. Trafficking in women and children and coerced prostitution and labor remained serious problems, although the Government's track record improved in the past year. In coordination with an NGO, the United States helped to support more than a dozen government agencies and NGOs, involved in combating and helping TIP victims. Programs included assistance for the improvement of law enforcement and prosecution, legal assistance centers for victims, prevention initiatives, protection for victims and reintegration assistance for TIP victims willing to return to their country of origin. The United States also provided funding to the International Organization for Migration for return and reintegration assistance for victims trafficked between countries of the Mekong region.

Vietnam

Vietnam is an authoritarian state, ruled by the Communist Party. The Government's human rights record remained unsatisfactory and it continued to commit abuses; however, during the year it released many political and religious prisoners of concern and continued to promote economic and other reforms. The Government significantly restricted freedom of religion, speech, the press, assembly, and associa-

tion during 2005. Vietnam censored domestic media sources, blocked foreign radio stations and websites, and denied citizens the right to form independent organizations. The Government also subjected religious communities to strict registration requirements and obstructed the activities of some "unauthorized" religious groups.

The United States promoted the development of human rights and democracy in Vietnam by encouraging the Government to expand economic and political ties to the international community and to undertake the concurrent economic and political reforms necessary to make this possible. U.S. officials maintained close contact with Vietnamese political activists and religious groups in order to identify and investigate abuses throughout the country, and advocated on behalf of human rights and political and legal reform during bilateral meetings at all levels. The United States agreed to restart its bilateral human rights dialogue with Vietnam in early 2006.

The United States encouraged awareness of democratic principles at the grassroots level in Vietnam by advocating for the right of citizens to peacefully express their views. The Government granted three amnesties over the course of the year, and a number of prisoners of concern were released, including Dr. Nguyen Dan Que and Father Nguyen Van Ly. They and others who were released had been the subject of long-term, high-level U.S. Government advocacy efforts. Furthermore, Embassy officials facilitated the travel of an ailing Vietnamese activist to the United States for medical treatment and successfully convinced the Government to allow his return to the country despite his public endorsement of democratic change in Vietnam while abroad. The United States also encouraged the Government to grant greater freedom of movement and activity to recently released advocates of democracy and to protect these individuals from violence and discrimination.

The United States supported media freedom and freedom of speech through outreach to Vietnamese journalists. Ten Vietnamese journalists participated in the International Visitors Leadership Program (IVLP) sponsored by the United States entitled "The



Media in the United States.” In addition, the Ambassador and other U.S. officials participated in widely viewed live web chats, in which they addressed issues related to human rights and religious freedom. Furthermore, U.S. officials maintained close contact with government and party officials during sessions of the National Assembly to encourage greater emphasis on freedom of expression in Vietnamese legislation and the operation of the Assembly.

The United States indirectly supported the development of freedom of assembly and association in Vietnam through programs aimed at building the capacity of institutions of a civil society, including NGOs working in a number of development areas. In 2005, this included funding to combat trafficking in persons (TIP) and funding to promote education, including a grant to the Thanh Hoa Province Women’s Union to implement a project aimed at preventing trafficking in women and children in the central Vietnam province.

The United States promoted development of a transparent and responsive legal system in Vietnam through rule of law programs related to economic development and to reform of the judicial system. The United States continued to fund a four-year program to help the Government develop and codify a stronger and more transparent legal and regulatory framework as part of the implementation of the U.S.-Vietnam Bilateral Trade Agreement. Among the activities of this program were 50 training and policy workshops, with 5,000 participants and seven study tours for 48 senior legislative and judicial officials, as well as significant participation in the development of key pieces of legislation to move Vietnam closer to a private sector, market economy. An IVLP study tour for nine senior Vietnamese National Assembly officials to study the lawmaking process in the United States offered a unique opportunity to meet with government and non-governmental organizations and learn the complexities of the local, state, and federal lawmaking process. The United States also invited a human rights scholar on an IVLP entitled “U.S. Foreign Policy and Human Rights Issues” and hosted four U.S. speakers on judicial and legal reform issues. These guest speakers addressed Vietnamese

lawyers, judges, and law students at various venues to promote and expand the understanding of the U.S. legal system.

The United States helped combat violations of the rights of women, minorities, and persons with disabilities primarily through advocating consistent application of the Government’s existing laws that protect individual rights. U.S. officials and most of the senior U.S. visitors to Vietnam raised the Government’s poor record of enforcing national laws and policy at the local level in their bilateral meetings with local, provincial, and national officials.

The United States promoted religious freedom in Vietnam by maintaining close contact with local religious groups in order to identify and highlight abuses and to encourage reform efforts. In a May 2005 exchange of letters with the United States, Vietnam committed to address a number of important religious freedom concerns. The Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom and the Embassy conducted discussions with the Government to urge improvements in religious freedom. In November, the Secretary of State re-designated Vietnam a “Country of Particular Concern” for continued violations of religious freedom but noted significant progress in this area.

The United States continued its efforts to document violations of religious freedom in Vietnam and to raise concerns at all levels in interactions with the Government. Restrictions on religious worship were particularly acute for ethnic minority Protestant groups in the Central and Northwest Highlands; however, U.S. diplomatic efforts encouraged the Government of Vietnam to permit opening of new churches in the Central Highlands and to allow greater tolerance for the operation of unauthorized “house churches” in several areas. The number of officially recognized Protestant churches in the Central Highlands continued to increase during the year, although overall numbers remained disappointingly low.

The United States, through continued advocacy of international labor standards and through target programs aimed at helping victims of trafficking and discrimination helped to combat TIP, supported efforts



against child labor, promoted employment access for the disabled, and improved worker/management relations.

The United States encouraged the Government to ratify additional International Labor Organization conventions addressing worker rights and recognizing international core worker rights. The United States also continued to stress the need to discuss issues surrounding freedom of association and collective bargaining. The United States funded several programs that addressed the protection of worker rights. The United States implemented, in cooperation with Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs, a number of multi-year programs to advance labor rights. These included a project to build the capacity of the Government to combat child labor and a program on dispute prevention and resolution in 70 enterprises located in seven provinces. Another U.S.-funded program worked with the Government to draft a new law on social insurance, which the Government anticipates will be approved by the National Assembly in 2006. Finally, the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief provided additional funding to an existing project addressing HIV/AIDS in the workplace, which works at the national and enterprise levels to establish policies to protect the rights of workers who have or are affected by HIV/AIDS.

To combat TIP, the United States sponsored international NGOs that operated two shelters for trafficking victims repatriated from Cambodia and China, as well as vulnerable populations at risk of trafficking. Other programs as-

sisted returned victims of trafficking and protected women and children in high-risk areas by providing awareness raising, vocational training, and economic opportunity through micro-credit programs. U.S. officials at all levels continued to raise TIP issues with their Vietnamese counterparts, and U.S. officials played an important role in coordinating and focusing the international community's response to the trafficking problem in Vietnam.





EAST ASIA & THE PACIFIC

EUROPE & EURASIA





“Freedom of association and peaceful demonstrations are considered fundamental human liberties, which have a huge significance for free flow of information, ideas and opinions in a democratic society.”

Sukhrobjon Ismoilov

*Chair, Tashkent city branch of “Ezgulik”
Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan*



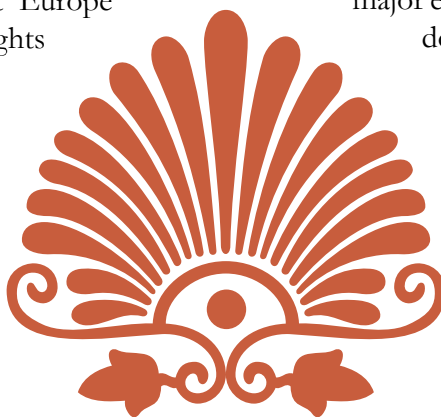
EUROPE AND EURASIA

In Europe and Eurasia, 2005 brought positive developments toward building democratic societies with respect for human rights and the rule of law in some areas and disappointing trends in others. Perhaps most startling was the dramatic change of government in Kyrgyzstan following fraudulent elections in the spring. However, the spring also saw the Andijon massacre in neighboring Uzbekistan and the subsequent crackdown on witnesses, their families, and activists whom the Government tried to implicate in the events that led up to the crackdown. Another disappointing trend this year was the continuing erosion of democratic principles and human rights in other parts of Central Asia, as well as in Belarus and Russia. Nonetheless, independent media, free speech, and civil society flourished elsewhere in the region, such as in the Balkans and Ukraine.

The United States maintained its vigorous support for democracy and human rights in the region in 2005 through various tools. It diplomatically engaged governments of the region bilaterally and in concert with democratic allies, as well as through multilateral forums. U.S. officials at the highest levels have regularly called on leaders throughout Europe and Eurasia to protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of their citizens, govern democratically, and hold free and fair elections. The United States also employed a wide range of assistance tools, including training, technical and legal assistance, grants, and exchanges, as well as trial and election monitoring. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) continued to play a vital role in promoting democracy and respect for human rights. The United States worked throughout 2005 to protect the OSCE's core values enshrined in the Helsinki Accord and subsequent agreements and the autonomy of its democracy promotion activities, such as its election observation efforts.

The United States continued its robust support for

democratic institutions and processes in the region, including free and fair elections. This support was provided through diplomatic engagement bilaterally and multilaterally with international partners such as the OSCE and European Union, as well as nonpartisan assistance programs. These efforts focused on major elections in Albania, Azerbaijan, Macedonia, Moldova, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan in 2005 and on promoting democratic elections scheduled for early 2006 in Belarus and Ukraine. High-level U.S. officials urged these governments to conduct elections that would meet OSCE standards. In all of these cases, U.S. diplomacy and assistance supported democratic electoral processes, not a particular candidate. U.S. assistance focused on promoting voter choice and education and on increasing the transparency of the electoral process. Assistance included support for election reform, monitoring media access and objective coverage, national candidate debates, voter education, domestic and international observation, exit polling, and nonpartisan political party training, with an emphasis on encouraging the participation of underrepresented





groups, including women and youth, in the political process. In addition, the United States continued to provide vigorous diplomatic and programmatic support for democratic governance, including assistance to local governments and parliaments and support for transparency, accountability, decentralization, and anti-corruption efforts.

Democracy is not just about elections that reflect the will of the people; it also entails a vibrant civil society. The United States has continued to urge governments in the region to respect the fundamental freedoms of expression, association, and assembly and to foster flourishing civil societies as the backbone of democracies. The past year has seen restrictions on civil society and harassment of NGOs in various parts of Eurasia. Many governments in the region and beyond misinterpreted the so-called “color revolutions” in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan—in which people spoke out against electoral fraud and corrupt regimes in favor of popularly elected governments—as the work of NGOs funded by and doing the bidding of foreign governments. In response, some governments—including Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Belarus—imposed varying degrees of restrictions on NGOs, particularly on foreign funding, and on political opposition and dissent. U.S. assistance continued to strengthen democratic civil societies and to develop the capacity of NGOs for effective advocacy, governmental oversight, and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. U.S. assistance to NGOs is transparent and abides by the principles of the OSCE and international standards. The United States offered support and technical assistance to NGOs that work to protect human rights, develop freedom of expression and media, monitor elections, serve as watchdogs on government actions, and provide vital services to citizens and refugees.

Another cornerstone of U.S. democracy and human rights promotion in the region remained support for robust independent media that offered diverse views and objective information for citizens. U.S.-funded programs have provided training and exchanges

for journalists, assistance to independent print and broadcast media to build their capacity and sustainability, aid to improve the legal framework for media, legal aid for media outlets, and increased access to objective information through the Internet. Events in Kyrgyzstan in 2005 demonstrated the centrality of media freedom to aspiring democratic societies, particularly through the visible role that the U.S.-funded independent printing press played during the democratic breakthrough. In Moldova, the United States successfully used the results of a U.S.-funded independent media monitoring project to prompt the Government of Moldova to grant more equal media access and coverage in the run-up to the March 2005 parliamentary elections.

Promotion of the rule of law and human rights, including religious freedom, remained a core element of U.S. efforts in the region. The United States continued to support human rights defenders and advocate for judicial reform and independence. The United States, bilaterally and through the OSCE, provided support and training to human rights activists and NGOs throughout the region, building organizational capacity and fostering advocacy for the rule of law. U.S. officials provided moral and material support to human rights and democracy defenders and, when permitted, attended their trials and visited many in prison. The United States also provided training to law enforcement and military personnel on protecting human rights, including freedom from torture.

The United States continued to speak out against abuses, including individual cases of abuse, and urge protection of human rights and the rule of law wherever these are threatened, including with our allies in Russia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan. The United States led international calls for an independent international investigation into the Andijon events. At the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly, the United States supported and voted for the resolution introduced by the EU concerning the abuses in Uzbekistan, including those related to Andijon, and, in conjunction with the EU and sev-



eral other countries, jointly introduced a successful resolution that condemned and called upon the Government of Turkmenistan to address severe human rights abuses. At the April 2005 UN Commission on Human Rights, the United States co-sponsored a successful resolution expressing concern about the Government of Belarus' actions on a range of human rights issues.

As the Secretary of State has repeatedly said, the United States does not compromise its promotion of democracy and human rights for security interests. Indeed, the United States maintains that stability, prosperity, and security hinge on robust democratic societies that respect human rights, the rule of law, and fundamental freedoms.



First-Ever, Live, Nationwide Presidential Election Debates in Kyrgyzstan

The sudden, dramatic ouster of former President Akayev prompted a new presidential election in July 2005. Emerging from the grip of authoritarianism, including restricted media freedom, presidential candidates were immediately faced with the challenges of developing and communicating their political platform to voters, while Kyrgyz citizens needed to familiarize themselves with candidates and key issues. The United States supported several projects to address these needs and to promote democratic elections. One of these projects included funding Internews to work with the Kyrgyz National Television and Radio Corporation (NTRK) to assist in the production and broadcast of Kyrgyzstan's first live, nationwide election debates in the run-up to the July 2005 presidential election.

In preparation, experts surveyed over 800 Kyrgyz citizens nationwide to determine the optimal content, format, language, medium (radio versus television), and broadcast time for the debates. Over 50% said that the debates would help them make their decision on election day. Media experts from Kyrgyzstan and Russia trained journalists and producers on the methodology and practical aspects of producing pre-election political debates and talk shows for television and radio and oversaw technical, design, and content issues.

Starting in May 2005, Internews launched a multifaceted information campaign to explain the project to Kyrgyz officials, the candidates, and the public. To this end, Internews wrote letters to and met with high-level Kyrgyz officials and all candidates, published several articles and press releases about the debates, and distributed these to most Kyrgyz media outlets. Several articles about the debates were published in the local press and special edition newspapers and the debate schedule was included in voter information disseminated by partner organizations.

Four television debates took place between July 4 and July 8, 2005. The six official candidates paired off in three 90-minute debates, while four participated in a final 120-minute debate. Each debate had a general theme ranging from property rights, the March 2005 revolution, political reform, presidential elections, and civil society. During the live broadcasts, each candidate was allocated 25 minutes of speaking time in the three first debates and 12 minutes in the final one. Candidates and audience participants were free to ask questions in Russian or Kyrgyz. In addition, the debates included the following:

- Short video biographies of the candidates shown at the beginning;
- Candidate presentations on the debate theme and their political platform;
- Short video reports on the debate theme;
- Questions from the Bishkek studio audience comprised of NGO leaders, journalists, civil society representatives, and candidates' supporters;
- Questions from an outdoor citizens' audience in Osh via a live connection;
- Concluding remarks from each candidate; and
- Audiences' concluding remarks and recommendations to the candidates.

In addition to the television debates, Kyrgyz State Radio, following an Internews training program, prepared and broadcast a series of election-related programs. The debates received widespread coverage in both domestic and international print and electronic media,



Four nationwide election TV debates were conducted among six official presidential candidates on the Kyrgyz National TV and Radio Corporation (NTRK) and simultaneously broadcast on State radio channel "21 Vek." (Internews)

particularly on the day when the leading candidate, interim President Kurmanbek Bakiyev, participated. Journalists were allowed in the studio before and after the debates to gather material for reports. All debates were simultaneously broadcast on the state radio channel "21 Vek." With support from the OSCE, local NGO Internews Kyrgyzstan translated the live debates and organized their rebroadcast with Kyrgyz and Russian subtitles on the state broadcaster the next morning. Also with OSCE support, popular private station Osh TV, which covers much of the southern and Uzbek populations of Kyrgyzstan, broadcast the debates with simultaneous translation in Uzbek to reach the resident Uzbek community. The main independent Kyrgyz press agency, Aki-Press, published regular reports of all debates, detailing arguments and positions expressed by candidates. NTRK reported that the debates had large audiences throughout the country and were well received. Some voters said that the debates had indeed played a role in their candidate choice.

In short, the project improved the professional capacity of NTRK staff to produce and host debates. In addition, it offered fair and balanced new coverage, gave candidates prime media time to communicate their views to voters, provided voters with opportunities to pose questions directly to candidates, and helped voters make an informed choice on election day.



Armenia

The Armenian Government's human rights record remained poor, although there were some improvements in a few areas. President Robert Kocharian's broad executive powers remained relatively unchecked by a compliant parliament, a judiciary subject to political pressure and vulnerable to corruption, and a weak, fractious opposition. The 2003 presidential and parliamentary elections that extended Kocharian's presidency and brought the country's ruling coalition to power were both marred by serious voting irregularities, as was a November 2005 national referendum that led to the adoption of a package of constitutional amendments. At year's end, it remained unclear how or to what extent the Government planned to implement the new amendments and other legal reforms required by the Council of Europe (CoE) under conditions of Armenia's accession in January 2001. The few political rallies and public demonstrations in 2005 drew only nominal attendance. As a result, police activity was not a serious problem as in years past. Physical abuse and lengthy pretrial detention of some suspects and witnesses remained a problem, as did police and prosecutorial corruption. Prison conditions remained poor. There were some limits on freedom of the media, assembly and religion. Violence against women continued, as did trafficking in persons (TIP).

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Armenia focused on promoting democratic institutions and processes, independent media, freedom of assembly, a vibrant civil society, rule of law, human rights, freedom of religion, and anti-TIP measures. Armenia's recently approved, five-year Millennium Challenge Compact (MCC) is tied to its performance on these and other indicators related to good governance. The United States emphasized to Armenian authorities that continued eligibility for MCC funding remained contingent upon the Government's progress toward ruling justly.

The Embassy convened a special Democracy Strategy Working Group in 2005 to determine how to best utilize U.S. resources in the run-up to parliamentary and presidential elections in 2007 and 2008. The United

States inaugurated a three-year package of financial and technical elections assistance that focused on enhancing the capabilities of the Armenian election administration (including producing accurate voter lists, providing public information and voter education), developing a democratic political culture, building public opinion polling capacity, strengthening fair electoral adjudication, enhancing election monitoring capabilities, strengthening political parties, and increasing independent media coverage.

The United States consistently raised the importance of media freedom and responsibility with high-level officials, media directors, and journalists. To promote media freedom, the United States launched a new program in 2005 to develop professional media outlets, decrease heavy dependence on biased political sponsorship, and tune programming to public interest. Building on the successes of earlier efforts, the program supported training and technical assistance to help media outlets qualify for and repay loans funded by the United States. The program also established a television ratings system to provide critical information designed to help media outlets develop audience-based programming and increase advertising revenues. The U.S. International Visitors Leadership Program (IVLP) funded professional and ethics training for journalists and business training for media managers.

To provide free access to independent sources of information, U.S. programs installed a series of Internet Connectivity Centers (ICC), which connected Armenian citizens and schools to one another and the rest of the world. Through the ICCs, a nationwide network of schools and communities engaged in organized discussion forums, courses and other learning activities, which included curricula on principles of democracy, civic involvement, and community development. Two American Corners provided information about U.S. democratic institutions and facilitated cultural events, which included an ongoing series of guest lectures by U.S. officers and exchange program alumni. Lecture topics included: American Political Parties, Democratic Values, Religious Pluralism in the United States, and Civil Society and the State in America.



To promote a vibrant civil society, U.S. officials consistently encouraged the Government, independent and opposition political parties, and civil society to engage in constructive dialogue on good governance issues. With substantial U.S. funding, local NGOs pursued initiatives to promote human rights, media freedom, democratic development, and civil society. This strengthening of civil society produced concrete results. A government-proposed draft law on lobbying introduced in 2005 threatened to curtail significantly the ability of Armenian NGOs to advocate a range of issues until effective lobbying by local and international NGOs -- many of which the United States supported -- prodded parliament to table the bill. U.S. grants supported the creation of municipal councils to encourage citizen participation in government.

U.S. officials urged the Government to respect freedom of assembly and closely monitored the few demonstrations and rallies that took place during the year.

To promote the rule of law and a democratic system of checks and balances, the United States worked with others in the international community to support CoE efforts to help Armenia arrive at a package of constitutional amendments consistent with international standards. The United States provided technical legislative expertise and funds for public awareness campaigns. The Association of Judges of Armenia (AJRA) unanimously approved the constitutional amendments and adopted a new Code of Ethics, which was drafted with U.S. assistance. U.S. programs also helped create a new Chamber of Advocates, which began work in 2005 to establish a Code of Ethics for Armenian attorneys. These reforms did not significantly alter the Armenian legal and judicial environment in the short-term, but provided a good foundation on which Armenian judges and lawyers may build an independent judiciary. To promote the rule of law, the United States also helped train judges, lawyers, and prosecutors. Every U.S. assistance program included anti-corruption components in 2005 in order to fight a persistent culture of corruption.

To promote respect for human rights, U.S. programs

provided technical and financial support to link Armenian human rights NGOs with counterpart NGOs in Armenia and throughout the South Caucasus. Armenian human rights NGOs used the contacts to share and develop best practices, initiate cooperative regional training programs, and promote human rights for women, children, minorities, and prisoners. U.S. grants supported public information campaigns to protect the rights of persons with disabilities.

The Ambassador and other U.S. officials frequently discussed religious freedom issues with the Government and religious leaders as part of the overall policy to promote human rights. The Embassy maintained close contact with the Catholicos at Etchmiadzin (the head of Armenia's national church, the Armenian Apostolic Church), with leaders of other religious and ecumenical groups in the country, and with traveling regional representatives of foreign-based religious groups such as the Church of Latter-Day Saints and Jehovah's Witnesses, and raised their concerns with the Government. The Embassy closely monitored trials related to religious freedom and took an active role in policy forums and NGO roundtables regarding religious freedom. In meetings with government officials, the Embassy consistently raised the importance of alternatives to military service for Jehovah's Witnesses who are conscientious objectors. The Embassy hosted several roundtable meetings and receptions in honor of U.S. representatives of religious organizations and invited leaders of local minority religious groups to these events.

Combating TIP in Armenia remains a top priority. While the United States downgraded Armenia to Tier 2's "Watch List," U.S. programs produced concrete results. The United States funded a victims' assistance program that provided safe haven and medical, social and legal services, facilitated the repatriation of six victims of TIP, and funded a victim hotline. U.S.-funded programs produced nation-wide public awareness campaigns and trained advocates of victims of TIP. U.S. programs also supported anti-TIP training seminars for orphanage staff and children and funded the establishment of a public information website on TIP.

Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan's human rights record remained poor. While there were some improvements in the period leading up to the November 6 parliamentary elections, the elections failed to meet a number of international standards. The Government partly restored freedom of assembly in the months leading up to the election. However, members of the security forces used excessive force to disperse unauthorized rallies as well as one authorized post-election rally, beating opposition party members and some journalists covering the events. The Government routinely detained opposition party members for several days often on spurious grounds. There were credible reports that security forces beat and tortured detainees. Human rights monitors reported that alleged abuse and mistreatment contributed to four prison deaths. Prison conditions continued to be harsh and life-threatening, and pretrial detention remained lengthy. The judiciary was corrupt, inefficient and dominated by the executive branch. Freedom of speech and of the press were at times subject to attack, as journalists continued to face disproportionately high libel judgments for slander committed against government officials, although the number of these suits declined. There was vigorous public debate of the Government's policies in the press. The Government restricted some religious freedoms of Muslims and Christians, citing its right to protect society from radical Islam and social instability. The Government adopted legislation to combat corruption and trafficking in persons (TIP), but has only begun implementation and has not yet undertaken vigorous investigation and prosecution.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Azerbaijan focused on promoting democratic parliamentary elections, a transparent and accountable government, a free and responsible media, freedom of assembly and association, a vibrant civil society, rule of law, human rights, religious freedom, and anti-TIP measures.

To promote a democratic electoral process, U.S. officials regularly met with representatives of political parties, a range of human rights and democracy activ-

ists and government officials. The Under Secretary for Global Affairs and Democracy, the Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs, and several Members of Congress traveled to Azerbaijan in 2005 to reinforce U.S. support for democracy and human rights, and their application in democratic parliamentary elections.

The United States intensified its efforts to encourage democratic reform through sustained high-level government intervention, public diplomacy outreach, and training programs. The Ambassador and visiting senior U.S. officials regularly engaged Azerbaijani officials in dialogue on the need to conduct elections consistent with international standards. The United States repeatedly raised specific concerns with Azerbaijani officials, including the need to deter fraud and other interference in the electoral process, prosecute cases of such interference, and permit domestic nonpartisan organizations to monitor the elections. The Ambassador co-led the "Friends of Azerbaijan" diplomatic group, which regularly engaged the Government on democratic reform. The United States encouraged Azerbaijan to meet its OSCE commitments.

The Ambassador called for democratic elections through the media over 50 times during the year. U.S. programs trained 1,200 political candidates on the basics of campaigning, 1,000 local election officials on the mechanics of carrying out a democratic election process, and 500 judges and lawyers on fair adjudication of the election code. A U.S.-sponsored exit poll provided an independent estimate of the results in half of the races, helped to corroborate credible allegations of fraud, and contributed to public debate on such fraud.

The United States funded numerous campaigns encouraging citizens to vote, which were tailored to target various voter groups. As part of an effort to encourage political dialogue and issue-based parliamentary elections, the United States supported the organization and broadcast of debates between parliamentary candidates in the regions. U.S. programs funded the translation and publication of American books on democracy in an effort to strengthen public





knowledge of democratic principles and values.

The U.S. contributed observers to the OSCE international election observation mission. The Embassy separately fielded 35 observer teams to monitor the elections. U.S. programs funded and trained 2,000 domestic election observers. When serious irregularities marred the vote counting and tabulation of results, senior U.S. officials raised concerns with the authorities and the United States issued a statement calling for corrective action. Before and after the elections, the United States urged the Central Election Commission to forward complaints of election code violations to the Prosecutor General's Office.

U.S. officials repeatedly urged the Government to respect media freedom. The United States advocated the launch of the country's first public television channel, which went on air in August 2005, and supported its nascent programming. The United States assisted with the organization of a regional television network to improve the financial solvency of local stations and promote free media. U.S. funding supported the professional development of journalists and advocacy for media rights. U.S.-supported programs provided extensive ongoing technical and programming assistance to several television stations and newspapers. A U.S. program funded training for three TV journalists who went to the United States to study best practices and coverage of democratic processes. Through the International Visitors Leadership Program (IVLP), the United States trained government spokespersons on how to develop and maintain positive relationships with the media. To promote freedom of expression, the United States sponsored a high school debate society network to encourage young people to voice their opinions.

In the aftermath of the murder of prominent independent journalist Elmar Huseynov, U.S. officials encouraged the Government to conduct a fair and impartial investigation into his death and provided technical law enforcement assistance to facilitate the investigation.

The United States continued to support the development of civil society in Azerbaijan by using technical

assistance, grants, and IVLPs to support the activities of local NGOs, encourage dialogue between the Government and civil society, and educate the Government about democratic practices in the United States. U.S. grants helped NGOs develop community networks to strengthen participatory government on a national and local level. The United States funded human rights training for eight Azerbaijanis representing different parts of society on how American law and society address freedom of the press and religion, as well as child labor, women's and refugee's issues. U.S. funding supported the establishment of regional information centers that provided independent information. U.S.-funded projects supported the active participation of women in civil society and empowered women to engage local governments in cooperative problem-solving.

U.S. officials repeatedly urged Azerbaijani officials to authorize peaceful demonstrations by opposition parties, which contributed to the Government's partial restoration of freedom of assembly in June. U.S. officials monitored police conduct at political rallies, and the Embassy publicly condemned the excessive use of force against demonstrators. The United States voiced its concerns to all levels of the Government regarding the international right of political parties to organize and demonstrate peacefully against government policies.

U.S. officials promoted respect for the rule of law and the United States funded a variety of rule of law programs. U.S. officials advocated respect for the rule of law during government investigations of individuals accused of fomenting a coup. U.S.-funded programs worked to strengthen the professional development of judges and lawyers, and to assist them in developing codes of ethics, reconstituting the bar association and the administration of a bar exam, expanding programs for law students, helping women to gain better access to justice, and conducting a legal literacy program for the general public. The United States continued to work with law schools on curriculum development and new teaching methodologies. U.S. funding and expertise helped to establish a legal database project, which provided easy access and use of legal framework documents for the legal profession



and the general populace. This database will expand the resources available to promote rule of law.

The United States funded programs to increase the professionalism and skills of the judiciary, procuracy, and the defense bar to improve legislation and to implement new anti-corruption legislation. The United States continued to work with the Government and private lawyers to implement the Law on Advocates and to develop an independent bar association. U.S.-funded programs provided training and material to judges, prosecutors, and attorneys on the European Convention on Human Rights, fair trials, and international standards for pretrial detention procedures. A U.S. program provided technical assistance to investigators and prosecutors to encourage evidence-based investigations, which could help decrease forced confessions. The United States sent two judges and one member of the Azerbaijani Young Lawyers Association to the United States to strengthen their skills and understanding of how free, open-market societies combat corruption and promote the rule of law.

U.S. officials repeatedly urged the Government to ensure that police complied with human rights standards and to hold police officials accountable for torture, abuse, or misconduct, and routinely visited detainees during the pre-election period. U.S.-funded training courses focused on the obligation of the police to uphold international human rights by respecting freedom of speech and assembly. The United States funded NGO prison monitoring and U.S. officials visited prisons to focus attention on poor conditions. Several U.S.-funded projects supported the protection of women's rights. The United States funded the reprinting and distribution of the Azerbaijani Human Rights Self Study Manual "Thirty-three Steps Up" to strengthen awareness of the existence and importance of human rights. U.S. grants supported the education of children on basic human rights in an effort to create an early childhood awareness.

The United States continued to support a program, which it helped design, to integrate human rights into training for security forces guarding the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline.

The United States actively encouraged respect for religious freedom, including the right to practice religion without unnecessary interference or restriction. U.S. officials frequently stressed the importance of respecting religious freedom to government officials. The Embassy and officials in Washington maintained close connections with local religious communities. A U.S. project funded high school debates on the role and importance of religious tolerance in society. The Embassy actively spread the message about religious tolerance and Islam in America throughout the year. The Ambassador and a senior Embassy official each hosted Iftar dinners in November.

The United States promoted anti-TIP measures and effective preventive mechanisms in meetings with government officials and through programs that included a TIP awareness campaign conducted by NGOs and technical assistance in implementing new anti-TIP legislation. The United States funded two experts to help government officials develop the policies and procedures for a police anti-TIP unit. The United States provided drafting expertise and coordinated an international review of draft anti-TIP legislation to ensure the June legislation, and corresponding criminal code amendments adopted in October, met international standards.

Belarus

Under its constitution, Belarus is a republic with a directly elected president and a bicameral parliament. President Aleksandr Lukashenko, first elected in 1994, has waged a systematic assault on critical elements of democracy: political parties, the independent media, and civil society. Through a series of flawed referenda, manipulated and fraudulent elections, and repressive laws and regulations, President Lukashenko has concentrated power in his hands, extended presidential tenure, and eliminated presidential term limits. The Parliament, chosen through a flawed election process, routinely approved presidential initiatives. The judiciary was not independent. The Government's human rights record remained poor and worsened in some areas. Pro-democracy activists, including opposition politicians, indepen-



dent trade union leaders, and newspaper editors, were detained, fined, and imprisoned for criticizing the Government. In June, the Government passed a law that made it easier to suspend or close political parties. At the time the law was passed, the Justice Ministry was in the process of closing approximately 80% of the opposition political party offices on a variety of pretexts. The Government increasingly used tax inspections and new registration requirements to complicate or deny the ability of NGOs, independent media, political parties, and minority and religious organizations to operate legally. It overtly interfered in the election of a new leadership of the NGO Union of Belarusian Poles. Amendments to the Belarusian criminal code introduced prison sentences of up to three years for “discrediting Belarus’ international image” or for organizing or taking part in activities of a suspended or closed NGO or foundation. The Government tightened its control over independent media by imposing excessive fines and cutting off access to the state subscription service and printing presses. Authorities restricted the Internet by blocking access to some foreign websites, monitoring material posted on the Internet, and harassing persons for material posted on websites. Educational exchange programs and student travel were subjected to increased government interference. Trafficking in persons (TIP) remained an issue of concern, although the Government made serious efforts to combat this problem.

The U.S. strategy to promote democracy and human rights in Belarus consisted of applying political and economic restrictions; maintaining bilateral and multilateral diplomatic pressure; limiting high-level engagement with Belarusian officials to the assistant secretary level or below; monitoring, reporting, and speaking out on abuses; supporting democracy and human rights programs; and facilitating educational and professional exchanges. U.S. assistance focused on helping to develop and strengthen civil society groups, increasing access to objective information through the Internet, strengthening independent print and broadcast media, building legal defense capacity and advocacy for the rule of law, and supporting the development of a democratic political process leading up to the 2006 presidential election. The United States also supported capacity-building and legal as-

sistance for independent trade unions. U.S.-funded exchange programs were tailored to familiarize a wide range of Belarusians, from students to professionals, with a democratic, market-based system. To help combat TIP, the United States focused assistance on efforts to prevent trafficking and to protect victims.

The United States cooperated closely with the OSCE, EU, and Belarus’ neighbors to promote democracy and human rights in Belarus, including releasing joint U.S.-EU press statements on specific human rights abuses committed by the Government and organizing joint activities to show solidarity on democracy promotion. The United States co-sponsored a successful resolution regarding Belarus at the UN Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR). It expressed concern about the Government’s policies on human rights issues, including the disappearances and/or executions of two prominent opposition politicians, a businessman, and a journalist, restrictions on freedoms of expression and of the media, restrictions on the activities of NGOs, prohibitions of the rights of workers to organize, restrictions on the freedom of academic institutions, and prosecution of the political opposition. In December 2005, the U.S. Embassy along with EU Heads of Mission in Belarus, conducted a joint roundtable discussion with representatives from Belarusian human rights organizations on the eve of the UN International Human Rights Day to emphasize the shared concern of the EU and the United States over the state of human rights in Belarus and to express their support for human rights activists. Democracy and human rights issues were key themes in virtually all U.S. officials’ speeches, press interviews, and public events concerning Belarus. The United States closely monitored the Government’s persistent, calculated attacks on civil society and opposition political parties, issued a number of press statements on human rights and democracy violations, and posted these statements on the Embassy website.

In the run up to the 2006 presidential election, the United States repeatedly urged the Government to hold free and fair elections and to invite international observers to conduct election monitoring. The EU joined the United States in delivering these messages. Throughout the year, U.S. officials met with Belaru-



Belarusian police officers detain a youth opposition activist during an unsanctioned rally in Minsk, Belarus. (AP Photo)

sian election and other government officials to encourage adherence to democratic principles. In December 2005, a U.S. official met with government officials and representatives of political and civil society groups in Minsk to express U.S. concerns regarding the state of democracy in Belarus and to encourage the Government to allow for a free and fair electoral process leading up to the March presidential elections. U.S. funding supported training, technical assistance, grants, and cross-border exchanges for pro-democracy groups and political parties on internal governance, strategic planning, membership recruitment and retention, message formulation, and outreach. Partly as a result of this assistance, leading pro-democracy forces in Belarus developed and successfully implemented a process for democratically selecting a candidate for the presidential election. Nevertheless, in the absence of access to the media and given constant harassment by governmental authorities,

pro-democratic forces face overwhelming odds in the election. To promote independent oversight of the electoral process, the United States provided assistance to a civic organization to train non-partisan election observers. Assistance to other non-partisan NGOs and independent media aimed to promote objective, fact-based reporting on election issues and awareness of voter rights.

U.S. programs helped independent media outlets find ways to remain in operation in a political and business environment hostile to free media and helped independent journalists access information resources. Due to the independent media's increased professionalism in providing objective and quality information, the level of public trust in the independent media remains high despite constant government pressure to close down or interrupt the publication of virtually all non-government newspapers. U.S. assistance



to a local media partner enabled the production and broadcast of 35 television talk-show programs on social, economic, and civic issues, which were broadcast in seven towns with a combined population of 1.4 million people.

Belarusian NGOs remained highly dependent on outside assistance for survival, a situation complicated by legal restrictions on foreign assistance. During 2005, 18 local communities and 30 NGOs took part in U.S.-funded projects aimed at strengthening civil society. Despite the Government's 2004 closure of a successful U.S.-funded program, the Government nonetheless permitted 11 grants to NGOs to go forward. These grants focused on providing information or training to target social problems, from unemployment to health related issues. To foster greater citizen involvement in community initiatives, 55 training workshops on topics ranging from youth leadership to social entrepreneurship were conducted for more than 300 NGOs and community activists. Eighty-two NGO leaders and representatives of local government and local businesses took part in seven study tours to other Eastern European countries to learn better practices on key issues including health, entrepreneurship, and empowerment of women and youth. Through the U.S. Democracy Commission Small Grants Program, funds were provided to promote the pro-democracy initiatives of non-political civic groups and media organizations, including youth and women's groups, human rights organizations, NGO resource centers, and trade unions. A new U.S. program brought together alumni of U.S.-sponsored exchange programs to carry out democracy promotion projects, including work in support of gender equality and civic education.

The United States continued to provide legal and advocacy training and assistance for NGO lawyers and activists. As part of a legal advocacy program, the United States supported the development of a website for civil society activists with current legal regulations on NGO activity and assisted in conducting a roundtable for 70 NGO lawyers on rendering legal aid in an increasingly difficult working environment. In 2005, local NGOs, with U.S. support, analyzed the impact of mandatory short-term employment con-

tracts on employee rights and conducted a public legal education campaign on worker rights by publishing pamphlets and holding 12 seminars attended by 365 people. Consequently, 18 attendees brought successful lawsuits against their employers for violation of labor rights through mandatory short-term contracts.

Although severely limited by the Government this year, training, exchange, and educational reform programs continued to be an important component of the U.S. democracy and human rights promotion strategy. Under the guise of an anti-trafficking law passed this year, the Government prevented high schools students from participating in the Future Leaders Exchange program (FLEX) for the first time since its initiation 12 years ago. As a result, no Belarusian students participated in the FLEX program this academic year, compared to 50 last year. Additional bureaucratic requirements imposed by this law seriously complicated other student exchange programs. The United States, however, continued to encourage Belarusian citizens to participate in U.S.-sponsored professional and academic training and exchange programs.

The Embassy regularly observed the trials of NGOs and media outlets, such as the Belarusian Helsinki Commission and Narodnaya Volya, which were targeted by the Government for closure on politically motivated pretexts. U.S. officials also attended trials for opposition figures, such as Pavel Severinets and Nikolai Statkevich, who were prosecuted for their political activities. The United States supported the OSCE's efforts to assist Belarus in meeting its OSCE commitments and issued statements calling on the Government to fulfill its OSCE pledges to observe human rights. The United States continued to press the Government to conduct an independent, transparent, and impartial investigation into the disappearances of several opposition activists and a journalist. The United States issued a statement criticizing the authorities' reluctance to investigate these disappearances and their use of intimidation and force against participants in a peaceful demonstration commemorating the anniversary of the disappearances. To support women's rights and to help create a wider net-



work for active women's groups, the United States launched a series of events focusing on women's issues in various aspects of civil society.

The United States urged government officials to respect religious freedom and monitored violations of international norms. U.S. officials met with representatives of a wide spectrum of religious groups and with the Government's Committee of Religious and Nationalities Affairs to advocate freedom of religion and the cessation of the harassment of religious minorities. The United States closely monitored incidents of anti-Semitism that occurred throughout Belarus and took actions in an effort to help prevent future acts. The Embassy regularly followed up on reports of desecrated bodies after the Government built a sports stadium on a Jewish cemetery in Grodno, and the United States issued a statement condemning the vandalism of religious icons and commemorative items at the Kurapaty memorial complex.

In response to workers' rights violations, the United States maintained close contact with local independent labor leaders and the International Labour Organization (ILO) and met with the Ministry of Labor to learn what actions the Government was taking to meet ILO's 12 recommendations to improve freedom of association and collective bargaining with regard to labor and trade union rights. The United States continued to support ILO efforts to promote worker rights and independent trade unions in Belarus.

The United States and other donors have achieved some degree of cooperation at the working level of the Government to counter TIP. U.S. officials worked closely with IOM's Minsk office and local organizations to monitor the Government's anti-trafficking efforts. Belarus increased its law enforcement efforts and instituted anti-trafficking legislation. As a result, U.S. assistance focused on areas where the Government lacked adequate funding, namely victim protection and trafficking prevention. In order to tackle the poverty and lack of job opportunities underlying trafficking in vulnerable communities, the United States worked with the IOM on expanding a successful pilot program based on the economic empowerment of women.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

The 1995 General Framework Agreement for Peace, the Dayton Accords, created the independent state of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). The Agreement also created two constituent entities within the state: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Federation) and the Republika Srpska (RS), along with the independent District of Brcko. In 2002 and 2004 respectively, Bosnia and Herzegovina held its first self-administered national and municipal elections, which international observers judged to be free and fair.

The Government's human rights record was poor. Although there were improvements in some areas, serious problems remained. Security in sensitive Internally Displaced Person (IDP) return areas and police responsiveness to incidents targeting minority returnees remained poor. Democracy and human rights problems included physical abuse by police officials; overcrowding and poor conditions in prisons; improper influence of the judiciary by government officials and politicians; harassment of the media; official restrictions on activity by religious minorities; government corruption; discrimination against women, ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, and sexual minorities; trafficking in persons (TIP); and limits on workers' rights. Republika Srpska's cooperation with the UN International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) improved, but the two most wanted war crimes indictees, Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic, remain at large.

The U.S. strategy for promoting human rights and democracy in Bosnia and Herzegovina focused on: building a robust civil society; strengthening the capacity of state-level institutions, especially the criminal justice system, to operate transparently and efficiently; advocating for religious freedom; and assisting the Government in combating TIP and discrimination against vulnerable groups in Bosnian society, including minority returnees. The United States also focused on developing more competitive and inclusive political processes in which moderate political parties could compete more effectively and increasing citizen participation in political decision-making.



Senior U.S. officials continued to send a strong message on democratic reform and respect for human rights in 2005. The Under Secretary for Political Affairs emphasized this message during his visits to Bosnia and Herzegovina in June and October 2005, underscoring the importance of reconciliation and the rule of law and encouraging full compliance with international legal obligations, including the ICTY. The Ambassador continued to travel extensively within Bosnia and Herzegovina, and raised key human rights issues such as TIP and minority returns with senior Bosnian officials. In July, an official Presidential delegation headed by the Special Ambassador for War Crimes Issues represented the United States at the commemoration of the 10th anniversary of the Srebrenica massacre. In November, the Secretary of State hosted an event in Washington focused on the political future of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the progress made since the 1995 signing of the Dayton Accords. The event was attended by Bosnian Presidency members, high-ranking religious leaders, and many other senior Bosnian officials and politicians. In a roundtable with religious leaders, the United States provided a platform to encourage open dialogue.

The United States continued to promote the development of an independent and professional media. A number of U.S.-supported media projects provided training and technical assistance to journalists, with a focus on radio management and TV investigative reporting. The U.S. also supported the creation of a permanent local organization dedicated to promoting high-quality investigative journalism. Eight investigative or in-depth reporting projects resulted in innovative print or broadcast reports that fostered public debate and spurred authorities to take positive remedial action. Two separate industry organizations were established with U.S. assistance: the Bosnia and Herzegovina Association of Journalists and the Bosnia and Herzegovina Publishers Association. Both have successfully lobbied on important regulatory matters such as a value-added tax exemption for printed materials. Local journalists also received specialized training in reporting on specific issues, including war crimes, international security, terrorism, and TIP.

Development of civil society and increased coop-

eration between NGOs and the Government, especially local governments, remained a U.S. priority in Bosnia and Herzegovina. A U.S.-funded civil society program improved the institutional capacity of local NGOs by awarding 25 small grants to implement projects. Other U.S.-funded civil society development programs included a number of grants to local NGOs to increase the profile and influence of the NGO sector in Bosnian society, to educate the public about volunteerism and philanthropy, and to promote cooperation among NGOs, the media, the Government, and the private sector.

The United States also promoted civil society through diverse educational initiatives. A U.S.-funded civic education project developed a democracy and human rights course that is now taught in every secondary school in the country. The program expanded in 2005, and the course is now taught at the Faculty of Islamic Sciences of the University of Sarajevo and at medresas (Muslim secondary schools) throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina. The U.S.-funded Parliamentary Internship Program gave talented young Bosnians the opportunity to serve as interns in the country's state- and entity-level parliaments, which afforded them valuable leadership skills and work experience.

U.S. assistance continued to strengthen the rule of law, with strong emphasis on judicial institutions. With U.S. financial, technical, and political support, Bosnia and Herzegovina made significant strides in developing its capacity to apprehend war criminals and to investigate and try war crimes cases. The U.S. was the major financial supporter of the Bosnian State Court's War Crimes Chamber and the State Prosecutor's Office. U.S.-funded initiatives to raise professional standards among lawyers and judges resulted in the creation of national-level professional associations for prosecutors and judges. The United States continued to fund training on the Criminal Procedure Code and its new legal mechanisms for prosecutors, judges, and defense attorneys. A highly successful U.S.-funded "model court" case management project was introduced in four municipalities. The courts in the pilot program significantly reduced case backlogs and improved efficiency and responsiveness to the public.



The U.S.-funded Justice Sector Development Program (JSDP) is improving the efficiency, transparency, and fairness of Bosnia and Herzegovina's justice system by providing expert assistance to the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council, which oversees Bosnia's judicial system. The JSDP also helped improve the Bosnian justice system by establishing and implementing improved court administration practices, reforming the current system for the defense of indigent criminal defendants, and working with the State Ministry of Justice and other agencies to improve local capacity to draft legislation and promote citizen participation in legislative development. The United States also supported a national moot court competition, which afforded Bosnian law students the opportunity to practice trial advocacy skills before a panel of senior Bosnian attorneys and judges. The students simulated criminal cases involving human rights violations under the European Convention of Human Rights.

The United States remained resolute in supporting efforts leading to truth and social justice in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP), financed in part by the United States, generated DNA matches that could potentially lead to the identification of 1,882 individuals reported missing during the 1992-1995 conflict. ICMP also collected blood samples from surviving relatives that will assist in identifying 958 missing persons. The ICMP assisted Bosnian authorities in carrying out 288 exhumations of mass or illicit gravesites, which led to the recovery of the remains of 282 complete and partial sets of human remains. Despite these efforts, an estimated 15,000 to 20,000 persons remain unaccounted for in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The United States continued to support the development of the Srebrenica-Potocari Memorial and Cemetery, where 1,937 of the estimated 7,800 victims of the Srebrenica massacre have been interred.

U.S. programs aimed to improve efficiency and accountability in local governments. The joint U.S.-Swedish Governance Accountability Project continued to focus on improving the service and financial management profiles of 40 target municipalities and on creating an environment in which these municipi-

pal governments have the resources and autonomy to respond effectively to citizens' needs. To date, 11 new municipal "one-stop shops" have been created throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina. These centers will enable citizens and businesses to receive municipal permits more quickly, while simultaneously reducing corruption and discrimination against ethnic minorities. The United States continued to support the Administrative Law and Procedural Systems (ALPS) program, designed to eliminate barriers that confront citizens because of the unwieldy nature of the Bosnian administrative system. The ALPS project successfully worked with 20 target municipalities to amend their statutes and rules of procedure, allowing for increased public participation in decision-making. The project's local partner monitored 1,045 administrative cases and pursued administrative sanctions against particularly intransigent officials in approximately 50 cases. The project also funded legal assistance to 55,000 citizens in matters relating to housing, urban planning, and disability and pension payments.

The United States donated agricultural commodities that were used to finance civil society development initiatives that promoted respect for the rights of women, children, and persons with disabilities. Other initiatives focused on assisting the Bosnian Government to reduce discrimination based on gender, race, ethnicity, disability, and religion. For example, one U.S.-funded program supported a coalition of local NGOs representing persons with disabilities. As a direct result of the coalition's advocacy efforts, the Government adopted several legislative reforms that directly benefit persons with disabilities. One reform included legislation that provides for the use of guide dogs for the blind.

The United States continued to support the return of refugees and IDPs from the 1992-1995 conflict. The United States funded the repair of vital local infrastructure and improvement of community-based government services. Through loans and grants, 550 families of minority returnees established viable sources of income. Economic and technical assistance for farmers was also critical in promoting the sustainability of minority returns.



In 2005, Bosnian authorities, including the State Coordinator for the Prevention of Trafficking and the Ministries of Health and Education in both entities and Brcko District, expanded anti-TIP efforts with U.S. assistance. U.S.-funded programs supported local NGOs that provided shelter and care for TIP victims. The United States funded an SOS hotline, reintegration assistance for victims, and a regional conference focusing on strategies for successful prosecution of TIP. Local NGOs implemented a U.S.-funded public awareness campaign targeting Bosnian children and youth (ages 6-25), victims of trafficking, potential consumers of sexual services, local authorities, and media professionals. The United States continued to support the national-level Anti-TIP Strike Force with technical advice and training on the effective use of plea bargains. Subsequently, a Bosnian State Prosecutor used these new legal tools to convict four defendants accused of trafficking women from Moldova, Romania, and Ukraine.

Georgia

Georgia continued to follow an ambitious reform agenda to create and strengthen democratic institutions and processes, including reducing human rights violations. Accordingly, its human rights record improved in some areas, although serious problems remained. Local NGOs considered the October parliamentary by-elections to be generally fair, despite continuing problems including inaccurate voter lists and non-tamper proof ballot boxes. The status of religious freedom improved through increased investigation and prosecution of harassers of religious minorities. The Government took significant steps to reduce torture and ill treatment of detainees by law enforcement officials in pretrial detention facilities. NGOs noted, however, that concurrent with the reduction of such abuse in these facilities was a rise in the number of complaints of abuse during arrest and transport of detainees to the facilities. A culture of impunity in law enforcement, especially outside Tbilisi, persisted. Other continuing problems included inhumane and life-threatening prison conditions, lack of judicial independence, violence and discrimination against women, and trafficking in persons (TIP).

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy focused on the promotion of democratic institutions and processes, the development of a vibrant civil society, fundamental freedoms, rule of law, human rights, and anti-TIP measures.

During his May visit to Tbilisi, the President praised Georgia's progress and encouraged continued democratization. The Secretary of State, the Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, and Members of Congress reinforced the President's message and other efforts to achieve U.S. objectives in Georgia in 2005. U.S. officials worked publicly and privately with officials, NGOs, and other organizations to identify and highlight areas of particular concern and encourage reform.

To promote democratic institutions and processes, the United States provided assistance for the October parliamentary by-elections, including providing reliable poll data to all parties, and worked with two leading Georgian youth NGOs to train domestic observers for the by-elections. As a result of U.S. assistance, four of the strongest opposition parties formed an alliance to conduct a primary to field unified opposition coalition candidates in the by-elections. A U.S.-funded project began to reform the Civil Registry to serve as a reliable and up-to-date source for voter lists for elections starting in 2008.

The United States provided the parliament with assistance to promote better governance and leadership skills, particularly by supporting the development of capacity for effective oversight of the executive branch and promoting transparency. To promote improved governance, the United States provided direct assistance to the offices of the President and Prime Minister. To strengthen political pluralism, the United States funded programs and worked with political leaders in the majority and opposition to promote regional and national political party development. The United States provided assistance to women leaders throughout the country to prepare them to run for elected office and positions within their political parties. U.S. assistance supported creation of the Parliamentary Women's Gender Equity Council. To strengthen local governance, the United States sup-



ported decentralization legislation and provided assistance to advance fiscal decentralization.

The United States continued to encourage and support the development of a strong civil society. U.S.-funded programs promoted the financial sustainability of the NGO community. As a result of a U.S.-supported advocacy program, a coalition successfully lobbied the Government to adopt amendments to the tax code, thus allowing for tax-free contributions to NGOs. U.S. assistance enabled civil society coalitions to pursue issue-based advocacy campaigns on issues such as democratic elections and human rights protection.

To support development of civil society in regions with large ethnic minorities, the United States worked with NGOs in Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo-Kartli on organizational capacity building, social outreach, and networking with other components of Georgian

and international civil society. The United States awarded six Democracy Commission grants to local NGOs that target ethnic integration, Georgian-language instruction, or conflict resolution. Civic education programs supported the development of innovative extracurricular teaching in civic values and responsibilities for youth.

The United States continued to encourage the Government to respect media freedom and to look for opportunities for constructive cooperation with media outlets. The United States funded several media development programs aimed at improving professionalism, including in the regions. The United States sponsored a media development professional to train news directors and reporters in the Autonomous Republic of Ajara. The United States dedicated an International Visitors Leadership Program (IVLP) to broadcast journalists and included print media journalists in other IVLP groups. U.S. Democracy Com-



A student demonstrates his familiarity with the Georgian Constitution. (U.S. Department of State)



mission grants supported projects aimed at improving independent journalism. The United States sponsored the Caucasus School of Journalism and Media Management at the Georgian Institute for Public Affairs. A working tour funded by the United States helped television journalists learn the values and principles of freedom of the press as well as standards of western journalism. U.S. travel grants enabled journalists to work on the issues of trafficking and human rights.

The United States continued to promote rule of law and human rights. U.S. funding supported a rule of law program that increased public awareness of legal rights and assisted in the reform of the legal system. U.S. advisors were closely involved in the ongoing re-writing of Georgia's Criminal Procedural Code in an effort to meet international human rights standards. Parliament recently passed amendments that had long been advocated by the United States, including provisions authorizing plea-bargaining and the use at trial of audio/video tapes taken by investigative journalists. U.S.-sponsored activities also focused on court structure reform, judicial self-advocacy and judicial independence. The rule of law program promoted implementation of the Administrative Code and its freedom of information provisions, funded legal aid clinics, and conducted public education campaigns regarding citizens' constitutional rights.

In response to the Government's willingness to tackle corruption and human rights issues within the framework of law enforcement, U.S. assistance to the Ministry of Interior expanded, including the posting of a permanent representative at the Embassy to administer such programs. The United States also continued to develop a new police training curriculum for entry- and advanced-level officers to meet international standards, including in human rights and establish procedures consistent with international standards at the central forensic lab. In the past, poor forensic capabilities were believed to have led to police abuse of detainees.

The separatist regime in Abkhazia continued to prevent repatriation of approximately 230,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs), and the de facto authorities

of South Ossetia continued to obstruct repatriation of 12,767 ethnic Georgians. The United States regularly worked with Georgia's IDPs to examine the potential for conflict mitigation and recovery assistance and launched a housing program that could act as a model for the return of IDPs.

The United States has historically been in the forefront of efforts to bring perpetrators of religiously motivated violence to justice. Embassy officials attended the trial of defrocked Orthodox Priest Father Basil Mkalavishvili, who was convicted in January and sentenced to six years imprisonment. Reports of violence against minority religious groups continued to decrease in 2005; however, several groups continued to report intimidation by local authorities as well as by citizens, prompting continued U.S. engagement on the issue. U.S. officials attended several governmental and non-governmental conferences on religious freedom and legislation concerning religion and urged the Ministry of Justice to register religious groups under a new law granting them legal status.

To combat TIP, the United States assembled a list of suggested steps the Government could take to improve anti-TIP efforts and shared the list with high-ranking members of the Government. The steps urged the Government to provide support to NGOs, demonstrate an increase in arrests and convictions of traffickers, finalize TIP legislation, and create and implement national referral mechanisms for victim assistance. Embassy officials continued to follow these steps by engaging officials from the Prosecutor's office, Ministry of Internal Affairs, and others. A U.S. official visited Tbilisi and met with key figures in the Government, civil society and international community working to fight TIP. The Embassy continued to train members of the Special Operations Division of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and officials from the Prosecutor General's office on victim identification and the apprehension and investigation of traffickers. The United States funded a project aimed at victims' assistance and general public awareness of TIP. The project was supported by the Government and administered through a local NGO.



Kazakhstan

The Government's human rights record remained poor. Although there were improvements in other human rights areas, democratic institutions remained weak and President Nursultan Nazarbayev, who was reelected to another seven-year term on December 4, dominated the political space. Since its independence from the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan has not held an election that met international standards. The media climate remained hostile for independent and opposition press, which were subjected to restrictive criminal and civil libel penalties for criticizing the President and other government officials. Legislation enacted during the year eroded legal protections for human rights and expanded executive branch powers to regulate and control civil society. Wary of a possible "color" revolution, the Government harassed and investigated NGOs engaged in democracy support and civil society development. Kazakhstani society is ethnically diverse, and there is a high degree of interethnic tolerance. Despite the erosion of legal protections for religious freedom and some interference from local authorities, religious communities continued to report general government support for the rights of religious communities, including minority faiths. Trafficking in persons (TIP) remained a problem.

The United States vigorously advocated progress on human rights and democracy as an integral component of bilateral engagement and an essential complement to economic and security cooperation. Speaking in Astana in October, the Secretary of State noted, "Wise statesmen know and history has demonstrated that political and economic freedom must advance together and complement one another. History also teaches us that true stability and true security are only found in democratic regimes." In keeping with this integrated approach, numerous U.S. assistance and training programs in Kazakhstan, including programs involving the military, law enforcement, and other government agencies, had a human rights component. Support for the rule of law and independent media remained priorities. The United States continued to encourage the Government to live up to its OSCE human dimension commitments.

In spring 2005, the Secretary determined that Kazakhstan had not made significant progress in human rights and requested a national security waiver from Congress, as provided for in Section 587 of the Foreign Operations Appropriation Act, so that assistance to the Government for democracy, health, regional security, and economic development could continue. As part of intense U.S. engagement, the Government of Kazakhstan acknowledged the need to further improve its democracy and human rights record. The Secretary, Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Ambassador to the OSCE, CENTCOM Commander, Members of Congress, and other officials traveled to Kazakhstan throughout the year to raise U.S. democracy concerns at the highest levels. The Ambassador and a broad spectrum of U.S. officials based in Kazakhstan, Vienna, and Washington made democratic and human rights progress a daily priority. In late December, the U.S. Ambassador met with and demarched Government officials regarding U.S. Government concerns about the forced return of nine Uzbek refugee seekers in late November. The United States raised concerns about the Government's actions in a March 1, 2006 statement to the OSCE's Permanent Council. The United States remained committed to non-partisan promotion of political pluralism and governance that reflects the political will of its citizens and engaged the Government at every level to emphasize U.S. commitment to those principles.

Improving electoral processes was a main focus of U.S. democracy promotion efforts. U.S. officials regularly emphasized to the Government, including President Nazarbayev, the importance of holding elections meeting international standards. While the OSCE's election observation mission determined that the December 4 presidential election failed to meet international standards, U.S. diplomatic and programmatic efforts contributed to small improvements, which the OSCE cited, in the transparency of the electoral process. On December 10, President Bush called to congratulate President Nazarbayev and to underscore the importance of addressing electoral violations and implementing OSCE election recommendations.



Internews Kazakhstan Information Technology specialists oversee a News Factory seminar for radio stations. (Internews)

The Internews News Factory news exchange website (www.newsfactory.kz) provides 31 participating media outlets across Kazakhstan with dozens of news stories each day.



The United States funded projects that provided nonpartisan, capacity-building support to improve political party, civil society, and independent media participation in the electoral process. A U.S. partner NGO conducted a nationwide pre-election opinion poll and shared the findings with all political parties to encourage responsiveness to voters' concerns, consistent with non-partisan political party development training programs. The United States provided broad support for election observation and monitoring. Dozens of U.S. officials observed the election, and U.S. grants supported a variety of independent domestic and international observation efforts. A U.S. partner NGO trained partisan election monitors in seven cities across the country. The United States also supported exit polling on election day. With U.S. support, a coalition of eight domestic NGOs worked with the Central Election Commission to produce brochures on the electoral process and candidates' policy positions.

Other U.S. programs promoted good governance, citizen participation in the decision-making process, and civic education. A U.S.-sponsored expert spoke with Kazakhstani officials about electronic rulemaking processes in the United States, noting that e-government leads to greater government transparency

and public participation. The Embassy's Democracy Commission Small Grants Program issued several grants to independent, grassroots NGOs for projects aimed at encouraging local self-governance, and the United States underwrote a larger grant for a pilot program to develop citizen advisory committees to work productively with local governments. To foster increased civic participation, U.S.-funded civic education activities reached more than 41,000 secondary students. More than 3,100 students participated in U.S.-supported extracurricular activities, such as summer camps, student action committees, and local government days, to apply the skills they learned in the classroom. Surveys indicate that 69% of the students who participated in these extracurricular activities demonstrated greater civic activism as a result.

Media support programs provided professional development for journalists as well as legal and techni-



cal support, reaching more than 175 journalists and nine television stations in 2005. In anticipation of the December election, the United States funded a conference in Astana for journalists that reviewed the role of media in the electoral process. Five television stations across the country received in-depth technical production training, which each station used to produce talk shows related to election issues. An ongoing U.S.-funded program provided a legal support network for journalists throughout the year. U.S. funding also supported the creation of an Internet-based “news factory” that enabled journalists and media outlets to share stories and data. The United States provided grant support that enabled a well-established domestic media advocacy NGO to monitor and publicize abuses of journalistic rights and freedom of speech. In addition, the United States funded projects aimed at improving the professional skills of women journalists and coverage of women’s issues and human rights.

Through the International Visitors Leadership Program (IVLP) two groups of Kazakhstani print and broadcast journalists engaged with their U.S. counterparts and learned best practices. The Embassy, the OSCE, and an international NGO co-sponsored a seminar on professional journalistic standards in covering terrorism for 35 regional journalists. The Ambassador opened the conference with remarks on “Terrorism vs. Democracy,” and a U.S.-sponsored speaker conducted classes on reporting on terrorism.

With U.S. support, a domestic NGO conducted an information and advocacy campaign in cooperation with Kazakhstani and international organizations to inform the public about draft legislation that would have seriously hindered NGO activity in Kazakhstan. The grantee led public consultations, collected opinions and concerns for a database, provided other NGO leaders and civic activists with information about proposed legislative changes, and involved civic leaders in the advocacy campaign aimed at protecting the rights and freedoms of civil society. At the end of the information project, the Constitutional Council found the draft laws unconstitutional.

A U.S.-supported civil society association took an ac-

tive role in policy dialogue, advocacy, and representation of broad NGO interests. The association advocated implementing a law on the rights of persons with disabilities, holding local government budget hearings, investigating the use of regional government funds, protecting students’ rights, and paying fair compensation for demolished housing. The United States funded a democracy information center in the southern city of Shymkent, providing human rights and democracy information and training, offering Internet access, and hosting discussion clubs. IVLPs provided an opportunity for eight NGO leaders to travel to the United States to exchange expertise with American experts and counterparts. Embassy officials met with current and former grantees and IVLP alumni and found that most grantee NGOs had accomplished the goals set and continued to apply lessons learned.

Support for the rule of law, including an independent judiciary, remained a fundamental goal of U.S.-funded training programs for NGOs and Kazakhstani officials. To support judicial transparency and accountability, the United States cooperated with the Government on a successful pilot program that tested a video and audio recording system for court proceedings. The United States encouraged Kazakhstan to institute a jury trial system in coordination with the OSCE and arranged a study tour on jury trials for five Government officials. In January 2006, parliament adopted a jury system. A U.S. partner NGO developed a legal reasoning and writing curriculum expected to be introduced into law school curricula in 2007. The United States continued its advocacy with law faculties to emphasize the importance of maintaining mandatory legal ethics training. The Embassy conducted two “Integrity Awareness” training sessions and worked to establish anti-corruption programs for customs inspectors to increase operational effectiveness and accountability. Four government officials and two journalists completed a U.S.-sponsored study tour focusing on anti-corruption measures.

Two Embassy small grants addressed penal reform. One grant underwrote a seminar focusing on juvenile justice and recidivism concerns that law professors, judges, penitentiary officials, and NGO leaders



attended. The second grant supported ongoing human rights training for prison psychologists, which received praise from international penitentiary reform experts. The United States included mandatory human rights components in all bilateral military training. With U.S. technical assistance, Kazakhstan reduced incidents of military conscript hazing and abuse through a series of reforms to its non-commissioned officer (NCO) system. As a result, professional responsibility and training increased for NCOs, who now earn their rank by merit in areas including protection of the rights of the conscripts in their command. The United States continued to encourage the Government to find a just resolution in the case of Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan leader Galymzham Zhakiyanov, convicted in 2002 on what appeared to be politically motivated charges. Zhakiyanov was paroled on January 14, 2006.

Additional grants were awarded to NGO programs focused on youth, women, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. The Embassy's Democracy Commission Small Grants Program awarded grants to two domestic NGO projects focused on protecting and rehabilitating at-risk children. Another grant supported a series of women's rights roundtables for local NGOs. The United States funded a project that increased women's participation in policymaking and promoted government accountability at local levels through the creation of unprecedented public advisory councils that worked with several local governments.

The Ambassador and other U.S. officials advocated that legislation relating to religious freedom be drafted transparently and reflect international commitments and standards for protection of religious freedom. U.S. officials raised concerns in Kazakhstan and Washington about proposed legislation such as the Extremism Law, the National Security Amendments, and the NGO Law. Following passage of the Extremism Law and the National Security Amendments, U.S. officials in Kazakhstan, Washington and at OSCE forums in Vienna and Warsaw urged the Government to implement these laws in a manner that promoted human rights and respected religious freedom. Throughout the year, the Embassy brought

specific cases of concern regarding religious communities to the attention of government officials, who often corrected subordinates' infringements of religious rights. Through a U.S.-funded program, a U.S. expert lectured on African-Americans and Islam in the United States. In his preface to a documentary on Muslims in America by regional broadcaster Mir TV, the Ambassador emphasized, "Freedom of religion is one of the most fundamental values of the American way of life," and praised the film for showing the wisdom of community leaders who demonstrated how to separate extremist ideologies from the peaceful observance of the Muslim faith. The finished product was broadcast on local television news in all Commonwealth of Independent States countries except Turkmenistan.

The United States supported its bilateral cooperation with the Government on combating TIP with a broad civil society assistance strategy. Ongoing U.S. assistance programs provided services to trafficking victims through shelters, hotlines, and repatriation assistance. Approximately 10,000 people received information and training on trafficking-related issues through U.S.-supported programs. The Embassy's Democracy Commission Small Grants Program awarded four grants for anti-trafficking programs to NGOs, which conducted more than 40 community education seminars that reached over 200 at-risk youth, their teachers, and community leaders. The NGOs also conducted more than 30 training sessions on combating TIP for law enforcement, procurators, judges, and other government officials. Embassy officials arranged a U.S.-funded study tour for five key government officials to a leading destination country for Kazakhstanis trafficked abroad. Government officials identified areas where they could better coordinate with host country officials to offer assistance to trafficking victims and to prosecute traffickers. U.S.-supported experts led a conference in Almaty for judges, procurators, law enforcement investigators, and NGO representatives that presented advanced techniques for investigating, prosecuting, and sentencing trafficking cases.



Kyrgyz Republic

The March 24, 2005 overthrow of President Askar Akayev resulted in a major improvement in the Government's respect for human rights. The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, problems remain. Democratic institutions remain fragile pending constitutional, electoral, media, and judicial reform. During the first three months of 2005, the Akayev Government frequently restricted freedom of speech, the press, and assembly. The February-March parliamentary elections were marred by serious violations, particularly in the pre-election period. Even following March 24, members of the security forces at times beat or otherwise mistreated persons, and prison conditions remained very poor, sparking, in part, a series of prison riots in September and October. Corruption continued to be a serious problem, limiting citizens' rights to due process. Trafficking in persons (TIP), violence against women and children, child labor, and discrimination against ethnic minorities were also problems.

During the run-up to the February-March parliamentary elections and July presidential election, the U.S. strategy to promote democracy and human rights focused on creating a conducive environment for free and fair elections by strengthening democratic institutions, increasing observance of human rights, supporting civil society organizations, and promoting the development of independent media. Following the presidential election, the U.S. strategy shifted its focus to anti-corruption initiatives and constitutional and media reform, along with continued support to civil society and independent media.

To promote democracy and human rights, the United States maintains close contact with independent journalists, human rights activists, and politicians from across the political spectrum while encouraging dialogue between the Government and civil society. The Ambassador and visiting senior U.S. officials met frequently with members of the Government, civil society, and human rights groups to solicit their views. For the inauguration of President Kurmanbek Bakiyev, the United States sent a presidential delegation, led by the Secretary of Commerce, who congratu-

lated the new president on advancing democracy, but stressed the need to implement additional reforms. During an October 2005 visit to Bishkek, the Secretary of State addressed a gathering of parliamentarians, members of the Government, and civil society activists on democratic and constitutional reform. In September, the Assistant Secretary for European Affairs held a roundtable discussion with civil society activists. Both the Secretary and the Assistant Secretary met with President Bakiyev and other senior officials to discuss concerns about human rights issues, corruption, and constitutional reform. Then-Acting Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor Davies met with Kyrgyz officials at the UN General Assembly and stressed the need to take swift action on constitutional, media, and electoral reform. The head of the U.S. delegation to the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting and the U.S. Ambassador to the OSCE met with the Kyrgyz delegation to emphasize the need to maintain reform momentum and focus on constitutional, media, and electoral reforms and combating corruption. The U.S. Ambassador to Kyrgyzstan also held a series of roundtables with journalists, students, and others to discuss the need for further reform. In addition, she maintained an active public diplomacy program to help build support for reform.

For both the parliamentary and presidential elections, the United States financed the purchase of indelible ink as well as training for poll workers on how to use the ink as an anti-fraud tool. In both elections, the ink proved to be an effective measure in combating multiple voting, which had been a serious problem in previous elections. The United States also financed the first-ever comprehensive, hands-on training for over 27,000 election officials, including nearly all precinct election commission members. The training included a significant component on election ethics. The United States also provided substantial financial and logistical support for both domestic and international election monitors for both the parliamentary and presidential elections and financed the first-ever parallel vote tabulation carried out in Kyrgyzstan. For both elections, the U.S. Government was the single-largest source of international election monitors for the OSCE election observation mission.



In the run-up to both elections, the United States supported considerable voter education efforts, designed to inform voters about the use of indelible ink as well as of their rights as voters. The United States also supported a “Rock the Vote” campaign in which a well-known Ukrainian rock star toured Kyrgyzstan in order to increase voter turnout and interest in the July presidential election. Over 22,000 Kyrgyz citizens attended the free concerts. For the presidential election, the United States also sponsored the first-ever nationally televised debates between candidates. U.S. support for non-partisan political party development continued throughout the year, particularly in the run-up to the elections. Training focused on message and platform development, public speaking skills, and coalition building.

The United States continued its support of civic education programs, supplying 66,500 civic education textbooks to students around the country. Throughout the year, over 80,000 students in 1,998 schools participated in a U.S.-sponsored civic education program that promoted greater understanding of civic responsibility, women in political life, and international human rights.

Although media freedom and freedom of speech improved considerably since March, they remained areas of strong U.S. focus. In 2005, the United States provided training to journalists from 42 electronic and print outlets in an effort to improve professional standards and clarify the legal framework for media operation. The United States continued its support for the Media Commissioner Institute, which provides a source for alternative dispute settlement for journalists. The United States also supported efforts to transform state-owned television into a public-broadcasting format station. Throughout the year, the United States continued its support of the Media Support Center, which is the only independent printing press in Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia. When the Government of then-President Akayev cut off electricity to the Center immediately before the flawed February parliamentary elections to halt publication of several pro-opposition newspapers, the Embassy provided generators to keep the press running. The United States also supported media resource centers

in the Ferghana Valley, and U.S.-funded projects increased the professionalism of women journalists and coverage of women’s issues and human rights.

Since March 2005, civil society has become considerably freer. However, although President Bakiyev’s government has generally resisted the regional trend toward restricting NGO activity, a few prominent Western-funded NGOs were subject to smear campaigns and harassment in early 2006. Freedom of assembly also improved substantially since March 2005. Nevertheless, the United States continued its strong support for a wide variety of programs designed to strengthen civil society through a network of nine support centers that provide training, grants, legal assistance, and other services to NGOs all over the country. These centers are joined into a countrywide association that advocates at the national level on civil society issues. The United States also supported the establishment of more than 20 Information Centers for Democracy throughout Kyrgyzstan that provide key information and training and host debates. In 2005, 38 NGOs received capacity building grants, while another 82 organizations received community action grants to work on issues of local importance. Throughout the year, 140 NGO leaders focused on promoting democratic reform participated in U.S.-sponsored training on advocacy skills.

As a result of U.S. assistance, 11 civil society organizations improved their internal governance with the aim of fostering more effective decision-making, strategic planning, public outreach, fundraising, and accountability. Another 20 organizations achieved financial sustainability and diversified their funding sources to become less dependent on outside sources of funding. Twenty-one NGOs introduced an ongoing process of strategic planning, while 20 leading NGOs developed and used public outreach strategies, and ten NGOs established or developed existing local civil society networks. The United States also funded regional networks that strengthened the capacity of NGOs to hold public hearings, advocate, and solve conflicts effectively in the Ferghana Valley. In 2005, the U.S.-funded Democracy Commission Small Grants Program provided 44 grants to local NGOs in support of independent media outlets, combating



human trafficking, journalism training, academic integrity, human rights, democracy, civic and legal education, and election-related programming.

The United States continued programs to promote greater transparency in the judicial system and improve the legal structure in order to fight corruption. The United States also provided strong diplomatic support to anti-corruption efforts, with visiting high-level U.S. officials stressing to President Bakiyev and Prime Minister Feliks Kulov the need to make anti-corruption initiatives the centerpiece of their democracy and economic reform programs. In November, the Government began implementation of a U.S.-sponsored pilot project to reform the Bishkek traffic police to improve its effectiveness and combat corruption. The United States sponsored judicial training for commercial, criminal, and non-commercial civil judges, while the U.S.-funded Judicial Watchdog Group continued its work monitoring courtrooms. The United States also continued programs promoting greater transparency in local government. Partly as a result of U.S. efforts, 21 local governments held public hearings on the local budget, communal property, asset management, and other issues. The United States also provided grants to student groups at 12 Kyrgyz universities and 4 teacher groups to combat corruption within the Kyrgyz educational system.

Throughout the year, a U.S.-supported “Human Rights Defenders” network continued monitoring prisons and pretrial detention facilities in an effort to prevent detainee abuse. The network also reported on human rights abuses around the country and worked with authorities at the local and national levels to prevent further abuses.

Following riots between Uzbek security forces and protesters in the city of Andijon, Uzbekistan, in mid-May, approximately 500 Uzbek citizens sought refuge in Kyrgyzstan. The United States provided food assistance to these refugees; the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) worked with Kyrgyz government officials to provide suitable conditions at a refugee camp in southern Kyrgyzstan. The United States took a leading role in urging the Kyrgyz Government to release the refugees to UNHCR for

third-country resettlement, which it did for 450 of them between July and September. Four other members of the original group were forcibly returned to Uzbekistan in June, an action strongly protested by the U.S. Government; four more remain in Kyrgyz detention while their asylum cases are heard by the Kyrgyz courts. The United States continues to urge the Government to turn these Uzbek refugees over to UNHCR for third-country resettlement. Following continuous advocacy efforts by U.S. authorities in both Bishkek and Washington, the Secretary sent a letter to President Bakiyev in January 2006 reiterating the U.S. position.

Remaining engaged on the issue of religious freedom, the United States maintained regular contacts with representatives of various religious communities, and several Muslim religious leaders visited the United States through the International Visitors Leadership Program. The Ambassador hosted an annual Iftar dinner for Muslim leaders and visited the Islamic University and regional mosques. An Embassy official addressed a crowd of over 30,000 worshipers in Bishkek’s main square on the Feast of Eid marking the end of Ramadan.

The United States continued to play a leading role in combating TIP. On numerous occasions, U.S. officials lobbied for Kyrgyzstan to employ more effective efforts to combat TIP. In December, the U.S. Government began a three-year project to combat TIP in Kyrgyzstan, with a particular focus on labor trafficking. The United States also sponsored anti-trafficking information campaigns as well as seminars and training sessions aimed at law enforcement officials involved in anti-trafficking efforts. The United States also continued to support the Sezim shelter for trafficking victims.

Moldova

Moldova is a parliamentary republic with power divided among a president, cabinet, parliament, and judiciary. (Note: In 1992, a separatist regime, supported by Russian military forces, declared a “Transdnester Moldovan Republic” in the region between the



Dniester River and Ukraine. Since the Government of Moldova does not control this region, all references that follow are to the rest of the country, unless otherwise stated.) Despite reform setbacks in recent years, the OSCE judged the parliamentary elections on March 6, 2005 to have met most international standards, with the exception of campaign conditions and media coverage that favored the incumbent Communist government. Although the Communist Party won a majority in the legislature, it fell short of the two-thirds needed to return President Voronin to office, and several opposition groups eventually agreed to support him in exchange for commitments to undertake specific reforms. The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, there were problems in some areas. Controversy continued over pro-government bias in the news programs of the public broadcaster, Teleradio Moldova. Widespread corruption persisted throughout government and society, particularly in the law enforcement, judicial, education, and health sectors. Authorities tortured and beat some persons in police custody. In some cases, people were held incommunicado for extended periods, and prison conditions remained harsh. Several religious groups continued to encounter difficulties in obtaining official registration. Societal violence and discrimination against women, children, and Roma persisted. Trafficking in persons (TIP) remained a very serious problem.

The democratization and human rights record of the separatist-controlled Transnistria region remained very poor. December 11 elections to the Transnistrian “Supreme Soviet” were not considered free and fair and were not recognized by the OSCE, the Government of Moldova, or any other state. Authorities in the region reportedly continued to use torture and arbitrary arrest and detention. Prison conditions remained harsh, and two members of the so-called Ilascu Group remained in prison despite a July 2004 ruling in their favor by the European Court for Human Rights. Transnistrian authorities harassed independent media and opposition lawmakers, restricted freedom of association and of religion, and discriminated against Romanian speakers.

The U.S. strategy for promoting human rights and de-

mocracy in Moldova continued to focus on strengthening the rule of law, good governance, independent media, and civil society; promoting free and fair elections; combating TIP; and supporting a just and speedy resolution to the conflict in Transnistria. The United States consistently stressed to the Government that it must take concrete steps to promote democracy and human rights in order to enjoy deeper bilateral relations and improve the country’s EU membership prospects. The United States worked closely with the EU to promote the conditions for free and fair elections and to maintain international pressure on the Transnistrian regime.

The United States worked through the OSCE and directly with the Government and mediators to push for a solution to the conflict in Transnistria that is fair and respects the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova. In 2005, the United States and the EU became observers to the settlement negotiations, and U.S. officials participated in negotiating rounds in November and December. The United States raised the issue at the highest levels in bilateral and multilateral meetings and forums, in particular urging Russia to use its influence with the separatist authorities to promote a settlement and to fulfill its commitments, undertaken at the 1999 OSCE Summit in Istanbul, to withdraw its troops and munitions from Moldovan territory. U.S. assistance, while limited in its reach into Transnistria, maintained outreach and some support to the Transnistrian people, encouraged interaction between the two parts of Moldova, strengthened local civil society groups, and worked at the grassroots level to promote the growth of democratic institutions. Programs included educational and professional exchanges and training and support for a legal aid clinic. The United States also supported the development of two independent radio stations with reach into Transnistria to provide objective information to the people living there.

Through diplomatic efforts and support for civil society, the United States played a vital role in helping to ensure that the 2005 parliamentary elections met most international standards. During the pre-election campaign, the United States encouraged the Government, both bilaterally and with the EU, to conduct



the elections fairly and ensure equal media coverage for all candidates. President Bush underscored the importance of democratic elections in Moldova in a speech in Bratislava in February, and high-level U.S. interventions emphasized to the Government that the conduct of the elections would affect Moldova's standing among the world's democracies. The United States supported a program to monitor the objectivity and content of all major news sources during the campaign period, the findings of which objectively demonstrated the public media's pro-government bias and limited election coverage. This data was a key part of the successful international and domestic efforts to urge President Voronin and his Government to revise campaign media regulations to increase dramatically the airtime for debates on public stations and allow news programs to cover the election campaign. The United States supported the efforts of an association of local NGOs, "Coalition for Free and Fair Elections," to carry out electoral monitoring and voter education programs, develop voter and poll worker guides, and organize candidate debates

on television and radio. In addition, the United States funded the work of several other local NGOs to carry out get-out-the-vote campaigns, and on election day, deployed dozens of election observers as part of the OSCE observation mission and supported the deployment of close to 2,000 domestic observers throughout the country.

Following the elections, the United States turned its attention to supporting the newly elected parliament in its unanimously stated priority of European integration. U.S.-sponsored exchange visits for Moldovan parliamentarians helped them learn about building democratic institutions and integrating into Europe from Latvian and Lithuanian legislators. In addition, the United States supported programs to assist the Moldovan parliament in developing a legislative process that is transparent and responsive to the needs and priorities of Moldovan citizens. In one innovative U.S.-funded project, two Moldovan NGOs introduced the American congressional hearing system to key parliamentary committees. The United



U.S.-funded NGO monitors media coverage for objectivity and political balance in Moldova. (U.S. Department of State)



States also encouraged greater integration of women and youth in political processes, for example through a study trip for 18 women parliamentarians to the United States, training for political party youth factions, and “political party fairs” at universities. To improve local governance and increase citizen participation, the United States supported the work of local governments and communities to implement community-initiated development projects. Assistance focused on building municipal capacity, encouraging local officials to engage their citizens in community decision-making, and enhancing the capacity of citizens to create tangible and positive change in their own communities through civic activity and democratic practices. In the community-led projects, citizens developed, planned, managed, and implemented projects to improve local water, heat, gas, and other municipal services, while the United States provided training, technical assistance, and small amounts of funding.

In support of media freedom, the United States worked on the diplomatic front and through various programs, including exchanges, grants, and training courses for journalists, to promote media freedom and high journalistic standards. U.S. officials raised concerns with authorities about the independence and transparency of the Audiovisual Coordinating Council (CCA) in distributing broadcast licenses and frequencies. The United States also pressed the Government to select a truly independent Supervisory Board for Teleradio Moldova, implement merit-based, transparent hiring practices within the station, and bring its broadcast laws in line with OSCE standards. Many independent media outlets received U.S.-funded grants for projects aimed at increasing the independence of media and promoting pluralism. Key to U.S. efforts was work with the News Department of the formerly state-owned television station, Moldova 1, a major source of news for most Moldovans, which U.S.-funded monitoring had shown to give consistently preferential and biased treatment to the Government in its broadcasts. A U.S.-funded media expert worked with the staff of Moldova 1’s News Department to improve the objectivity and balance of its daily newscasts and increase the use of multiple sources in its reports. The United States also

financed the purchase of updated editing and video equipment, replacing broken and outdated equipment. In addition, the United States supported the development of civil society through the Democracy Commission Small Grants Program, giving grants to promote independent media and citizens’ access to information and to empower youth.

The United States supported several efforts to promote the rule of law and combat corruption and engaged the Government and President on the need to address the problem of corruption seriously. In 2005, the United States invited Moldova to submit a proposal for a Millennium Challenge Account Threshold Program, through which it may receive targeted assistance to combat corruption. The United States provided management expertise, technical assistance, and training opportunities to the Center for Combating Economic Crime and Corruption and the Prosecutor General’s Office to develop initiatives to fight corruption and increase the effectiveness of law enforcement anti-corruption and anti-trafficking efforts. With U.S. assistance, the Government developed and passed the so-called “Guillotine Law,” which led to the elimination of 189 costly and obsolete regulations, thus reducing opportunities for corruption and making it easier to open and operate a business. This process was accompanied by a U.S.-supported public information campaign to raise citizens’ awareness of the limits of government authority and encourage them to fight back against official abuse and corruption. Other rule of law programs assisted legal institutions, judges, bar associations, students, and lawyers to strengthen the quality and awareness of legal education and legal reforms. A U.S.-funded criminal law program conducted training for judges on human rights and for the defense bar on advocacy skills.

The United States highlighted its concern for religious freedom, advocating throughout the year the registration of several religious organizations that have been unable to register for many years. The Ambassador raised concerns about persistent registration difficulties at the highest levels of the Government. In observance of Human Rights Day in December, the Ambassador highlighted religious freedom in an editorial placed in two national newspapers. The Embas-



sy repeatedly raised concerns about certain religious groups encountering hindrances to the construction of houses of worship.

The Ambassador and other U.S. officials, including a U.S. congressional delegation, emphasized the importance of combating TIP. The United States successfully pushed for the passage of a comprehensive anti-trafficking law and the ratification of the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, supplementing the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime. In September, through President Bush's Anti-Trafficking Initiative, the United States signed an agreement with the Government to support the creation of an inter-agency Center for Combating Trafficking in Persons. The President's initiative also includes support for the creation of a network of transitional living and educational facilities to reduce the vulnerability to TIP of orphanage and boarding school graduates and returned trafficking victims. The United States funded several programs to address the economic roots of TIP by improving access for actual and potential trafficking victims to counseling, job training, and legitimate employment opportunities. The United States continued to support the work of the Center for the Prevention of Trafficking in Women in providing victims legal assistance and counseling, legal representation, and help in replacing identity papers.

Russia

The Russian Federation has a weak multiparty political system with a strong presidency, a government headed by a prime minister, and a bicameral legislature consisting of a lower house (State Duma) and an upper house (Federation Council). The most notable human rights development in 2005 was the continued centralization of power in the executive branch through changes in the parliamentary election laws and a move away from the direct election of regional governors. Government pressure continued to weaken freedom of expression and media independence, particularly of major national television networks, and further undermined the effectiveness of NGOs.

Legislation passed by the Duma in December 2005 and signed into law by President Putin in January 2006 contained many elements that could severely hinder the work of NGOs in Russia. These trends, taken together with a compliant State Duma, corruption and selectivity in law enforcement, and political pressure on the judiciary, resulted in the further erosion of government accountability. The Government's human rights record remained poor in Chechnya, where there were credible reports of serious human rights violations, including reports of unlawful killings and abuses of civilians by both federal security forces and Chechen Government security forces. Rebel fighters committed terrorist bombings and serious human rights abuses in the North Caucasus region. Authorities, primarily at the local level, imposed limitations on freedom of assembly. Minorities continued to experience widespread discrimination and racially and religiously motivated attacks. Trafficking in persons (TIP) remained a problem despite steps to combat it.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy in Russia focused on promoting democratic institutions and processes, a vibrant civil society, rule of law, human rights, independent media, and anti-trafficking measures. A range of senior U.S. officials, including the President, Secretary of State, National Security Advisor, Under Secretary for Political Affairs, and the Ambassador, raised human rights and democracy concerns with their Russian counterparts. In May and November 2005 meetings with President Putin, President Bush raised a broad range of bilateral issues, including democracy and human rights concerns. In addition to meeting with government officials, the President and Secretary of State met with Russian civic leaders during their visit to Russia in May. In early 2006, the Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor visited Moscow to discuss the NGO law with civil society, Duma, and government leaders.

To promote free and fair elections, the United States continued to provide programmatic and technical support to a Russian election watchdog organization, nonpartisan training for political parties, and training for mass media representatives on covering political issues and engaging with the public about the



role of free media in an open, competitive political system. U.S.-funded organizations conducted non-partisan observation of several regional elections in Russia. NGO observers of the December 4 Moscow City legislative elections successfully ran an election day hotline that received calls from candidates, observers, and citizens. However, changes to electoral legislation passed during 2005 could prevent Russian NGOs from observing federal elections in future years. A U.S.-funded organization conducted polling to help political parties, civic organizations, and citizen groups be more responsive to the concerns of their constituents and foster greater citizen participation in the political process. The United States also supported training and development activities for Russian political parties committed to working peacefully within the democratic process to advocate legitimate citizen interests and seek responsible legislative representation, with a focus on strengthening links with constituents, promoting effective governance, and encouraging the participation of women and youth. With U.S. funding, NGOs trained observers to monitor the work of deputies in regional legislatures, with the goals of encouraging interaction between constituents and their elected officials and promoting good governance.

The Government continued efforts to manage civil society, including scrutiny of many foreign and domestic NGOs. U.S. officials raised concerns about the controversial NGO legislation and harassment of specific NGOs. To strengthen civil society, U.S. programs provided technical assistance and grant support to civil society groups, NGO resource centers, advocacy and watchdog groups, policy think tanks, business associations, and labor unions. With U.S. funding, NGOs promoted volunteerism and community service, advocated for citizens' rights, and fought corruption. A civic campaign launched by regional organizations and supported in part by the United States inspired more than 400,000 volunteers to address critical needs in their communities. School-based community service learning engaged thousands of young people in developing and implementing projects to improve their communities. During 2005, at least 20 government entities of the Siberian Federal District introduced competitive grant procedures for NGOs,

due in part to the efforts of a U.S.-supported regional resource center. U.S. assistance supported more than 1,000 environmental protection, public advocacy, and other civil society events throughout Russia, with the participation of tens of thousands of activists. U.S. funding also enabled independent Russian think tanks in 17 regions to develop policy recommendations that influenced reform in areas such as local self-governance, economic development, and social policy. In 2005, more than 90 analyses prepared by think tanks, supported in part by the United States, were incorporated into legislation and policy initiatives of the Government. A consortium of U.S. and Russian NGOs dedicated to improving the legislative environment regulating NGOs provided analysis and opinion after the Duma introduced controversial NGO legislation in late 2005. In addition, the Embassy – in part through a U.S.-sponsored American Corner branch at the Duma's Parliamentary Library – helped provide Duma deputies with information on U.S. laws concerning NGOs.

Media freedom in Russia was a continuing concern in 2005 and was publicly raised by the President and Secretary of State. The United States worked to strengthen journalism in Russia, organizing International Visitors Leadership Programs (IVLPs) for journalists on public policy, which advocated a greater role for journalists in the policy dialogue. The United States also contributed to journalism education through an IVLP for journalism educators as well as through the Moscow State University-University of Missouri Columbia partnership in journalism and the Fulbright Summer Institute in Journalism. In addition, journalists across Russia participated in the Open World visitor program and, with U.S. funding, three media experts visited Russia to address various aspects of journalism in discussions with Russian audiences. The United States worked to strengthen regional broadcast media and to improve access to non-governmental sources of information. Organized by a U.S.-funded NGO, over 300 small and mid-sized regional TV stations participated in the first professional television competition that encouraged socially responsible journalism. More than 2,600 broadcast journalists participated in U.S.-financed training, conferences, and competitions on professional standards,



socially responsible journalism, production best practices, and media business development. U.S. support also helped create the conditions for an independent association of newspaper publishers to advocate on behalf of its members and for Russia's first media lawyers' association to help protect news outlets from external pressure on editorial freedom.

To promote the rule of law, the United States continued to support exchange and technical assistance programs aimed at bolstering judicial independence, ethical conduct, transparency, and professionalism. In March, a U.S.-funded program helped organize a trip by senior Russian judges to Washington to meet with eight U.S. Supreme Court Justices, at the Chief Justice's request. The delegation discussed issues such as jury trials and the relationship between the courts and the media. The Open World Program brought U.S. Federal judges to Russia to discuss with Russian legal audiences the fundamentals of an independent judiciary, including judicial oversight and the role of prosecutors, and expanded ties between Russian legal professionals and U.S. counterparts. U.S. funding contributed to reforms made in 2005 to further professionalize judicial operations by increasing the use of computers, professional court administrators, justices of the peace, law clerks, and court press officers. Innovations adopted in U.S.-funded pilot courts have improved customer service, efficiency, and transparency of operations, and Russian officials are considering expanding them throughout the court system. Other U.S. programs continued to support legal clinics, defend the rights of women, labor, and migrants, and develop NGO advocacy skills.

The United States supported the use of the legal system by NGOs, which have won the majority of over 2,000 cases taken to court in the last three years. Most cases were on behalf of refugees and labor union activists. The number of visitors to a U.S.-supported human rights website increased from 1,400 in 2003 to 125,968 in November 2005; 37,000 persons have visited the Russian-language version of that website since its establishment in 2004. U.S.-supported legal clinics have been established at approximately 80 law schools, many of which provide representation to indigent persons. Some clinics are now beginning to

specialize in subjects such as the rights of women, children, and prisoners.

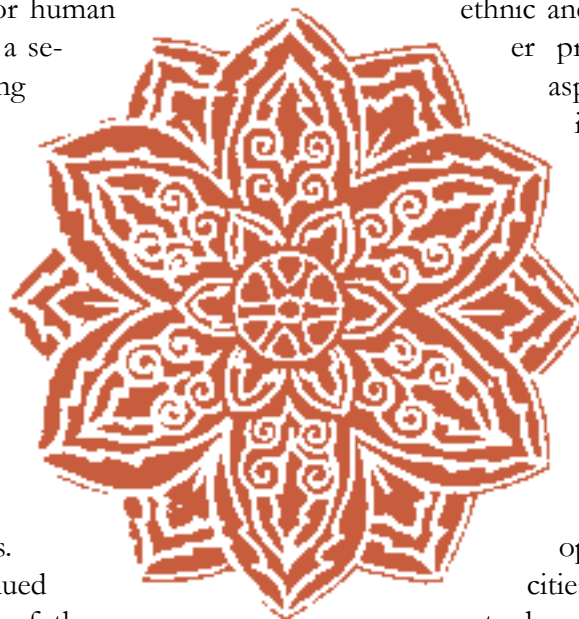
The gravest violations of human rights in Russia continued to occur in Chechnya and other areas of the North Caucasus. Senior U.S. officials expressed concern to Russian leaders about the conduct of Russian security services and about the security services' association with the Government of the Republic of Chechnya, which was increasingly linked to abductions and disappearances of civilians. U.S. officials stressed that the United States supports a political, not a military, solution in Chechnya; urged an end to human rights abuses by all parties to the conflict and accountability for such abuses when they occur; and urged officials to conduct the November 2005 local parliamentary elections in a free, fair, and transparent manner. U.S. officials continued to encourage the development and broadening of a political dialogue with all parties, which is a fundamental step necessary to the settlement of the conflict. The United States also condemned terrorist acts and violence against civilians carried out by Chechen fighters and called on them to repudiate terrorism and cut all ties to Chechen and international terrorists. The United States recognizes the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation.

U.S. officials, in Moscow and during visits to the region, met frequently with human rights NGOs to discuss the situation in Chechnya and to show support for the work of these organizations. In July, a delegation from Washington traveled to Chechnya, Ingushetia, and North Ossetia to assess the humanitarian situation as well as the potential to provide conflict mitigation and recovery assistance. U.S. officials also regularly met with officials from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and persons displaced by the conflict to ensure that those who returned to Chechnya did so voluntarily or had the alternative of staying in Ingushetiya. U.S. officials stressed to Russian officials that all returns of internally displaced persons (IDPs) to Chechnya should continue to be purely voluntary, that alternative shelter should be provided to those IDPs who wish to remain in Ingushetiya, and that humanitarian aid organizations should be allowed to work without



interference. The United States supported legal assistance to IDPs, including through UNHCR and through an NGO that assisted thousands of IDPs in the North Caucasus. The same NGO conducted activities to foster more tolerant societal attitudes toward IDPs through public campaigns and the media. The United States funded international humanitarian assistance programs addressing a wide range of IDP needs in the North Caucasus.

To celebrate International Human Rights Day, the Ambassador addressed and took questions from students of Moscow's Higher School of Economics on the subjects of human rights and democracy. The Embassy, working with a partner organization, supported three fellowships for human rights activists to spend up to a semester in Washington working on human rights-related issues. Gender issues remained an important element of the U.S. human rights strategy. A U.S.-funded program trained 60 social advocates in 2005 to handle domestic violence cases and other gender-related issues. This program also worked to improve law enforcement response to domestic violence complaints. The United States also continued working to promote the rights of the disabled and children. A U.S.-assisted NGO project promoted the use of legal advocacy to secure access to education for disabled students and conducted public campaigns on inclusive education for persons with disabilities. The United States supported seminars on the rights of the disabled for thousands of government and educational officials, community leaders, media representatives, and lawyers and supported the development of a university course on disability law. In November, the Ambassador hosted an event for "Inclusive Education Week," which included the participation of the Minister of Education, to encourage support for better mainstreaming of disabled children in public education.



Senior U.S. officials, including the Ambassador, maintained an active dialogue with government officials, religious denominations, and NGOs on freedom of religion and religious, racial, and ethnic tolerance. U.S. officials condemned attacks on religious minorities and their places of worship and met with Russian officials at multiple levels to urge them to hold accountable those responsible and to condemn publicly such attacks. The Embassy's Democracy Commission Small Grants Program gave grants to 12 NGOs working to improve inter-ethnic and inter-religious tolerance. In five regions, the United States continued to support tolerance councils that brought together the general public, law enforcement officials, local NGOs, and local governments to combat intolerance toward ethnic and religious groups. Six speaker programs focused on various aspects of tolerance, including interfaith relations and multicultural themes. Two speakers specifically addressed interfaith relations in the United States, religious tolerance, and the experience of American Muslims.

U.S. support continued for a Russia-wide association of labor lawyers and advocates operating legal centers in seven cities. This association provides trade unions and their members with expert legal advice on a wide range of labor contract issues. In 2005, the organization represented in court the interests of 800 individuals and 34 unions, which resulted in 131 decisions – two-thirds of which were in favor of labor – and more than \$160,000 in damages to plaintiffs. The organization appealed one of these cases to the European Court of Human Rights, which is expected to hear the case in 2006.

To assist Russia in combating TIP, the United States worked with the Ministry of Internal Affairs to train police and prosecutors on methods for investigating and prosecuting trafficking cases, using a victim-centered approach. Three week-long train-the-trainer



conferences were held to train police instructors in state-of-the-art anti-trafficking techniques. The Embassy worked closely with the State Duma to conduct legislative hearings in each of Russia's seven federal districts on additional victim-centered anti-trafficking legislation. The Embassy also worked with the Presidential Administration and the Ministry of Internal Affairs to develop implementing regulations for Russia's new witness protection program and to assist in drafting an asset forfeiture law that can be used to divest traffickers of illicit proceeds and fund victim assistance. The United States and Russia established a bilateral law enforcement task force to promote closer cooperation among law enforcement officials on trafficking cases. The United States is working with the Federation Council to draft more effective child pornography legislation and continues to work closely with NGO partners throughout Russia to raise awareness of TIP and encourage closer, more effective cooperation between law enforcement and NGOs. The United States continues to support anti-trafficking NGOs throughout Russia that provide assistance to trafficking victims and train police on TIP issues. NGOs in the Russian Far East, supported by U.S. funding, conducted informational seminars for teachers from 55 schools to help them educate young people about TIP and provided more than 100 training sessions in job skill development to young, at-risk women. U.S. support helped to create hotlines for victims and persons at risk of being trafficked and improved community sensitivity to and civic action against TIP.

Serbia and Montenegro

Serbia and Montenegro is a state union consisting of the relatively large Republic of Serbia and the much smaller Republic of Montenegro. The two republics hold most of the authority, while the state union Government's responsibilities are limited to foreign affairs, national security, human and minority rights, and foreign and domestic economic and commercial relations.

The United States promotes human rights and democracy in Serbia and Montenegro through a vari-

ety of U.S.-funded programs and projects, exchanges, training, and other professional programs. The Embassy uses interagency working groups through its Rolling Policy Agenda and Democracy Commission to identify priorities and plan programs through the implementation phase. Establishing rule of law is a top U.S. priority for building democracy in Serbia and Montenegro. The United States and European partners continued to deliver a strong message to the Government that Euro-Atlantic integration will not be possible without full cooperation with the UN International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). To combat the persisting public opinion that portrays war criminals as national heroes, the United States funded NGOs to organize media campaigns, public debates, and reports on "dealing with the past."

SERBIA

In Serbia, the Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens and continued efforts to address human rights violations throughout 2005, but numerous problems from previous years persisted. Government attention to police abuses increased, but incidents of police violence and misconduct continued. There were cases of arbitrary arrest and selective enforcement of the law for political purposes. The judiciary remained marred by corruption and inefficiency, and the judicial process continued to be lengthy. The Government at times impeded freedom of the press and harassed journalists as well as NGO workers. Societal violence and discrimination against religious and ethnic minorities continued. Two of ICTY's most wanted war crimes suspects, Ratko Mladic and Radovan Karadzic, remained at large in the region. Trafficking in persons (TIP) and violence against women and children persisted.

During 2005, the United States trained and directly engaged Serbian party leaders by building the capacity of democratic parties to serve and represent citizens, formulate and implement reform agendas, move toward issue-based political dialogue, and mount fair and transparent election campaigns. The United States also provided technical assistance and training to build the capacity, accountability, and transparency



of municipal governments. U.S. officials also urged central government officials to promote greater decentralization in order to foster more participatory and representative democracy.

The United States provided training, technical assistance, exchanges, and grant support to increase media professionalism and competitiveness. In 2005, the United States supported the production of documentaries and reports on topics such as transitional justice. The United States also actively engaged the new Broadcast Council to ensure fairness and media freedom in determining media licensing and assignment of frequencies.

The United States actively supported the continued development of a vibrant civil society by working closely with a variety of NGOs to increase institutional effectiveness and sustainability. U.S. grants supported NGO educational programs on transitional justice and local NGOs working to promote civic awareness, government transparency, and economic and social reform.

The United States assisted in building the rule of law and domestic capacity to try war crimes in Serbia through training programs focused on improving the professional capacity of the police, prosecutors, and judges who oversee war crimes cases. The programs contributed to the establishment of a victim/witness protection unit and helped the Government draft a witness protection law. A U.S.-organized trial monitoring program for war crimes cases helped identify and resolve legal and technical issues that arose during such trials. The United States provided training and technical assistance to magistrates, judges, prosecutors, law schools, and associations of young lawyers to promote a more independent, transparent, and efficient judicial system. The United States contributed to the development of associations for magistrates, judges, and prosecutors. Visitor exchanges also proved to be an invaluable tool for educating government and judicial officials about the U.S. judicial system and methods of judicial reform.

The United States pressed the Serbian Government to prevent and respond appropriately to attacks against

ethnic minorities, increase ethnic tolerance, and promote reconciliation within society. The United States supported a university campaign designed to increase tolerance and inter-ethnic dialogue and funded exchange visits focused on managing diversity in a multiethnic society and minority political participation. U.S. efforts to safeguard and promote the rights of ethnic minorities also promoted the rights of religious minorities associated with those ethnic groups. The United States routinely met with government officials to urge revisions to a draft religion law that favors some religions over others.

In 2005, the United States trained and equipped police, prosecutors, and judges and funded a TIP victims' shelter through the IOM. The United States also helped establish a government agency to coordinate assistance to trafficking victims and funded workshops and public awareness campaigns.

KOSOVO

Since 1999, Kosovo has been administered by the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) pursuant to UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (June 1999). UNMIK has worked to foster autonomy, effective self-governance, protection of minority rights, and adherence to the rule of law. After six years of international community assistance, the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG) must still fully address interethnic reconciliation and make further progress on implementing the "Standards for Kosovo," which help provide the framework for establishing a multi-ethnic, sustainable democratic society. In October 2005, the UN Security Council formally approved commencement of final status negotiations for Kosovo, based on the recommendation of UN Special Envoy Kai Eide. As a member of the Contact Group and contributor to the NATO-led Kosovo Force, the United States remains fully involved in all aspects of peacekeeping and democratization in Kosovo. UNMIK and the PISG generally respected the human rights of Kosovo's residents; however, there were serious problems in some areas, especially relating to Kosovo's ethnic minority communities, including politically and ethnically motivated killings; restrictions of freedom of movement



for minorities, particularly ethnic Serbs; and societal violence, abuse, and discrimination against minority communities. Additional progress is also still needed in identifying the fate of approximately 2,500 individuals from Kosovo who remain missing as a result of the 1999 conflict.

The United States continued to promote democracy and human rights to aid Kosovo's post-war transition into a stable, democratic society on the path to Euro-Atlantic integration. In a dynamic period of transition in Kosovo, the United States worked to strengthen transparency, institutional accountability, and respect for the rule of law and the rights of minorities. The United States worked diligently with the international community, including UNMIK, the EU, the OSCE, NGOs, and PISG officials to foster democratic and accountable institutions in Kosovo. Officials of the U.S. Office in Pristina, in coordination with the OSCE, assisted UNMIK with monitoring, protecting, and promoting human rights. In tandem with the PISG, the United States worked to combat TIP, build capacity within central and local government in both the executive and legislative branches, and train civil servants, judges, prosecutors, and youth to understand and apply rule of law and human rights standards. The United States funded programs that supported reform of local governance in order to better address the needs of Kosovo's ethnic communities and assisted existing political parties to increase transparency and accountability for their constituencies. The United States also supported NGOs in promoting the return of displaced persons and provided training to the police and judiciary to combat trafficking in persons and foster the creation of an independent, viable, and unbiased judiciary. The United States provided training to print and broadcast media on professional journalism. The International Visitor Program, along with other exchange and speaker programs, promoted a secure, multi-ethnic environment for all of Kosovo's residents in the interest of building mutual understanding.

Following what were characterized as generally free and fair parliamentary elections in October 2004 (although only approximately one percent of Kosovo Serbs participated because of a Serbian Government-

sponsored boycott), Kosovo's new Government created the Ministry for Local Government Administration, and the United States provided it with technical and policy assistance to shape policies and plans for municipal finance, the election of local officials, and the decentralization of local government throughout all of Kosovo in order to give all communities, especially minorities, a greater voice in local affairs. The U.S.-sponsored Local Government Initiative and the Municipal Infrastructure and Support Initiative provided training and technical assistance to municipalities in order to strengthen performance in financial self-sustainability, transparency, and accountability, legislative functioning, and citizen participation. The United States continued efforts to create the conditions necessary to facilitate the return of ethnic minority internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees who fled Kosovo during and immediately following the 1999 conflict as well as during the March 2004 riots. At the request of the PISG, the United States provided advisors to the Office of the Prime Minister on macro-economic policy, budgeting, legislative drafting, organization, management, and public relations.

The United States used political support and technical assistance to focus PISG efforts on passing and reviewing legislation and to strengthen the newly formed opposition's voice. As a result of U.S. encouragement, political parties now use polling and constituent research data to make timely policy and strategic decisions and better represent constituents' views. In an effort to encourage greater participation by Kosovo Serbs, the majority of whom boycotted participation in central and local government institutions, the United States assisted in the registration of the newly formed Serbian Democratic Party of Kosovo (SDS-KiM). Kosovo Assembly committees received expert advice in a new effort to monitor the implementation of parliamentary and governmental decisions for alignment with budgetary realities. At the request of Assembly members, the United States provided training on the Assembly's rules of procedure, discussed how best to guarantee the rights of newly established opposition and minority parties, and resurrected the dormant Assembly rules committee.



The overall state of Kosovo's print and broadcast media continued to improve, but the level of professional journalism was inconsistent. U.S. assistance supported the enhancement of an independent, self-sufficient media to focus on increased professionalism, effectiveness, and sustainability. The United States reduced its levels of direct subsidy in favor of assistance for business planning, increased the use of audience research and targeting, and strengthened professional and trade associations to represent both media interests and responsibility to the public. With U.S. guidance, the Kosovo Assembly passed legislation establishing the Independent Media Commission to help equalize private and public media, improved public media accountability, and created a new regulatory body governing the licensing and operation of broadcast media. As a result of U.S. support, the Association of Independent Broadcasters of Kosovo and the Association of Professional Journalists of Kosovo successfully lobbied to decriminalize libel and defamation and change some of the customs restrictions on importing foreign media. U.S. funds supported the creation of a local media association's code of ethics and sponsored a best practices workshop for media professionals of all ethnicities in Kosovo.

Civil society development is crucial to Kosovo's maturation as a modern democracy. The U.S.-funded Kosovo Institute for Policy Research and Development assisted the Government in drafting the new election law and the Kosovo Research and Documentation Institute worked in all municipalities to improve communication, transparency, and the reporting skills of municipal leadership. The United States assisted the Kosovo NGO consortium and the Advocacy Network of Kosovo to carry out a 15-municipality-strong campaign promoting the implementation of the Standards. U.S. assistance to civil society brought together networks of like-minded organizations while supporting training, management, and grant-making efforts.

The United States provided much-needed computer equipment, books and English-language instruction in the majority ethnic Serb municipality of Gracanica. Two American Corners established during the year in

multi-ethnic municipalities – one in the ethnic Serb majority area of northern Mitrovica – provided a springboard for further community outreach, including speakers, exhibits, and English language classes and resources.

Strengthening the rule of law is a key U.S. priority for ensuring a democratic, stable future and efficient, transparent legal structures in Kosovo. Building on U.S. efforts to help establish the policy framework for a modern justice sector, assistance focused on using a consultative process with local and international stakeholders to develop appropriate legislation; draft and enact modern criminal justice laws and regulations; and de-politicize judicial institutions. The United States supported a criminal procedure commentary project, amendments to the Kosovo criminal procedure code, a Kosovo Chamber of Advocates, and a legal clinic/moot courtroom to advance technical skills of law students, judges, and prosecutors. In conjunction with the European Agency for Reconstruction, the United States provided recommendations on court administration, adopted by UNMIK's Department of Justice, and supported the creation of an apolitical, independent, and transparent justice ministry.

The United States actively encouraged the creation of an open and safe climate for the return of IDPs who fled Kosovo following the 1999 conflict and the 2004 inter-ethnic riots. U.S. officials publicly urged the PISG to continue the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue to help resolve the fate of an estimated 2,500 persons missing since 1999. The United States contributed funding to identify new gravesites and exhume and identify remains in Kosovo. Additionally, the United States encouraged UNMIK's Department of Justice to develop a war crimes division to investigate and prosecute unsolved war crimes and missing persons cases. The active leadership of the United States on minority issues culminated in conflict mitigation programs, assistance to reconciliation dialogue NGOs, and significant funding to NGOs working with returns-related infrastructure construction. During the year the United States provided advocacy and funding for UNMIK's efforts to relocate and provide health care to hundreds of Roma living in three lead-con-



taminated IDP camps in northern Kosovo.

The promotion of the rights of women and persons with disabilities continued to be U.S. priorities. In 2005, the United States contributed training, advocacy and political support to the first women's caucus in the Kosovo Assembly, one of Kosovo's few truly multi-ethnic cross-party political institutions. U.S. funding contributed to women's regional business initiatives, awareness campaigns for disability issues, and the first women's center established in Serb-majority northern Kosovo. The United States awarded 22 small grants for projects ranging from conflict resolution training for teachers in multi-ethnic schools to the development of a Junior Achievement-style program. A U.S.-funded program sent Kosovo television crews to the United States to participate in the production of documentaries on community policing, philanthropy, and volunteerism.

U.S. officials continued to urge dialogue between members of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Kosovo and ethnic Albanian members of the PISG. Officials from the United States met frequently with the heads of major religious communities: the Chief of Mission hosted a well-attended and well-received annual Iftaar (fast-breaking dinners) for the Islamic community, and U.S. officials attended Serbian Orthodox holiday services during the year. U.S. officials continued to urge UNMIK and the PISG to begin reconstruction on religious buildings damaged during the 1999 conflict and in the inter-ethnic riots of March 2004. Officials from the United States met frequently with the heads of the major religious communities, provided funding to preserve Ottoman-era transcripts in the Gazi Medhmed Pasha Library and granted significant funding to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization's large-scale effort to preserve cultural heritage in Kosovo.

The United States continued to highlight the need for increased UNMIK and PISG attention to curbing human trafficking in Kosovo through support of governance structures and NGOs. In addition to sponsoring a speaker to further develop local resources, the United States advocated a joint effort among the more than 20 organizations currently handling traf-

ficking to arrest and convict known traffickers and provide support to victims. The United States actively assisted in developing an anti-trafficking strategy for Kosovo, organized public awareness campaigns, and provided surveillance equipment for UNMIK's anti-trafficking unit, which aided in several arrests.

MONTENEGRO

In Montenegro, the Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens, but there were problems in some areas. Shortly after the assassination of the chief of police, police raided a nearby prison and beat and abused suspected prisoners. Human rights abuses by police were generally not brought to justice. Media independence improved but problems remain. An analysis prepared for the Montenegrin Foreign Ministry on the Montenegrin media sparked controversy and sharp reactions from local outlets due to the Government's apparent attempt to better "control" the media. Domestic violence and discrimination against women remained problems. Trafficking in women and children for sexual exploitation continued to be a problem. Some ethnic discrimination persisted, particularly with regard to Roma.

The United States continued to support democratic reforms in Montenegro by assisting the development of democratic political parties, strengthening the representative and legislative functions of parliament, and building domestic capacity for credible nonpartisan election monitoring. In Montenegro, political party development helped political parties, particularly younger party members in politically isolated communities in the north, to improve their organization, decision-making, and public outreach in order to be more representative and issue-based. Programs to support civil society development strengthened the capacity of civic organizations to hold the Government accountable, advocate for democratic reform, and monitor elections. Parliamentary capacity building efforts improved caucus and committee work, staff development, and constituency outreach. These programs aimed at creating a political dialogue that is anchored firmly to the public interest and through which complex issues can be addressed democratically.



Through grants, training, and technical assistance, the United States is working to develop the skills and capacity of independent Montenegrin media outlets by enabling them to offer a professional product and become financially sustainable. U.S. programs provided expert advice to leaders of Montenegro's new Public Broadcasting Service regarding adoption of various programming principles and organizational options for the restructuring of the public broadcaster. The United States also promoted media freedom and principles of free speech in Montenegro through small-scale exchange and training programs.

In Montenegro, the United States provided a combination of technical assistance, training, and financial grants to a core group of NGOs to develop institutional capacity according to international standards of transparency and accountability and to develop the skills, expertise, and credibility required to advance public policy dialogue. Through U.S. programs, these NGOs are learning to build constituencies for judicial, economic, and social reform priorities; conduct public education about legislative initiatives; participate in the development of policy solutions; and demand accountability from the government. As a result, the Government adopted more than 25 key pieces of reform legislation, including laws on political party financing, guidelines for police on domestic abuse intervention, a law on witness protection, and a code of ethics for civil servants.

The United States is strongly committed to supporting the rule of law in Montenegro and supported programs focused on increasing the capacity of the judiciary. The United States strengthened the ability of the state prosecutor's office to effectively investigate and prosecute official corruption through technical advice and assistance. U.S.-sponsored police training emphasized the importance of respect for citizens' rights.

The United States funded a "Legal Counseling Office" project implemented by the Association for Disabled Youth in Montenegro. The Association printed and distributed state disability laws to increase awareness on rights and benefits for disabled persons. The U.S. also supported the NGO "Sign of Hope" to provide

training and raise awareness on the needs of youth with disabilities.

The U.S. Government continued to promote ethnic and religious tolerance throughout Montenegro. U.S. officials met regularly with the leaders of religious and ethnic minorities, as well as with representatives of the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Government to promote respect for religious freedom and human rights. U.S. officials reached out to the Islamic community during Ramadan in 2005, sponsoring well-received Iftaars (fast-breaking dinners) in both Serbia and Montenegro.

Trafficking in women and children for sexual exploitation continued to be a problem. U.S. efforts helped reestablish an effective, integrated anti-trafficking effort by the Government of Montenegro. Reaching beyond traditional "rule of law" actors, the new effort included health, labor, and education officials. Six traffickers were convicted in 2005, compared to only one total in all previous years. The Government of Montenegro assumed the entire budget responsibility for a TIP victim's shelter that the United States helped establish in 2004 and partially funded through 2005.

Tajikistan

The Government of Tajikistan's human rights record remained poor. Tajikistan is an authoritarian state; President Emomali Rahmonov and an inner circle of loyal supporters dominated political life. The country has a constitution and a functioning multiparty political system, but in practice, democratic progress was slow. Although the Government registered two new, pro-government political parties this year, it continued to deny registration to opposition political parties. The executive branch continued to exert pressure over the judicial system and dominated the legislative branch. Corruption continued to hamper democratic and social reform. The Government continued to restrict civil society and denied visas and registration to several international and local democracy and human rights NGOs. The Government refused to register, harassed, and censored independent media outlets.



There were reports of torture, abuse, and extortion by security forces that acted with impunity; harsh prison conditions; restrictions on religious freedom; violence and discrimination against women; and child and forced labor. Trafficking in persons (TIP) remained a problem, but the Government made some improvements in this area.

The U.S. democracy and human rights strategy remained focused on reinforcing positive developments and engaging the Government, the international community, and the Tajik public to advance progress toward democratic reform and respect for human rights to ensure continued stability. The United States identified reliable partners in the NGO, governmental, and private sectors and maintained regular, close contact with like-minded countries and international organizations involved in monitoring the human rights and democracy situation.

U.S. democracy promotion efforts largely focused on parliamentary elections in February 2005 and upcoming presidential elections in November 2006. Embassy officers met regularly with election officials, as well as with other diplomatic and international missions, to emphasize the need for free and fair elections, build election-monitoring capacity, and coordinate activities. Prior to the February elections, U.S.-funded NGOs conducted procedural and ethical training for members of the Precinct Electoral Commissions. The United States supported development of civic and election manuals and textbooks for NGO resource centers and school curricula. In October 2005, the Secretary of State and other senior U.S. officials met with political party leaders for a roundtable discussion of the political climate and encouraged them to continue democratic reforms and voice their opinions. The Secretary of State assured the political party leaders that the United States would work with them to build a democratic society.

To promote genuine political plurality and develop Tajikistan's multi-party system, the United States trained party leaders to build strong constituencies by promoting women, youth membership, and better media and public relations. The United States supported a parliamentary roundtable series, which

brought together political parties and citizens in televised town hall meetings. Through local NGO partners, the United States fostered dialogue among citizens and local politicians, mobilized youth and the general public to participate in the 2006 presidential election, and encouraged free and fair elections. A U.S.-funded NGO worked to strengthen registered political parties prior to the February 2005 parliamentary elections and also contributed to post-election party building through workshops and consultations for district party organizers and their parties. This NGO worked with women from political parties, indigenous NGOs, the Government, and the media to advise them on methods of increasing women's political participation.

The United States actively engaged with like-minded international and NGO implementing partners to lay the groundwork for a free, fair, and transparent November 2006 presidential election. The United States focused on improving media freedom and access to information, as the Government refused to register several independent media organizations and broadcast stations. Journalists critical of the Government faced harassment and legal charges. U.S. officials publicly and privately pressed for greater freedom of the press, improved access to independent media, and freedom of speech. The United States supported partner NGOs to develop the capacity of independent media and enhance local media's ability to provide accurate and responsible journalism. U.S.-sponsored programs trained journalists, supported news publications, and sponsored debates and conferences. As a result, many articles dealing with human rights issues have been published. To celebrate World Press Freedom Day, the United States helped a local NGO hold a human rights conference and sponsored a contest for Tajik journalists.

With U.S. funds, local and international NGOs collaborated to launch five radio stations in areas with little access to media. NGOs will assist in setting up the stations and training staff. The radio stations will distribute news freely to independent and state media for broadcast. The United States also funded "Nabzeh Zindago" (The Pulse of Life), which is the only Tajik-language program to consolidate informa-



tion from all regions and broadcast to an audience of up to one million people.

With the Government increasingly targeting international NGOs and their local partners, U.S. officials regularly met with representatives of this community to urge the Government to treat them fairly. U.S. officials encouraged all implementing partners and grantees to remain transparent to deny the Government any pretense for closing the NGOs or harassing them. The United States advocated for NGO rights and assisted NGOs with growing problems and pressure from the Government, promoting more transparent visa and registration processes. In 2005, the Embassy organized the first-ever NGO roundtable, bringing together government officials, donors, and the NGO community to discuss registration and visa issues. The roundtable started a much-needed dialogue between the Government and civil society. The United States funded seven civil society support centers that provided training seminars, technical support, information resources, and professional services to NGOs and public associations. The United States also provided assistance to develop a comprehensive legal and fiscal framework that will support and strengthen the NGO sector.

To support human rights and the rule of law, the United States worked with partner NGOs to train lawyers in human rights law and establish legal-information centers throughout Tajikistan. A U.S.-funded NGO continued operating the Citizen's Rights Advocacy Network in the Ferghana Valley. The network trained advocates and lawyers and developed advocacy campaigns on citizens' rights, including human rights. The network also promoted the rule of law and educated the public on their legal rights.

The United States raised its concerns about human rights abuses and lack of due process. The United

States urged due process and respect for the human rights of Mahmadruci Iskandarov, the Chairman of the Democratic Party of Tajikistan, who was sentenced in 2005 to 23 years in prison on a variety of charges. Iskandarov maintained the charges were false and politically motivated. The United States spoke out strongly against the process surrounding Iskandarov's rendition from Russia, his prolonged detention, alleged torture, and the limited access to his trial.

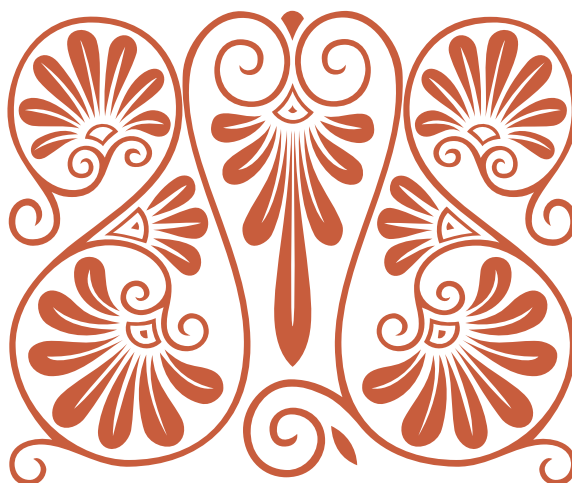
The United States collaborated closely with law enforcement and security ministries to train law enforcement and military officers in human rights regulations. As a result of U.S. and other international efforts, the Government institutionalized a mandatory two-day human rights course for all law enforcement recruits.

The Embassy sponsored local and federal government employee training in Tajikistan and abroad to instill good governance practices.

The Embassy routinely participated in Human Rights Thematic Group meetings with human rights-focused international organizations and monitored and reported on human rights violations and improvements.

In 2005, a U.S.-funded NGO concluded a program to support and strengthen the work of human rights defenders in protecting and promoting human rights. The program focused on press freedom and encouraging cooperation between human rights organizations on both local and regional levels.

Although Tajik law affords women the same rights as men, many women are not knowledgeable about their rights and faced abuse and harassment. Through local partners, the Embassy sponsored programs to educate and support women in both urban and rural areas and helped raise their status through education about micro-finance opportunities, the market economy, and legal rights. The United States raised





awareness of domestic and spousal abuse through its NGO partners and supported a project to train female journalists to report on women's issues.

U.S.-funded Women's Legal Advocacy Centers in Dushanbe and Khujand identified and trained lawyers and law students to empower women to defend their legal rights and provided legal services. The Centers also served as repositories for legal material on women's rights for research and dissemination purposes and conducted monthly training programs for the public. The United States also worked with local leaders to draft legislation to improve women's rights.

The Embassy sent five Tajik religious leaders to the United States on an International Visitors Leadership Program focused on religion, politics, and tolerance. The program facilitated an exchange of ideas and views between the religious leaders and immigrants from Tajikistan and Central Asia. The participants gained an understanding of ethnic and cultural diversity in the United States and the role of NGOs, special interest groups, and religious institutions in promoting ethnic and religious tolerance in the United States. The United States continued to promote religious tolerance in meetings with religious leaders and government officials from the State Committee on Religious Affairs. The Embassy assisted religious organizations on a case-by-case basis and continued to monitor and report on religious rights violations throughout the country.

A U.S. grant helped a local NGO educate labor migrants about their rights and responsibilities so they could protect themselves while working abroad. Up to one million Tajiks are labor migrants and often faced hardship abroad, particularly in Russia. Tajikistan is one of the major source countries of forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation for Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, the United Arab Emirates, and other countries. The Government proved a responsive ally in combating TIP. The Special Division for Combating TIP and Racketeering investigated and arrested more perpetrators than last year, in part as a result of U.S. funding. In addition, the United States also worked closely with international and local partners to plan a future bor-

der checkpoint to interdict TIP operations and will provide a permanent shelter for victim rehabilitation. U.S. partner organizations also worked to raise public awareness, train law enforcement authorities about TIP, and provide social support for victims.

Turkey

Turkey is a constitutional republic with a multiparty parliamentary system and a president with limited powers elected by the single-chamber parliament, the Turkish Grand National Assembly. In the 2002 parliamentary elections, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) won the majority of seats and formed a one-party government. In March 2003, AKP Chairman Recep Tayyip Erdogan was named Prime Minister. The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens. While there were improvements in a number of areas, serious problems remained. The Government continued to restrict religious freedom and to punish some forms of non-violent expression by the media and private citizens. The Government at times restricted the rights of assembly and association and limited the activities of some political parties and leaders. Human rights organizations continued to report widespread incidents of police torture and ill treatment, although the number of such incidents declined. Observers also reported an increase in the number of detainees who consulted with attorneys during detention. The Constitution provides for an independent judiciary; however, the judiciary was sometimes subject to outside influences.

The United States focused on a broad range of human rights issues, including police and judicial practices, religious freedom, freedom of expression, government ethics, trafficking in persons, and the right of return for internally displaced persons. U.S. officials routinely met with representatives of various political, religious, social, cultural, and ethnic groups to discuss human rights conditions and relations between these groups and the Government. U.S. officials also met regularly with members of the bureaucracy, legislature, executive branch, and judiciary to encourage broad reforms, including those needed to meet EU accession criteria. The Ambassador and other U.S.



officials met with Cabinet ministers and Foreign Ministry officials to discuss freedom of expression and religion.

The International Visitors Leadership Program continued to provide opportunities for professionals in all fields to be introduced to the United States and their American counterparts. Each year 35 to 40 Turks take part in the program. In 2005, 20 Turks participated in projects specifically related to human rights and democracy, including programs on grassroots activism, NGO management, and legal reform. Exchange projects for the year also included Turkish and American delegations of the American Council of Young Political Leaders. Through the U.S. TV Co-op program, Turkish TV journalists from two major national television stations spent a total of seven weeks during the year in the United States filming documentaries for national broadcast in Turkey on subjects that included transparency and governance, multiculturalism, and interaction between civil society groups and local and national government.

The United States funded a program to enhance the skills of newly elected officials in Turkey and encourage citizen participation in local government. Through an education program and a series of focus groups, the program trained and advised local government administrators and civic activists in six communities in Turkey, and worked to help local officials understand their roles under applicable legislation.

The United States supported a professional exchange program for journalists designed to foster ethics and journalistic responsibility among younger reporters and to promote freedom of expression for editors and media gatekeepers. Two delegations spent three weeks each in the United States exploring, among other topics, how a democratic society handles diversity.

In March, 10 Turkish parliamentarians, under a U.S. grant, explored issues of legislative reform and met with U.S. Congressional counterparts. A U.S.-funded project brought a delegation of Turkish high school students to the United States in January 2006 for a three-week visit that examined democratic gover-

nance and respect for human rights in the United States.

U.S. officials discussed concepts such as “due process of law” and “chain of custody” under the U.S. Constitution with members of the Turkish National Police. In December, the Embassy conducted a mock criminal trial for the Ankara Bar Association, in which Turkish lawyers acted as jurors and employed U.S. evidentiary standards, including the presumption of innocence and proof beyond a reasonable doubt.

The Embassy, working with a Turkish partner, oversaw a project to promote awareness of the rights of detainees under Turkish law. As part of the project, in June, the Human Rights Presidency of the Turkish Government held a U.S.-funded conference on detainees’ rights, which was attended by approximately 300 participants, including representatives from each of the country’s 81 provincial human rights boards. The project also included the publishing and distribution of pamphlets and books detailing the rights of detainees.

An ongoing Turkish-U.S. Legal Exchange project focused on issues dealing with freedom of expression, police conduct, and trial alternatives in the criminal justice system in 2005, with exchanges of visits by U.S. and Turkish legal professionals. Two delegations of Turkish officials from the Justice and Interior ministries traveled to the United States in March and June, respectively, to examine alternatives to criminal trial procedures used in the U.S. judicial system. In October, 30 prosecutors, judges, and other Ministry of Justice officials attended a one-day seminar in Ankara to discuss with a U.S. District Court judge and a county District Attorney mechanisms used in the United States to reduce judicial caseloads.

The Embassy engaged the NGO community during the year through speaker programs. Kent State University and its partner in Turkey conducted a series of conferences on women’s leadership for NGO leaders in Ohio and southeastern Anatolia, culminating in a December conference in Gaziantep that focused on conflict resolution, income generation, and working with local leaders.



The United States also stressed the need to allow free religious expression for all faiths, including Protestants, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Baha'i, none of whom have legal standing in Turkey. The United States continued to urge high-level Turkish government officials to reach agreement with the Ecumenical Patriarchate on the re-opening of the Halki seminary on the island of Heybeli, to acknowledge the ecumenical nature of the Patriarchate, and to ensure the right of non-Turkish citizens to serve as clergy. Embassy officials regularly continued to engage Turkish officials in a dialogue on religious freedom.

The United States collaborated with the Gaziantep American Corner, the Gaziantep Rotary Club, and the Anatolian Journalists Union in organizing a photo exhibit in June on religious diversity that helped engage attendees in dialogue about issues important to Turkey's continued democratic development.

In February, the United States conducted a seminar in Ankara organized with International Organization for Migration (IOM) for 50 judges and prosecutors on the prosecution of trafficking in persons (TIP) cases. The speaker also led a workshop in Istanbul for NGO leaders to help raise public awareness about TIP issues. In July, the United States hosted a roundtable for NGO leaders on TIP awareness with a board member of the Vital Voices Global Partnership. IOM, with a grant from the United States, continued its cooperation with Turkish authorities to implement a comprehensive protection mechanism for TIP victims and enhance the country's capacity to combat TIP. One-third of the grant money was used for protecting and providing direct assistance to victims of trafficking. U.S. funds allowed IOM to continue the training of the Jandarma and judiciary in high-trafficking areas of the country and to work on international law enforcement cooperation initiatives to facilitate prosecution of traffickers. Finally, the United States funded the implementation of a major international public awareness campaign, including television and print media advertisements for a toll-free 24-hour victim hotline that saved more than 50 lives during its first six months of operation.

Turkmenistan

The Government of Turkmenistan continued to commit serious abuses, and its human rights record remained extremely poor. Turkmenistan is an authoritarian state dominated by president-for-life Saparmurat Niyazov. Niyazov has been president since independence in 1991 and may legally remain in office until he chooses to step down. In August 2003, Niyazov was elected to a life term as Chairman of the parliament, giving him a substantial say in the selection of any presidential successor. He has retained his monopoly on political and economic power, and controls the parliament, judicial system, and the Democratic Party, which remained the sole legally recognized political party. Niyazov stifled political dissent and freedom of the press, and eroded the educational system. Democracy Party members comprised all candidates in the 2004 parliamentary elections, and the Government did not invite foreign observers to monitor the elections. While serious violations of religious freedom continued, the Government noticeably reduced harassment of registered minority religious groups. The Government continued to restrict registration of civil society groups.

The United States maintained a multi-pronged strategy to support the development of democracy and human rights in Turkmenistan. The United States urged the Government to respect human rights and advance democracy at every opportunity through high-level bilateral meetings, multilateral institutions, and public statements. The United States regularly advocated on behalf of individual cases of abuse and coordinated closely with other diplomatic missions and international organizations. The United States funded a wide range of programs designed to strengthen civil society and respect for human rights. The Embassy expanded public outreach programs directed toward Muslim audiences and continued educational and professional exchange programs to give citizens greater contact with and understanding of democratic values.

Throughout 2005, the Ambassador and other U.S. officials stressed the importance of promoting democratic reform and highlighted human rights abuses in



bilateral meetings with President Niyazov and other senior officials. In Ashgabat, the Ambassador and Deputy Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs informed President Niyazov that improvement of Turkmenistan's human rights situation is the highest priority, and senior U.S. officials in Washington reiterated this message.

The Embassy, through bilateral meetings with government officials, public statements and a range of speaker and exchange programs, consistently promoted the importance of freedom of media and speech. In 2005, the United States funded three speakers, two conferences, and several International Visitors Leadership Program participants, as well as grants to NGOs for programs that highlighted the importance of media freedom and freedom of speech. An ecological conference organized by the Embassy in November 2005 included a workshop on journalism addressing ecological issues and media freedom. Two new Internet Access Training Program sites opened in 2005, which brought the total to six. These facilities gave Turkmenistani citizens a critical link to the outside world by offering access to independent sources of information.

The Embassy sponsored a landmark conference on civil society development and the role of international organizations that brought together Turkmenistani NGO leaders, representatives of religious faiths, directors of international organizations in Ashgabat, and government officials. Conference participants noted this was a unique opportunity to raise questions about NGO and religious group registration directly to a Ministry of Justice official. The United States continued to urge government officials to register NGOs throughout 2005. U.S.-funded civil society development programs supported a network of four Civil Society Support Centers (CSSC) that provided training seminars, technical support, information resources, networking opportunities, and professional services to NGOs and grassroots activists to build their capacity in the civic sector. In 2005, eight CSSCs were operating, and five had access to the Internet. The United States also provided assistance in the development of a comprehensive legal and fiscal framework that will support and strengthen the NGO

sector, as well as direct legal support and services for NGOs through the CSSC Network. A U.S.-funded civil society development program focused on grassroots community development and advocacy. In 2005, this program conducted 114 capacity-building training events for 1,820 participants. U.S. exchange program alumni along with local NGOs conducted regular sessions on debate skills, critical thinking, and freedom of speech.

To promote the rule of law, a U.S.-funded program supported the Legal Resource Center (LRC) at Turkmen State University (TSU). Program staff also worked with LRC staff to develop strategies to increase its accessibility to the public. Since January 2004, the LRC has organized training programs on Turkmenistan's labor legislation, the development of its criminal legislation, legal guarantees of women's rights and the development of civil legislation. Approximately 200 people participated in the seminars in 2005, and over 4,000 people visited the LRC facilities and benefited from access to legal information via the Internet. The civil law clinic operating at the TSU, which was the first clinical program in Turkmenistan, provides individual consultation on both civic and criminal legal issues and develops legal professional and ethics standards through seminars and workshops for law faculty students. Program staff provided ongoing training to clinic staff attorneys on managing a student-run clinical program and addressing practical and pedagogical issues surrounding clinical legal education.

U.S.-funded programs continued to sponsor student participation in national moot court competitions. A program developed in 2005 in cooperation with TSU offered young people the opportunity to learn about the law and basic principles of human rights and democracy. Law students involved in the program learned techniques for teaching primary and secondary school students about their rights and responsibilities under Turkmenistani law. The program's objective is to sensitize students at a young age to the ways in which the law can help solve critical family, social, and political issues. Training in 2005 covered topics such as children's rights, the law on delinquency, administrative violations, the right to individuality,



the right to marry, and the legal status of women. The program effectively promoted practical skills and legal knowledge among law student participants and provided desperately needed legal information to the entire population.

In 2005, 120 students and professionals traveled to the United States on U.S.-sponsored exchange programs, which raised the alumni base to 1,287. The Embassy also awarded three- and four-year scholarships to 15 college students to attend the American University of Central Asia in the Kyrgyz Republic. The fourth and newest American Corner opened in 2005.

In November 2005, the United States, EU, and several other countries jointly introduced a successful UN General Assembly resolution that condemned and called upon the Government to address severe human rights abuses. The resolution called for international fact-finding missions to investigate reports of torture and abuse and reiterated the need for the international community to keep pressure on Turkmenistan to democratize and respect human rights.

Through civil society seminars, human rights roundtables, speaker and film programs, as well as numerous other programs and alumni grants conducted in 2005, the Embassy actively promoted the rights of women, minorities, and persons with disabilities. The Embassy showed videos depicting the fight for the rights of the disabled in America, and U.S. officials participated in local programs focusing on the disabled. U.S. grants enabled deaf Turkmenistani children to gain computer proficiency, and in 2005 the Future Leaders' Exchange program included more disabled high school students. The United States awarded 40 small grants to independent trainers affiliated with initiative groups to conduct countrywide workshops and seminars on democracy, human rights, and disability rights. Through these programs the Embassy reached out to more than 3,500 Turkmenistanis.

The United States actively supported efforts by the International Committee of the Red Cross to gain access to all prisoners, including those detained following the armed attack on President Niyazov's motorcade in 2002. The Embassy also advocated for

better treatment of relatives of those implicated in the November 2002 attack, and urged the Government to cease systematically harassing them.

The United States continued to monitor Turkmenistan's compliance with its international obligations on freedom of movement. Although in 2004 the Government formally lifted the exit visa regime to avoid Jackson-Vanik sanctions, throughout 2005 the Government maintained a blacklist of select individuals not permitted to travel. In 2005, the Embassy raised individual freedom of movement cases with the Government, advocated on behalf of relatives of prisoners, and protested the detention of a noted author.

The United States continued to urge the Government to respect religious freedom and noted possible designation of "Country of Particular Concern" under the International Religious Freedom Act. As a result of U.S. efforts, the Government reduced harassment of minority religious groups and held a roundtable to improve communication with religious groups about the registration process. Under U.S. pressure, the Government registered five new religious groups, bringing the total to nine, and established a procedure to register branch minority religious groups. U.S. officials visited Turkmenistan throughout 2005 to discuss religious freedom with officials, religious leaders, and students. In a March visit to Turkmenistan, a Helsinki Commission counsel met with senior government officials and representatives of religious minorities and NGOs to discuss religious freedom and NGOs, including issues of registration. The Embassy also embarked on an intensive Muslim outreach and reporting program by visiting at least one of the welayats (provinces) on a bi-weekly basis to show films on Islam in America and discussing religious freedom in America.

U.S. funding to combat trafficking in persons (TIP) supported IOM's work with the State Border Service on a Ministry of Justice-approved program attempting to ascertain the extent and patterns of TIP in Turkmenistan. Funding also supported an anti-trafficking public education campaign and training for the Border Service to combat TIP.



Ukraine

Ukraine is a republic with a mixed presidential and parliamentary system, governed by a directly elected president and a unicameral parliament (Verkhovna Rada). The Government's human rights performance improved significantly following the Orange Revolution in late 2004. The Administration of newly elected President Viktor Yushchenko largely put an end to government harassment of the mass media and interference with freedom of assembly, lifted limitations on freedom of association, increased accountability by police officers, and brought some improvement to prison conditions. Domestic and international human rights groups generally operated without government harassment. The Government increased its investigation of suspected human traffickers and harmonized its criminal code with the trafficking in persons (TIP) provisions of the UN Palermo Convention, but it is still grappling with how to strengthen its prosecution capabilities. The Government also reduced its role in the sphere of religion. Despite these improvements, a number of serious human rights problems remained, including torture in pretrial detention facilities, violent hazing of military conscripts, and corruption in all branches of government.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Ukraine focused on supporting efforts to maximize the opportunities for democratic reform presented by the Orange Revolution and creating the conditions for free and fair local and parliamentary elections in March 2006. This included strengthening the rule of law, independent media, electoral processes, and respect for civil liberties; fighting corruption; promoting good governance; and improving the monitoring and advocacy capabilities of human rights organizations. Combating TIP was also an important goal. The Ambassador and senior U.S. officials met frequently with senior government officials, including President Yushchenko, to stress the importance of continuing democratic reform and highlight that membership in Euro-Atlantic institutions such as NATO hinges on respect for democracy and human rights. This message was regularly reinforced in Washington and in Kiev by the Secretary of State, Under Secretary for Democracy and Global Affairs, Assistant Secretary

for European and Eurasian Affairs, and others.

In the run-up to the March 2006 elections, U.S. assistance focused on strengthening the electoral system and promoting a process that would be judged free and fair by international standards. U.S. assistance, bilaterally and through the OSCE, supported work to develop and implement improvements to the parliamentary election law, create a nationwide voter registry, and train election commissioners on new procedures. Through grants to local NGOs and independent media, the United States supported voter education initiatives that emphasized voter rights and nonpartisan discussion of election issues and placed a particular focus on southern and eastern Ukraine. With U.S. grant support, a Dnipropetrovsk-based NGO worked with the local government to conduct a voter education and get-out-the-vote campaign in 14 of the oblast's cities and create an information brochure for first-time voters in the oblast. Other programs provided support to election monitoring groups, nonpartisan training for political parties, and training for lawyers and judges on election law.

To promote effective, transparent, and participatory governance, U.S. programs provided the parliament with technical assistance in drafting reform legislation, including changes to the election law, and facilitated public hearings by parliamentary committees. At the local level, U.S. assistance concentrated on helping officials to improve service provision and involving the public in decision-making. A U.S.-funded program trained 1,600 local council members in 50 villages in 8 oblasts to better address the concerns of their constituents and use public input in decision making. With U.S. grant support, an NGO in Odesa created a forum for young people to participate in local decision making and represent their interests to the city government.

U.S. media assistance programs focused on improving the legal and regulatory framework for media, supporting legal aid for media outlets, helping independent outlets to improve their financial sustainability, and training journalists in investigative reporting. Grant support for independent media outlets concentrated on regions that had been underrepresented in



U.S. programs in the past due to government control of the media environment and an unwillingness to work with the United States out of fear of government retribution. With U.S. grant funding, a Kiev-based NGO developed a plan for the transition of 750 state-owned media outlets to the private sector and briefed Prime Minister Yuriy Yekhanurov on this plan. A U.S.-funded legal defense program helped the small independent newspaper *Rivnenska Hazeta* successfully fend off a politically motivated lawsuit by the Rivne Oblast Governor for allegedly slandering him in an editorial.

After their pivotal role in bringing about the Orange Revolution, civil society organizations have grown in stature and become more active and professional in their use of U.S. assistance. In 2005, small grants and technical assistance programs enabled NGOs to broaden and deepen their influence with the public and government as advocates for reform, increase their financial sustainability, work together in coalitions, and share successful strategies. In a key development, one U.S.-supported civil society partner organization successfully championed important tax exemptions for NGOs, and deductions for corporate charitable donations were reinstated in the 2005 budget law.



The United States also supported efforts to strengthen the rule of law, increase judicial independence, and combat corruption, capitalizing on the new Government's commitment to reform in these areas. U.S. technical and advisory assistance supported the drafting of amendments to Ukraine's Criminal Procedure Code to harmonize it with Council of Europe standards and curtail many of the Soviet-era powers of the procuracy. The United States helped further strengthen the rule of law by supporting arbitration and mediation as effective and efficient alternatives to litigation, working with the Ministry of Justice to draft a concept paper on the comprehensive reform of the juvenile justice system, and launching a pilot

program to demonstrate the benefits of respecting the basic human rights of detainees through a fair and transparent pretrial detention system. At the grassroots level, a U.S.-supported legal aid program added 13 new centers to its network of public advocacy centers and thus was able to provide nearly 3,000 legal consultations for disadvantaged citizens last year.

The United States continued to strengthen the independence of the judiciary through training and technical assistance aimed at improving the professionalism of judges as well as the enforcement of judicial decisions. To fight corruption, the United States worked with the Ministry of Interior and General

Procuracy to increase accountability and develop rules and procedures to prosecute corruption in a more effective and non-partisan manner. Other anti-corruption programs supported public hearings on corruption, a major public information campaign, the Government's public complaint initiative, training for journalists on investigative reporting, and grants to NGOs engaged in anti-corruption advocacy and watchdog efforts.

Through public diplomacy and small grant support to local NGOs, the United States worked to monitor and curb human rights abuses like torture and to encourage respect for the rights of women, children, minorities, and people with disabilities. The Embassy supported the second annual National Human Rights Forum, organized by the Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union, bringing together over 200 civic activists and representatives of human rights organizations, the media, international organizations, and government agencies to discuss methods for curbing abuses. A 300-page report prepared by a national network of Ukrainian human rights organizations was presented at the forum. The Embassy's Democracy Commission Small Grants Program provided 22 grants to small human rights NGOs that conducted a broad range of nationwide monitoring



and reporting on the rights of refugees and prisoners, the right to a fair trial, and freedom from arbitrary arrest. A Lviv-based NGO used a U.S. grant to help people with disabilities enjoy equal access to national parks and major recreational areas and proposed a list of amendments to current national legislation on access to public facilities by people with disabilities. A Kiev-based NGO, with U.S. support, strengthened cooperation between NGOs, businesses, and governmental organizations to ensure the delivery of social services and charitable donations to people with disabilities and their families. With U.S. funding, a national NGO brought victims of domestic violence together with government, law enforcement, and social services personnel to discuss ways of improving the implementation of Ukraine's domestic violence legislation.

The Ambassador and other officials demonstrated the U.S. Government's concern for religious freedom by maintaining an ongoing dialogue with government and religious leaders and staying in close contact with clerics and lay leaders in religious communities. The Embassy tracked developments in religious freedom and cultural heritage preservation court cases involving anti-Semitism, including the Sambir and Volodymyr-Volynsky Jewish cemetery cases, and raised them with the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Prime Minister's office and the Presidential Secretariat. The United States also provided a grant to the Ukrainian Catholic University to monitor religious freedom across the country and, through the International Visitors Leadership Program, sent groups to the United States for programs focused on the promotion of interfaith dialogue, Islam in America, and the treatment of religious organizations under U.S. law at the national, state, and local levels.

The United States supported the labor movement in its efforts to obtain independence from government control and to exercise its legal rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining. The United States funded a trade union development program, supported NGO-administered seminars on labor issues, maintained ongoing contact with union representatives, regularly reported on workers' rights issues, and funded a number of technical assistance

programs to promote basic rights of workers.

Combating TIP and assisting trafficking victims were also priorities. During 2005, the Embassy was instrumental in convincing the Ministry of Interior to establish a special anti-TIP department staffed with 500 officers. To jump-start the new department's operations, the United States provided equipment and vehicles. The Embassy also made it possible for the new department to participate in the regional anti-TIP operations of the Bucharest Southeast European Cooperative Center for Combating Transnational Crime (known as the SECI Center). In addition, the Embassy successfully organized a press event, at which the Minister of Family, Youth and Sports, Ukrainian First Lady Kateryna Yushchenko, and several Ukrainian celebrities emphasized the need to de-stigmatize TIP victims. Assistance to the General Procuracy also focused on increasing its capacity to successfully combat serious crimes, including TIP.

Uzbekistan

The Government of Uzbekistan's human rights record, already poor, worsened considerably in 2005. An uprising in the city of Andijon started after a series of daily peaceful protests in support of 23 businessmen on trial for Islamic extremism between February and May. According to eyewitnesses the protests grew to between 500 to 1,000 participants. On the night of May 12-13, an unknown number of unidentified individuals seized weapons from a police garrison, stormed the city prison where the defendants were being held, released several hundred inmates, occupied the regional administration building, and took hostages. On May 13, a crowd of several thousand unarmed civilians gathered in front of the administration building. That evening, according to eyewitness accounts, government forces fired on the crowd, resulting in the deaths of hundreds of civilians, including women and children. The Government portrayed the events as an attempted coup by radical Islamic militants seeking to establish an Islamic caliphate. In the aftermath of the uprising, the Government took repressive action, harassing, beating, and jailing dozens of human rights activists, journalists, and others



who spoke about the events to foreign media. The Government sentenced numerous people to prison and sought to extradite an unknown number of people for their alleged involvement in the Andijon tragedy. The majority of the trials were closed and all failed to meet international standards. Human rights groups maintain that the defendants' trial testimony, which fully supported the government's version of events, was coerced.

Uzbekistan's directly elected president, Islom Karimov, has led the Government since 1990. His current term in office expires in 2007. Past elections were neither free nor fair. The President dominates the Government, and the bicameral parliament has no independent authority. The judiciary was under government control, and trial verdicts were usually predetermined. In 2003, the UN's Special Rapporteur on Torture concluded that torture was systematic in prisons and other places of detention. The Government has taken few steps to address the Rapporteur's concerns, and prison conditions continued to be harsh. There were an estimated 5,000-5,500 political prisoners in the country as of 2004. There were no independent political parties, and the few opposition groups faced official harassment. The Government generally did not respect freedom of speech and the press, and self-censorship was widely practiced. The Government exerted relentless pressure on local NGOs, ordering many to close "voluntarily." Unregistered religious activity was outlawed, and legal religious activity was tightly controlled. Trafficking in persons (TIP) to other countries for labor and sexual exploitation is an ongoing problem. In 2005, the Government initiated more investigations of trafficking cases, but due to weak legislation, few traffickers were jailed, and most of those convicted were amnestied. Anti-trafficking legislation has stalled.

In 2005, the United States pursued a multi-faceted strategy to promote democracy and human rights in Uzbekistan. Alongside vigorous diplomatic engagement with the Government to advance human rights and legal reform, the United States supported a broad range of civil society and human rights programs. The United States, in cooperation with other diplomatic missions, international organizations, and

human rights groups, raised individual human rights cases with the Government. The United States consistently made public statements promoting democracy and human rights, denounced abuses, and pressed the Government to end harassment of U.S. implementing partners and local NGOs and eliminate restrictions on U.S. grants to local NGOs. The United States also provided diplomatic and programmatic support to democracy and human rights activists and disseminated relevant democracy and human rights materials to the Uzbek media, civil society, and the Government.

At the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly, the United States vigorously lobbied for the successful passage of a resolution introduced by the European Union concerning the abuses in Uzbekistan. The resolution addressed the right to readily accessible, free, and fair trials with due process of those accused of involvement in the events of Andijon. It also addressed the lack of media independence, the lack of openness of the electoral process, abuses of refugees with respect to their right to go to third countries, and the mistreatment of religious minorities. At various OSCE meetings, U.S. officials decried human rights abuses and called on the Government to cease them and hold perpetrators accountable.

U.S. democracy and human rights efforts suffered serious setbacks in the wake of the Andijon crisis. The Government refused repeated calls by the United States and other governments and international organizations for an independent international investigation into Andijon. These calls for an independent investigation and the Government's concerns about "color revolutions" in the region likely prompted the Government to curtail engagement sharply. U.S. military forces were asked to vacate the Karshi-Khanabad airbase. Uzbek authorities initiated a crackdown on both domestic and U.S.-funded democracy, civil society, and human rights organizations. Many were closed or suspended. U.S. funding to local NGOs remained largely paralyzed, subject to approval or denial by a government-appointed banking commission. The Government forced the closure of all U.S.-sponsored American Corners and hampered the operation



of U.S.-funded student exchange programs and other programs.

The United States acted quickly after the events in Andijon to reevaluate assistance programs to Uzbekistan and severely limited aid to the Government. In Fiscal Year 2005, prior to the Andijon events, budgeted aid to programs involving the Government was withheld because the Secretary of State could not determine that Uzbekistan made progress on commitments it had made to the United States in 2002, including on human rights. Following the Andijon events, and as required in the Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, the United States decided to cut funds supporting programs with the Government, including military exchanges and security programs. The United States redirected these funds to support projects promoting democracy and human rights in Uzbekistan.

In September 2005, the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs met with President Karimov and emphasized that the bilateral relationship with Uzbekistan must be balanced to include progress on democracy and human rights, including press and religious freedom. The Assistant Secretary of State also reiterated the firm U.S. desire for an independent investigation into Andijon. U.S. officials in Tashkent have consistently attended the Andijon-related trials that have been open to observers. The U.S. Embassy asked the Uzbek Ministry of Foreign Affairs for information on the four Uzbek refugee seekers returned in June 2005 by the Government of Kyrgyzstan and the nine Uzbek refugee seekers returned in late November by the Government of Kazakhstan and requested that the Government of Uzbekistan allow the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Committee for the Red Cross immediate access to them. In a March 1, 2006 statement to the OSCE's Permanent Council, the United States raised concerns about forcibly returned Uzbek refugee seekers.

Despite these obstacles, U.S. officials continued to engage with the Government where possible and to support education and other outreach programs.

The United States monitored human rights abuses, maintained contact with human rights organizations, and supported those organizations with small grants. The Ambassador and visiting U.S. officials, including Senators John McCain, John Sununu, and Lindsey Graham, Representative Alcee Hastings, and the Assistant Secretary for European Affairs consistently delivered the message that respect for human rights is a crucial element of the bilateral relationship.

When authorities arrested political party representatives on politically motivated charges, U.S. officials monitored their condition to the extent possible and repeatedly appealed to the Government to cease using the law to restrict human rights. When the Government prosecuted opposition party members on charges of organizing an anti-government conspiracy in connection with the Andijon violence, U.S. officials coordinated with other diplomatic missions and human rights groups to monitor their cases and to press the Government to hold trials meeting international standards. Despite government pressure on opposition organizations, U.S.-funded organizations provided guidance to government and opposition political parties on grassroots organizing, press relations, and responsive, issue-based party platforms.

The United States supported freedom of the press through a variety of programs and activities. U.S.-funded NGOs trained and counseled journalists and media managers, funded informational programming at privately owned regional television stations, managed Internet access and training programs in several cities, and ran media resource centers in the Ferghana Valley. Despite vigorous U.S. support, the Government forced these NGOs to close in late 2005. Nonetheless, journalists continued to participate in U.S. exchange programs and training sessions that underscored the tenets of media freedom. The United States also sponsored television programs on such topics as the 2004 U.S. presidential election, environmental activism, and education.

In the face of relentless government pressure, the United States continued to support the development of civil society in Uzbekistan. A U.S.-supported network of seven NGO resource centers continued its



work until government pressure forced most of the centers to close. At year's end, the centers were reorganizing in an effort to continue their work. U.S.-funded organizations continued to assist local human rights activists and organizations to develop protection strategies to assist each other in the face of increased harassment and hostility from the Government. In 2005, the Embassy's Democracy Commission awarded small grants to 51 NGOs for projects designed to develop civil society institutions. These grants supported valuable reporting and advocacy work in the regions. The United States also supported programs in rural communities that enabled citizens to take collective responsibility for management of natural resources at the local level, sewing the seeds of civic responsibility and accountability. A related civic advocacy support program helped NGOs and other civil society organizations become more involved in public policy issues, particularly those at the regional level.

The United States continued programs to promote the rule of law. In an effort to improve legal literacy in the population at large, legal resource centers in Ferghana and Samarkand conducted education and training programs for young lawyers. Other programs, such as summer courses and moot court competitions, emphasize legal education among high school and university students. In January the Embassy, in conjunction with the OSCE and international legal experts, launched a yearlong practical skills training program for prosecutors. Training promoted ethical standards for prosecutors, as well as effective interviewing techniques without abuse of human rights. Nine Uzbek criminal justice officials visited counterparts in Washington and Puerto Rico as part of an exchange program aimed at addressing torture in pretrial detention as well as restrictions of freedom of expression due to national security concerns. In May the Embassy, in cooperation with the UN Development Program, the OSCE Center in Tashkent, and international legal experts, organized an international conference on habeas corpus, at which more than 60 senior Uzbek officials discussed with their international counterparts the issues involved with judicial oversight of arrest and pretrial detention. The United States also worked with the Uzbek military on

rule of law issues. During the year, the United States sponsored 15 Uzbek military officers to take part in training programs at the Marshall Center in Germany, at which human rights and civilian control of the military are featured aspects of the curriculum.

Combating torture, which is still frequently alleged in pretrial investigation, remained at the top of the U.S. human rights agenda. There was one death in custody during the year in which torture was suspected. In May, just before the Andijon events, the United States initiated a project to foster dialogue between civil society actors and the law enforcement agencies responsible for many human rights abuses. The program maintains working relations with law enforcement agencies, despite government harassment and hostility toward international organizations and civil society. U.S. law enforcement experts consulted on the issue of shifting arrest authority from the prosecutors to the courts. The program also trained and supported human rights activists, lawyers, doctors, educators, and others attempting to engage the Government in a dialogue on human rights issues.

In its efforts to combat torture, the United States devoted considerable attention to conditions in pretrial detention, where the most serious abuse seemed to occur. U.S. funding supported a network of public defender centers, which provided high-quality pro bono legal advice to indigent defendants in criminal cases. While the legal system still produced convictions in almost all cases, the public defender centers were successful in reducing abuse during pretrial detention and winning reduced sentences for those convicted. A U.S.-supported law firm continued to provide a venue for young lawyers to work with more experienced advocates to protect clients' rights. International NGO partners and the OSCE have been active partners in programs designed by the Embassy to promote respect for detainees' rights. Central themes included access to defense counsel and habeas corpus.

The United States was actively engaged in highlighting respect for religious tolerance and pluralism through exchanges, contact with madrassahs, and distribution of appropriate materials. The United States



advocated religious freedom by maintaining contact with imams, priests, educators, journalists, and independent religious leaders and actively monitoring the state of religious freedom in Uzbekistan. The Ambassador and U.S. officials regularly raise issues of religious freedom with their Uzbek counterparts, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the Muslim Board, and the Committee on Religious Affairs. The consistent message of U.S. officials was that religious tolerance and political security are complementary, not mutually exclusive, goals. Several U.S.-funded exchange and educational programs were specifically designed to promote religious tolerance and religious freedom. An ongoing three-year University Partnership Program organized exchanges of experts and professors from five Uzbek universities and institutes. The project seeks to develop school curricula that promote religious tolerance. The United States sponsored Uzbek participation in the Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy's annual conference in Washington as well as the International Summer School on Religion in Public Life in Jerusalem.

U.S. anti-trafficking efforts were hampered by the deterioration in U.S.-Uzbek relations. Nevertheless, the United States, in cooperation with the Uzbek Government and local and international NGOs, conducted several public awareness campaigns on human trafficking. With U.S. funding, a nationwide NGO network provided counseling and information on TIP through public hotlines, as well as seminars and discussions in schools, colleges, universities, and neighborhood committees. Official television aired documentaries aimed at raising public awareness, and anti-trafficking messages appeared regularly in newspapers and radio and television broadcasts. U.S.-funded training programs for law enforcement officers and prosecutors focused on techniques for combating trafficking rings. A U.S.-funded shelter provided medical, psychological, legal, and educational assistance to repatriated TIP victims. In February, the International Organization for Migration, with U.S. funding, organized the first roundtable discussion on human trafficking for Uzbek law enforcement and consular officers. Officials from the most common destination countries for Uzbek trafficking

victims also attended. The meeting helped to establish effective mechanisms for returning and providing assistance to TIP victims. Three Uzbek military officers participated in a U.S.-sponsored training program on human trafficking. The Embassy hosted regular meetings with Uzbek officials to discuss TIP and, with the OSCE, encouraged the Government to form an interagency working group to coordinate its own anti-trafficking efforts.



EUROPE & EURASIA

MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA





“As an Arab and Muslim woman, I see no contradiction whatsoever between Islam and the call for democratic governance and respect for human rights...democracy provides a sensible framework for guaranteeing human rights...and is in harmony with the main assumption in Islam that the individual human being is born free and endowed with the freedom of choice regardless of his or her religion, race or identity.”

Amat al-Aleem Alsoswa
Yemeni Minister for Human Rights

Maryam Al-Raes, member of Iraqi National Assembly, and Zainab Al-Salbi, founder and CEO of Women for Women International Organization, in a press conference in Amman, Jordan. (AP Photo)



MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

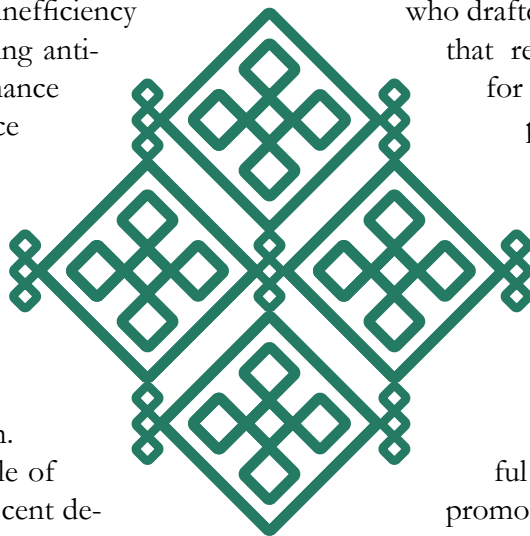
The past year brought both heartening progress and challenges to the promotion of democracy and human rights in the Middle East and North Africa. New technologies such as the Internet and satellite television widened public access to global information and strengthened internal demands for political participation, clean and responsive government, and broader economic opportunity. The Freedom Agenda found new partners in regional leaders and in a growing number of reform-minded government officials and civil society leaders. The Iraqi people went to the polls three times, in increasing numbers. At the same time authoritarian governments, rebuffing calls for peaceful democratic change, struck back at internal challenges to their monopoly on power. Courageous critics of such regimes continued to speak out despite assassinations, brutal attacks, and incarceration on spurious charges of defamation or treason.

Citing fears of instability or foreign interference, some governments moved to impose Draconian restrictions on reformist civil society groups. Their efforts to weaken the secular opposition often drove frustrated citizens to support the only visible alternative to corruption and inefficiency -- Islamist parties with compelling anti-corruption and good governance platforms and solid social service track records.

The United States used a variety of diplomatic and programmatic tools to strengthen its support for the consolidation of democracy and human rights protections in the region. Through these efforts the people of Iraq continued to build their nascent democracy, despite corruption and high levels of sectarian violence instigated by those who would institute a new dictatorship to replace that of Saddam Hussein. With U.S. support, Iraqis carried out elections that met international standards. This allowed a growing number of Iraqi voters, including

members of the Sunni Arab community, to assert their right to participate in national political life, voting in elections and electing members of their community to the Council of Representatives. U.S. experts and outreach programs supported Iraqis who drafted and ratified a new Constitution that reflected growing public support for democratic principles, including protections for fundamental freedoms and human rights, due process, and separation of powers.

Robust private and public advocacy by U.S. officials spotlighted egregious violations such as arrests of peaceful reformers in Syria and Iran, and promoted continued progress through multilateral fora such as the Forum for the Future and the UN. The United States worked with regional and international allies to demand Syrian compliance with UN Security Council resolutions and investigations and to support credible international monitoring of elections around the region.





Buffeted by allegations of complicity in assassinations and kidnapping in Lebanon, President Bashar Al-Assad and the Syrian regime struggled to contain internal demands for freedom and to rebuff intensifying international scrutiny. The United States supported multilateral pressure on Syria to meet its international obligations and improve its deplorable human rights record, while encouraging calls for peaceful change such as the Damascus Declaration.

Meanwhile, Iran sank further into tyranny and international isolation during the year, turning back limited democratic progress through blatant electoral manipulation and the unblinking repression of dissent and religious and ethnic minorities. It continued to act as a state sponsor of terrorism, to stifle religious freedom, and to foster sectarian divisions and hatred abroad. The United States worked with regional allies to highlight concerns on Iran's human rights performance, and sought to strengthen internal voices of reform.

U.S. assistance programs throughout the region worked to address injustice and past abuses, strengthen democratic civil society organizations, support women's empowerment, and bolster the efforts of reformists within regional governments. Free Trade Agreement negotiations conditioned access to U.S. economic assistance and trade benefits on genuine

progress toward labor, good governance and human rights benchmarks. An International Labor Organization official noted that member countries in the region had been "knocking on our door" in 2005 to ask for help with labor reform and protecting worker rights, and several countries in the region are making serious strides to end the use of child jockeys in the hazardous sport of camel racing.

The United States joined leaders such as King Abdullah Al-Hussein of Jordan in calling for increased religious tolerance and respect for religious minorities. Iran and Saudi Arabia were designated as Countries of Particular Concern for continued severe violations of religious freedom. During the year, the United States and Saudi Arabia initiated the Strategic Dialogue to address issues of concern including respect for religion and political, social, and educational reforms. The United States urged Saudi Arabia to widen political participation and to extend greater protections for religious minorities and women. The United States welcomed Saudi Arabia's release of political prisoners following King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz al-Saud's accession to the throne, as well as steps to widen political participation through municipal council elections. The United States also encouraged governments throughout the region to enhance their efforts to prevent trafficking in persons, particularly of expatriate workers.



Women's Advocacy Groups in Jordan

The foundations of democracy and its critical institutions are built over time, through the efforts of ordinary people longing for a better life and a say in their future. U.S.-supported Women's Advocacy Groups in Jordan work to open the door to that future, provide the skills and knowledge to empower the powerless, and build critical partnerships between a willing government and its people for internal democratic reform.

In tiny neighborhoods in rural and urban areas of the governorates of Jerash, Madaba, and Al-Karak, in partnership with government ministries, the Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development, and the Queen Zein Al Sharaf Institute for Development, the nongovernmental organization CARE used a small grant from the United States to establish three women's community development centers and provide impoverished women the skills, knowledge, and mechanisms to advocate for their needs and rights.

Participants in the Women's Advocacy Groups — women from traditional, conservative Muslim communities — learned how to resolve practical problems with the critical tools of grassroots democracy: consultation with the community to collect data on public needs, dialogue with government officials and service providers, networking to exchange best practices and address mutual concerns, and fostering public outreach on civic rights and responsibilities. During the 22 months of this project, these women not only mastered new leadership and advocacy skills but quickly used them to push for positive improvements to their communities. Successes included:

- Assignment of a much-needed resident gynecologist to the public health center in Mu'ta.
- Closure of an abandoned and contaminated pool in Al-Karak that endangered community children.
- Improved conditions in public schools, and plans for new schools in Al-Karak and Jarash.
- Improved street lighting and bus routes in Madaba.

The work of these women and their success in mobilizing positive change for their community has been remarkable. This and other civil society projects supported by the United States underscore the energy and enthusiasm of grassroots democrats in the region and the compatibility of democracy and Islam. This support will continue to help build critical democratic skills and empower women to play a key role in advancing democracy in the region.



Women Advocacy Group (WAG) members express their concerns and needs during an exchange of information and skills training. (CARE Jordan)



Algeria

In 2005, the Government of Algeria again took several important steps to strengthen human rights protections, following over a decade of civil strife and terrorism. As a result of increased human rights training for police and security forces and criminalization of torture, reported abuses by the security forces decreased. Government actions such as the push for national reconciliation and better training for security forces contributed to a decrease in daily violence between the proponents and opponents of an Islamic state, and the overall security situation in the country continued to improve. Revisions to the Family Code and Nationality Code strengthened equal rights protections for women. The Government took significant steps toward reforming the judiciary by investigating corruption; however, corruption in the executive and legislative branches continued to be a serious problem. In an effort to address Kabylie regional concerns, the Government improved its outreach to and relationships with Berber groups. Regional elections in November followed an accord to resolve the problem of under-representation of Kabylie interests in regional and national legislatures.

The Government's respect for human rights in some areas remained problematic. Nearly all cases of disappeared persons remain unresolved. The Ad Hoc Mechanism on the Disappeared, established in 2003, to recommend ways to solve the more than 16,000 cases of disappeared persons in the 1990s, submitted its final report to President Bouteflika in March. This report was not made public. The Mechanism was widely criticized as ineffective and lacking sufficient independence, investigative authority, and impartiality. Alleged abuse and torture of detainees, arbitrary arrests, prolonged detentions, official impunity, and a continuation of the State of Emergency remained problems. The Government continued to impose restrictions on freedoms of speech, press, assembly, association, and movement during the year. The use of defamation laws and government harassment of the press increased significantly, and the Government held considerable economic leverage over the press. A lack of governmental transparency and judicial independence continued to be problems; the Gov-

ernment also restricted privacy rights and workers' rights.

Supporting human rights and democracy in Algeria was a key objective for the United States. Throughout 2005, the United States encouraged the Government and civil society organizations to move forward on human rights and democracy issues. The Ambassador repeatedly underscored the importance of freedom of the press in both private and public exchanges with high-ranking government officials and nongovernmental leaders. He cautioned that restrictions on press freedom not only harmed Algeria's image abroad, but also hampered the country's democratic development and ability to modernize state institutions. The Ambassador raised the importance of press freedom and responsibility with the Minister of Communication and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, among others. U.S. officials strongly encouraged decriminalizing defamation. To encourage and support press freedom, the United States sponsored training on responsible journalism and greater coverage of critical issues. The Embassy sponsored one conference and three workshops focused on human rights and the media. Through a small grant, the United States also sponsored media training for ministry spokespersons as part of an initiative to promote greater government transparency and press responsibility.

The United States continued to promote reform and independence of the judiciary. Embassy officials used the Commercial Law Development Program to encourage judicial reforms, curb corruption and strengthen adherence to the rule of law. In 2005, with U.S. support, the American Bar Association (ABA) completed an assessment mission on promoting judicial independence. As part of ABA's North Africa program, the United States also supported training for Algerian judges and the expansion of training programs at the National Institute for Magistrates. U.S. officials worked with security forces to encourage internal reforms and self-correction, providing training videos and resource materials on human rights issues and giving lectures at the police academy.

The United States also sponsored programs to



strengthen political parties and civil society organizations, train legislators, and build electoral capacity. Activities included organized roundtables, workshops, and study missions to encourage cooperation on issues of mutual concern between groups from different parties and outlooks. Local press coverage of these initiatives increased public awareness of democracy and built support for critical reforms and democratic principles.

The United States encouraged improved human rights practices and protections throughout Algerian society and governmental institutions. The Embassy worked to strengthen its outreach by directly supporting two NGOs that addressed civil society and human rights issues. Embassy officials met with international human rights groups to support the creation of an independent nongovernmental coalition in Algeria to monitor, investigate, document, and advocate on behalf of the missing. Embassy officials continued to meet with the president of the Ad Hoc Mechanism on the Disappeared, encouraging the commission to work closely with human rights NGOs and to support broader civic discourse on human rights issues. The United States urged the Mechanism to publicly release its March report.

The United States supported governmental efforts to fully integrate human rights principles and practices into professional training for the security forces. Seventy-one military officers received instruction in the rule of law and human rights during International Military Education and Training programs in the United States and within Algeria. Increased exchanges between the U.S. and Algerian military enhanced awareness of modern standards of military conduct, fostering respect for internationally recognized human rights standards and practices.

During the year, the Government passed liberalizing amendments to the Nationality Code and Family Code that granted women equal rights to transmit citizenship to a spouse and/or children and extended broader legal protections in the areas of marriage and divorce. The United States also funded a Global Rights regional project with Algerian participants to promote human rights advocacy skills for women

and foster capacity building and networking for rural women and women's organizations.

Student exchange programs and the International Visitors Leadership Program also played an important role in U.S. efforts to strengthen democratic awareness and support for fundamental freedoms. During the year, the United States sponsored 65 student leaders and other participants in exchanges promoting democracy, freedom of the press, technology, and free market economy studies.

The United States continued its dialogue on religious freedom with the High Islamic Council, the Council of Algerian Religious Scholars, and representatives of Islamic political parties. The Ambassador underscored the message of religious tolerance by giving several speeches on the theme and continuing to fund two cultural restoration projects with religious significance for both Christians and Muslims.

Algeria was ranked at Tier 2 in the 2005 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report for acknowledging and beginning to address its status as a transit country for persons subject to sexual and labor exploitation in Europe. U.S. officials continued to raise our concerns about TIP with the Government of Algeria, particularly the need to screen and protect victims, and encouraged the Government to follow through on its promises to establish an anti-TIP office.

Bahrain

In 2002, Bahrain became a monarchy, adopting a Constitution that reinstated a bicameral legislature consisting of a 40-member Shura (Consultative) Council appointed by the King and a 40-member elected Council of Representatives. Parliament has the authority to propose and review legislation, but the King, as head of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government, holds most of the legislative authority. All citizens over the age of 21 have the right to vote. The 2002 legislative elections, the first in nearly three decades, were perceived as generally free and fair despite a boycott by four opposition political societies. (Political parties are not



The U.S. Secretary of State exchanges a memorandum of understanding at Forum for the Future meeting in Bahrain, which included discussions on Middle East democracy and development. (AP Photo)

permitted under the law, but in July 2005 the Government passed legislation that legalized political societies.) Both Shi'a and Sunni citizens are represented in the government, although the minority Sunni population plays a dominant role in both politics and the economy. Women ran, albeit unsuccessfully, for office in 2002. Six of the 40 appointed Shura Council members and two of the 20 government ministers are women. Problems remained in the Government's respect for human rights, including impunity for government officials and discrimination against the Shi'a population, women, and third-country nationals. The judiciary lacked full independence. The Government also infringed on the privacy rights of citizens, and in some cases restricted freedom of speech, the press, assembly, and association.

Advancing human rights and democracy in Bahrain was a U.S. priority. The United States promoted the rule of law, greater political participation, freedom of the press, judicial reform, civil society development, labor rights and the protection of foreign workers, and actions to combat Trafficking in Persons (TIP). U.S. officials regularly met with Bahraini officials to

advocate respect for human rights and a proactive approach to democratization. U.S. officials frequently engaged civil society activists and moderates in the political opposition and encouraged their participation in the political process. The United States advanced economic reforms through diplomatic engagement and the participation of business, labor, and civil society input during the negotiations leading to signing and ratification of the Free Trade Agreement.

U.S. programs worked to strengthen Bahrain's democratic movement and increase civil society's confidence in the electoral system leading up to the 2006 municipal and parliamentary elections. Through the Middle East Partnership Initiative, the United States sponsored efforts to help the country's political societies (in the absence of political parties) strengthen their institutional capacity and transparency and better respond to citizens' needs. During the year, the United States hosted eight workshops to increase the participation of youth and women in the political process and facilitated discussions between civil society and Members of Parliament on key legislation and other matters of national interest.



The United States engaged the political societies in dialogue, urging them to become involved in the political process and voice their concerns from within the system. Four political societies, including the most influential Shi'a political society Al-Wifaq, boycotted the 2002 elections and have since remained outside the political system. With encouragement by the United States, all four have now registered under the new Political Societies Law. While there are indications they may drop their boycott, these societies have not publicly declared their intent to participate in the 2006 municipal and parliamentary elections.

The Embassy focused on civic education initiatives as key to long-term consolidation of democracy in Bahrain. In 2005, the Civic Education Program trained over 100 Ministry of Education officials and teachers on a curriculum that will teach students about participation in the community and in government, individual responsibility, and collective problem solving, all core principles of a successful democracy. The United States supported two secondary school pilots using "Arab Civitas," an ongoing regional cooperative learning-based civic education program. In another program, U.S. funding supported the Arabic-language translation of a series of civic education storybooks for the primary grades and training for teachers on using the texts. The United States also helped train over 250 primary teachers on how to promote critical thinking skills using Arabic-language translations of American children's fiction. The Microscholarships Program sponsored the attendance of over 70 Bahraini high school students in English language classes that emphasized skills that students need in a democracy such as critical thinking, and encouraged targeted discussions about topics such as the U.S. Constitution. During 2005, the United States also sponsored three senior specialists from the Ministry of Education on an International Visitors Leadership Program on civic education and curriculum reform.

Freedom of expression and press liberties were priorities for the United States in Bahrain. U.S. programs trained dozens of Bahraini journalists during the year in investigative journalism and on the role of media in society, working to promote broader and more balanced coverage of political and social issues.

The United States helped establish the University of Bahrain's first student-run radio station. During the past two years, the Embassy sent several journalists as International Visitors to study the role of the media in a democracy and responsibilities of an investigative journalist. A U.S. grant supported an assessment of the country's state television that led to recommendations to transform Bahrain Radio and Television into a public broadcaster with editorial independence.

Embassy officers met regularly with leaders of various civil society organizations focused on women's rights, youth, human rights, labor, and transparency in government. The United States provided a small grant to the Bahrain Transparency Society to support management training for some of these groups. Senior U.S. officials, including the Secretary of State and the Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, participated in the Forum for the Future conference in Bahrain and were instrumental in establishing the Foundation for the Future to support the development of civil society.

Judicial reform was another priority, supported through a multi-faceted project facilitating reforms within the Bahraini Ministry of Justice (MOJ). The project trained two senior judges as trainers in Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) and conducted the first ADR training in the country for judges, lawyers, and senior government officials. The Economic Development Board began integration of ADR into the settlement of labor cases. In consultation with project consultants, the MOJ amended its rules of civil procedure and related legislation to expedite administration of justice. Also through this project, the Ministry introduced advances in technology to reduce or eliminate case backlogs that impede citizens' access to justice. These included a scanning system for court records and a digital audio court-reporting system pilot that will be expanded to all of Bahrain's courtrooms during the next year. The project also supported the development of a Judicial Training Institute and conducted TIP training for judges and prosecutors, judicial clerk training for law students, and case management training for judges.

After the King called for the creation of a family law



ensuring greater protection of women’s legal rights, the government-funded Supreme Council for Women spearheaded a supportive media campaign on the issue. A subsequent U.S.-funded regional conference drew together women participants from Bahrain and the region to review personal status laws. The Embassy also reached out to encourage human rights organizations and activists, including women and youth, to network and leverage their efforts in support of the proposal.

The United States monitored religious freedom through regular meetings with representatives of different sects and minority faiths. To foster better relations between Muslims and non-Muslims and among Muslim sects in the country, the Embassy sponsored the visit of a prominent imam from Georgetown University to Bahrain. He met with a broad range of interlocutors including clerics, government officials, and members of the public. He delivered lectures promoting tolerance by describing Muslim life in America and gave interviews to the local media.

Approximately 60% of the country’s work force are expatriates, and some foreign workers, especially domestic workers, were victims of trafficking. The 2005 TIP Report placed Bahrain on the Tier 2 Watch List, noting insufficient progress in extending labor law protection to domestic workers, prosecuting traffickers, and educating the public on trafficking and the rights of foreign workers. In official exchanges, the United States consistently underscored the importance of combating abuse of foreign domestic workers by affording them labor law protections, establishing a fast-track court for labor exploitation cases and encouraging victims to participate in legal prosecutions against their employers. During the year, a U.S.-funded NGO visited the country for an initial assessment of anti-TIP needs in the areas of legislation, law enforcement training, and public outreach.

Egypt



The Government of Egypt introduced some important reforms during the year, including the first annual report of the National Council for Human Rights, a

constitutional amendment to permit the direct election of the president in multi-party elections rather than a yes-no referendum, and a presidential decree to ease restrictions on church repair. However, the Government’s respect for human rights and the overall human rights situation remained poor. Significant human rights problems included limitations on citizens’ ability to change the government and broad use of a decades-old Emergency Law, including the use of emergency courts and indefinite administrative detentions. The Government’s commitment to protecting and expanding human rights was called into question by the prosecution and conviction of an opposition leader, Ayman Nour; by persistent and credible reports of abuse and torture, including deaths at police stations and in prisons; and by police violence against Sudanese refugees and against opposition protesters and voters during parliamentary elections. A culture of impunity discouraged systematic prosecution of security personnel who committed human rights abuses. There were arbitrary and sometimes mass arrests and detentions, poor prison conditions, executive influence over the judiciary, some restrictions on religious freedom, corruption, a lack of transparency, and societal discrimination against women and religious minorities, including Coptic Christians and Baha’is.

The referendum on the constitutional amendment to allow for multi-party presidential elections was tainted by low turnout and violence by government supporters. Critics of the amendment cited the inclusion of barriers to meaningful participation by opposition parties and independents, including continued restrictions on the licensing and operation of Islamist parties. Parliamentary elections in November and December were marred by low turnout, vote buying, rigging, and violence by the ruling National Democratic Party, which maintained its dominance in national politics with an overriding majority in the People’s Assembly and the partially elected Shura (Consultative) Council. Independent candidates affiliated with the banned Muslim Brotherhood became Egypt’s largest parliamentary opposition with 20% of the seats.

At least 27 Sudanese protestors were killed on December 30 when security forces removed a group



of several thousand protestors from a Cairo park. The United States worked closely with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and government officials to facilitate re-evaluations of refugee status claims, discourage summary deportations, and alleviate suffering. The Government took no immediate steps to discipline or otherwise prosecute members of security forces responsible for this violence or other instances of violence against protestors. Although many opposition critics called for the resignation of the Interior Minister, the President reappointed him to his position during a year-end cabinet reshuffle.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy addressed human rights problems and supported efforts to build a more robust civil society, promote the rule of law, and encourage the growth of democratic institutions, including an independent media. In 2005, the President and the Secretary of State made clear statements of U.S. support for democracy and human rights in Egypt. During a May 7 speech in Latvia, the President said Egypt's presidential election should "proceed with international monitors and rules that allow for a real campaign." On June 26 in Cairo, the Secretary of State called upon the Egyptian Government to "fulfill the promise it has made to its people—and to the entire world—by giving its citizens the freedom to choose." The Secretary of State also called for the rule of law to replace emergency decrees and for an independent judiciary to replace arbitrary justice, expressing concern "for the future of Egypt's reforms when peaceful supporters of democracy—men and women—are not free from violence." Emphasizing the importance of international standards, she also said, "Egypt's elections, including the Parliamentary elections, must meet objective standards that define every free election" and called for voting "without violence or intimidation."

Other senior U.S. officials pressed the Government throughout the year, urging lifting of the Emergency Law and other critical political reforms. In official exchanges, senior U.S. officials raised concerns about civil society development, political participation (including electoral reform), and basic political rights, as well as the prosecution and conviction of opposition leader Ayman Nour.

U.S. programs focused on promoting greater participation, accountability, and scrutiny for presidential and parliamentary elections. U.S. democracy programs supported international and Egyptian NGOs working to improve Egypt's electoral processes. Several major U.S. nongovernmental democracy institutes began programs in 2005, playing a critical role in training and funding the electoral activities of Egyptian civil society organizations monitoring the polls. Providing funds directly to a variety of Egyptian civil society groups, the United States supported several domestic election monitoring initiatives, whose 5,000 observers enabled unprecedented domestic scrutiny of the elections. Achievements through U.S. support also included the organization of several international election assessment missions. U.S. funding helped train broadcast and press journalists in election coverage, supported preparation of a voters' information guide by the Egyptian State Information Service, established an NGO network focusing on voters education, supported another NGO network advocating greater access by the disabled to voting places, and organized several high-level discussions on elections and political reform. National election commissions established to oversee presidential and parliamentary elections were criticized for their lack of independence and consistency; they declined U.S. offers of technical assistance.

The year saw positive developments for freedom of the press and expression, with the media, opposition figures, and civil society voicing unprecedented public criticism of the government and its policies. The campaign period prior to September's presidential election was marked by vigorous public debate and greater political awareness and engagement. Domestic media coverage of the elections, particularly regarding violence in the last round, was comprehensive and accurate.

The United States funded a new effort to promote greater independence and professionalism in the media and assist Egyptian television, radio, print, and electronic media to improve professionalism, sustainability, and diversity. The program built training capacity to promote the development of journalists, mid-career professionals and managers, and improve



the economic viability of media. It was also intended to strengthen local media and support legal, regulatory, and policy reform. U.S. support for journalist workshops, including one for 32 women journalists looking at the political participation of women, also helped improve media awareness and coverage of human rights and political reform initiatives.

Other U.S. democracy and governance programs promoted the participation of marginalized groups in decision-making at the local level, trained student union leaders to become more engaged in political processes, promoted the civil and political participation of people with disabilities, fostered greater political participation by Bedouins and migrants in South Sinai, and promoted democratic engagement and empowerment of women, youth, and poor farmers in marginalized rural and urban communities. Still other U.S. programs provided legal aid to victims of human rights violations among prisoners, detainees, and their families and reinforced understanding among religious leaders of the importance of democratic practices, human rights, and participation in politics and civil society.

The new Egyptian NGO Support Center, an institution designed to strengthen civil society organizations developed through a major U.S. assistance project, played an important role during the year. It quickly put into place key structures, including its vision statement, board, committees, and leadership, and prepared plans and proposals for multi-donor funding and sustaining project functions and services. The new Center, with U.S. and international support, is fully committed to providing assistance to civil society in advocacy, improved internal governance, and effective management.

In other initiatives to strengthen civil society, the United States supported Egyptian organizations working on human rights, religious tolerance, and women's and children's issues. The Embassy awarded several dozen small grants to support local, grassroots initiatives, including training for youth activists, support for both model parliamentary workshops and a model U.S. Congress program at Cairo University, legal systems training and exchanges for lawyers and

judges, civic education summer camps, and programs focused on women's and children's rights. The 2005 International Visitors Leadership Program supported exchanges on subjects relating to human rights, civil society, good governance, and women's issues.

A bilateral democracy assistance agreement signed in 2005 included a decentralization initiative, which will maximize the collection and retention of local revenue by pilot governorates, promote national policy reform to increase local autonomy, strengthen mechanisms for citizen participation around local decision-making, and build the capacity of local governments to manage revenue.

U.S. programs supported a nationwide reform of the judicial system, with a pilot program streamlining court procedures and enhancing judicial transparency. The bilateral assistance agreement also initiated a program to provide more effective assistance of counsel to criminal defendants and improve administration of criminal justice through development of a public defense system and a human rights curriculum for prosecutors and judges as well as automation of selected areas of the Prosecutor General's Office. Under an ongoing criminal justice project with the Egyptian Prosecutor General's Office, Egyptian judges and prosecutors visited the United States to study best practices and network with U.S. federal judges.

The United States urged the Government to grant due process of law to all citizens and raised specific concerns about the issue of the Government requiring notation of religious affiliation on national identity cards, a practice that adversely affects citizens who wish to convert away from Islam and members of religions not recognized by the Government. U.S. officials also raised concerns about discrimination against Egypt's Christians, Baha'is, and other religious minorities. The Embassy maintained excellent relations with representatives of Egypt's various religious communities. Embassy officers also monitored the trial of Ayman Nour, convicted in December of forging documents for the Ghad Party's registration.

Egypt was ranked in Tier 2 in the 2005 U.S. Trafficking in Persons Report as a transit country into



Israel for women trafficked for sexual exploitation. The Government is building upon cooperation with Bedouin tribes to prevent trafficking through the Sinai. In January 2006, First Lady Suzanne Mubarak brought attention to the issue of TIP at a conference in Greece coordinated by her organization, Women's International Peace Movement.

Iran

The Islamic Republic of Iran is a theocratic, constitutional republic dominated by Shi'a religious leaders. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei dominates the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, directly controls the armed forces, and indirectly controls internal security forces. President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad won a four-year term after a flawed election in 2005 and heads the executive branch. Hard-liners dedicated to the maintenance of the Islamic Republic blocked the legislative agenda of the previous "reformist" government led by President Khatami, closed down many of the reformist newspapers, and banned an attempt to start up a nongovernmental satellite station. They also physically injured, arrested, or intimidated supporters in the streets, impeached or otherwise intimidated some of Khatami's ministers, and stripped sitting members of the legislature of their rights as deputies, including the ability to run for re-election. The process of silencing the national debate on civil reforms initiated by Khatami's election in 1997 was all but complete by 2005. Inevitably, the election of a hard-line legislature and government that emphasized revolutionary dogma negatively impacted the human rights of average Iranians. In 2005, the Government committed a number of serious human rights abuses. Summary executions, discrimination based on ethnicity and religion, harassment and arrest of journalists and bloggers, disappearances, extremist vigilantism, widespread use of torture, and other degrading treatment remained problems.

Violence and a brutal crackdown in which dozens were killed or injured accompanied protests by ethnic Arabs in Khuzestan in April 2005 and by ethnic Kurds in northwestern Iran in the summer of 2005. The Government continued to detain and torture

dissidents and individuals exercising freedom of expression, including scores of political prisoners. Imprisoned journalist Akbar Ganji, arrested in April 2000, was hospitalized on July 17, 40 days into a 70-day hunger strike protesting his six-year sentence on charges of collecting confidential state documents to jeopardize state security and spreading propaganda. He has reportedly been tortured. At the end of the year, he was being held in solitary confinement in a high security section of the notorious Evin prison. Iranian bloggers continued to endure arrest and stiff penalties for expressing their ideas on the Internet. On February 2, Internet writer and journalist Arash Sigarchi received a sentence of 14 years in prison on charges including espionage, aiding "hostile" governments, and insulting the country's leaders. He was released pending appeal on March 17 after posting \$127,000 bail. There were also reports of executions based on charges of homosexuality, but details remained difficult to verify.

The Government continued to discriminate against and arrest members of the Baha'i religious community. Other religious and ethnic minority groups, including Jews, Christians, and Sunni and Sufi Muslims faced continued social, political, and economic discrimination. Reports of women sentenced to death by stoning continue, but there were no confirmed reports that sentences were carried out.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy centered on urging friends and allies to condition improvement in bilateral and trade relations on positive changes in Iran's human rights policies. The United States worked to advance UN and other international resolutions condemning Iran's human rights record and practices and publicly highlighted the Government's abuse of its citizens' fundamental rights and freedoms. Although the United States does not maintain diplomatic relations with Iran, it continued a multi-faceted effort to support the Iranian people's aspirations to live in a democratic country where human rights are respected. The United States also supported in various ways the continuing efforts of the Iranian people to broaden real political participation and reassert their right to fundamental freedoms.



In 2005, for a third year in a row, the United States co-sponsored and actively supported a resolution that passed in the UN General Assembly's 60th Plenary condemning the human rights situation in Iran. This sent an important signal to the Iranian people and their Government that serious concerns regarding Iran's overall behavior would not overshadow concerns regarding the internal human rights situation.

The United States also regularly raised concerns about Iran's poor human rights record during consultations with allies, urging that these be raised during any formal human rights dialogue or other bilateral contact with the Government. U.S. policy consistently called for Iran to respect the human rights of its citizens, and all public statements reflected this core issue. President Bush and senior-level U.S. officials repeatedly expressed support for the Iranian people in their quest for freedom, democracy, and a more transparent and accountable government. U.S. officials regularly met with individuals and members of various groups suffering human rights abuses in Iran, documenting incidents for dissemination to other governments and inclusion in the annual Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Iran and the Report on International Religious Freedom. The Secretary of State also re-designated Iran as a Country of Particular Concern for particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

Under current law, Iran is ineligible for most assistance from the U.S. Government. However, in 2005 the United States renewed a grant to document abuses inside Iran under the limited special authority granted by Congress. This program provided sub-grants to educational institutions, humanitarian groups, NGOs, and individuals inside Iran to support the advancement of democracy and human rights. The project sought to raise public awareness of accountability and rule of law as an important component of democratization in Iran. In addition to this grant, other U.S.-funded programs promoted respect for human rights and advocacy for freedom of assembly, free speech, and political participation. During the past two years, the United States directed four million dollars to projects that promote respect for human rights and empower citizens in their call for more represen-

tative political participation.

In addition, the United States supported the advancement of democracy and human rights standards inside Iran through NGOs and funded Voice of America radio and television broadcasts into Iran, a website in Persian to speak directly to the Iranian people about U.S. policy, and Persian-language Radio Farda, which operated 24 hours a day.

Iran was believed to be a source, transit, and destination country for sexual exploitation and labor-related trafficking in persons (TIP). Although lack of access prohibited a full assessment of official anti-TIP efforts, Iran has taken measures to sign memoranda of understanding with source countries and international NGOs to prevent TIP. Victims of trafficking have access to counseling, legal, and health services. The United States has encouraged Iran to improve screening of TIP victims to distinguish them from illegal immigrants and to pursue cooperation with neighboring countries to monitor borders.

Iraq

Iraq is a republic with a recently elected democratic government. After the overthrow of the Ba'athist regime and the interim administration of the Coalition Provisional Authority, the Iraqi Interim Government assumed power following the 2004 transfer of sovereignty. Historic elections and the first step in the formation of the Iraqi Transitional Government took place on January 30. In two subsequent polls, voters not only adopted a Constitution on October 15, but also elected a new parliament under that Constitution on December 15. The elections and referendum were regarded as free and fair, and they were critical steps in Iraq's democratic process. During the past year, unsettled conditions prevented effective governance in parts of the country and the Government's human rights performance was handicapped by insurgency, sectarian violence, and terrorism. Elements of the security forces and those employed by the Government frequently acted independently of governmental authority; some committed serious

human rights violations.

To combat these conditions, the United States supported the formation of a government and development of institutional safeguards for democracy and human rights, underscoring the importance of an inclusive and responsive government in preventing abuses and ensuring stability. Toward this goal, the United States employed a variety of diplomatic and programmatic tools in support of good governance, rule of law, institutional capacity, independent media, civil society, human rights, and democracy. Senior U.S. officials worked to ensure that different segments of Iraqi society, including minorities, women, and political parties not represented in the Government, remained constructively engaged in the political process.

The United States supported the Government's conduct of three major electoral events during the year: January elections for a Transitional National Assembly, the October constitutional referendum, and the December parliamentary elections. The United States

helped build the capacity of political parties across the spectrum, trained and supported the deployment of accredited domestic monitors throughout the country for each election and for the referendum, and implemented a comprehensive, nationwide voter education and get-out-the-vote campaign with a special focus on women and outreach to Sunni Arab areas.

At the national level, the United States helped support the elected legislature's development of new processes, rules of procedures, and regulations. The U.S. also strengthened legislators' capacity to craft legislation, offer constituent services, and strengthen oversight of governmental institutions. The United States funded over 10,000 educational events on the Constitution involving over 300,000 participants, supported female National Assembly members and provincial and civic leaders advocating constitutional protections for women's rights, and fostered youth participation in the political process.

The United States promoted participatory, representative and accountable government in rural and ur-



Women entering polling station in Najaf, Iraq, carry banner that reads "Vote Iraq." The January 30, 2005, elections were the first free elections held in Iraq in a half century. (AP Photo)



ban communities nationwide, working to prevent and mitigate conflict across gender, ethnic, and religious lines. Often working through provincial and regional reconstruction teams, the United States supported local government capacity-building projects in Iraq's major cities and all 18 governorates. Reconstruction teams supported improvements in the rule of law, promoted political and economic development, and fostered improved service capacity in provincial administrations.

The United States supported the establishment of the National Iraqi News Agency (NINA), the first independent commercial news agency in Iraq. NINA covered the constitutional referendum, the elections, and Saddam Hussein's trial. NINA's website received over 100,000 visits per month. The BBC and other international media credit NINA as a news source for their own coverage.

The United States further promoted media freedom and development through training over 1,000 journalists and media managers on subjects ranging from investigative journalism to strategic media management. U.S. training focused on building skills to produce informative and responsible reporting by a professional, independent press. Programs included an October program for journalists in Baghdad and the visit of seven journalists to the United States in July. The Embassy sponsored regular events at the International Press Center. The United States also supported the development of "Iraqis for Public Broadcasting" (IPB), a civil society media watchdog group that monitors programming on the Independent Media Network. IPB successfully advocated for balanced reporting and for adjusting public broadcast program scheduling to ensure members of the opposition, including prominent Sunni personalities, had a voice in the political process.

Civic education programs supported by the United States promoted democratization and civil society development. Training, technical assistance, and outreach to civil society organizations benefited more than 2,400 NGOs and 40,000 citizens (38% of whom were women), resulting in organizations better equipped to advocate for good government and

human rights protections. Four civil society resource centers were opened to reach out to all of Iraq's 18 governorates. These serve as regional hubs for capacity-building services for Iraqi NGOs, providing training to strengthen operational competencies, enable advocacy and awareness-raising on specific issues, encourage the building of networks and coalitions, and foster inter-institutional policy dialogues and productive engagement between NGOs and the Government. In partnership with local organizations, the centers sponsored a variety of anti-corruption, independent media, civic education, human rights, and women's advocacy activities. The United States also facilitated broad participation in public dialogues, promoted interaction between citizens and public officials to encourage responsive and accountable local government, and provided start-up resources and training to strengthen the institutional capacity of grassroots organizations.

The United States supported Iraqi efforts to strengthen the rule of law and ensure an independent and impartial judicial system. U.S. programs provided training to judges on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, international human rights law, and anti-corruption initiatives. The United States also provided technical guidance and support to the Ministry of Justice to enhance the judiciary's effectiveness. U.S. programs were directed at improving the skills of judiciary officials as well as more efficient judicial processes and a culture of lawfulness. The United States worked closely with the UN and the EU to establish a Rule of Law Working Group chaired by the Chief Justice of Iraq.

The United States assisted the Iraqi people in efforts to improve the climate for the protection of fundamental human rights and dignity in Iraq. In response to the recent discovery of serious prisoner abuse and torture in Iraqi security ministry facilities, senior U.S. officials encouraged and supported ongoing government inspections of all Iraqi detention facilities. The United States supported a strong human rights and rule of law component in the training of all Iraqi police forces, and U.S. police personnel mentored their Iraqi counterparts, reinforcing the importance of respecting human rights.



The United States worked to strengthen protections for human rights both in the Government and through NGOs addressing human rights issues. U.S. programs supported the opening of the Human Rights Education Center in Baghdad, sponsored human rights workshops for officials, and supported the National Center for Missing and Disappeared Persons. U.S. grants to NGOs allowed for the treatment and reintegration of victims of torture, collection and documentation of human rights abuses committed by the former regime, enhanced awareness of human rights standards throughout society, and the development and strengthening of human rights organizations.

The United States supported the Iraq Property Claims Commission (IPCC), established in 2004 as an independent commission designed to resolve claims for real property confiscated, forcibly acquired, or otherwise taken for less than fair value by the former regime for reasons other than land reform or lawfully applied eminent domain. U.S. support included training in public relations and a capacity building program managed by the International Organization for Migration and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. The IPCC operated under Article 58 of the Transitional Administrative Law, which addresses procedures to remedy injustices of the former regime including forced migration and the altering of certain regional demographic populations. Through bilateral assistance to the Ministry of Displacement and Migration and multilateral assistance to UN partners, the United States also enhanced legal and physical protections for refugees, returnees, and internally displaced persons.

The United States placed a high priority on the issue of equality for women in Iraq, supporting this goal through diplomatic advocacy and programming. The U.S.-funded Iraqi Women's Democracy Initiative provided women with training and education in the skills and practices of democratic public life. The U.S.-Iraqi Women's Network, a public-private partnership, linked Iraqi NGO representatives and business leaders with American counterparts, strengthening Iraqi women's skills and participation in the political and economic life of their country. The United States held workshops for women political leaders, includ-

ing members of the Transitional National Assembly, and sponsored more than 60 regional meetings and workshops across Iraq on women's rights and women in the political process and civil society. The United States also sponsored delegations of Iraqi women to two sessions of the UN Commission on the Status of Women.

U.S. officials regularly engaged with Iraqi religious leaders and officials to urge that legal protections for minority rights and freedom of religion be respected. The United States supported seminars, conferences, and interfaith dialogue aimed at uniting religious groups against violence and fostering an environment of tolerance, particularly between the Sunnis and Shi'a, as well as towards Christians and others. The United States acted to prevent trafficking in persons (TIP) in Iraq, distributing information and working with officials to increase awareness of TIP issues. A component on TIP was developed for inclusion in basic police training, and trafficking assessments in various areas of Iraq were supported.

Jordan

Jordan is a constitutional monarchy; the Constitution concentrates executive and legislative authority in the King. During the year, three changes of government occurred. On November 27, King Abdullah Al-Hussein approved the most recent cabinet under Prime Minister Marouf al-Bakhit, who replaced outgoing Prime Minister Adnan Badran. King Abdullah charged the new cabinet with advancing reform while at the same time bolstering Jordan's security in the wake of the November 9, 2005, Amman hotel bombings, which killed 60 people. In 2005 the Government respected human rights, though its overall record continued to reflect problems. The National Centre for Human Rights (NCHR), a human rights commission established by King Abdullah in 2003, produced its first report during the year, in which it ranked Jordan "good" at the planning and policy level, "acceptable" in economic, social, and cultural rights, and "poor" in civil and political rights. While the Government sought to promote social and political reform, progress lagged in some areas. Citizens'



right to change their Government remained restricted. Official restrictions on the rights of women and social discrimination against women continued, as did restrictions on freedom of speech, press, assembly, association, and religion. Citizens participated in the political process through their elected representatives in parliament. The Royal Commission for the National Agenda completed a 10-year comprehensive reform plan; the Government is now studying the plan and preparing implementing legislation.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy strives to promote rule of law and legal reform, civil society development, civic participation in the political process, and women's rights. Through a broad portfolio of programs, the United States worked in close collaboration with its Jordanian counterparts to: increase citizen participation in the political, economic, and social development of the country; increase the capacity of the Parliament to promote transparency and accountability within the institution; strengthen independent media; improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the judicial system; strengthen the rights of women; and increase religious freedom and interfaith dialogue and tolerance.

The United States implemented this strategy through direct dialogue with the Jordanian Government; through training; through civilian, government, and military exchanges; and through the publication of reports on human rights, labor, and religious freedom.

U.S. assistance programs served as a catalyst for democratic reform in Jordan. Programs helped modernize Parliament's research department. U.S. assistance improved the ability of the legislature to conduct meaningful monitoring and evaluation of public expenditures and increased transparency and accountability within key committees of Parliament. The United States funded programs to assist political parties in Jordan, improving the ability of the parties to develop platforms, diversify membership, and more effectively advocate for the passage of legislation in line with party values and objectives. A number of U.S. exchange programs facilitated the visit of Jordanian parliamentarians to the United States to study

American legislative models and create partnerships with American institutions. Other U.S. efforts, such as the Millennium Challenge Account and the Forum, Foundation, and Fund for the Future, also advanced the human rights and democracy goals of the United States and provided incentives and support for reform efforts in Jordan.

U.S. assistance helped to develop and field-test civic education modules to educate Jordan's youth on the responsibilities of citizens in the democratic process. Jordanians improved their understanding of democracy and governance through exposure to and participation in three U.S.-funded comprehensive national polls conducted on democracy, the rule of law, and participation in the legislative process. Other U.S. programs supported training English teachers in the use of a content-based pedagogy that focused on civic education and social studies.

Several U.S. initiatives created linkages between American and Jordanian journalism training programs in order to enhance journalistic standards and to exchange experiences and expertise. These projects helped create new curriculum modules and developed the skills of a Jordanian university's journalism faculty and students. The United States also supported a half-dozen workshops and seminars over the year that helped participants broaden their understanding of how freedom influences the media's role in topics ranging from "Access to Information" to "Media and Good Governance." The United States also translated, published, and distributed a number of American books on the role of a free and responsible media in democratic societies throughout Jordan and the region.

U.S. programs aimed at promoting respect for the rule of law improved court efficiency while simultaneously promoting greater accountability and transparency in the judicial system. U.S. assistance facilitated the efforts of leading stakeholders to draft and adopt Jordan's first comprehensive code of judicial conduct. Technical assistance contributed to the Government of Jordan's development of a new Arabic-language case management system and to its implementation in over 60% of the courts in Am-



man. Approximately 500 judges, lawyers, and court staff received training on the new automated system, and cumbersome, manual filing procedures are being reengineered based on the new technology. The new system significantly reduced case backlogs in three pilot courts, and public opinion polls indicated that 70% of those surveyed expressed greater satisfaction with court services in the pilot courts, compared with a 43% satisfaction rate with courts overall. The number of litigants who received timely court notices increased by 84%.

U.S. programs promoted greater judicial independence in Jordan through the drafting of a detailed action plan for building the capacity of the Judicial Council to become the driver for legal reform in Jordan. Programs aimed at modernizing Jordan's judicial training facility succeeded in improving decision-making skills for the judiciary. Exchanges for lawyers, law students, and Shari'a court judges exposed Jordan's judiciary to American legal institutions and helped to introduce American legal models into the Jordanian system. One linkage program introduced alternative dispute resolution and presented a model for criminal justice reform.

The United States continued to work with the quasi-independent NCHR, which published its first report on the status of human rights in Jordan during the year. In April, the United States sponsored a capacity-building workshop at the NCHR to benefit local NGOs working to improve human rights in Jordan. Other efforts, including a number of U.S. exchange programs, worked to strengthen local NGOs. These programs focused on fostering networking and cooperation between groups working to promote democratic reform and human rights norms, and on strengthening their capacities to inform and communicate with national decision-making institutions to encourage reform. U.S. officials often received invitations to local NGO activities and regularly attended these events, regardless of U.S. sponsorship.

Programs designed to advance and promote the role of women in society succeeded during the year. As an example, women leaders established an organization in the Tafleeh governorate with the cooperation

of Jordan's only female mayor. The United States supported programs that reduced violence against women and funded an annual anti-violence campaign with events held across Jordan. The United States supported and organized numerous training and exchange programs that developed the skills of female trade union leaders. Several civil society roundtable discussions with female leaders were held during the year, usually coinciding with the visits of high profile U.S. officials and civil society leaders. Examples of these events included roundtable discussions held with the First Lady, former Ambassador Hunt, and the Assistant Secretary of State for International Organizations.

One of the primary purposes of the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program in Jordan is to strengthen bilateral relations by exposing members of Jordan's military to the U.S. democratic system and to raise awareness and respect for human rights. With the exception of very short technical courses, all courses under the IMET program included seminars on U.S. Government, judiciary, and culture. Students in short-term courses visited local courthouses and state or local legislatures. Long-term students visited Washington and received briefings from Congress, the White House, and the Supreme Court. All Professional Military Education courses included a bloc of instruction on the Law of War. Additionally, the Counterterrorism Fellowship Program taught Jordanian military personnel how to combat terrorism while respecting the rule of law, human rights, and civil rights. In 2005, approximately 300 Jordanians received U.S.-funded training through these programs.

Working to promote religious freedom and tolerance in Jordan, the United States sponsored numerous exchange visits and two major regional conferences that encouraged interfaith dialogue and understanding. In November, one of these conferences brought together Christian, Muslim, and Jewish leaders from the region and from the United States. The conference culminated with an interfaith breaking of the fast to end Ramadan and with the endorsement of a joint message supporting tolerance and moderation in all religions. Another U.S. grant supported collabora-



tion between Middle Eastern and American colleges and universities by creating a series of exchange programs, seminars, and workshops focused on the role of religion and on Islam in the United States.

A multi-year project to strengthen social dialogue and address labor administration and labor/management relations continued during 2005. The project included the successful creation of a Jordanian Economic and Social Council, and the establishment, within the Ministry of Labor, of a Tripartite National Committee. The United States informed the Government of Jordan of its concern over child labor and trafficking in persons.

Kuwait

Kuwait is a constitutional, hereditary emirate ruled by the al-Sabah family, which governs in consultation with prominent families and community leaders. The 1962 Constitution grants the Emir executive and legislative authority and permits dissolution of the elected National Assembly by decree. The Prime Minister proposes candidates for ministerial positions, subject to approval by the Emir. Kuwait has a population of 2.9 million residents, approximately 970,000 of whom are citizens. The rest are expatriate workers and their dependents. During the July 2003 parliamentary elections, the electorate consisted of approximately 143,000 male citizens, and there were no political parties. Within these parameters and recognizing that the Government and the opposition reportedly bought votes, the elections were generally considered to have been free and fair. In a historic and long-awaited development, the National Assembly passed a law in 2005 granting women the right to vote and run for office; however, women were not eligible to vote in the June 2 Municipal Council elections because the annual February voter registration period had passed. The elected National Assembly at times influenced or overturned government decisions.

The Government improved its human rights record by granting women the right to vote; however, serious problems remained. The law provides for an inde-

pendent judiciary and the right to a fair trial; however, the Emir appoints all judges, and the Ministry of Justice must approve the renewal of most judicial appointments. While civilian authorities generally maintained effective control of the security forces, there were some instances in which elements of the security forces acted independently of government authority. The parliament and press engaged in lively debate, although they are forbidden from criticizing the fundamentals of religion and the state, and the licensing of new daily newspapers was impossible in practice. Freedom of worship continued to be protected, though Shi'a Muslims and Christian groups have faced difficulties in obtaining permission to build appropriate places for worship. Expatriate laborers continued to face significant violations of their human rights due to Kuwaiti labor laws and practices.

The U.S. strategy for promoting human rights and democracy in Kuwait was multi-faceted, involving study tours to the U.S., Embassy outreach, U.S. speakers, cultural events, and digital video conferences between Kuwaiti and American students, journalists, subject experts, and government officials. The United States worked to inculcate the values of democracy and participatory civil society, especially among youth and women, through support of NGOs, International Visitor Leadership Programs (IVLP), and educational and training programs. Trafficking in persons (TIP) continued to be a significant human rights issue in Kuwait. A major focus of the Embassy's activities in 2005 was raising awareness about this problem in Kuwaiti society.

In 2005, the United States implemented a number of educational and professional development programs to promote democracy and strengthen civil society. The "Study of the U.S. Institutes for Student Leaders" program helped emerging leaders to gain a better understanding of and appreciation for the democratic political process. The program taught young people about American social and political values through a combination of academic study, meetings, lectures, and roundtable discussions with American civic leaders and academics. Students also learned about civic participation through experiential learning, community service, and meeting average Americans. A simi-



lar program based in Kuwait, “Junior Achievement,” exposed young Kuwaitis to the American system of commerce, rule of law, and participatory governance. To further young Kuwaitis’ exposure to democratic values and the role of civil society, the Embassy sent 13 Kuwaiti high school students on the Partnership for Learning Youth Exchange & Study Program. The students spent their third year of high school in the United States, where they took civics and social studies classes to learn about American democratic values. An English-language micro-scholarship program for ninth- and tenth-graders helped to instill the values of democracy and civic participation through in-class elections and community service projects.

Parliamentary elections in 2007 are expected to mark the first time in Kuwait’s history that women will fully participate in the political process. The United States, in cooperation with the National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute, provided training to Kuwaiti women and men on campaign strategies, including platform development, working with the media, and advocacy. This U.S.-supported training brought together women and activists from different backgrounds in support of women’s political rights. A U.S. grant also funded the research and production of a brochure detailing discrimination against women in the law and encouraging their political awareness. Other efforts by the United States to promote the full participation of Kuwaiti women in society included recruitment of young women to participate in “U.S. Business Internships for Young Middle Eastern Women.” This program’s goal was to further empower women to be active and influential in their communities by participating in a month-long business administration course and a three-month internship with an American company.

Kuwait is currently considering a new Press and Publications Law. In an effort to encourage media freedom, the United States implemented programs to increase Kuwaiti reporters’ exposure to U.S. counterparts and encourage objective reporting on people, policies, and events, as well as on American media practices and American society. The Embassy arranged for a journalist and parliamentary staffer to participate in an IVLP on the “Foreign Policy Deci-

sion-Making Process” in April 2005. The program addressed U.S. foreign policy formulation, including the role of the press, a free media and free speech. Throughout the year, U.S. officials actively engaged with the media by organizing visits to observe and accurately report on Coalition efforts in the Gulf, Coalition humanitarian assistance in Pakistan, and other cooperative efforts in the region. Journalists were regularly invited to the Embassy for interviews with U.S. officials and for video teleconference discussions on key foreign policy issues.

NGOs in Kuwait operate in a difficult environment. Dozens are allowed to operate, but NGOs must apply to the Government for the right to exist and operate, and the Government has used this power to restrict the reach and effectiveness of the NGO sector. To strengthen the country’s NGO community, the United States funded a number of programs through a small grants program. In one project, a Kuwaiti NGO carried out a study on how the Government’s budgeting affects women. Another NGO conducted a survey that measured support for women’s political rights. In the interest of strengthening civil society, the Embassy awarded a grant to a local group to produce a series of civic-minded films by young filmmakers. Another U.S.-funded NGO created a summer entrepreneurial and civic action training program for youth.

The United States funded several projects to support the rule of law in Kuwait through IVLP exchanges. The Embassy sent a female lawyer on a program entitled “Promoting Rule of Law and Judicial Reform,” not only to learn about the U.S. legal system but also to observe it in practice. The program stressed legal programs to safeguard the rule of law and fundamental human rights. The Embassy arranged for Kuwaiti participation in other exchanges that focused on promoting rule of law and international security, including a program titled, “Combating International Crime.”

More informal means of promoting democratic values and practices included movie nights, representational events, and roundtable discussions at American Corners at local universities. The Embassy screened



several films that showcased community activism and civic participation to young people and political activists. The events have been among the Embassy's most popular outreach activities, and the Embassy purchased extra copies of the films for distribution. The Ambassador hosted a series of representational events on the themes of religious freedom, human rights, and women's political rights. The events brought together a cross section of Kuwaiti society and helped to create professional links among individuals and groups that did not have a history of working together. A variety of U.S. officials spoke at universities and high schools on U.S. history and politics, human rights, and cultural issues.

The Embassy worked with the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs to send two Kuwaiti imams to the U.S. on a Single-Country IVLP titled "Religion in the U.S." This formed part of our effort to develop a dialogue with moderates in Kuwait. The project showed Kuwaitis the scope of religious freedom in the United States and encouraged the promotion of tolerance and inter-religious understanding. A third official of the Ministry participated in an exchange on "Interfaith Dialogue in the U.S." Both programs consisted of three-week visits to five representative cities in the United States. Participants had the opportunity to meet with counterparts of different religious backgrounds and to discuss issues related to their vocation. All three participants commented that the visit radically transformed their preconceived notions about life in the United States. They gained a significant appreciation for the inter-religious dialogue in the United States and for the tolerance of diversity they discovered in their interaction with American clergy.

Expatriate laborers, who form a majority of Kuwait's labor force, face significant problems. They often arrive in Kuwait to find that working conditions and salaries are not what they agreed upon in their home

countries. In practice, many expatriate laborers who are exploited have difficulty redressing their grievances. Domestic laborers (maids) face a particularly difficult situation in that they are not covered by Kuwait's labor laws, which afford other workers some degree of protection by setting a minimum wage and establishing standards for conditions of work. The

Embassy arranged a digital video conference between Kuwaiti reporters and columnists and the U.S. coordinator for trafficking in persons (TIP) issues to raise awareness of the problems faced by domestic laborers, increase the profile of this problem, and explain the issues included in the U.S. TIP Report. The video conference received extensive press coverage in all of the country's Arabic and English newspapers. The Embassy also arranged a press roundtable discussion with the Ambassador, in which he called upon the Government to address deficiencies and areas of non-compliance. The Ambassador's message resonated loudly in Kuwait. U.S. pressure contributed to the Government's highly successful campaign to eliminate the use of children as jockeys in camel races.



Lebanon

Although Lebanon made significant improvements in democracy and promoting respect for human rights, the Government's overall human rights record remained poor. During a momentous year, the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri in a terrorist bombing that took the lives of 21 others, including MP Basil Fuleihan, served as a catalyst for massive pro-independence demonstrations and led to the withdrawal of Syrian military forces. Generally free and democratic parliamentary elections—the first in decades without Syrian interference—resulted in a new, pro-independence parliamentary majority. Lebanon's judiciary enjoyed greater independence, moving to arrest four former Lebanese security chiefs identified as



suspects in the Hariri assassination by the UN Independent International Investigation Commission.

U.S. and international assistance sought to help Lebanon rebuild as a sovereign and independent country founded on respect for human rights and democratic principles after decades of Syrian occupation and civil conflict. Sectarian tensions, however, compounded by a fragile economic, political, and security environment and ongoing interference from neighboring states and their proxies, continued to threaten Lebanon's reform efforts. The United States worked with the Government and international allies to support the goals outlined in UN Security Council Resolution 1559 and worked with a broad coalition of international partners, known as the Core Group, to support Lebanese plans for economic, fiscal and political transparency, and reform.

U.S. programs enhanced Lebanese efforts to promote transparency and accountability in government, strengthen civil society, build greater independence of the judiciary, promote respect for the rule of law, and support the conduct of free and fair elections. U.S. diplomatic and program support promoted freedom of the press, women's rights, and universal education.

In May 2005, in close coordination with the United Nations, the United States provided technical support to the first independent parliamentary elections in Lebanon in nearly 30 years. The United States called for these elections to be held on time despite pro-Syrian elements seeking indefinite delays. The United States also supported the presence of international and domestic election observers. The May-June parliamentary elections were considered generally free and fair, despite concerns with inherent inequities in districting and the electoral law. The subsequent cabinet was the first cabinet voted into power by the Lebanese people without Syrian oversight in nearly three decades. U.S. programs also promoted the development of cross confessional, independent political parties. The United States identified a diverse representation of rising young Lebanese political leaders for local, regional, and U.S.-based training programs and seminars that included discussions of indepen-

dent platform-based electoral politics. The United States also supported a municipal reform program that has been credited with successfully rebuilding essential local government foundations. This assistance has focused on enhancing administrative and financial capabilities, expanding social services, encouraging public participation, and increasing accountability.

The Lebanese press is one of the most independent and free in the Middle East. In the wake of the Syrian withdrawal, journalists were emboldened to speak out to a degree previously unimaginable, encouraging and documenting rallies such as the massive pro-Lebanon and anti-Syria demonstration of March 14. But some of Lebanon's most courageous voices for democracy paid the highest price. The murder of An-Nahar columnist Samir Kassir and An-Nahar publisher and editor and Member of Parliament Gebran Tueni, along with an assassination attempt on news anchor May Chidiac of the Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation, were clear attempts to intimidate the press and the Lebanese people. The United States strongly condemned all three attacks and diplomats visited media outlets and those injured in the attacks. In public and private statements, U.S. officials emphasized the importance of protections for freedoms of speech and the press and noted the critical role of journalists in advancing democracy and human rights protections. The Lebanese press benefited from a number of U.S.-funded programs to strengthen press freedom and independence of the media, which included training for the media and civil society in the role of the press and on the importance of free expression in promoting democracy and human rights.

Massive street demonstrations in the weeks and months following the assassination of former Prime Minister Hariri demonstrated the value Lebanese citizens place on freedom of assembly and their willingness to play a role in affecting changes in their government and society. As the role of civil society grows in Lebanon, the United States has expanded its support of local advocacy groups and NGOs promoting transparency in government and civil society organizations. U.S. programs worked to build civil society networks in isolated and underserved municipalities in northern Lebanon and the eastern Bekaa valley.



Since the end of Syrian occupation, Lebanon's judiciary has demonstrated increased independence, although it remains subject to political pressure, particularly in appointments of key prosecutors and investigating magistrates. The United States has supported greater independence and transparency in the judiciary, sponsoring several in-depth civil society assessments on the rule of law and the judiciary, with a focus on sentencing trends and judicial autonomy.

The Government's sovereignty over its own territory and its ability to guarantee security and stability within its borders continues to be hampered by Syrian proxies and Palestinian and Lebanese militias. Despite the end of the Syrian military occupation of Lebanon, armed groups, particularly Hizballah, retained significant influence over parts of the country in defiance of UN Security Council Resolution 1559. The United States, through support of this resolution and other multilateral means, has supported the Government's efforts to assert its control over all of its territory. At the request of the Government, the United States provided technical support for investigations into a number of last year's car bombings and assassinations, improving Lebanese capacity to successfully investigate, prosecute and deter terrorist attacks. By the end of the year, the Government had begun taking steps to isolate and limit Palestinian armed groups; it had not yet, however, taken steps to disarm extra-legal armed groups or to disarm Hizballah, which is designated by the United States as a terrorist organization.

Arbitrary and unlawful deprivation of life continues to be a serious problem in Lebanon. Over a dozen car bombs in 2005 targeted reform leaders and the general population, resulting in scores of deaths and injuries. The United States, through diplomatic efforts and cooperation with the Government and international community, has made efforts to stop the bombings and bring their perpetrators to justice. The United States supported UN Security Council Resolutions 1595, 1636 and 1644, which placed the full weight of the international community behind the search for justice in Lebanon.

The law provides for equality among all citizens but in practice, some aspects of the law and traditional custom discriminated against women and other disadvantaged populations. The United States supported a wide range of programs to support the legal rights and access to education and health care of women in the country. The United States worked to protect the rights of people with disabilities through a March 2005 grant to a Lebanese NGO working with persons with disabilities. The United States also advocated on behalf of the rights of refugees in Lebanon and supported a research training and Internet access program for Palestinian youth in both Bourj el Barajneh and Dbayeh refugee camps and a diversified skills program for women and youth in Bourj el Barajneh refugee camp.

To underscore U.S. support for religious freedom, which is protected under the Lebanese Constitution, U.S. officials met regularly with religious leaders and members of the Council on Religious Understanding and facilitated an International Visitors Leadership Program, including an interfaith dialogue.

The United States pressed the Government at all levels to acknowledge trafficking in persons (TIP) as a serious issue and take immediate steps towards eliminating it. In January 2005, the Immigration Service of Lebanon formally began working and coordinating with a local NGO to protect TIP victims, a first for the region. Official interviews with victims were held with the support of social workers, special status was accorded to abused workers cooperating with investigators, and screening and referral procedures were established for TIP cases. The United States supported the funding of safe houses for victims under governmental protection.

The Embassy met regularly with labor leaders to reiterate U.S. support for labor rights and for economic liberalization and reform. U.S. officials encouraged these leaders to engage in dialogue with the private sector and government to promote reforms, and programs provided the country's labor unions the chance to train with American unions on labor organization, labor law and workers' rights. The United States, in cooperation with the American Federation of Teach-



ers, worked to strengthen the leadership skills and awareness of the labor rights of Lebanese private and public school teachers, most of whom were women.

Libya

The Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya is an authoritarian regime led by Colonel Mu'ammār Al-Qadhafi since 1969. The Government's human rights record remained poor, and the Government continued to commit numerous, serious abuses. The country maintains an extensive security apparatus that monitors and controls the activities of individuals and includes police and military units, multiple intelligence services, local Revolutionary Committees, People's Committees, and "Purification" Committees. Security forces have the authority to impose sentences without trial, and various security forces committed serious human rights abuses, including the use of torture, arbitrary arrest, and incommunicado detention. Many political detainees were held for years without charge or trial. The Government controls the judiciary and has used summary judicial proceedings in many cases; citizens do not have the right to a fair public trial or to be represented by legal counsel. Official impunity continued to be a problem. The Government infringed on citizens' privacy rights; restricted freedom of speech, press, assembly, association, and religion; imposed limits on freedom of movement; continued to ban political parties; and continued to prohibit the establishment of independent human rights organizations. The Government continued to repress banned Islamic groups and discriminated against women and ethnic and tribal minorities. The Government denied basic worker rights and discriminated against foreign workers.

Following the country's historic announcement that it would eliminate its weapons of mass destruction, in 2004 the United States lifted all sanctions except those related to the country's continued placement on the list of state sponsors of terrorism. On June 28, 2004, the United States formally reestablished direct bilateral ties with Libya by opening a Liaison Office in Tripoli. Promoting improved respect for human rights and the implementation of political reforms

remained integral to the process of normalizing relations between the United States and Libya. The ability of the United States to support remedial programming in Libya was very limited; full diplomatic relations have not been established. Despite statements by high-level Libyan officials, including Mu'ammār Al-Qadhafi, acknowledging the need to improve the country's respect for human rights, there have been no major changes in the human rights situation.

The United States has called on Libya in recent years to close down the People's Courts, adjunct institutions within the judicial hierarchy notorious for their lack of due process guarantees. The General People's Congress abolished them in January 2005. The Government indicated plans to re-try members of the Muslim Brotherhood previously sentenced by these Courts; this had not yet occurred by year's end.

The United States regularly raised human rights issues at senior levels with Libyan officials, urging adherence to international human rights conventions and protocols and publicly condemning Libya's human rights abuses. U.S. diplomats in Tripoli worked with EU counterparts to encourage fair trials, humane treatment, and the release of five Bulgarian medics and a Palestinian doctor. A Libyan regional court had sentenced these individuals to death in 2004 on charges of infecting over 400 Libyan children with HIV-tainted blood in a Benghazi hospital. The United States also participated in the 2005 establishment of the International Benghazi Families Support Fund to assist the infected children. The United States consistently raised the issue of the continued detention of Fathi al-Jahmi, who was released and then re-detained in 2004 after he continued to call for democratic reform.

Morocco

Morocco, with a Constitution and an elected parliament, is ruled by a hereditary monarchy; the Constitution ensures that ultimate authority rests with King Mohammed VI. The King presides over the Council of Ministers and appoints or approves members of the Government, including the prime minister, who



need not be a member of parliament or a political party. The King may terminate the tenure of any minister, dissolve parliament, call for new elections, and rule by decree, thus restricting citizens' right to change their government. Theoretically, the parliament has the ability to change the system of government, but the Constitution may not be changed without the King's approval. The lower house of parliament may dissolve the Government through a vote of no confidence.

The country's human rights record remained poor in some areas despite some notable progress. This included implementation of the 2004 Family Status Code, efforts to address past human rights abuses through an equity and reconciliation commission, and the suppression of international sex tourism. The police and security forces used excessive force against demonstrators. Five demonstrators set themselves on fire, and two died of their burns. The military used force against illegal migrants that resulted in at least several deaths. Prison conditions continued to be inadequate. The judiciary lacked independence and transparency, and restrictions on freedom of the press and speech continued. Journalists practiced self-censorship, although several publications pushed the boundaries of press freedom. Trafficking in persons (TIP), particularly for prostitution and child labor, remained problems.

The U.S. strategy for promoting human rights and democracy incorporated public diplomacy and assistance programs to strengthen the rule of law, support the development of civil society, promote freedom of the media and speech, strengthen human rights principles and core democratic values, and support human rights and democratic reforms implemented by the Government over the last six years.

At the highest levels of government, U.S. officials promoted democracy and democratic values, working to assist the country's development of a more competent, effective, and responsive government. Working in partnership with local NGOs, the United States focused on integrated capacity building for parliament and political parties, including ongoing in-depth training of parliamentarians and their staff

members on budget analysis and oversight. In September 2005, seven parliamentarians and key staff members participated in a study tour, learning how to strengthen legislative committees, improve budget oversight, and increase interaction between legislators and constituents. Visiting U.S. congressional delegations met regularly with parliamentarians to share ideas and experiences. U.S. initiatives also included support for local good governance, promotion of regional and municipal efforts to respond more effectively to citizen needs, and improvement of the long-term financing capacities of local government.

In support of the country's political reform initiatives, a U.S.-hosted roundtable of parliamentarians, academics, and members of civil society discussed the political party law enacted in December to expand participation and democratization in political parties by eliminating age and gender inequities and mandating broad-based parties that are neither regionally or religiously exclusive. Anti-corruption programs supported by the United States worked to improve the audit and oversight capacity of the Audit Court and executive branch in monitoring administration of public resources, thus ensuring greater accountability in government.

U.S. officials and programs actively promoted interactions and partnerships between the Government and civil society organizations. The United States assisted and participated in the October meeting of the "Democratic Assistance Dialogue" in Rabat, which brought together government and civil society representatives from the Middle East and North Africa region. The event promoted a stronger role for civil society in the second G-8/BMENA "Forum for the Future" held in Manama.

English-language training of teachers and students promoted an inclusive, informed, and democratic society. U.S. programs offered training to 54 English teachers in 2005. Because of increased U.S. program funding, 573 disadvantaged young Moroccans enrolled in the English Access Micro-Scholarship language-training program. Students completed courses at ten American Language Centers and two Amideast offices across the country. These educational pro-



grams strengthened participatory democratic values while focusing on specific subjects and skills. With student-centered classrooms where initiative and interaction were encouraged, students learned fundamental skills for participation in a modern, democratic nation.

U.S. officials regularly discussed freedom of the press and speech, advocated the release of imprisoned journalists, and actively supported the reform of the press code at the highest levels of government. U.S. outreach programs throughout Morocco promoted these freedoms and discussed journalistic ethics, professional standards, and research skills. Five Moroccan journalists were sent to the United States for training; two other journalists participated in a Foreign Press Center tour for Arab journalists. Thirty-eight Moroccans, including thirteen teenaged boys and girls, participated in U.S.-based training programs directly related to promoting human rights and democracy. These programs included training on participatory governance and pluralistic societies. In 2005, 107 members of the Moroccan military received human rights training.

U.S. assistance was also directed at developing a positive relationship between civil society and the Government, promoting gender equity, educating youth, and developing an informed, participatory citizenry. In preparation for the 2007 elections, women interested in candidacy for parliament participated in a regional “campaign school” training program. Over 3,500 middle and secondary school students, teachers, and university students also received training on citizenship and how to participate in their Government. U.S. programs concentrated on effective dissemination of the Family Status Code, enacted in 2004, and on educating the population about the changes. Educating the public about the code proved to be an effective tool to help citizens understand and protect their civic rights and to combat illiteracy among rural women. U.S. regional programs enabled Moroccan participation in seminars on Islam and governance and the rule of law.

U.S. officials frequently held roundtable discussions and consultations with members of NGOs to increase

understanding of societal changes. These discussions enabled adjustments to existing U.S. programs, demonstrated U.S. commitment to fostering reform, and informed the bilateral dialogue between the United States and the Government.

U.S. officials advocated the rule of law, an independent judiciary, and judicial and penal reform at the highest levels of government and through programmatic interactions with civil society. U.S. programs targeting the education of the judiciary on the Family Status Code progressed significantly in 2005. The United States focused on judicial independence and transparency, as well as on legal education. A U.S. program worked closely with the Government, universities, and lawyers to strengthen institutional capacity. This same program actively supported civil society, building capacity in a local NGO advocating judicial independence.

The Government’s reform agenda included penal reform and the institutional recognition and implementation of laws to support human rights, including gender equity legislation and safeguards for the physically and mentally impaired. To complement this agenda, the United States supported a program, in partnership with a local university law school to develop a human rights law clinic. This included development of curriculum and teaching modules and encouraged law students to provide legal assistance under the supervision of the law faculty and private human rights lawyers. U.S. officials worked closely with the government to provide professional training, including human rights awareness, for public security officials.

U.S. officials strongly advocated at the highest levels of the Government for the application of human rights protections in all regions of the Kingdom, including the disputed Western Sahara, and for unauthorized migrants. U.S. officials raised allegations of torture and lack of due process with the Government. The United States worked with Morocco and Algeria to secure the August release of the remaining 404 Moroccan POWs held by the Polisario Front on Algerian territory.



Women's rights remained a significant concern. Female NGO leaders participated in programs to enhance their leadership skills. Many U.S. programs relating to the Family Status Code were directed towards women to help them advance their legal rights under the new Code. U.S. NGO partners also used the Code in literacy classes to increase women's literacy rates and to educate women about the Code.

Religious freedom is guaranteed by the Constitution, which also recognizes Islam as the state religion and the King as the commander of the Muslim faithful. U.S. officials met regularly with members of all religious communities to promote religious tolerance and freedom. Officials facilitated meetings between the Ministry of Islamic Affairs and Endowments and visiting Christian and Jewish leaders. U.S. programs enabled one university professor, two journalists, and two religious leaders to study the relationship between religion and civic education, and a U.S. Speaker program showcased religious tolerance and freedom in the United States.

U.S. officials met regularly with local NGOs working to eliminate child labor and TIP, and with those supporting the reintegration of children and trafficked persons into society. Many trafficked noncitizens were returned to their home countries at the expense of the Government and international organizations. U.S. programs supported workers' rights, including collective bargaining, arbitration, and conflict resolution, and supported capacity building to more effectively enforce the 2004 Labor Code. The United States continued to support NGOs working to end child labor and provided alternative educational programs for children in the labor force.

The U.S. – North Africa – Middle East Labor Dialogue was held in Rabat on May 23 and 24. Its purpose was to share the experiences of Morocco and Jordan in negotiating and implementing the labor provisions of Free Trade Agreements (FTA) with the United States. Topics included the labor provisions of bilateral free trade agreements; international core labor standards; labor law administration, enforcement and compliance; and dispute prevention, mediation, and arbitration. Participants included experts

from the ILO and governmental and private sector participants from the United States, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain, Oman, United Arab Emirates, and Jordan.

For a second year, the United States funded a consortium of Moroccan and international NGOs working to end child labor, including developing laws against child labor and, in the interim, providing alternative educational programs for working children. A four-year project implemented by an international NGO continued to improve access to education for working and at-risk *petites bonnes* (little maids), as well as child laborers in sectors such as auto repair and handicrafts. This assistance targeted more than 6,000 children in the areas of Rabat/Salé/Temara, Marrakech, Fez, and Casablanca, and enrolled them in non-formal education and vocational training programs. The project included a joint child labor awareness raising campaign to mainstream child labor concerns into broader education and development strategies. During the year, the United States also supported a four-year program to eliminate the worst forms of child labor; an estimated 5,000 children work in or are at-risk of entering hazardous agricultural activities or exploitive child labor.

Saudi Arabia

King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz al-Saud served 23 years as Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, acting as regent during the last 10 years. Since assuming the throne on August 1, following the death of his half-brother King Fahd, he has continued to foster a reform agenda. In early 2005, as Crown Prince, he supported the country's very limited elections for municipal councils, which were the first such elections since 1963. The King appointed half the council members in December. Saudi women did not vote or run in these polls. Freedom of the press improved with more frequent press reports and articles on controversial issues and those containing criticism of the Government. Despite these important steps forward, the Government's human rights record remained poor. Security forces continued to abuse detainees and prisoners and to arbitrarily arrest, detain,



Woman flashes victory sign after Parliament passed a law in Kuwait allowing women to vote and run for public office for the first time in the country's history. (AP Photo)

and hold persons incommunicado. The Mutawwa'in (religious police) continued to intimidate, abuse, and detain citizens and foreigners with impunity, although to a lesser extent than in the past. Strict limitations on women's rights continued, including harassment and highly restrictive dress codes, travel restrictions including denial of any right to drive, severe discrimination in family law and other legal proceedings, and extraordinary segregation in schools, most workplaces, and public facilities of every kind. Violence against women and children, as well as discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities, continued. Most trials were closed, and defendants usually had no legal counsel. The Government continued to infringe upon privacy rights and restricted freedom of speech and the press. Freedom of religion did not exist. The Government restricted freedom of assembly, association, and movement.

The Secretary of State launched the U.S.-Saudi Stra-

tegic Dialogue in November, which reinvigorated the bilateral relationship and raised the profile of key issues through this new process. The Dialogue's Education, Exchange, and Human Development Working Group was established to address improving citizen participation in decision-making and human rights issues such as religious freedom, trafficking in persons (TIP), and promoting tolerance.

The United States frequently engaged the Government on issues of political participation, transparency, accountability in government, religious freedom, and rights for women and workers. Numerous high-level U.S. officials—including the Vice President, influential members of Congress, cabinet secretaries, and the Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs—used visits to the Kingdom to discuss these and related concerns with King Abdullah and senior officials. The United States continued to raise concerns on human rights at all levels of the Govern-



ment, notably on religious freedom, TIP, and women's rights. In September, the Government established the Human Rights Commission (HRC) headquarters in Riyadh. U.S. officials met with and encouraged the work of the HRC, the National Society for Human Rights, and the still unrecognized NGO Human Rights First Society.

In June, the United States, working with the U.S.-based Center for Civic Education, provided training to Saudi school principals and Education Ministry officials in civic education. In September and December, the Riyadh-based King Faisal School Director General organized a series of U.S.-sponsored, one-week training workshops for 25 female and 50 male teachers from throughout the Kingdom. The training focused on skills and concepts for teaching civic education, including activities to promote community involvement and grassroots democracy.

U.S. officials participated in civic organization meetings and press roundtables to discuss internal political reform, as well as the rights of women and minority groups. The United States also participated in weekly majlis gatherings, open-door meetings held by the king, a prince, or an important national or local notable during which, in theory, any male citizen or foreign national may express an opinion or a grievance. U.S. officials were invited to accompany Saudi citizens to voter registration centers in advance of Jeddah's landmark municipal council elections and observed campaign rallies for female candidates seeking election to the Jeddah Chamber of Commerce and Industry Board of Directors.

In December, the King Abdul Aziz Center for National Dialogue held the Fifth National Dialogue Forum in Abha called "We and the Other: A National Vision for Dealing with World Cultures." Then-Crown Prince Abdullah started the National Dialogue in 2003 in response to calls for real and practical reform in the Kingdom. The December meeting was the culmination of 13 preparatory meetings held in Saudi Arabia between April and November, during which men and women scholars and civil society members discussed political reform, religious tolerance, and the role of women and youth in the country. It brought

together more than 700 men and women scholars, intellectuals, and government officials to produce a national vision paper with recommendations that were presented to the King for consideration. For the first time, its proceedings were broadcast live on Saudi television.

Through the International Visitor Leadership Program, the United States sponsored participation by members of Government and civil society in U.S. seminars such as the rule of law in judicial reform, religious and public education in the United States, NGO administration, and volunteerism.

The United States recruited and obtained funding for two U.S. business and communication professors to conduct workshops for Saudi businesswomen at the Eastern Province Chamber of Commerce in Dammam and Qatif. Approximately 40 Saudi women attended these workshops, which focused on leadership and entrepreneurial skills. Overall, the inclusion and participation of women in grassroots and business organizations increased during the year. In November, two Saudi women were elected to the Jeddah Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, followed by the December appointments of two additional women. In December, a woman was elected to the Saudi Engineers Council Board of Directors. These women joined the two women elected to the Saudi Journalists Association Board of Directors in 2004. There is also one female advisor to the Majles al-Shoura.

The United States continued providing International Military Education and Training Assistance for the Saudi military to increase its awareness of international norms of human rights and foster greater respect for the principle of civilian control of the military and the rule of law.

The United States strongly advocated for religious freedom, which does not exist in the Kingdom. In November, the Secretary of State redesignated Saudi Arabia as a Country of Particular Concern for particularly severe violations of religious freedom. The Ambassador and other senior officials raised the issue of religious freedom with the Foreign Minister and other



senior Saudi officials. The Ambassador also protested raids on private homes and the detention of Christian worshippers. The United States encouraged Saudi officials to honor their Government's public commitment to permit and protect private religious worship by non-Muslims, eliminate discrimination against religious minorities, and promote tolerance towards non-Muslims and those Muslims who do not adhere to the official Salafist tradition of Islam. A group of 30 Saudi religious educators, consisting of supervisors, professors, and teachers, traveled with Education and Higher Education Ministry officials. The group visited mosques, churches, synagogues, and public and parochial schools throughout the United States in cities including Washington, Philadelphia, Santa Fe, and Los Angeles.

In December, King Abdullah hosted a ministerial summit of the Organization of the Islamic Conference in Mecca, which produced the communiqué "A Ten Year Plan of Action for the Muslim World." The United States supported provisions calling for religious tolerance, improved human rights standards, and state accountability.

In 2005, the United States ranked Saudi Arabia on Tier 3 for failing to take significant steps to address TIP, including coercion and involuntary servitude of foreign domestic workers. In the interest of national security, the Secretary of State decided to waive sanctions. In September, the Government issued a new labor law and began writing an addendum for domestic workers. The United States encouraged the Government to raise public awareness of abuse of foreign domestic workers and to extend labor protections to domestic workers, advocating long-term improvements in the status and legal rights of foreign laborers under Saudi labor law. In coordination with source-country embassies, the United States worked to promote better legal protections for foreign workers, the prevention and protection of trafficking victims, and the investigation and prosecution of traffickers. The state-controlled press carried some stories on the abuse of maids and other domestic workers, including the prosecution and punishment of citizen employers who abused foreign domestic employees. While most cases were settled through mediation and settlements,

in the prominent case of an Indonesian maid who was severely abused by her employers, the wife of the employer was sentenced to 35 lashes.

Syria

In 2005, Syria's human rights record remained poor. The Government prevented any organized political opposition and severely limited civil society anti-Government activities. Open political life was stymied by the Government's continued detention of political prisoners, including six Damascus Spring activists, as well as the arbitrary arrest and long-term detention of other civil society activists such as Kamal al-Labwani, Nizar al-Rastanawi, Habib Saleh, Riyadh Drar al-Hamood, and Mahmoud Sarem. The Government also continued its repression of civil society groups, including the Al-Atassi Forum, and refused to recognize the citizenship of the Kurdish minority.

As a state sponsor of terrorism, Syria remained ineligible for all forms of economic assistance from the United States in 2005. U.S. officials, however, encouraged the development of democracy and respect for human rights through bilateral discussions, regular contact with Syrian and international human rights and civil society advocates, and public diplomacy programs designed to strengthen civil society and stimulate dialogue on key issues for promoting human rights and democracy.

At every opportunity, U.S. officials emphasized to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs the importance of respecting human rights, including the freedom of assembly, association, speech, and the press. U.S. officials also actively participated in a diplomatic monitoring group that exchanged information on the human rights situation in Syria and coordinated diplomatic responses and related assistance programs. A Syrian education official participated in an International Visitors Leadership Program (IVLP) that focused on curriculum development and civic education.

During 2005, the United States sponsored a number of training programs for both aspiring and established journalists active in a variety of media. Program top-



ics included professional skills and ethics, a lecture by a Fulbright Scholar on how to create a blog, a presentation and discussion session about documentaries and press freedom. One Syrian journalist also participated in the U.S.-based State Department Foreign Press Center Working Journalist Program.

The United States developed strong contacts with a variety of NGOs and civil society activists throughout the year. The Embassy closely monitored the Government's repression of organizations and democratic activists that sought to peacefully assemble and associate.

The United States managed the majority of its democracy and human rights activities through public diplomacy channels. Through a visitor's exchange program, Syrian civil society activists met with a variety of NGOs and officials in the United States. Three local NGOs were also recipients of small grants in 2005.

The U.S. Information Resource Center distributed materials and electronic information in both English and Arabic on rule of law, anti-corruption, and anti-terrorism topics. A working-level government official traveled to the United States as part of an IVLP on promoting the rule of law and judicial reform. The Embassy regularly monitored political prosecutions, including attendance at trials.

Several groups of private Syrian citizens also participated in IVLPs in the United States. One group learned about enhancing women's rights and fostering the development of women entrepreneurs while visiting a variety of NGOs throughout the United States.

The Embassy also sponsored a number of public events to promote religious freedom in the country, including a Fulbright lecture on religion in the U.S. political system, as well as a speaker on Islamic Studies in the United States. As part of its outreach to the Muslim community, the Embassy hosted a social event for the Grand Mufti of Syria and other Muslim leaders, as well as Ramadan Iftaars for religious and business leaders and NGO activists.

Syria was a destination country for women trafficked from South and East Asia and Ethiopia for the purpose of labor exploitation and from Eastern Europe for the purpose of sexual exploitation. There were no statistics available on the scope and type of trafficking in persons (TIP) that may exist. Reports by NGOs and the press indicated that Iraqi women may be subjected to sexual exploitation in prostitution in Syria at the hands of Iraqi criminal networks, but those reports have not been confirmed. The United States closely monitored the TIP situation in Syria, cooperating and sharing information with international organizations that worked in the field.

Tunisia

Tunisia's human rights record remained poor, and the Government continued to commit serious abuses. While progress continued in protections for the religious freedom of minorities and the rights of women and children, an authoritarian system of government exercised significant control over political participation and freedoms of expression, association, assembly, and the press. The Government remained intolerant of public criticism and used a number of coercive methods to discourage that criticism, including harassment of journalists and widely condemned legal actions against outspoken dissidents and human rights and opposition activists. Security forces arbitrarily arrested and detained individuals and tortured prisoners and detainees.

The U.S. democracy and human rights strategy in Tunisia recognized the country's achievements on social and economic issues, particularly its advancement of equal rights and opportunities for women, and called for similarly bold steps on political process reforms and respect for human rights. The United States made it a priority to work with the Government and civil society to increase the pace and substance of critical political, economic, and human rights reforms. The Embassy maintained a regular dialogue on human rights at all levels of the Government, and monitored and reported factually on prison conditions and human rights developments. U.S. officials maintained contact with all elements of Tunisian civil society



and media, placed opinion pieces in the local press, raised inquiries regarding specific cases, and worked to strengthen civil society organizations supporting economic, media, and political reform through small grants. The United States monitored political trials and visited activists who staged a well-publicized hunger strike to protest limits on freedom of expression and association and demand the release of political prisoners. High-level U.S. officials raised human rights, democracy, and good governance issues with the Government throughout the year.

U.S. initiatives in support of democracy and human rights showed mixed results in 2005. The Government continued to invoke a variety of laws and regulations to obstruct implementation of U.S. and internationally funded reform projects and initiatives, including those promoting media freedom and opinion in the political process. While some activities could be successfully completed, restrictions imposed by the Government delayed or led to the cancellation of others.

Following the November UN World Summit on the Information Society in Tunis, the United States released a statement noting “disappointment that the Government of Tunisia did not take advantage of this important opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to freedom of expression and assembly in Tunisia.” This was in reference to the Government’s harassment of journalists, attempts to suppress or control NGO meetings at the summit site, and restrictions on full participation by NGOs during the summit. The U.S. worked to strengthen civil society and its ability to influence and communicate with the Government and urged the Government to remove onerous NGO registration and funding restrictions.

The United States made full use of exchange, cultural, and professional programs to promote the Freedom Agenda. Thirty Tunisian men and women in fields of government, human rights, judicial reform, education, and the media participated in the International Visitor Leadership Program to meet international counterparts and gain exposure to the United States. The Embassy also brought high profile speakers to Tunisia to discuss human rights and democracy is-

ues with Tunisian think tanks, government officials, journalists, and university classes. The United States fostered outreach programs on human rights and democracy through the extensive distribution of resource materials, including U.S. reports on human rights, religious freedom, and trafficking in persons; independent NGO reports on regional human rights issues; and electronic journals and articles on rule of law and transparency in government. Many of these resources were translated into French and Arabic. The Embassy also created a targeted packet of outreach materials directly linked to the U.S. and international celebrations of Human Rights Day. Six Tunisians were among the 42 Arab student leaders who participated in Student Leaders Institutes in the U.S. and a subsequent Alumni Conference in Tunis.

The United States promoted media independence and professionalism through monthly programs for Tunisian journalists and regular interaction with media professionals. One U.S. official worked full-time on press and media outreach, vastly increasing direct journalist access to International Information Program material and other U.S. sources of information. The Embassy actively supported a “University Linkage” program between Bowling Green University and the *Institute de Presse et des Sciences de l’Information Université de la Manouba*, the only Tunisian journalism institute for enhanced professional journalism. A subsequent small U.S. grant allowed the institute to start a student newspaper. Five Tunisian journalists attended U.S. exchange programs, returning with greater insight into American culture and renewed appreciation of the value of a free press and freedom of expression. During the year, 46 Tunisian journalists participated in two sessions of training on media ethics and human rights conducted by a U.S.-funded NGO.

Local press outlets frequently published human rights and reform-related press releases, letters to the editor, and op-eds from the Ambassador and other high-level U.S. officials. The Ambassador and other officials consistently highlighted the U.S. commitment to human rights, transparency, and freedom of expression in their speeches, media interviews, and publications. As part of the U.S. mission to promote democracy through freedom of expression, a U.S.-funded NGO



organized a September 2005 conference in Tunis on the role of public opinion in the political process.

To promote greater awareness of the importance of the rule of law and human rights protections, the Embassy continued its support for the Common Law program at a Tunisian law school, identifying and sponsoring guest American professors. A U.S.-funded Commercial Law Development Program continued to promote judicial competency, transparency, and independence in Tunisia, as did other regional technical assistance programs that emphasized rule of law. In 2005, 87 Tunisian military personnel took part in U.S. International Military Education and Training, which included components on respect for human rights and rule of law.

Additional projects focused on increasing opportunities for women, including the Business Internship and the Middle East Entrepreneurship Training programs held in the U.S. In May 2005, more than 100 veterans of these programs joined more than 100 aspiring women entrepreneurs for the region's first "Businesswomen's Summit" in Tunis, which gathered women from 15 countries across the Middle East and North Africa. Organized by the Office of International Women's Issues, this summit featured the Under Secretary for Democracy and Global Affairs as a keynote speaker and focused on the role of women in advancing reform throughout the region. The United States also worked to ensure the active participation of Tunisian women in all assistance programs, including the "Women and the Law" regional network.

Embassy officials maintained close contact with Muslim, Christian, and Jewish communities in Tunisia and promoted visitor exchanges on U.S. traditions of religious tolerance and pluralism. The United States funded the Arab Civic Education Network program, including a "Project Citizen" component that taught Tunisian secondary students how to identify civic issues, express their opinions, and influence decision-makers.

Tunisia may be a transit country for trafficking in persons (TIP) of Africans and South Asians into Europe for sexual and labor exploitation. Although the

extent to which TIP was a problem was unclear, the Embassy maintained links with and provided training and equipment to Tunisian border security forces to increase their ability to detect TIP and immigration flows and protect the country's borders. U.S. officials worked to raise awareness of TIP patterns and concerns with the Government and local NGOs in coordination with international organizations.

West Bank and Gaza

The year 2005 marked a pivotal time for Palestinians and the Palestinian Authority (PA), with a series of landmark elections at the presidential, legislative, and municipal level. In January, PLO Chairman Mahmud Abbas won approximately 62% of the popular vote in elections deemed free and fair by international observers. Throughout 2005, the PA conducted a series of vigorously competed municipal elections in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, marking the first local council elections since 1976 and drawing a large voter turnout. Hundreds of Palestinian candidates on 11 national lists and in 16 constituency races competed in Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) elections on January 25, 2006. These were the first such elections in 10 years. International monitors praised the professionalism displayed by the Palestinian election commission, the high degree of enthusiasm from the Palestinian public, and the absence of serious violence during the polls. Despite the establishment of a democratically elected legislature and presidency, the PA's overall human rights record remained poor. This was due in part to the Government's failure to fully establish control of public security, including insufficient measures to prevent attacks on targets within the occupied territories and in Israel by Palestinian terrorist groups, which operated with impunity. There was also widespread public perception of corruption, notably within the security forces. The Government of Israel's overall human rights record in the occupied territories also remained poor during 2005, due in part to actions by Israeli soldiers and settlers that resulted in death and injury to Palestinian civilians. In August, the Government of Israel began the evacuation of 21 settlements in Gaza and four settlements in the northern West Bank, culminating in the



removal of more than 8,000 Israeli settlers from Gaza and the official transfer of security responsibility to PA security forces.

The goal of the United States was to reform Palestinian political, economic, and security institutions in accordance with the Quartet Roadmap and the President's vision for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The United States, in partnership with democratic actors committed to non-violence, continued to support consolidation of key democratic institutions and institutional protections for human rights, including provision of support for adoption of a political party law, judicial reform, free elections, and a constitution. U.S. efforts focused on promoting the rule of law and strengthening civil society and a responsible and independent media as a bulwark for civil liberties. The United States worked through diplomatic initiatives, public outreach, and assistance programs to advance democracy and human rights.

The United States provided critical support for democratic Palestinian elections with technical and in-kind assistance to the Palestinian Central Election Commission (CEC), and the Higher Commission for Local Elections. Support for CEC media centers during the January presidential election enabled the Commission to publicize results and other election-related information in a timely and professional manner. This success contributed to a generally favorable domestic and international perception of the legitimacy of the electoral process. Technical assistance to the CEC also strengthened its capacity to respond rapidly to emergent electoral administration needs and demonstrated unambiguous U.S. support for Palestinian democratic elections.

U.S. programs also supported the deployment of international observers for presidential, municipal, and parliamentary elections, focusing public and international attention on the conduct of those elections and

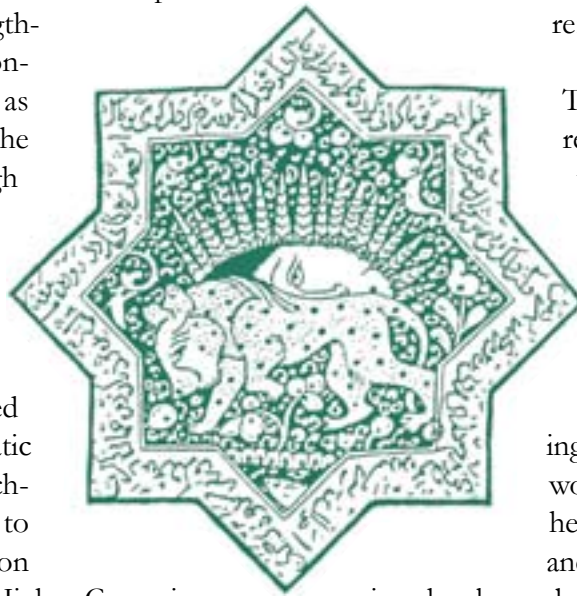
enhancing the credibility of their results. U.S. technical assistance facilitated campaign polling and surveying, supported voter education and information campaigns, and assisted democratic political parties in building management skills.

A small grant to the Association of Women Committees for Social Work supported increased voter-education activities among village women and training for women candidates. A larger grant built on this initiative, enabling training for women elected to municipal councils on their responsibilities and the process of government. Other small grants supported training for female NGO managers in Gaza and a series of civil society lectures for women in Shu'fat refugee camp.

The United States sponsored a regional school in Jordan that taught women, including participants from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, how to run a modern and democratic political campaign. This program provided leadership, communication, and skills training to both current and aspiring women leaders. The United States helped improve civic education and sponsored tolerance classes

in schools run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), sponsored public service announcements regarding voter responsibilities, and broadcast live coverage of legislative debates in order to educate Palestinian voters. The United States supported capacity building through international exchanges and human rights training for the staff of the Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights.

The Consulate General also hosted speakers and digital video conferences (DVCs) on democracy for women and youth. In July, the Under Secretary for Democracy and Global Affairs moderated a DVC on women's rights and political participation that included nearly two dozen U.S., Palestinian, and Israeli NGO leaders. The United States also provided hu-





man rights and democracy books and other publications in Arabic and English to local schools, libraries, PA officials, and other contacts. Palestinians residing in the West Bank and Gaza Strip regularly participated in International Visitor Leadership Programs, the Salzburg Seminar, and Fulbright Summer Institute Programs that focused on democracy and human rights and provided media professionalization opportunities to enhance the media's role in informing women in a democratic society. U.S. officials regularly offered interviews on democracy and human rights issues, in addition to providing Palestinian journalists with background materials on democracy and human rights to broaden public awareness.

In the run-up to the January 2006 legislative elections, the United States launched an intensive outreach effort including two DVCs for audiences in the West Bank and Gaza on youth participation in politics and two DVCs on media responsibilities in an election campaign. The United States showed a film on citizen participation in voting and sponsored a workshop on campaign tactics for young aspiring politicians, as well as two speaker programs for journalists examining the role of international observers in elections.

U.S. programs continued to sustain Palestinian civil society and nurture new Palestinian NGOs. Through Tamkeen, an umbrella civil society initiative, the United States was able to identify new, alternative NGO partners and support key think tanks undertaking public opinion surveys. The United States promoted policy and legislative change and organized grassroots forums to determine the needs and priorities of Palestinian citizens. U.S. programs strengthened reformist civil society organizations, including a special project offering internal financial transparency and accountability training to over 40 civil society partners. A core group of democratic Palestinian civil society leaders benefited from U.S.-sponsored training in advocacy skills and assistance in forming a network of advocacy practitioners from a broad cross section of medium-sized groups in the West Bank and Gaza. U.S. initiatives supported political party development, enhanced understanding of local and national elections, and promoted increased participation.

U.S. programs supported the efforts of popular radio personalities to emphasize themes of moderation, tolerance, and individual responsibility. These programs also promoted Palestinian-Israeli local dialogue, created new classroom tools and aids for Palestinian teachers in the field of conflict resolution, and equipped journalists with new skills for addressing conflict-related themes in their work. With the support of the United States, moderate voices in media imparted a message of reconciliation, mediation, anti-incitement, and non-violence for thousands of people throughout the West Bank and Gaza.

U.S. programs were designed to promote the rule of law and reform. Anti-corruption activities formed a critical component in democracy and governance programs, including civil society initiatives promoting citizen participation in policy making and governmental accountability. In September, a new program called "Netham" was launched to assist the Ministry of Justice, court administrators, and elements within the judiciary responsible for the enforcement of court decisions. U.S.-funded workshops and conferences on judicial, legal, and other reform matters stimulated debate and raised awareness in the legal community and among the Palestinian public. Participants discussed a wide range of topics such as future judicial training and the legal consequences of Israeli disengagement from the Gaza.

U.S.-funded programs trained judges and public prosecutors. Through the Judicial Training Bridge Project, the United States offered education for judges and public prosecutors in topics including labor and traffic law, civil and criminal procedures, the penal code, and ethics and professional responsibility. Palestinian judges and prosecutors can now apply newly learned legal concepts and skills in those critical areas, and are better prepared to advance modern, progressive concepts of justice. U.S. programs also provided five Palestinian law schools with tools to provide better legal education for their students, allowing them to become more effective advocates for legal and judicial reform. A U.S.-supported program called "Arkan" provided training in interactive teaching methodologies for 25 law professors.



The United States provided grants to support conflict mitigation and advance reconciliation, respect, and tolerance between Palestinians and Israelis. The new grants are part of a global initiative to promote reconciliation programs in post-conflict and/or conflict zones. One grant supported joint training, research, and cooperation between Palestinian and Israeli physicians, nurses, and social workers working to assist needy Palestinian and Israelis. The second grant sponsored the production of a joint Israeli-Palestinian dramatic television series aimed at creating a gradual transformation in the beliefs and perceptions of both Israeli and Palestinian societies.

The United States continued to support a special tolerance project to promote respect for human rights, democracy, and gender equality and build conflict resolution skills among Palestinian refugee children in the region, including the approximately 250,000 youth in the West Bank and Gaza Strip enrolled in primary schools run by UNRWA. U.S. programs helped produce educational materials for all 273 UNRWA schools in the West Bank and Gaza and training for the teachers and administrative staff. Illustrated storybooks funded by the United States introduced human rights and tolerance concepts in grades five through eight, together with related worksheets that link human rights and tolerance concepts to various parts of the Palestinian curriculum. The United States provided supplemental teaching materials and additional training in human rights and conflict resolution concepts for all UNRWA teachers, school supervisors, vocational training instructors, and students in UNRWA's teacher-training programs. It supported the establishment of elected student parliaments in UNRWA schools.

Yemen

Yemen is a republic with an active elected legislature. The Constitution calls for power to be shared between the elected President, Ali Abdullah Saleh, and the 301-seat House of Representatives. In practice, however, power lies squarely with the executive branch. An appointed 111-member Shura Council advises the President on policy but has no legislative

authority. Against the backdrop of a sporadic insurgency in the north of the country, Yemen's human rights record remained poor in 2005. While there were some improvements in prisoners' rights and a substantial decrease in reports of torture in prisons, there was a substantial rise in restrictions on freedom of the press. Security forces continued to arbitrarily arrest and detain persons, and in many cases, the Government of Yemen failed to hold members of the security forces accountable for abuses. Members of the Political Security Office and Ministry of Interior police forces continued to torture and abuse persons in detention. Despite constitutional prohibitions against such practices, security officers routinely monitored citizens' activities, searched their homes, detained them for questioning, and mistreated detainees. Prolonged pretrial detention, judicial corruption, and executive interference were rampant and undermined due process. Problems remained with discrimination against women and child labor. The Government, at times, limited freedom of assembly and, in response to tensions in the north, imposed some restrictions on freedom of religion.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Yemen focused on supporting the Government's efforts to strengthen its human rights record, enact additional democratic reforms, and improve the administration of justice. The United States also pushed to strengthen civil society, give women a greater voice in their government, and further the process of democratic development. The United States aggressively advocated democratic reform and continued or undertook several long-term projects in 2005, while playing a key role in uniting the international donor community to press the Government on implementation of long-delayed reform commitments. High-level visits during the year underscored the U.S. commitment to consolidating and institutionalizing respect for human rights and democracy in Yemen.

The United States continued support to strengthen and democratize political parties, improve election administration, and foster fair elections. Throughout the year, U.S. officials met with government and political party officials to press for critical electoral reforms, working in close cooperation with an inter-



national donor working group. The United States helped expand the capacity of the Supreme Commission for Electoral Reform (SCER) to effectively and fairly regulate the 2006 presidential and local council elections. To help foster even-handed and competitive elections, the United States also funded reports on electoral and political party law reforms. The conclusions and recommendations of these reports were debated at U.S.-sponsored policy roundtables for leaders from major political parties and civil society.

Bound by tradition, many Yemeni women were politically and socially marginalized. With limited access to education, health care, and judicial redress, they enjoyed only minimal political representation in parliament and local councils. An initiative to establish a female candidate quota made some headway this year, with the President and the country's ruling party making public commitments to enact a 15% quota before the 2006 local council elections. Part of this momentum came from a U.S.-sponsored program working to increase women's political participation. This program also helped establish a unit within the SCER to promote women's electoral participation; this initiative trained women from the four largest political parties on how to run campaigns and lobby for reform.

Women also took center stage with the opening session of a regional women's conference, where the address of a high-ranking U.S. official underscored continued U.S. support for women's rights. During his speech, the official announced a substantial 2006 grant, to be implemented through the Ministry of Human Rights and the UN Development Program. This project will help Yemeni women take a more visible role in lobbying for reform, running for elections, and gaining access to justice, and will also assist women prisoners.

In 2005, the United States continued to expand efforts to strengthen democratic institutions, decentralize authority, and assist with elections in Yemen. One program strengthened core legislative skills, including constituent outreach and executive oversight functions, and established a Parliamentary Resource Center to help Members understand their responsibilities and draft more responsive legislation. This support

prompted some steps towards asserting a stronger legislative role in the government. Another U.S.-supported program worked to bring democratic government closer to the people, improving the capacity of constitutionally mandated local councils.

During the year, a string of legal, psychological, and in many cases physical attacks against journalists critical of the Government marred the country's reputation as a bastion of relatively free press in the Middle East. The United States strongly pressed government, journalist, and civil society leaders on the need to counter this with support to a free and professional press. In July, the United States sponsored two legal experts to work with government officials and over 40 journalists for one week. These experts moderated a well-attended workshop that was organized in cooperation with other international donors. Its recommendations on how to protect press freedoms were publicly presented to the Government and civil society.

Many times throughout the year, embassy officials met with members of the Yemeni Journalists Syndicate as well as individual victims of harassment. In October, the Ambassador expressed concern over the deterioration in freedom of speech to a local newspaper, provoking a heated debate in the press and in civil society circles. While government-controlled papers billed the Ambassador's comments as "interference" in Yemen's internal affairs, independent and opposition press praised them. Civil society leaders also publicly thanked the United States for having the first embassy to openly raise the issue.

In 2005, the United States actively engaged NGOs on the issues of rule of law, human rights, and political freedom, encouraging them to take a lead in pressing for needed reforms of political and social institutions. The United States supported several Yemeni NGO initiatives during the year, including a very successful project teaching children about democratic principles, the importance of participation in government, and freedom of speech. Another U.S.-funded initiative helped a local NGO work with counterparts to establish a coalition network. U.S. support for civil society in Yemen was underscored at the highest levels in the February visit of the Under Secretary for Democracy



and Global Affairs. The Under Secretary met with Government officials and held a roundtable discussion with local NGOs to explore ways to support civil society.

The judicial system coexisted with more traditional means of dispute resolution such as tribal mediation. There were numerous problems within the court system, including tampering by the executive branch, corruption, inefficient court administration, and the failure by authorities to enforce rulings. In January 2005, the United States supported an extensive assessment of the judiciary, a first step in developing programs to galvanize legal reform. The Embassy also sponsored “Qualifying Young Lawyers in Human Rights,” a program that introduced 160 Islamic law students and law faculty members to the precepts of human rights law.

Through the International Visitors Leadership Program, more than 10 Yemenis participated in U.S. exchange programs on issues such “Promoting Rule of Law and Justice,” “Human Rights Advocacy and Awareness,” “Role of the Media,” and “State and Local Governments.” Throughout the year, the Embassy worked to disseminate information on democracy and human rights through the donation of more than 600 Arabic- and English-language publications to numerous Yemeni universities, NGOs, schools, and civil society institutions.

In 2005, the United States provided International Military Education and Training (IMET) assistance for 26 members of the Yemeni military, including training to promote greater awareness of international human rights norms and foster respect for rule of law and the principle of civilian control of the military. The Counter-Terrorism Fellowship worked to train military officers and Ministry of Interior and Defense civilians on the importance of respecting human rights, and three participants from Yemen completed training during the year.



MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA

SOUTH ASIA





“One person alone cannot do this. I am only able to stand up if the whole world is behind me. The little hope that I’ve got for justice is because of the support I’m getting from the rest of the world.”

Mukhtar Mai

*Pakistani rape survivor and
human rights activist*

Bushra Ibal, radio producer for “Hear My Voice” interviews Afghan refugees in Rawalpindi, Pakistan. “Hear My Voice,” which has produced over 130 radio programs, has sought to expand the number of women working as journalists to more than three percent.
(AP Photo)

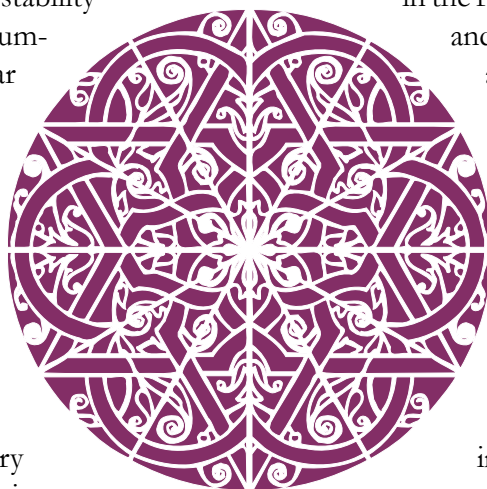


SOUTH ASIA

South Asia experienced a number of encouraging successes during the year that resulted in expanded democracy and human rights. In September 2005, Afghanistan held its first democratic legislative elections since 1969. In a challenge to impunity, President Karzai's cabinet approved a transitional justice action plan in December that acknowledges the suffering of the Afghan people and calls for the investigation of past war crimes and human rights abuses. In November, Sri Lanka held a presidential election generally deemed free and fair despite a boycott by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. In Nepal, the Supreme Court ruled on three important cases that recognized women as equal citizens under the law. India and Pakistan remained engaged in peaceful dialogue on a range of issues and worked together to assist victims in the aftermath of the devastating October 8 earthquake. In Pakistan, the Anti-Trafficking Unit (ATU) became fully functional, resulting in an increase in arrests and prosecutions of human traffickers. Cooperative efforts between the Pakistani military, ATU, and international organizations prevented an increase in human trafficking following the October 8 earthquake.

Despite these positive developments, long-standing ethnic conflicts and insurgencies hindered progress, and numerous human rights and development challenges continued to threaten stability and democracy in South Asia. A number of worrisome events made clear that good governance and respect for human rights continued to face serious obstacles. The King of Nepal's February 2005 dismissal of the Prime Minister and his cabinet, followed by a declaration of a state of emergency and the subsequent arrests of members of the political opposition threw the country into political turmoil and played into the hands of the Maoists. In Bangladesh, rising extremism, abuses by security forces, and intractable polarization of the two major political parties presented serious threats to advances made over

the past 15 years.



The United States continued to press governments in the region to open their political systems and allow greater freedoms of speech and assembly. High-level U.S. visitors, including the Secretary of State, raised the importance of making progress on democracy directly to the region's leaders. Ambassadors and other U.S. officials highlighted the significance the United States places on respecting human rights and ending impunity, and stressed the importance of national elections in securing a mandate from the people. Throughout the region, the United States urged South Asian governments to protect the rights of women and religious minorities and empower judiciaries to seriously address the issue of impunity.



In Nepal, the United States helped fund the establishment of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and worked closely with OHCHR to monitor human rights abuses in eight of the country's regions. In Sri Lanka, the United States helped build capacity of the Human Rights Commission to record and process tens of thousands of unresolved cases of disappearances. U.S. law enforcement officials also led a training course on community policing, emphasizing basic interrogation and investigation skills that eliminate the use of torture as an information gathering method.

The United States and India joined in a partnership to co-launch the Global Democracy Initiative, in which both countries agreed to collaborate on a number of democracy and human rights initiatives worldwide. This partnership between the United States and the world's largest democracy has already led to the establishment of Virtual Coordination and Information Centers to identify potential opportunities for joint initiatives and share best democracy-building practices. The partnership also generated significant international support for the successful launch of the new United Nations Democracy Fund.

In Pakistan, the United States continued to build a framework for democratic institutions. U.S. programming reinforced national and provincial legislatures through the establishment of an Institute for Legislative Strengthening, which will provide ongoing train-

ing to parliamentarians and their staff. The United States worked with major political parties to train emerging leaders in the fundamentals of democratic governance. Programs funded by the United States also focused specifically on women's political participation by training a new generation to enter the political arena and encouraging established leaders to offer their support. The United States continued to press the Government of Pakistan to reform discriminatory legislation and encouraged Pakistan's efforts to prevent abuse of the blasphemy laws. U.S. officials have spoken out against sectarian violence within the country's Muslim community.

Discrimination against women and ethnic and religious minorities, as well as Trafficking in Persons (TIP), child labor, and corruption, further hampered development in the entire region. The United States pursued several anti-trafficking initiatives including the South Asia Regional Initiative on Equity for Women and Children (SARI/Equity). Through SARI/Equity, the United States funded a three-year project that convened TIP prevention groups throughout South Asia and provided grants to anti-trafficking NGOs. The program was designed to enhance social and economic opportunities for women and children to prevent TIP and promote women's rights on a regional basis. Through the President's initiative, the United States also funded a law enforcement training program to expand India's capacity to address trafficking through the UN Office on Drugs and Crime.



Raising Public Voices: Strengthening Freedom of Expression in Pakistan Through Independent Radio



“Hear My Voice” producer/reporter Sara Fareed on air in Islamabad. (Internews)

The United States views the strengthening of Pakistan’s media as a critical component to the long-term development of its democracy and civil society. Responding to the Government of Pakistan’s decision to expand the broadcast sector to private ownership, the United States worked with the NGO Internews to build the capacity of independent media and strengthen freedom of expression in Pakistan.

With the support of the United States, Internews advised the Pakistani Government on media law reform and provided training to journalists and station managers of the country’s first private radio stations. Internews was able to accomplish many “firsts” in Pakistan. They supported Pakistan’s first generation of female

radio journalists, launched the first independent female radio programming focused on gender issues, established Pakistan’s first university-based community station, wrote Pakistan’s first university broadcast journalism curriculum at Peshawar University, helped get the country’s first nongovernmental radio stations on the air, and trained its first media lawyers working on media policy and regulatory reform.

The project trained local journalists to cover critical human rights, rule of law, and election issues confronting the country through practical training and development of radio programs. U.S. assistance helped foster independent media by creating a space for new and innovative voices to be heard. In an effort to promote awareness of women’s rights, Pakistani female journalists developed a radio program entitled “Meri Awaz Suno” (Hear My Voice), which focused on groundbreaking topics affecting women such as health and education, HIV/AIDS awareness, female political participation, and discussions on violence against women and so-called honor killings. In September 2005, the Meri Awaz Suno team helped with the emergency earthquake information program “Jazba-e-Tameer” (Drive to Rebuild). Female journalists from the program produced 12 segments focused on areas damaged by the earthquake as well as the experience of women living in camps for displaced people. These special programs were played on emergency FM radio stations in the earthquake zone.

The United States also supported training for journalists in the tribal areas bordering Afghanistan and for students at Peshawar University. The curriculum focused on the fundamental principles of responsible journalism, including presentation, interviewing, news writing, technical skills, and ethics. The training produced new programming entitled “Da Nan Khabara” (Topic of the Day) and “Hawa Aur Duniya” (Women and the World). Subject highlights included improving relations between India and Pakistan, AIDS prevention and awareness, domestic violence, and the role of women as elected women counselors and their participation in local government affairs.



Afghanistan

In 2005, Afghanistan made continued progress toward reconstruction, stability, and protection of human rights. In September, Afghanistan held its first democratic parliamentary elections since 1969. With these elections, Afghanistan successfully implemented the political process outlined in the Bonn Agreement and established a constitutional and representative government that embodies the aspirations of Afghans.

Despite these achievements, Afghanistan was still recovering from more than two decades of war, weak national institutions, and fighting a continuing insurgency. Serious human rights abuses occurred such as instances where local security forces and police committed extrajudicial killings, and officials used torture in prisons. Efforts to bring to justice serious human rights offenders were often ineffective, and impunity under the law was a serious concern. Prolonged pre-trial detention and poor prison conditions led to deteriorating health conditions and the death of some prisoners. The Government generally provided for freedom of speech, the press, assembly, association, and movement; however, serious problems remained. Violence—including rape and kidnapping—and societal discrimination against women and minorities continued. Internationally recognized worker rights were ignored and abused. Child labor was a widespread practice, and there was no evidence that labor laws were enforced. Trafficking in persons (TIP) was a problem.

The United States was committed to helping Afghanistan overcome its legacy of conflict by working with it on good governance, respect for rule of law, and the protection of human rights. The United States supported Afghanistan's efforts to develop as a nation that respects human rights and conducts free and fair elections as outlined under its new Constitution. The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy assisted the Government in rebuilding democratic national institutions and infrastructure, including judicial institutions, rule of law, elections, and civic participation. In December, the Afghan Cabinet adopted a modified version of The Hague Conference language on

the Transitional Justice Action Plan for Afghanistan. The Action Plan included five areas for action: symbolic measures, institutional reform, truth-seeking and documentation, reconciliation, and accountability. Senior U.S. officials met regularly with President Karzai and others to underscore the U.S. democracy message. The First Lady traveled to Afghanistan in March 2005, stressing the importance of education for girls and women's political participation. The Vice President traveled to Afghanistan in December to attend the inauguration of the newly elected parliament and deliver the message that the United States remains firmly committed to helping Afghans build a secure, democratic, and prosperous future in which the rights of all Afghan citizens are respected.

The United States played a key role along with the Government of Afghanistan, the United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA), and the international community in the planning and execution of the September 2005 National Assembly and Provincial Council elections. The United States was the lead donor for the elections and supported voter registration and education, polling, counting, security, and logistics. During the year, the United States provided legal, operational, and policy advisors to the Joint Election Management Body to help carry out the elections. The United States supported public outreach, voter education, political party and independent candidate training, and election monitoring. The United States played a key role in strengthening the structures of provincial governments and provided training and mentoring to the newly elected Provincial Councils in all 34 provinces.

The United States funded civic education programs to increase awareness of elections, the rule of law, and the importance of newly emerging democratic institutions. This was accomplished through various means, including posters, radio programs, traveling troupes of actors, and the distribution of comic books with civic themes. In advance of the parliamentary elections, the United States provided 41,000 solar-powered devices akin to amplified MP3 players containing eight hours of civic education and human rights material. These devices similar to the comic books and acting troupes, proved highly popular



The convening of Afghanistan's first popularly elected parliament in more than 30 years is a major step toward democracy. (AP Photo)

among women and particularly effective at reaching illiterate audiences in rural areas.

The United States promoted the independent press and electronic media, assisting with the completion of independent community-based radio networks and investing in training and business plan development for sustainable independent media organizations. The United States helped create 32 independent community-based radio stations. U.S. assistance helped renovate and expand local Afghan radio stations throughout the country, especially in the south, where media freedom was severely restricted. The United States funded three new FM stations in the Afghanistan/Pakistan border region, a critical area due to incidents of extremism. A U.S.-funded private television station, "Tolo TV Kabul," continued to broadcast programs on a range of issues, including public interest programming, local, national, and international news, children's programming, and roundtable talk shows. The United States supported an Afghan initiative to unite journalists through a professional association. This was an important step toward ensuring press

freedoms and informing the emerging regulatory framework for the media sector. U.S. International Visitors Leadership Programs (IVLP) and exchange programs provided local journalists opportunities to travel to the United States and learn about best media practices.

To strengthen the rule of law, the United States rebuilt the justice system infrastructure, including equipping and training judges, attorneys, and administrators. The United States rehabilitated 27 judicial facilities, trained approximately 500 judges, supported the Supreme Court in organizing an educational program for 335 judges and court administrators, and offered courses for 50 employees at the legislative drafting unit of the Ministry of Justice (MOJ). To help disseminate basic information on the country's new laws and Constitution, the United States supported development of an MOJ website for posting laws and printed 4,100 copies of select basic laws and the Constitution for distribution to all courts, prosecutor's offices, and MOJ branch offices. The United States also funded English classes for MOJ and Kabul University



law faculty. A U.S.-funded grant helped a U.S.-based university develop a masters degree program specifically designed for Afghan legal educators to improve the institutional capacity of this critical sector. The United States educated the Afghan public about the role of the legal system by widely distributing approximately 30,000 copies of a set of comic books on legal rights and 10,000 copies of the Afghan Constitution.

The United States trained police on community-based policing and the protection of human rights, with an emphasis on women's and children's rights. The United States trained 79 women, 12 of whom were counter-narcotics police officers. U.S. support helped the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) build its capacity and carry out its mandate of monitoring and investigating human rights violations. U.S. officials worked with the AIHRC, NGOs, and Afghan officials to identify areas of particular concern and encourage wider reforms within the Government. The AIHRC regularly monitored the human rights situation, published findings, and worked closely with the international community to resolve human rights issues, including those in Government-run prisons and TIP. The AIHRC has a total of 10 offices in Afghanistan, whose responsibilities as mandated by the Constitution include human rights monitoring, investigation of human rights violations, and development of domestic human rights institutions. The United States sponsored training programs for middle and high school teachers on human rights, including the rights of women and children.

The United States continued to prioritize the protection of the rights of Afghan women and support their active participation in government and community activities. The United States funded NGOs to hold workshops and educate women on their legal rights and the justice system, the new Constitution, and the National Assembly and Provincial Council Elections. Female turnout in the September National Assembly and Provincial Council Elections was 43 percent, and of the approximately 5800 total candidates that stood for office, 582 were women. The United States integrated women's is-

ues into virtually all of its programs, aiming to increase female political participation, education, economic opportunities, and their role in civil society. In partnership with the United States, the U.S.-Afghan Women's Council, which was established in 2002, brought together private and public sector Americans and Afghans to support projects that Afghan women identified as most important. In particular, the Council supported the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA). The Council facilitated U.S. funding to construct, furnish, and equip a network of 17 provincial Women's Resource Centers that served as the provincial offices of MOWA and provided rural venues for women to receive training and other services. MOWA and NGOs utilized the centers to provide training in literacy, legal and income generation activities, human rights, and political participation for women.

U.S. officials worked with civil society organizations to promote religious tolerance. The United States sent Afghan imams to the United States to participate in programs on democracy, civil society, and Islam in America. The United States provided assistance for the cultural preservation of the Mullah Mohamad mosque and the Shah Shaheed shrine and granted money to sponsor an Ulema (religious leaders) conference, which addressed the role of the Ulema in a democratic society and strategies for working with the Government.

The United States was the single largest contributor to UN High Commissioner for Refugees' assisted repatriation program, through which over 3.5 million Afghan refugees have returned to Afghanistan since March 2002 – 520,000 of whom returned in 2005. The United States assisted returnees by providing them with shelter, education, health care, livelihood opportunities, and water and sanitation services.

The United States raised the profile of TIP issues with the Government and civil society members. The United States developed a national Anti-Trafficking Action Plan with the Government to combat TIP in both the short- and long-term. The United States funded return and reintegration programs, training of government officials, capacity building, and cam-



paigns against TIP. The United States worked with UNAMA to provide informational sessions on TIP to members of the UN protection working groups. These groups were established in eight provinces and met regularly to discuss alleged human rights cases and determine the most appropriate intervention. More than 40 child traffickers were arrested during the year.

Bangladesh

Bangladesh is a parliamentary democracy governed by a prime minister with strong executive powers. Bangladesh's elections are generally free and fair, although politics are traditionally acrimonious. Violence resulting in death was a pervasive element in the country's politics in 2005. The Awami League (AL) boycotted parliament for most of 2005, refused to contest parliamentary by-elections, rejected offers of dialogue from the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), and threatened to boycott the general election expected in January 2007 unless the BNP accepted its demands for major changes in the caretaker regime and electoral systems. Weak political and governmental institutions, pervasive corruption, and general indifference by ruling parties to human rights continued to undermine basic civil liberties. Extrajudicial killings, torture, and other widespread abuses by law enforcement personnel such as the police and members of the paramilitary Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) went largely unpunished, and the BNP exploited its position to gain unfair advantage over the opposition. Trafficking in persons (TIP) and other abuses against women and children remained serious problems, and criminals, political activists, and Islamist militants threatened and occasionally attacked journalists. While the constitution guarantees freedom of religion, Islam is the official state religion. The Government's record of protecting religious minorities was inconsistent, and police were often ineffective in assisting members of religious minorities who were victims of crime.

U.S. human rights and democracy goals in Bangladesh include full participation by political parties in free and fair national elections in 2007 and greater protec-

tion of human rights. The United States promoted democracy and human rights in Bangladesh by supporting democratic institutions and practices, encouraging transparency and accountability in government actions and policies, endorsing respect for the rule of law, and seeking justice for the perpetrators of political and extremist violence.

U.S. officials routinely highlighted the importance of democratic and rights-based practices in Bangladesh during senior-level visits and through discussions with Bangladeshi officials, members of civil society, and the press. The United States urged the opposition to exercise, not surrender, its rights, and pressed the Government to allow lawful opposition activity. The United States brought Bangladeshi-American public officials to Bangladesh to discuss democracy and the American political system, including such issues as voter rights and preventing voter intimidation.

The United States funded numerous projects to promote democracy in Bangladesh and lay the foundation for 2007 elections. These initiatives included a program to conduct professional leadership training courses for 355 mid-level leaders from all major parties and a program in which 20,000 members of those parties' student wings participated in festivals and training events aimed at better defining youth-related issues within party platforms. A U.S.-funded survey on the integrity of the 2001 voter list revealed that eight percent of its names were inaccurate, which became an important part of the public debate on whether to create a new list or revise the existing one. U.S. officials and U.S.-sponsored Bangladeshi monitors observed several parliamentary by-elections and the Chittagong mayoral election and confirmed that the AL incumbent won reelection freely and fairly. The United States funded the training of selected domestic groups to build their capacity to be long-term observers. The U.S. Government chaired a local consultative working group of international donors to coordinate programs and initiatives in support of elections.

The United States promoted media freedom and freedom of speech in Bangladesh. U.S. efforts focused attention on the security and freedom of journalists,



who continued to face pressure from criminals, political activists, and Islamist extremists. Then-Ambassador Thomas and other U.S. officials frequently referred to these issues publicly, particularly during America Week in Khulna, one of the most dangerous regions for journalists. In Khulna, the then-Ambassador met with the families of slain journalists. The United States sponsored training for 48 journalists, emphasizing investigative reporting skills for those who cover stories involving violence against women and children's rights, and also sponsored training for reporters to serve as watchdogs in elections.

As the general election approaches, U.S. diplomacy efforts continued to promote respect for freedom of association and assembly for all participants in the democratic process. The United States promoted the development of stronger local government associations to act as advocates for enhanced local governance. Both the U.S.-supported Bangladesh Union Parishad Forum (comparable to an American city council) and the Municipal Association of Bangladesh held extensive strategic planning workshops to articulate a vision for short, medium, and long-term policy goals. The United States supported the formation of women's caucuses within both organizations to deal more directly with issues of gender representation, reserved seats for women, and the responsibilities of female council members.

In 2005, the United States was committed to promoting rule of law in Bangladesh. The United States worked with other donors and the Government to design a long-term, government-wide anti-corruption strategy, which led to a draft national integrity strategy. This draft was under review by several ministries and, once adopted, will set the road map for the Government's overall approach to combat corruption.

The United States collaborated with 11 local and international organizations to launch a test initiative entitled "In Quest of Good Governance," to promote citizen participation in the allocation and use of resources in their respective areas. The Moulavibazar district in northeast Bangladesh was the first pilot area. A tool kit for community coordination of activities,

knowledge sharing, and peoples' empowerment was developed based on that experience. After receiving training from the United States, 65 Union Parishads held the first open local budget hearings, aimed at increasing financial transparency in 2005. Citizens had the opportunity to scrutinize the budgets of these local governments, prioritize development projects, and review reports of public expenditures. This transparency resulted in increased local revenue collection of approximately 15 percent on average.

To improve legal protection for abused women, a coalition of human rights organizations was launched with U.S. support to advocate for the criminalization of domestic violence. This coalition was drafting legislation to make domestic violence punishable with prison terms. The coalition published three major research reports on human rights abuses, including one on the prevalence of domestic violence in marriage.

Over 20,000 Rohingya refugees from Burma reside in camps run by the Government of Bangladesh. The United States provided funding to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for its activities to assist refugees in Bangladesh. The United States supported UNHCR's efforts to encourage the Government to permit improvements to living conditions in the camps and to seek progress on other concerns facing the refugees, such as access to education and permission to work.

The United States continued to support religious freedom in Bangladesh. The Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs and the Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs met with leaders of all religious minority groups to underscore support for their rights and safety against persecution and violence. The International Khatme Nubawat Movement of Bangladesh continued its often-violent campaign to force the Government to declare members of the Ahmadiyya sect as non-Muslims, but in 2005 the Government of Bangladesh took concerted steps to protect Ahmadiyyas, due in large part to U.S. and other diplomatic pressure. An Ahmadiyya missionary, along with members of other minority communities and human rights activists, traveled to various locations in the United States through the Interna-



tional Visitor Leadership Program. Because minorities, especially Hindus, were subjected to intimidation and other forms of pressure during previous election campaigns, the United States increased its monitoring of this issue in anticipation of the 2007 election.

The United States advocated for the adoption of international labor standards in Bangladesh's Export Processing Zones (EPZ). After legislation passed in 2004 under strong U.S. scrutiny, the first elections were held in 2005 for Worker Rights and Welfare Committees (WRWC), an interim step to full freedom of labor association expected in 2007. The United States supported training for the WRWCs to enhance their effectiveness and understanding of their legal rights and responsibilities. The WRWCs engaged with the EPZ oversight authority and individual factory owners to increase respect for workers' rights. When allegations of intimidation of Bangladeshi trade unionists by security forces were reported, U.S. officials raised the issue with the Government.

The United States worked closely with the Government to combat TIP. U.S. officials met with the Government to monitor the progress of the special anti-trafficking police unit and to discuss strategies for improving the Government's ability to prosecute TIP cases. An innovative U.S.-funded imam outreach program expanded to new parts of Bangladesh. More than 2,100 imams received training on the risks, threats, and modalities of TIP, and 100 imams received specialized training-of-trainers to replicate such training within their communities. As a result of these efforts, 2,667 imams delivered specific anti-trafficking messages during Friday prayer services in 2005, reaching millions of people.

The United States provided support to a shelter for child trafficking victims who were repatriated after working as camel jockeys in the Middle East. Most of these children were reunited with their families. The United States began programming to support a comprehensive approach to victim care services offered by both the Government and NGOs. These included primary health care, counseling, the provision of safe shelter, and assisting TIP survivors in pursuing alternative livelihood options.

Bhutan

Bhutan is in the process of a fundamental governance shift from a hereditary to a constitutional monarchy. On December 18, King Jigme Singye Wangchuck stated that by 2008 the nation will become a constitutional monarchy operating under a parliamentary system amalgamating ideas from many democratic systems and that he would abdicate to the crown prince. In preparation for the planned transformation, the King began devolving authority in recent years to a National Assembly and Council of Ministers. In 2005, the National Assembly met twice and passed legislation on a broad variety of topics, including evidentiary rules for civil and criminal cases and privacy rights, and debated the Government's policy toward Bhutanese refugees. The King met with citizens to explain their rights under the new Constitution, which is slated to come into effect before elections are held in 2008. The proposed draft Constitution legalizes political parties and guarantees fundamental human rights such as the right to life, liberty and security of person, the right of association, freedom of speech and press, freedom from torture or inhuman punishment, and freedom from discrimination based on race, sex, language, religion, or politics. Until these changes take effect, civil liberties remain limited. The Government restricted freedom of speech, press, religion, assembly, and association and prohibited the formation of human rights organizations and political parties. The Government also restricted freedom of religion. The ban on political parties allowed the Government a large degree of control over the expression of dissent.

The United States and Bhutan do not have formal diplomatic relations; the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi was responsible for following Bhutanese issues and communicated frequently and effectively with the Government. The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Bhutan focused on supporting its transition to democracy and finding durable solutions for the Bhutanese refugees of ethnic Nepali descent who were compelled to leave Bhutan for Nepal in the early 1990s. U.S. officials visited Bhutan in August and October to discuss the refugee issue, Bhutan's transi-



tion to democracy, human rights, religious freedom, and labor issues. The Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs raised the Bhutanese refugee issue during the year.

Over 100,000 Bhutanese refugees have been encamped in southeastern Nepal since the early 1990s. The United States has vigorously engaged with the Governments of Bhutan and Nepal over the years to promote durable solutions for these refugees. To date, no refugees have been permitted to repatriate to Bhutan, despite the 2003 agreement between the Governments of Bhutan and Nepal to arrange for Categories I, II, and IV refugees from Khudunabari Camp (over 9,000 people who were considered Bhutanese citizens when they left Bhutan) to voluntarily repatriate. No efforts were made since December 2003 to categorize and verify the remaining six camps through the Governments' bilateral Joint Verification Team process. Although the Government of Bhutan offered in fall 2005 to allow Category I and IV refugees from Khudunabari Camp (approximately 640 people) to return as a goodwill gesture, it did not establish a timeline for the repatriation or produce clear, acceptable terms and conditions for return.

In 2005, the United States approached the Government of Bhutan in New Delhi, New York, and Thimpu to discuss the Bhutanese refugee issue. The United States urged both the Governments of Bhutan and Nepal to establish a timeline for voluntary repatriation to Bhutan, produce acceptable terms and conditions for return, and communicate these terms and conditions to the refugees. The United States approached other interested parties, including donor countries, UN agencies, and NGOs on this issue.

During the year, four Bhutanese nationals traveled to the United States through the International Visitors Leadership Program, focusing on areas such as journalism, sustainable development, environmental protection, and judicial reform. Three Bhutanese nationals visited the United States under the Hubert Humphrey Fellowship Program to study law and human rights, higher education, and judicial reform.

India

India is a vibrant democracy with strong constitutional human rights protections. Democracy is fully entrenched in India, with 675 million people voting in the 2004 elections. This was the largest exercise of electoral democracy in history. While religious tensions do exist, India's leadership is representative of its religious diversity, with a Muslim President, Sikh Prime Minister, Christian head of the governing parliamentary party, and five states headed by Christian Chief Ministers, one headed by a Sikh, and one by a Muslim.

The Government generally respected the rights of its citizens and continued efforts to curb human rights abuses, although numerous serious problems remained. These included extrajudicial killings, disappearances, custodial deaths, excessive use of force, arbitrary arrests, torture, poor prison conditions, and extended pretrial detention, especially related to combating insurgencies in Jammu and Kashmir. Societal violence and discrimination against women, trafficking of women and children for forced prostitution and labor, and female feticide and infanticide remained concerns. Poor enforcement of laws, widespread corruption, a lack of accountability, and the severely overburdened court system weakened the delivery of justice. Caste-based discrimination and exploitation of workers, including indentured and bonded servants and child laborers continued, as did religiously motivated violence against Christians and Muslims. The Government addressed a number of human rights concerns that arose in recent years. It rewrote school textbooks that had previously espoused a Hindu nationalist agenda. Also, for the first time, the Prime Minister apologized for the 1984 anti-Sikh riots. Efforts by the Government, such as withdrawing troops from Jammu and Kashmir, opening bus routes between Indian and Pakistani-controlled Kashmir, and releasing several detainees, were positive steps toward addressing some past human rights concerns.

Prime Minister Singh's visit to Washington in July 2005 solidified the emerging global partnership between



the largest and oldest democracies in the world. In September, President Bush and Prime Minister Singh inaugurated the UN Democracy Fund at the UN General Assembly and launched the Virtual Coordination and Information Center to promote democracy and development. The United States worked with India to strengthen this partnership and implement projects in third countries focused on institution building and providing technical assistance to energize democracies. The Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs and the Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs met with Indian officials in early 2006 to discuss the partnership, which involves a wide array of initiatives focused on the economic development, democracy, combating HIV/AIDS, the environment, and science and technology cooperation.

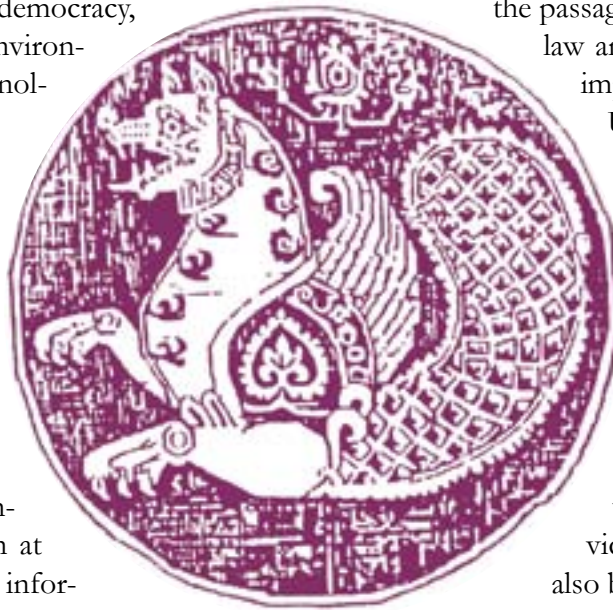
U. S. human rights and democracy initiatives in India focused on the promotion of good governance and the rights of vulnerable groups, especially the rights of women and children. U.S. engagement on the full range of these initiatives included diplomatic interaction at the highest levels, sharing of information, public diplomacy, and funding of projects to encourage respect for democracy and human rights. U.S. officials met regularly with the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) to discuss human rights.

The United States supported human rights and democracy by sponsoring programs on conflict resolution, judicial reform, women's and children's empowerment, addressed stigmatization and discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS, disability issues, Muslim and minority outreach, and international exchanges. Highlights of these efforts include the English Language Access Program, which provided scholarships for underprivileged Muslim high school students, including students from Jammu and Kashmir, and religious outreach to minority communities,

including Muslims, Sikhs, Jains, Christians, and Dalits. The United States also expanded its Urdu and Hindi editions of SPAN magazine, which explored issues such as globalization, conflict resolution, human rights, academic freedom, and inclusiveness toward women and minorities.

The United States funded numerous efforts to promote the rights of women. U.S. assistance to NGOs and research institutions helped them conduct assessments of the prevalence of dowry deaths and sex-selective abortion, and helped concerned NGOs start a new organization known as WomenPowerConnect (WPC). Over the past year, WPC supported

the passage of a new domestic violence law and worked to secure effective implementing regulations. The United States administered a program in Rajasthan and Karnataka that set up 36 new mediation and legal aid centers for women. The program established lawyer and paralegal networks in both states to expand outreach to women and provided over 30,000 women with information, advice, or support. Dalit women also benefited from this support.



The United States addressed the needs of Muslim women through its "Gender and the Law" initiative at the grassroots level, particularly regarding family matters. The United States supported and financed NGO efforts to increase Muslim women's awareness of their rights under the Koran and the Indian Constitution. The program organized a national level conference promoting dialogue between religious leaders, members of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board, women's rights activists, academics, and NGO representatives that resulted in grassroots rights awareness campaigns. In addition, the United States continued the program "Reaching and Educating At-Risk Children" that provided services to school children from vulnerable communities and assisted Dalits and other underprivileged groups.



The United States sponsored numerous conferences, lectures, and seminars on religious and racial tolerance, development of civil society and democracy, good governance, interfaith relations, multiculturalism, and peaceful conflict resolution.

The United States supported a wide range of initiatives to encourage religious and communal tolerance and freedom. During Ramadan, U.S. officials hosted several Iftaar dinners to reach out to the Muslim community and continued to meet with religious leaders of the Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Sikh, and Buddhist communities. The United States continued its outreach to the Muslim community through its English-language program and micro-scholarship program at the Anjuman-e-Himayath-e-Islam school in Chennai. The United States revoked a senior government official's visa under the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act, which makes any foreign government official responsible for particularly severe violations of religious freedom ineligible for a visa.

The United States continued to support a joint U.S.-India "INDUS" child labor project implemented through the International Labor Organization. Each Government provided funding to bring children out of the workplace and into school. The project aims to remove 80,000 children from work situations over three years.

The United States worked with Indian officials, NGOs, and international organizations to combat the long-standing problem of trafficking in persons (TIP). U.S. officials raised TIP issues on numerous occasions with senior government officials. The United States funded projects to prevent TIP, established shelters, and set up female protection programs to help reintegrate victims into the local economy. Through the South Asia Regional Initiative on Equity for Women and Children (SARI/Equity), the United States funded a three-year project convening trafficking prevention groups throughout South Asia and provided grants to anti-trafficking NGOs. The program was designed to enhance social and economic opportunities for women and children in order to prevent TIP and promote women's rights on a regional basis. SARI/Equity expanded its programs

to include cross-border anti-trafficking efforts and a victim witness protection program in Mumbai. The program focused on protection, preparation of TIP victims to testify in court, and provided services for victims of TIP and sexual exploitation in government and private shelter homes. This initiative provided 17 TIP victims with employment opportunities in the corporate sector and more than 40 others received employment training. SARI/Equity also set up a cross-border vigilance program along the Indo-Nepal and Indo-Bangladesh borders.

The United States funded an NHRC study on TIP. The Supreme Court ordered the study to be distributed to all states and encouraged them to use its recommendations as the baseline for their reporting on TIP. The NHRC report had a positive influence on proposed revisions to the Immoral Trafficking Prevention Act. The Government cooperated with a U.S.-funded partner to present 20 India-wide workshops on TIP prevention. At the national level, the National Law Commission of India accepted SARI/Equity's Regional Victim Witness Protection Protocol, a piece of model legislation designed to improve prosecution and conviction rates. The United States funded a total of 24 NGO programs to raise public awareness of at-risk groups, expand victim assistance, and improve cross-border collaboration between law enforcement and civil society. The state of Maharashtra incorporated the Victim Witness Protocol into its draft State Plan for Trafficking Prevention. The states of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, and West Bengal altered their policies to permit NGO participation in the management of state homes for rescued victims of trafficking, resulting in noticeable and substantial improvements in the living conditions of the victims.

Maldives

The Republic of Maldives has a parliamentary style of government with a strong executive branch, headed by President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom. President Gayoom began a process to strengthen democracy and introduce political reforms in 2004, and the Government's human rights record has improved slightly



since that time. In 2005, the parliament unanimously agreed to recognize political parties. Freedoms of expression and assembly expanded, and prison conditions improved. The Government created a Judicial Services Commission to oversee the hiring, dismissal, and disciplining of all judges and drafted a number of bills to expand criminal justice reform and press freedom; however, serious problems remained. The President's power to appoint members of parliament constrained citizens' ability to change their Government. Despite some improvements, freedom of the press, religion, and expression continued to be limited. Mohamed Nasheed, the Chairperson of the opposition Maldives Democratic Party (MDP), was arrested in August and charged with terrorism and crimes against the state. Nasheed was transferred to house arrest in November, and a trial date has not been set. In October 2005, 14 months after her initial trial, human rights activist Jennifer Latheef, the daughter of MDP founder Mohamed Latheef, was sentenced to ten years in prison for her participation in a 2003 demonstration.

U.S. human rights and democracy goals in Maldives include encouraging the continuation of the President's reform agenda to improve awareness of, and respect for, human rights and democratic institutions such as political party development, voter education, an independent media and judiciary, and respect for the rule of law. The United States worked to promote human rights and democracy in Maldives through bilateral discussions, public statements, training of Maldivian security forces, and support for the Maldives Human Rights Commission.

U.S. diplomats engaged in discussions with Maldivian officials to encourage the fair treatment of detainees, advocate for increased freedom of the press, and urge expanded rights of expression and assembly. High-ranking U.S. officials, including the Secretary of State, sent letters to President Gayoom encouraging him to continue the reform process. During multiple visits to Maldives, U.S. officials, including the Ambassador, raised human rights as a key area of concern. U.S. officials conducted prison visits and visited opposition leader Mohamed Nasheed under house arrest. In September, the Embassy held a U.S.-Maldives

Friendship Week in Male, the capital city. In an address recorded for that event, the Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs stressed the importance of due process and political reform. The Ambassador also prioritized democratic reforms, both in his own opening address and in subsequent meetings with Government officials during Friendship Week.

The United States supported the efforts of the Maldivian Human Rights Commission (MHRC), including funding consultations for the MHRC with a U.S. law professor specializing in international human rights. The professor also met with Government officials, students, and civil society representatives with whom he discussed international human rights norms and how they might apply in a Maldivian context.

The United States funded consultations for the MHRC with a forensic specialist to help the MHRC build capacity in recognizing symptoms of torture and abuse. The specialist also conducted a seminar on investigative techniques for the Maldivian police. In August, the majority of the Commissioners resigned. The Government and parliament failed to appoint new members to the MHRC, leaving the organization unable to function.

Human rights training was a key component of all U.S.-Maldivian military-to-military programs. The United States sent Maldivian military officers to International Military Education and Training programs and other professional military education courses in the United States and funded Maldivian attendees at senior service schools, where they received training on respect for human rights.

Nepal

Nepal's struggling multiparty democracy suffered a severe setback with the King's February 1, 2005 dismissal of the Government, declaration of a state of emergency, and suspension of basic human rights. Although the King lifted the state of emergency in April, restoring many civil freedoms, his restrictions on NGOs, the press, civil society, and political party activists were concerns, and Nepal's poor human



Pro-democracy activists gather during an organized protest rally against King Gyanendra in Bhaktapur on the outskirts of Kathmandu, Nepal. (AP Photo)

rights record worsened. Amidst the ongoing Maoist insurgency, security forces engaged in serious human rights abuses, including arbitrary detentions, disappearances of detainees, torture, and arbitrary and unwarranted lethal force. In pursuit of establishing an authoritarian single-party state, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) systematically employed violence and terror and committed serious human rights abuses, including torture, killings, bombings, extortion, and conscription of child soldiers. Pervasive corruption and social, economic, gender, caste, and ethnic inequalities made many citizens susceptible to Maoist influence and propaganda. Institutional weaknesses hampered the Government's ability to respond appropriately and effectively to address human rights violations. Trafficking in persons (TIP) and the rights of women, children, and refugees remained serious human rights concerns.

The United States pursued two main goals in Nepal: preventing a Maoist takeover and restoring multi-

party democracy by encouraging the King to reach out to the mainstream political parties. The United States engaged the Government, its security forces, the international community, and civil society to facilitate a common vision for a peaceful, prosperous, and democratic Nepal. Because all efforts to protect human rights and develop democratic institutions were hampered by the insurgency, the United States worked to address Nepal's inequalities by encouraging these actors to translate principles of democracy and human rights into practice. Areas of engagement included electoral and political reform, civic education, good governance, and rule of law. Other areas included support for conflict management and mitigation, international humanitarian law, civil-military relations, anti-corruption efforts, rehabilitation of torture victims, women's political participation, support for refugee communities, and combating child labor and TIP.

The United States interacted regularly with political



leaders, government officials, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), NGOs, and other sectors of civil society on the importance of restoring democratic processes and institutions, the rule of law, and respect for human rights. The United States, in repeated public and private statements, pressed legitimate political forces to reconcile and agree on a way back to democracy. The United States urged the Government to be inclusive and bring the political parties into the municipal elections planned for February 2006. U.S. officials encouraged balanced public statements on human rights, including criticism of Maoist violence, by the international community, including international organizations and NGOs. Nine statements by these groups during the year focused on Maoist human rights abuses, forcing the Maoists to declare their policies on human rights matters publicly and exposing the widening gap between their statements and their actions.

Senior U.S. officials, including the Assistant Secretary for South Asian Affairs, urged the Government to focus its efforts on restoring democracy and reducing human rights abuses. The Ambassador repeatedly emphasized the importance of protecting human rights, restoring democratic practices, releasing political prisoners, and political reconciliation between the King and the political parties.

The United States provided assistance for electoral processes and political party development and reform. In 2005, the United States began a program to support internal political party reform that developed dialogue among political party and civil society leaders and also provided assistance to expand the Government's election planning capacity. As part of this program, former U.S. Senator Tom Daschle visited Nepal and discussed intra-party reform and reconciliation with members of civil society, political parties, and the King. This message of reconciliation received broad media coverage. The United States assisted Nepal's political parties in working to develop healthy and transparent internal processes, represent their constituencies effectively, and expand internal opportunities for women and disenfranchised groups.

The United States spoke out strongly against the

King's October media ordinance and subsequent seizure at gunpoint of radio equipment from private FM radio stations. In October, the Ambassador addressed democracy and freedom for journalists in the municipality of Butwal. The United States sponsored the participation of a group of Government officials and journalists in an International Visitors Leadership Program (IVLP) in the United States on how government can regulate media without abridging fundamental freedoms, including freedom of speech.

The United States also spoke out strongly against the King's banning of demonstrations and preemptive arrests of political party leaders on January 19, 2006. U.S. officials met regularly with NGOs and civil society to provide public support for their activities, including urging the Government to release civil society members held for peacefully protesting.

The United States worked with the Nepali judiciary, Supreme Court Registrar, and civil society to modernize the justice sector and strengthen capacity to combat corruption. This initiative also worked to strengthen legal protections for women and the disenfranchised. U.S. assistance to improve Supreme Court case management, including training and the provision of computers, allowed the Court to promptly schedule and hear all habeas corpus petitions filed on behalf of disappeared persons. At the end of the year, the Court reported no backlog in habeas corpus cases. The United States sponsored members of the judicial community, including district and Supreme Court judges and members of the bar association, for training in the United States. The program involved judicial training, long-term technical assistance, and small grants to NGOs working on judicial sector reform. During the year, the United States sent Nepalese Government officials and media personnel to the United States to participate in rule of law programs through the IVLP.

The U.S.-sponsored community-based alternative dispute resolution program trained more than 5,000 Nepalese in peace building, including training in negotiation, strategic planning, communication strategies, and mediation. U.S. assistance to Nepal's Commission on Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA)



helped to increase its investigation and prosecution capacity. In 2005, the CIAA prosecuted 122 corruption cases, including three senior officials and one former minister. The CIAA began to focus on more serious corruption cases, with convictions in 22 fraud and five disproportionate property cases.

During the 61st session of the UN Commission on Human Rights, the United States worked with international partners and Nepal to successfully negotiate a technical assistance resolution that called on the Government to restore multiparty democracy and respect human rights and the rule of law. The resolution requested the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to establish an office to assist the Nepalese authorities in developing policies and programs for the promotion, protection, and monitoring of human rights. The United States worked to establish the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Kathmandu in May. The United States provided funding and worked closely with the OHCHR to monitor and improve the human rights situation in four regions of Nepal. To strengthen independent nonpartisan human rights groups, the United States provided funding to the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) to employ a software tool to securely record and store human rights investigations. The United States supported a local NGO to work with the NHRC in conducting a legal review of Nepali law that was inconsistent with international standards of human rights and norms of fair trial. The NGO also studied the impact of security-related laws on the local population.

The United States also provided key services to victims of conflict and vulnerable rural households, reducing poverty, building community solidarity, and addressing dissatisfaction with the governing system, thereby helping to prevent a Maoist takeover. Services included basic health care, income generation opportunities, job training, and psychological and legal counseling for victims of conflict. In 2005, U.S. programs provided wages to rural Nepalis, increased the household incomes of approximately 227,000 individuals, and provided scholarships to 4,889 child victims of conflict. The United States began a program to build the capacity of the Government's Peace

Secretariat. U.S. assistance helped the Peace Secretariat formulate a master plan, and the Secretariat began focusing on the large number of internally displaced persons created by the ongoing conflict. To promote good governance, the United States encouraged 391 natural resource management users groups in Nepal to hold general assemblies and elections, and engage in democratic practices at the local level, including participation of women and minority groups.

The Foreign Military Financing section of the U.S. 2005 Foreign Operations Act required the Nepalese Government to improve human rights practices or face a loss of military assistance. The Government's five-member committee to investigate disappearance claims released four reports in 2005, cumulatively locating 580 persons previously listed as disappeared. While U.S. officials repeatedly emphasized the importance of meeting the Act's requirements in discussions with military officials, the judiciary, and the NHRC, the Government did not allow unimpeded access to places of detention by the NHRC. The United States funded seminars on Operational Law for Armed Conflicts and investigating human rights violations, and sponsored 28 soldiers to attend International Military Education and Training programs, many of which included instruction on respect for human rights.

To promote women's development initiatives and expand their political roles, the United States supported several rural and urban women's empowerment programs, enabling women to become financially independent. Through a four-year program, the United States trained 13,000 politically active women at the community level, strengthening their skills in campaigning, leadership, transparency, and democracy. Three percent of the trained women were elevated to higher positions within their political parties. The United States also supported the formation of the Women's Caucus at the national level, which advocated for increased women's participation in politics, government, and other sectors. Since women comprise only nine percent of the civil service, U.S. assistance provided training to 300 women to enable them to be more competitive candidates for the civil service.

The United States worked with the Government, the



UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and the Tibetan community to seek continued safe passage of Tibetan refugees transiting to India through Nepal. Following the Government's closure of the Dalai Lama's office and Tibetan Refugee Welfare Office in January 2005, U.S. officials urged the Government to register a new organization, the Tibetan Welfare Society, to continue providing assistance to Tibetans. In addition, the United States made significant contributions to UNHCR that assisted over 100,000 Bhutanese refugees in Nepal. The United States engaged the Government and other interested parties to promote durable solutions for the Bhutanese refugee population.

The United States supported participation by Nepal in the IVLP on "Religious Diversity in the U.S." U.S. officials met regularly with religious leaders to provide public support for their activities.

Since 2001, the United States supported a four-year program to combat TIP. The program included providing economic alternatives to vulnerable groups, education programs, and rights-based training for the Government's anti-trafficking task force members. As an economic strategy to prevent TIP, U.S. assistance provided informal educational and vocational training to 537 vulnerable women and TIP survivors, and placed 375 of them in permanent gainful employment. Achievements in combating TIP included a policy to protect and promote the rights of migrant workers, increased convictions of traffickers, and more victims rescued at the community level. U.S. support of anti-trafficking efforts helped Nepal achieve Tier 1 status as a country that actively discourages TIP. The United States continued to sponsor participants to attend IVLPs addressing TIP. The United States also worked on a multi-year project to combat exploitive child labor through education.

Pakistan

Pakistan is a federal republic. The Head of State, President, and Chief of Army Staff Pervez Musharraf initially seized power in the 1999 overthrow of an elected civilian government. President Musharraf's

continued tenure was later confirmed in a controversial 2002 national referendum and an equally controversial 2003 election by the National and Provincial Assemblies. The Head of Government is the civilian Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz, who was elected by the National Assembly in 2004 over the objections of opposition parties. Under the current arrangement, the Office of the Prime Minister is subservient to the Office of the President. Domestic and international observers found the 2002 National Assembly elections deeply flawed. During local government elections in 2005, observers again found serious flaws, including interference by political parties that impacted the outcome of the vote in parts of the country. Legislatures at all levels debated freely and took action on a wide range of issues, at times in opposition to the stated policies of the executive. The judiciary was subject to political influence and corruption and lacked public confidence. Civilian authorities maintained control of the security agencies; however, there were instances when local police acted independently of Government authority. Pakistan's human rights record remained poor, with serious concerns including abuses by security forces, treatment of women and religious minorities, child labor, and trafficking in persons (TIP). While generally independent, Pakistan's media faced periodic harassment by the Government, practiced self-censorship, and lacked the capacity to serve as an adequate check on Government action.

Pakistan's return to democracy is critical to the strength of our long-term relationship and will positively contribute to its effective participation in the Global War on Terror. The U.S. strategy in 2005 focused on promoting free and fair local and national elections, strengthening national and provincial legislatures, democratization and institutional strengthening of political parties, and encouraging local governments to be accountable. The United States also supported respect for the rule of law through professionalizing law enforcement personnel and promoting an appropriate role for the military. The United States continued to work with the Government, civil society institutions, and international organizations to strengthen the media and combat violence and discrimination against women and religious minorities, TIP, and child labor. The Secretary of State and



Local election monitoring team counting votes in Pakistan. (National Democratic Institute)

also strove to develop the local capacity of women political leaders to train other women members and elected officials.

The United States actively pressed for free and fair local elections in 2005. Senior officials engaged their Pakistani counterparts to encourage a level playing field for all political parties and the withdrawal of security and intelligence agencies from the electoral process. U.S. officials discussed specific concerns with the Chief Election Commissioner and the staff of the Election Commission of Pakistan. In advance of the elections, the United States funded voter education workshops in key districts. The United States fielded a team of observers for each of the three rounds of voting and

other high-level U.S. officials repeatedly raised the importance of democracy.

The United States engaged in a multi-year strategy to strengthen Pakistan's democratic institutions. Through the legislative strengthening program, the United States provided training to national and provincial parliaments to enhance their secretariats and research capacity, helped develop a functioning committee system, and promoted regular dialogue between constituents and NGOs.

Through the political party strengthening program, the United States worked with the leadership of all major parties to train future political leaders in issue-based campaigning, grassroots party development, and internally democratic mechanisms for platform development and candidate selection. A separate program focused specifically on emerging female party leaders and provided training and assistance to improve their capacity to campaign for elected office and serve the public as elected officials. The program

raised concerns with the Pakistani Government about what were viewed as serious violations of election norms that prejudiced the results in certain areas. In addition, the United States funded a comprehensive elections study by a local NGO that raised serious concerns about the administration of the electoral process. U.S. officials stressed to the Government the need for improvements in upcoming national and provincial elections.

The United States regards the strengthening of Pakistan's media as critical to the long-term development of Pakistani democracy. The United States funded training for radio and print journalists and supported community radio stations in key areas such as rural North West Frontier Province and the adjoining Federally Administered Tribal Areas. The United States maintained active dialogue with journalists and advocated for improvements in journalism standards. Moreover, the United States supported the participation of eight journalists in International Visitors Leadership Programs. Senior U.S. officials routinely



raised the need to respect press freedom with the Government, highlighted specific high-profile violations of press freedom, and pressed for redress.

During the year, the United States continued efforts to develop competent, professional security forces in Pakistan, a strategy that will both help end human rights violations by these organizations and contribute to greater respect for rule of law in the country. The United States worked with the National Police Academy and Police College Sihala to develop and implement new training curricula for law enforcement personnel. The curricula focused on criminal investigation techniques, strategic planning, and law enforcement management and included courses in developing professional standards and appropriate use of force. Courses incorporated elements that stressed the rule of law and respect for human rights. The United States provided training and material assistance to improve the professionalism and efficacy of Pakistan's security personnel engaged in counter-terrorism and counter-narcotics operations. Through engagement with senior Pakistani leaders, the United States pressed for broader judicial reform, encouraging the Government to augment judicial independence.

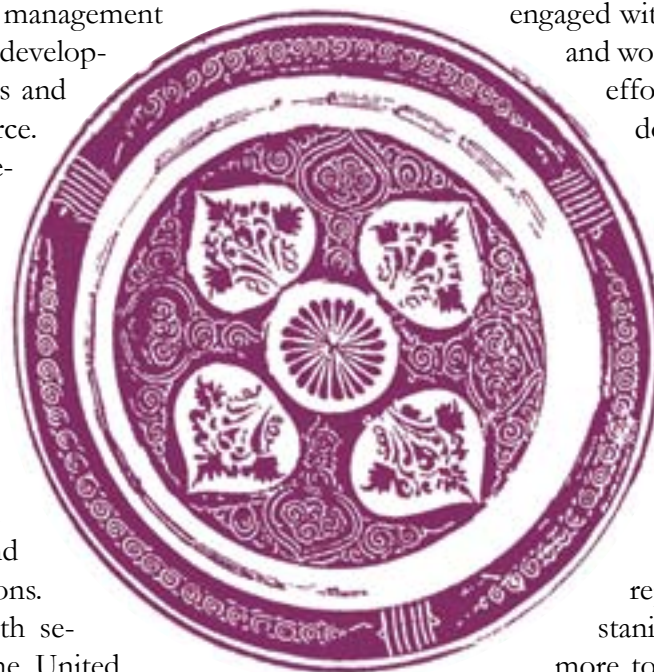
Through the International Military Education and Training program, the United States provided 111 emerging military leaders with professional development opportunities that emphasized the importance of civilian control of the military and improved civil-military relations. The Counter Terrorism Fellowship program provided similar engagement opportunities and enhanced Pakistan's capacity to combat domestic terrorist and extremist organizations. Military procurement cases under the Foreign Military Sales program funded training visits of Pakistani person-

nel to the United States, where young leaders gained exposure to the American military ethos in which the military is subordinate to civil authority. The rule of law and civilian control of the military were two topics consistently raised by the United States during interaction with Pakistan's military leadership.

As an ongoing part of its democracy and human rights strategy in Pakistan, the United States advocated for the elimination of discrimination against women. The United States assisted local NGOs in conducting training courses for lawyers, judges, civil society activists, and other opinion leaders to offer support to female survivors of abuse. The United States engaged with local women's rights NGOs and worked to support their advocacy efforts to strengthen penalties for domestic violence and so-called honor killings and to reform discriminatory provisions of the nation's legal system. As part of a U.S.-sponsored media project, Pakistani women developed a radio program focused on their rights and discussed such topics as violence against women and so-called honor crimes. Senior U.S. officials repeatedly raised with their Pakistani counterparts the need to do more to end violence against women and to protect victims of such violence.

For instance, the Secretary of State and other high-level U.S. officials interceded when rape-survivor and human rights advocate Mukhtar Mai was temporarily prevented from leaving Pakistan. She subsequently met senior officials during a visit to Washington.

The United States supported programs to uphold the human rights of millions of Afghan refugees in Pakistan and built capacity within local organizations and the Government to carry out this work. The United States was the single largest contributor to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees' assisted repatriation program, through which over 2.7 million Afghan refugees have returned home from Pakistan





since March 2002 – 450,000 of them in 2005. The United States also supported programs to alleviate gender-based violence in refugee and host communities. Although Pakistan is not a signatory to either the 1951 Refugee Convention or the 1967 Protocol, its treatment of refugees generally accorded with international norms. The United States worked to ensure that Pakistan abided by these norms as it sought to close down refugee camps.

The United States worked to combat religious discrimination and victimization of religious minorities. Senior officials strongly supported President Musharraf's efforts to combat extremist and terrorist organizations, and the United States provided direct training and equipment to security forces to aid in their counter-terrorism operations. Through information sharing and cooperative investigations, U.S. law enforcement worked with Pakistani counterparts to bring terrorists and extremists to justice for their crimes. Such extremist and terrorist groups have regularly been implicated in violent attacks. As part of its advocacy, the United States pressed the Government to reform discriminatory legislation such as the so-called anti-Ahmadi laws and encouraged efforts to prevent abuse of blasphemy laws. U.S. officials spoke out against sectarian violence in the country's majority Muslim community and urged the Government to continue its efforts to dismantle organizations responsible for such violence. The United States maintained close ties with Christian, Ahmadi, Shi'a, Sikh, Sunni majority, and Hindu communities, and raised cases of discrimination and violence against minority religious groups with the Government. The United States actively engaged with the country's religious leadership, advocating tolerance and supporting President Musharraf's vision of enlightened moderation. As part of its education program, the United States worked with Pakistani counterparts to improve the quality and availability of public education to provide a viable alternative to religious schools.

During 2005, the United States supported several programs geared toward the elimination of child labor, including the International Program for the Elimination of Child Labor in Pakistan and the Program for Promoting Quality Education for All and

Addressing Child Labor. These projects targeted working children and children at risk of entering the work force by placing them in informal education centers to learn basic literacy and numeric skills, with the goal of mainstreaming them into government schools. U.S. officials pressed for revision of labor legislation to ensure its compliance with international standards. The United States funded work with local labor unions to strengthen their ability to advocate effectively for increased labor rights and to protect workers' interests. In 2005, the United States increased this funding to support NGO projects that promoted workers' rights through workplace policy changes and stressed the improvement of women's rights in the workplace.

In 2005, the United States restored benefits to Pakistan under the Generalized System of Preferences that were suspended in 1996 due to the Government's failure to take steps to grant internationally recognized workers' rights. The United States continued to urge the Government to allow workers in the Karachi Export Processing Zone and other such zones the right to organize and bargain collectively. The United States also urged the Government to address the issue of the broad application of restrictions on unionization in certain sectors under the provisions of the Essential Services Maintenance Act.

The United States assisted the Government in combating TIP, emphasizing prevention, prosecution, and protection of victims. The United States funded a series of awareness-raising activities in collaboration with the Government. The United States provided training to the newly created Anti-Trafficking Unit and funded the establishment of a shelter for TIP victims.

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka is a constitutional democracy that continued to be fractured by the repercussions of the 1983 - 2001 conflict between the Government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), a terrorist organization advocating a separate ethnic Tamil state. President Mahinda Rajapaksa, elected in November,



and the parliament share constitutional power. The election was generally considered free and fair; however, in both Government and LTTE-controlled areas, the LTTE enforced an electoral boycott. The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens, although serious problems remained. In 2005, both the Government and the LTTE frequently violated the 2002 peace accord. There were numerous reports that armed paramilitary groups, suspected of being linked to the Government and security forces, participated in armed attacks during the year. Police frequently used torture, sometimes resulting in custodial deaths, and did not investigate dozens of politically motivated killings. The LTTE engaged in politically motivated killings, disappearances, torture, arbitrary arrest and detention, denial of fair public trial, arbitrary interference with privacy, denial of freedoms of speech, press, assembly, and association, and recruited child soldiers. Through a campaign of intimidation, the LTTE denied those under its control the right to vote in the 2005 national election. Following the August 12 killing of Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar, the Government enacted Emergency Regulations that permitted arrests without warrants and non-accountable detentions.

The United States promoted human rights and democracy in Sri Lanka. In 2005, U.S. human rights initiatives focused on supporting the benefits of peace and on bolstering freedom of the press, freedom of religion, fair labor practices, and the rights of women and children. Recovery efforts from the December 2004 tsunami became a vehicle to promote dialogue and cooperation among ethnic and religious communities who were empowered to collaborate in identifying needs and distributing resources. This type of local decision-making was modeled on the devolution of power envisioned in the peace process.

Major democracy initiatives in 2005 focused on the November 17 presidential election. During the election, eight teams from the Embassy visited different locations around the country, excluding LTTE-controlled areas. To aid election-monitoring efforts, a U.S.-supported NGO funded the two largest indigenous election-monitoring groups in Sri Lanka. Following the presidential elections, there were com-

plaints that 100,000 eligible voters were stricken from the voting roles. The U.S.-funded National Voter Register program began in late 2005 to provide technical assistance, training, and commodities to the National Elections Commission to computerize the national voter register.

The United States funded the Transparent and Accountable Local Governance Project, which aimed to strengthen the capacity of local government in management and service delivery, increase citizen participation in local government decision making, improve the capacity of community mediators through the Ministry of Justice's Mediation Boards Program, and train informal "para-legals" to represent marginalized communities. The program partnered with 33 local authorities across six provinces and more than ten percent of the local authorities in Sri Lanka. Twenty of these were in districts affected by the tsunami.

The United States funded 225 students from all across the country to participate in Sri Lanka's first Youth Parliament, permitting a new generation of community leaders to network, acquire new skills, and develop action plans for social change.

U.S. efforts in Sri Lanka included the promotion of media freedom. In Sri Lanka, journalism often lacks a balanced analysis about conflict and the peace process, with a tendency toward inflammatory and highly partisan reporting. Most journalists, especially those at the provincial level, never received proper training in the basics of their craft, nor were they aware of the role that they could play in support of peace. The United States supported the National Peace Council in conducting a series of workshops for 90 provincial journalists in conflict-sensitive reporting. This workshop generated understanding and support for a negotiated settlement among those who have the potential to influence the wider community.

The United States provided support for civil society in Sri Lanka. The post-tsunami relief and recovery process highlighted the tendency of government and NGOs alike to rely on their own data rather than the "voice of the people" when making decisions about services provided to communities. In Matara dis-



district, people called for better coordination between government agencies, NGOs, and community representatives. Aware of the need for stronger civil society participation in tsunami recovery, the United States developed a series of Community Consultation Workshops in the district. The program identified two multi-ethnic local divisions within the district and carried out initial mobilization and awareness-raising among 500 families. Communities were divided into groups of 50 for intensive, one-day workshops. Program coordinators ensured diversity in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, profession, and social status, and received an overwhelmingly positive reaction. The program demonstrated that active consultation can motivate an engaged, resourceful, and creative citizenry to produce a consensus that provides stronger public support for government initiatives and deepens community ownership of planning problems and their solutions.

The United States promoted the rule of law in Sri Lanka. Media reports aired charges by both the LTTE and the Government that tsunami disaster assistance was being used for political gain and personal profit. A U.S.-funded anti-corruption program began in late 2005 for the purpose of ensuring that relief was properly administered. A strategic assessment was completed, and the program provided technical assistance and training to the Auditor General's Department's tsunami auditors and legal and investigative staff from the Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery and Corruption. The program will continue to support provincial and national civil society organizations in raising awareness on issues of corruption and reporting of instances of corruption from tsunami-affected districts.

In line with the U.S. goal of promoting human rights and helping Sri Lankans achieve a political solution to conflict, the United States assisted in retraining the Sri Lankan police to focus on community-oriented policing. U.S. law enforcement professionals led courses on basic investigation and interrogation techniques aimed at reducing the use of torture. U.S. officers led a course entitled "Human Dignity and Ethics" and worked with their Sri Lankan counterparts to integrate these skills and techniques into the local law en-

forcement curriculum. A U.S. grant supported the Sri Lankan Human Rights Commission's efforts to process more than 16,000 complaints of disappearances and to establish a national database on disappearance cases. Human rights training was a key component of all U.S.-Sri Lankan military-to-military programs.

In Sri Lanka's eastern province, incidences of violence and general strikes were common, and there was mutual suspicion between communities. An innovative program that was funded by the United States and designed by professional photographer Marie Ange Bordas improved communication between multi-ethnic youth and among members of their communities. Six girls and 11 boys between the ages of 15 and 21 learned new skills, such as photography, journalistic writing, and different modes of media and visual expression. At the end of the course, the participants produced and published a newsletter covering themes such as religious harmony, the experience of being handicapped, and thoughts about ethnic cooperation to be distributed to NGOs, schools, and other organizations in the area. Individual projects resulted in a series of posters that celebrate diversity and support peace that will be displayed in neighboring towns.

In speeches, press roundtables and op-ed pieces, the Ambassador, the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, the Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs, and the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs condemned human rights abuses committed by the LTTE and pressed the Government to investigate allegations of human rights abuses by Sri Lankan authorities.

Sri Lanka is predominantly Buddhist but also has sizeable Christian, Hindu, and Muslim populations. U.S. officials regularly met with representatives of all religious groups to review a wide range of human rights, ethnic, and religious freedom issues. The United States discussed religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialogue and policy of promoting human rights. In 2005, the Ambassador held high-level meetings with the current and former presidents of Sri Lanka to express concern about the negative impact anti-conversion laws could have on religious freedom. The Assistant



Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs, the Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, and the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom discussed the anti-conversion issue with Sri Lanka's Ambassador to the United States. By the end of the reporting period, the legislation had not passed. The United States continued to encourage government and religious leaders to find non-legislative means to address religious issues.

The United States sponsored a series of inter-religious peace building workshops in Sri Lanka using the interfaith training and dialogue workshop to refine and enhance religious leaders' involvement in influencing social and political change. A total of 32 Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, and Christian religious leaders from three districts within the volatile Eastern Province explored peace building in their region from a religious perspective. The two-day activity introduced a process model to analyze the current conflict through an inter-faith framework and to seek resolution through inter-faith dialogue.

The United States funded a four-year program in Sri Lanka to create a National Plan of Action for Decent Work designed to promote good governance of labor standards and protection of labor. The United States also funded the Factory Improvement Program, a multi-supplier training program for the development of local factories' capacity in industrial relations, health, safety, and working conditions, linked to areas of productivity and quality.



SOUTH ASIA

WESTERN HEMISPHERE





“Democracy and the observance of human rights are the linchpins of a hemispheric coexistence ... Democracy requires free and fair elections and an unwavering devotion to promoting absolute citizenship in which the people enjoy the fullest civil, social, and cultural rights.”

José Miguel Insulza
*Secretary General of the
Organization of American States*

WESTERN HEMISPHERE

Countries of the Western Hemisphere continued to consolidate democratic gains won during the past two decades, further distancing themselves from the military dictatorships of the past. Progress, however, remained uneven. Widespread corruption, long-standing marginalization of certain groups, fragile institutions, and agitation of populist sentiment for political ends threatened the progress of the past 20 years.

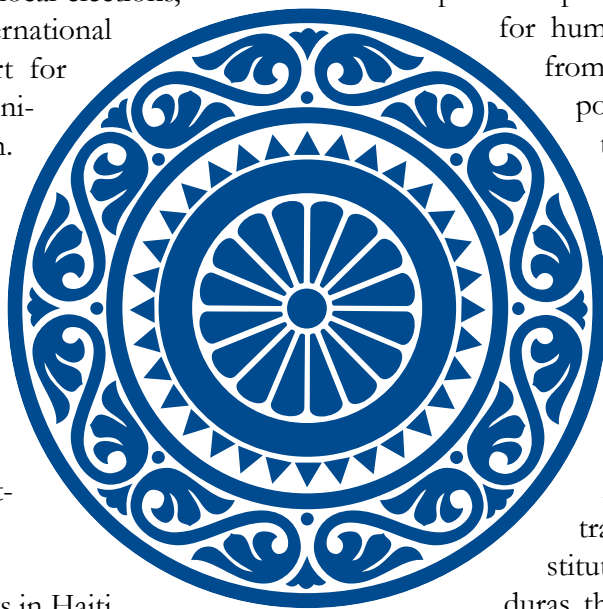
Popular participation in the political process of countries that have suffered recent instability constituted an important step on the path to inclusive and strong democratic institutions. In Haiti, citizens demonstrated their commitment to democracy by going to the polls in large numbers on February 7, 2006. In preparation for national and local elections, the United States and the international community provided support for election administration, monitoring, and voter education. In December, an estimated 85% of Bolivians voted to elect the country's first indigenous president. This election marked the first time since Bolivia restored democracy in 1982 that one candidate received enough votes to be declared the outright victor.

Despite positive developments in Haiti and Bolivia, challenges to established democracies occurred elsewhere in the region. Citing concerns over the perceived bias of the electoral authority and the lack of transparency in the voting process, major opposition parties boycotted Venezuela's December legislative elections, in which President Hugo Chavez's party and its allies secured all 167 seats in the National Assembly. Though only approximately 15% of eligible voters participated, Chavez vowed to remain in power until 2021 in what would be a clear breach of the constitution. In Cuba, the lone

antiquated dictatorship in the hemisphere, repression against dissidents continued, and 333 political prisoners and detainees remained in custody.

The United States continued in its collaboration with the governments and peoples of the Western Hemisphere to promote democracy and respect for human rights. Initiatives ranged from grassroots projects among politically marginalized Afro-Latinos to visits to the region by the President and Secretary, both of whom assured the people of the region of the U.S. Government's unwavering support for democratic ideals.

U.S. efforts throughout the region focused on developing transparent and accountable institutions at the local level. In Honduras, the United States funded efforts to encourage decentralization and increase the capacity of municipalities to deliver basic services. The United States also promoted dialogue between local governments and NGOs to garner greater public participation on civic planning issues. To support decentralization in Peru, the United States provided training in budget preparation and oversight to over 500 local governments and encouraged greater public participation in budgetary decisions. In Ecuador, the United States worked with 64 local governments and four provinces to increase public participation in the



implementation of local assistance projects and the development of decentralized government.

The United States also focused on outreach to marginalized peoples to promote more inclusive democracy. In Bolivia, U.S. programs trained nearly 4,500 representatives of indigenous groups on the importance of democracy and rule of law and produced democracy-oriented radio programs in widely understood indigenous languages. In Ecuador, the United States provided political leadership training to Afro-Ecuadorians to increase the group's participation in elections. Additionally, the United States funded visits to the United States by several Afro-Brazilians to acquaint them with African-American culture and the importance of political participation in the democratic process.

Democracy promotion efforts also targeted judicial system reform. In Ecuador, the United States backed

the creation of a coalition of 47 NGOs which monitored the selection of new Supreme Court Judges, ensuring transparency in the selection of the most qualified candidates. The United States supported Colombian efforts to address weaknesses in its justice system by designing and helping to implement Colombia's new criminal oral accusatorial system. This initiative entailed training over 12,000 justice officials, assisting 35 major universities to adjust their law school curricula accordingly, and supporting the judicial branch in its efforts to phase in new public hearing courtrooms and administrative spaces. In Guatemala, the United States provided technical assistance in case analysis methodologies to the Public Ministry and helped the Guatemalan judiciary implement oral pretrial procedures in Guatemala City. It was the first time such procedures had been implemented since the law prescribing them was passed 11 years ago.



Trained leaders of the “Outreach to Indigenous Group and Farmers” project discuss with peers a revision of a legislative document in Bolivia. (CARE - Bolivia)

U.S. CARES: Empowering Bolivia’s Indigenous Community

To help overcome the marginalization of indigenous people in Bolivia, the NGO CARE used U.S. funding to implement a program that encouraged the full participation of indigenous groups in the country’s political process. The program focused on teaching community leaders and citizens about human rights and Bolivian law.

CARE conducted train-the-trainer workshops in which 87 facilitators learned about human rights, effective democratic avenues to address grievances, and specific training on Bolivian law, including agrarian reform and the Constituent Assembly. In turn, the trainers instructed more than 2,600 indigenous people from the Aymara, Quechua, and Guarani ethnic groups and 85 municipal leaders on these topics, providing them with the necessary tools to better understand and defend their rights. These mechanisms, which included interactive techniques and debates, resulted in greater understanding of the process of land ownership and fuller participation in public administration planning meetings. Participants were not only able to establish their demands but to propose their own solutions to human rights issues. The project produced multicultural educational materials to support its work, and posters, radio, and television spots reaffirmed the results of the training session in the target communities.

As a result of the training, individuals gained a better knowledge of the causes of poverty, racial discrimination, and social exclusion in political decision-making. They gained insights into such factors as relations of servitude, inhumane treatment, and abuse of power. Participants recognized the need to investigate the plight of indigenous Gurarani families in the Chaco region of the Department of Chuquisaca. Consequently, participants and those they influenced established ties with the Ministry of Justice to coordinate actions to defend human rights. Communities set up cooperative agreements with the Ombudsman, Institute of Agrarian Reform, municipal governments, and other organizations to incorporate indigenous people into the political process.



Bolivia

Bolivia continued to face considerable political instability in 2005 but maintained a democratic course. On June 9, following weeks of social protests, Congress accepted the resignation of President Carlos Mesa Gisbert. Supreme Court President Eduardo Rodríguez Veltze assumed the Presidency and called for national elections. On December 18, Bolivians turned out in record numbers to elect Evo Morales Aima as their first indigenous President, giving him an outright majority and the largest margin of victory in Bolivia's recent democratic history. The Governments of Presidents Mesa and Rodríguez generally respected human rights, although weak institutions, corruption, social opposition, and limited resources remained serious problems. There were credible reports of abuses by security forces, including use of excessive force, arbitrary arrest and detention, and mistreatment of military conscripts. Prison conditions were harsh, and violence in prisons and prolonged pretrial detentions were prevalent. The judiciary was characterized by corruption, inefficiency, and political manipulation. Domestic violence and discrimination against women, abuse of children, child labor, discrimination against indigenous and Afro-Bolivians, forced labor, and trafficking in persons (TIP) continued.

The U.S. Government's highest priorities in Bolivia were the promotion of democracy and political and social stability. The United States worked to ensure that government security forces respected human rights and cooperated with investigations and prosecutions of alleged human rights violations. The U.S. Government targeted increasing citizen participation in democratic processes, train future indigenous leaders, improve local government, and bolster the judicial system and rule of law. The United States also promoted women's rights and assisted in combating corruption, child labor, and TIP.

The United States worked closely with other nations, including Brazil, Argentina, and Spain, to build international support for democratic transitions of power. For the December national elections, the U.S. Government conducted voter education campaigns that focused on voter efficacy, including how to vote,

choose a candidate, and evaluate platforms and key electoral issues. The United States also supported a large network of local election observers, comprised primarily of local NGOs.

The United States supported democratic governance and institutions through programs to strengthen the rule of law, democratic values, municipal governments, legislative development, citizen participation, political party reform, and anti-corruption efforts. These programs encouraged the participation of women and indigenous people, particularly in the city of El Alto. The Embassy also relied on native language-speaking indigenous advisors to help it broaden links with this large and underrepresented segment of the population. In the past year, U.S. programs trained nearly 4,500 representatives of indigenous groups on the importance of democracy, and the rule of law, civic participation, and political tolerance. The United States also focused assistance on increasing political participation for indigenous communities by educating indigenous leaders about peaceful participation in politics and candidate choice and through leadership training that they replicated among their communities.

As part of its outreach to the indigenous population, the United States sent various indigenous community representatives to participate in International Visitors Leadership Programs on topics such as democracy, transparency, conflict resolution, and human rights. The U.S. Government also published op-ed pieces and invited guest speakers to discuss democracy, conflict resolution, and fighting corruption. The United States produced radio news programs in Bolivia's most common indigenous languages, Quechua and Aymara. The U.S. Government funded indigenous language radio producers for the communications office of the executive branch to ensure widespread outreach. Indigenous and Afro-Bolivian groups participated in workshops on democratic values, as well as a U.S.-funded education-based program to promote improvements in political access, and responsible civic and political participation among rural and indigenous populations.

The United States held 12 workshops promoting free-



Voter information being distributed by volunteer in Bolivia. (IRI)

doms of the press and expression. Through a program on investigative journalism held in El Alto, La Paz, and Santa Cruz, Bolivian journalists developed links to professional associations in Latin America and the United States. A four-day workshop held in the Yungas and the Chapare on political journalism emphasized the importance of freedom of expression and access to information. The United States also hosted guest speakers who taught journalists in La Paz and Santa Cruz about investigative reporting and the responsibility of the media to demand truth and accountability from the public sector on behalf of the Bolivian people.

U.S. efforts focused on combating the human rights abuses that occurred within the justice system. Programs targeting justice system reform, initiated in the early 1990s, continued to support implementation of the Code of Criminal Procedures (CCP). The U.S. Government provided extensive training and technical assistance to help strengthen the Public Ministry and other key justice sector institutions. To date, several thousand judges, prosecutors, police, public defenders, lawyers, law students, and NGO representatives have received training on the CCP. Many of these also received human rights training.

The United States worked closely with civil society to help educate citizens about their rights under the reformed criminal justice procedures and strengthen their support for these important reforms. Criminal trials became more transparent and efficient as a result of CCP implementation in 1999. The U.S. Government also worked to expand access to justice services for poor Bolivians by helping to establish one new Integrated Justice Center and supporting existing centers in areas of conflict, including El Alto and the coca-growing regions of the Chapare and Yungas. These centers provided citizens with access to mediation and other legal services, and established a positive government presence in areas where respect for the rule of law is fragile. Additionally, the U.S. Government supported the Presidential Delegate for Anti-Corruption and provided technical assistance to initiatives undertaken by that office. The United States also supported an initiative led by an NGO to pass an access-to-information law.

The United States routinely raised the importance of human rights conditions to U.S. security assistance. The U.S. Government also helped create the Bolivian Government's own human rights database. The United States continued to assist the National Police with



its National Directorate of Professional Responsibility and the related Disciplinary Tribunal to investigate administrative allegations against police officers. The United States supported training police and military personnel with funding and technical expertise, emphasizing respect for human rights and internationally accepted principles of non-lethal crowd control.

The United States repeatedly highlighted to Bolivian officials the need for comprehensive action on TIP, child labor, and prostitution. The Government passed key TIP legislation in 2005, bringing it into compliance with relevant international conventions. A U.S. grant continued to support a project to keep the children of Potosi miners in school and out of the mines. The United States funded a project to improve workplace safety and to promote tripartite dialogue among workers, businesspeople, and the Government. The U.S. Government is closely monitoring the Government of Bolivia's investigation of forced labor in the agricultural sector, which affects the indigenous population in Beni, Santa Cruz, and the Chaco in Chuquisaca.

Brazil

In October 2002, Brazil's constitutional Government held its fourth general election since the end of military rule in 1985, electing President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva ("Lula") and members of the legislature in accordance with the 1988 Constitution. The Government of Brazil generally respected human rights, and there were improvements in a few areas in 2005. However, serious problems remained, and the human rights record of several states remained poor. Police continued to commit numerous abuses, including unlawful killings, torture, and use of excessive force. Failure to punish numerous human rights violations by state authorities perpetuated a climate of impunity. Prison conditions remained harsh and life threatening. The judiciary was largely inefficient, lacked resources, and was often subject to political and economic influences, especially at the state level. Although an appeals process existed, a large case backlog hindered the courts' ability to ensure fair and expeditious trials. Violence and discrimination against women, in-

igenous people, Afro-Brazilians, and homosexuals remained a problem. Child abuse and prostitution, trafficking in persons (TIP), and internal slave labor also continued, as did intimidation and killings of rural labor organizers.

The U. S. human rights and democracy strategy in Brazil focused on strengthening the judiciary, increasing political participation of underrepresented persons (mainly women and Afro-Brazilians), and launching a new program to combat TIP and internal slave labor.

In October, the Embassy supported the participation of three U.S. college professors in the Third Biannual Conference of the Association for the Study of the Worldwide African Diaspora. Over 300 speakers from around the world participated in 60 thematic panels on politics, literature, economics, education, and political activism. After the conference, the U.S. professors traveled under U.S. Government sponsorship to Salvador, Bahia and participated in "The African Diaspora: Contemporary Perspectives" seminar. The seminar attracted over 300 Brazilian government officials, academics, NGO representatives, Afro-Brazilian activists, and students. The Salvador Municipal Secretaries of Education and Affirmative Action and the presidents of the state universities of Bahia, Feira de Santana, Southwest Bahia, and Santa Cruz were also in attendance.

In August, the United States sponsored a three day political reform conference for the Brazilian Congress. Brazilian Congressional and Supreme Court representatives and the former Chamber President were in attendance. The conference generated discussion on political reform in the Chamber, and facilitated the passing of new legislation on political reform.

Ethical behavior among public figures became a major issue during the year. To address corruption problems, the United States sponsored the visit of two experts to conduct seminars entitled "Combating Money Laundering and Organized Crime" and "Illegal Financial Activities and Asset Forfeiture" for 350 Brazilian prosecutors, judges, and law enforcement officials in Rio Grande do Sul state and Sao Paulo

city. The United States helped train over 4,500 law enforcement officials in proper human rights procedures, civil rights, force parameters, arrest and apprehension procedures, and positive community relations. U.S. military officials explained human and civil rights policies and the role of police in bridging the gap between law enforcement and positive community relations. One course included participants from 12 other Latin American countries.

In November, the United States supported the visit of a prominent U.S. civil rights activist to Sao Paulo. The activist visited with the Afro-Brazilian community, student groups, universities, and social service NGOs. Also in November, Presidents Bush and Lula da Silva agreed to increase cooperation on the promotion of equal opportunity.

U.S. activities targeted labor rights abuses, including against men and children who were forced into agricultural labor schemes on farms in the country's interior. To further reduce child labor and associated human rights abuses, the Embassy teamed with Partners of the Americas, Catholic Relief Services, the International Labor Organization and others to target sexual exploitation and child labor in northeast Brazil.

Brazil has a significant domestic and international TIP problem. The U.S. Presidential Trafficking in Persons Initiative supported programs to improve local capacity to address the special needs of TIP and sexual exploitation victims, to train 4,700 government and NGO technicians in case notification procedures, to support the creation of a judicial referral system, to provide specialized training in child-victim communications and evidentiary medical examinations, to fund psychological support and counseling, and to provide emergency health assistance to victims.

The United States also helped improve coordination between anti-trafficking professionals and service providers at the local level and provided technical assistance to improve the Brazilian human trafficking and sexual exploitation notification system. The U.S. Government's implementation of the Program of Integrated and Referential Actions to Combat Traffick-

ing in Children and Adolescents for Sexual Exploitation Purposes continued. The program provided direct health, psycho-social, and legal services to over 1,100 victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation. A pilot services methodology, developed and tested with U.S. support in six Brazilian municipalities, was expanded to an additional 24 cities through the support of the Brazilian Government and other donors.

The United States sought to maximize the impact of its programs through the use of public awareness campaigns that worked with a broad range of local, state, and national TIP professionals to increase public awareness about TIP and sexual exploitation and to foster development of effective assistance, law enforcement, and judicial models for application throughout Brazil.

At the invitation of the Brazilian Government, the U.S. Government held a seat, for the third consecutive year, on the Inter-Sectoral Commission on Trafficking in Persons and Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents. This Commission is responsible for coordinating all activities to combat sexual exploitation. The Commission identified 930 Brazilian municipalities to prioritize implementation of policies to combat TIP and sexual exploitation in the near future.

Colombia

The Government of Colombia's respect for human rights continued to improve, although serious problems remained. Colombia, although a constitutional, multiparty democracy, continued to be affected by the 41-year internal armed conflict between the Government and Foreign Terrorist Organizations, particularly the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, the National Liberation Army, and certain blocs of the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) that were not involved in demobilization negotiations with the Government. While civilian authorities generally maintained effective control of the security forces, there were instances in which elements of the security forces acted in violation of state policy. All actors in the internal conflict committed human rights violations, the majority of which were commit-



ted by the illegal armed groups. Violations included political killings, massacres, forced disappearances, and forced internal displacement. Methods to deal with these threats through the civilian judiciary were complicated by corruption and a cumbersome justice system. There were considerable reductions in the number of killings and kidnappings as a result of the Government's concentrated military offensive and ongoing demobilization negotiations with the AUC. In order to better address these issues and resource constraints, the Government of Colombia began a move to an accusatorial judicial system in January 2005 with the hope of strengthening the power of the judiciary, increasing the efficiency with which these cases are handled, eliminating impunity from punishment and bolstering respect for human rights.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Colombia tackles the root causes of human rights violations and social unrest, reforms the way those violations are prosecuted, and continues to invest in short-term emergency humanitarian assistance. Key strategic objectives included promotion of democracy and good governance, support for judicial reform and the rule of law coupled with increased access to the justice system, protection of vulnerable populations, promotion of peace initiatives, and provision of humanitarian assistance.

In 2005, the United States supported the first-ever, comprehensive baseline assessment of Colombian political parties and conducted workshops to address party financing issues. U.S. technical assistance and training led to reforms within several political parties intended to attract and include more underrepresented sectors of Colombian society, such as women, youth, and ethnic minorities. In support of upcoming Colombian elections in 2006, the United States sponsored training for political parties and voters in electoral reforms.

The United States aided Colombian municipal government efforts to involve citizens in local decisionmaking, assisting all parties in managing resources more effectively and transparently. As a way to link democracy with local governments to meet local needs, the United States helped establish 69 infrastructure proj-

ects; all were administered by local citizen committees responsible for planning, management, and financial oversight. Some 87 such committees were formed. U.S. funding also provided training for public officials on internal control, public ethics, communications, and management. Citizen oversight groups were trained in monitoring public health projects.

As part of a U.S.-funded program, journalists received protection along with other vulnerable human rights defender groups. U.S. funding helped support freedom of the press through programs aimed at monitoring human rights violations associated with journalists.

U.S. funding directly supported grants to civil society for implementing peace initiatives, including work with indigenous groups whose activities focused on peaceful resistance to the conflict. The United States supported initiatives that helped advance the application of restorative justice through establishment of peace and restoration centers, and an academic program involving restorative justice issues. The program involved 1,000 university students, 75 professors, 300 urban, at-risk youth, and 2,600 rural families in high-conflict areas.

As negotiations developed between the Government and paramilitary groups, the United States provided its views on the demobilization framework, as well as advice on institutional strengthening for the Reincorporation Program in the Ministry of Interior. For this program, the United States helped develop a comprehensive database to track and monitor individuals who demobilize, and helped to establish Reference and Opportunity Centers, where the demobilized population may receive assistance. The United States also supported the Organization of American States mission, which monitored the cease-fire and security conditions in regions with large demobilized populations.

The United States supported Colombian efforts to address weaknesses in its justice system by designing and helping to implement Colombia's new criminal oral accusatorial system, which began to replace the cumbersome inquisitorial system beginning in early

2005. The United States trained over 12,000 justice officials (judges, public defenders, police, and forensic experts) in the new system, assisted 35 major universities in adjusting their law school curricula accordingly, and supported the judicial branch in its efforts to phase in new public hearing courtrooms and administrative spaces. With U.S. assistance, the Government constructed 39 courtrooms since the inception of U.S. justice assistance programs.

The United States strengthened the Government's capability to investigate and prosecute human rights cases by training judicial police investigators, forensic examiners, and prosecutors from the Prosecutor General's national and local human rights units. In addition, the United States enhanced DNA analyzers and the Combined DNA Index System Database, updated ballistics identification systems, augmented forensic imaging and document analysis systems, upgraded an automated fingerprint identification system, and installed a wireless network for interagency connectivity. In 2005, such assistance allowed the Prosecutor General to conduct major operations against guerrilla and paramilitary criminal organizations, bringing charges for murder, assault, extortion, and drug trafficking.

The United States trained a total of 668 public officials in internal control, transparency, ethics, communications, and management processes. In addition, the program assisted the National Advisory Board on Internal Control to develop a uniform, internal control model to be applied across Colombian agencies. On May 20, 2005, a presidential decree mandated this model for all executive branch entities. As a result of these programs, the most notable impact of U.S. assistance on Government accountability was the accuracy of the National Accounting Balance in 2005: for the first time in 10 years, the Controller General scored it as reliable and did not report any auditing errors.

The United States helped Colombia to establish three additional Justice and Peace Houses, raising the total to 40. They generally existed in places where previously there was almost no access to government services. These one-stop legal assistance centers handled

995,527 cases during 2005 and fielded more than 3.6 million requests since the program's inception in 1997. In addition, the United States assisted in the certification of 670 dispute resolution experts, for a total of 1,718. The United States supported two Co-Existence Centers in more rural areas of Colombia. Co-Existence Centers provided legal and social services to marginalized rural populations and functioned much in the same way as a Justice House.

The United States provided security protection assistance through the Ministry of Interior to individuals under threat of paramilitary and guerrilla terrorist groups. In 2005, some 917 people received protection, for a total of 4,618 since May 2001. In addition, 18 offices received security upgrades, for a total of 114. Beneficiaries of the protection program included threatened human rights workers, union leaders, journalists, former members of the Patriotic Union Party, ex-mayors, and ex-city council members. The United States continued funding an Early Warning System (EWS), which operated under the auspices of the National Ombudsman and includes 21 regional EWS offices, whose main duty is to prevent massive human rights violations. The EWS issued 68 risk assessments and seven alerts, which helped prevent or mitigate human rights violations by providing local civilian and military authorities with recommendations for preventive actions.

Although kidnapping rates dropped by 44% in 2005, kidnapping remained a problem. The United States assisted the Government in the development and implementation of two comprehensive anti-kidnapping training programs. Under these programs, some 112 investigators and prosecutors received training in managing crime scenes, handling evidence, and interviewing witnesses. Another 100 public security officers received tactical anti-kidnapping training.

According to government figures, over two million persons have been displaced since 1995, although the rate of displacement slowed considerably in 2005. The United States supported six international organizations and NGOs in Colombia that provided emergency humanitarian assistance such as food, temporary shelter, hygiene and household kits, psy-

chological counseling, health care, and temporary employment to newly displaced persons. The United States also provided mid- to long-term assistance to displaced persons to help economic reintegration, including a program to return those displaced to their original homes. Through these programs, the United States assisted 584,046 internally displaced persons in 2005, for a total of 2,376,296. In addition, the United States helped more than 550 former child combatants to abandon illegal armed groups and integrated them into society, for a total of 2,641.

The United States participated in a program to combat child labor in Colombia that provided basic education for children working, or at-risk of working, in hazardous agricultural trades. The United States also supported a regional program with the International Labor Organization to prevent children's involvement in both domestic labor and commercial sexual exploitation. To date 750 children have been identified as domestic laborers and are involved in the program. The U.S. Government sponsored a program against trafficking in persons that educated at-risk victims, set up a hotline for those already trafficked, and established a victim assistance and prevention kiosk at Bogota's international airport.

Cuba

For 47 years, the Cuban Government has consistently spurned domestic and international calls for greater political tolerance and respect for human rights. Cuba's human rights record remained poor in 2005. The Cuban Government ignored or violated virtually all of its citizens' fundamental rights, including the right to change their government. The Cuban people did not enjoy freedom of speech, press or movement, and were denied the right to assemble peacefully or freely form associations. Police had broad detention powers and used them frequently, including against those who questioned single-party rule. Cuban officials and their proxies increasingly tormented pro-democracy activists and independent journalists through the use of mob actions known as "acts of repudiation." Accused dissidents, some charged with common crimes, received sham trials, and those sent to prison were

often held in harsh conditions. By the end of 2005, Cuban jails confined at least 333 documented political prisoners, including 60 of the 75 pro-democracy activists arrested in a March 2003 crackdown. A television program aired by the Cuban Government in December 2005 characterized pro-democracy and human rights activists as "mercenaries."

The priorities of the U.S. Government in Cuba were to encourage a genuine and peaceful transition to democracy and to direct international attention to the severe human rights crisis on the island. The regime tolerates no attempt at political or economic reform. Significant human rights improvements will be extremely difficult to achieve under current conditions, and democratic political processes will be arduous if not impossible. Throughout 2005, the United States was guided by the report of the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba (CAFC), a comprehensive plan to accelerate a peaceful democratic transition in Cuba and to coordinate U.S. support to a free and democratic Cuban Government. In July, Caleb McCarray was named the Cuba Transition Coordinator.

To focus international attention on Cuba's deplorable human rights situation, the United States issued high-level public statements on ongoing abuses and encouraged other governments to do the same. In July 2005, the United States condemned the detention of at least a dozen peaceful Cuban human rights activists, including Rene Gomez Manzano. In December 2005, the Secretary of State chaired a CAFC meeting and underlined that after decades of cruel dictatorship, now is the time for change in Cuba. The Chief of Mission focused on human rights themes in all interviews and public events. In a major speech on December 10, 2005, Human Rights Day, the Chief of Mission told a large crowd of Cuban activists, international journalists and foreign diplomats that citizens hold their governments accountable for their actions, and Cuba will be no exception.

The United States introduced a resolution on Cuba at the annual meeting of the UN Commission on Human Rights. Forty-three other nations joined in co-sponsoring the resolution, including, for the first time, the European Union. The resolution extended

the mandate of the Personal Representative of the High Commissioner on Human Rights in Cuba and highlighted the regime's failure to live up to its obligations to its citizens. With its passage, the international community once again recognized the appalling human rights situation in Cuba.

The United States helped increase the flow of accurate information concerning democracy, human rights, and free enterprise to, from, and within Cuba. Specifically, U.S. grants to 18 U.S. universities and U.S. NGOs helped build solidarity with Cuba's human rights activists, give voice to Cuba's independent journalists, develop independent Cuban NGOs, defend the rights of Cuban workers, and provide direct outreach to the Cuban people.

To break the Government's stranglehold on public discourse, the United States Interests Section continued its effort to increase access to information about events inside and outside Cuba. In fiscal year 2005, the United States distributed nearly 300,000 magazines, newspapers, pamphlets, books, news clips, and related items.

The United States also distributed several thousand short-wave radios, enabling Cubans to obtain information from the BBC, Radio Netherlands, Radio Prague, and a host of Miami-based stations, including Radio Marti. In January 2006, the Interests Section unveiled a streaming electronic billboard. The billboard features news headlines, inspirational quotes from people such as Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi, and text from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the publication of which is banned in Cuba.

The more than 100,000 Cubans who entered U.S. facilities over the past three years were exposed to CNN En Espanol or TV Marti, read and took home press clips, and learned about their Government's incarceration of compatriots seeking peaceful change. The Interests Section's two Internet centers, aimed

primarily at independent journalists, independent librarians, and human rights activists, represented the country's biggest "Internet café." Use was free of charge and censorship. Independent journalists were able to have their articles published overseas, and human rights activists could internationally expose human rights violations. The Interests Section also worked with like-minded diplomatic colleagues to break the information blockade and to support pro-democracy advocates. This cooperation included sharing press clips via the Internet (rather than the regime-controlled Intranet) to keep other diplomatic missions informed on developments in Cuba. More than 500 Cubans visited the Interests Section in 2005 to use its Internet facilities.



The U.S. Interests Section frequently organized videoconferences that linked Cuban civil society figures with experts overseas. In January 2006, the Interests Section and the Polish Embassy co-hosted a videoconference featuring former Polish President and Nobel Peace Prize winner Lech Waleśa, who urged pro-democracy activists to prepare for the inevitable political transition. One videoconference helped three leading dissidents testify before the U.S. House of

Representatives, while another enabled respected international journalists to train independent journalists. Other videoconferences focused on education, rule of law, health care, and youth groups.

To promote freedom of thought, the Interests Section supports independent libraries in Cuba. Since regime censorship limits the types of books that Cubans are allowed to read, the United States supported some 300 independent libraries on the island, roughly one-third of them in the Havana area. Books, newspapers, pamphlets, and periodic training sessions are held to boost the professionalism of independent librarians.

Under the U.S.-Cuba Migration Accords, the Cuban

Government pledged not to retaliate against any Cuban returned to the island after attempting an illegal voyage to the United States. However, some “rafters” and others interdicted by the U.S. Coast Guard and repatriated to Cuba said they suffered harassment or discrimination by Cuban officials. To help protect repatriated rafters, U.S. officials informed all such individuals of their rights under the Migration Accords. They followed up to the extent possible with visits to their Havana homes or telephone calls to homes outside the capital, to find out whether they experienced retaliation. The U.S. Government continued to deny visas to those implicated in human rights violations in Cuba, including those involved in the show trials of the 75 pro-democracy activists jailed in March 2003. Cuba incarcerates more people for peaceful political activity, per capita than any other country.

To provide moral support to political prisoners and to monitor their situation, the Interests Section monitored hundreds of cases and met frequently with prisoners’ families.

U.S. officials met frequently with activists representing human rights, pro-democracy, independent labor, and civic society organizations. U.S. officials also supported the Cuban organizers of the Varela Project petition drive, which calls for basic political and economic rights. In January 2006, officers organized a discussion on racism in Cuba, a problem that the regime maintains does not exist, but that many Cuban participants described as pervasive. U.S. officials made a point of meeting with any Cuban who wished to discuss human rights abuses.

The Cuban Government continues to control religious activities through surveillance, infiltration, intimidation, and harassment of religious groups, religious professionals and laypersons. U.S. officials engaged a broad range of religious leaders in discourse. In fiscal year 2005, the U.S. Government issued 254 travel licenses to U.S.-based religious representatives whose work in Cuba enhanced religious freedom. The Interests Section also facilitated visa applications by legitimate Cuban religious representatives to participate in religious activities in the United States.

Dominican Republic

The Dominican Republic has a democratically elected Government and a dynamic multiparty system. Even so, accountable, democratic governance with appropriate checks and balances is still new and fragile, and much remains to be done. Freedoms of the press, assembly, and religion were respected, but in other areas, problems remained. Security forces carried out unlawful killings and used excessive force, although deaths at the hands of police officers declined in the second half of the year. The Government generally denied the existence of racial prejudice, but acts of discrimination were common, ranging from petty to more serious. During sweeps to detect and repatriate illegal migrants, security forces did not always respect due process. Problems in child labor and trafficking in persons continued.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy targeted increasing adherence to the rule of law and respect for human rights, combating corruption while increasing transparency, promoting accountability and public demand for reform, encouraging citizen involvement in political and civic matters through better information flow via free, objective media. The U.S. strategy also supported administration of elections, training for political leaders, strengthening the transparency and professionalism of political parties, and assisting Dominican authorities in reinforcing the appropriate role for the military in a democracy. U.S. partners in government and civil society helped advance key efforts to promote democracy and human rights. To support the U.S. human rights and democracy strategy, U.S. diplomatic and programmatic efforts focused on four areas: developing and implementing legislation, norms, administrative procedures, and civil society awareness in order to battle corruption; assisting the authorities to implement new criminal procedures that increase protection of human rights, better serve citizens, and better control crime; ensuring the conduct of free, fair, and participative elections; and improving public administration through creation of a career civil service and by ensuring greater transparency in government procurement.

As in previous national elections, the Embassy made arrangements to support observation of the 2006 congressional and municipal elections. The United States funded training of 3,500 Dominican election observers.

To further bolster freedom of the press, the United States brought the president of the Society of Professional Journalists together with Dominican journalists to outline practical approaches to the country's new law on freedom of information. The trip prompted a prominent on-line daily journal to adopt a code of ethics based on principles suggested by the Society. The Ambassador regularly invited leading editors for informal sessions to convey U.S. views on the bilateral relationship.

The United States funded the establishment and operation of NGOs to vocalize the importance of good government and citizen involvement. These nationally prominent groups emphasized anti-corruption work and political party reform. Some of these U.S.-funded NGOs urged political party reform around principles of majority rule, ethics, and explicit norms for political party finance. Other NGOs pushed for legislation on transparency of public expenditure, associating their efforts in a "Coalition for Transparency."

The United States provided more than 600 hours of formal training on money-laundering and other complex crimes to a core group of 40 officials, including auditors, police, prosecutors, and investigators. The U.S. assistance program supported training on criminal procedure, ethics, and case management. A revision of the Criminal Procedures Code (CPC) carried out with U.S. assistance provided important new legal safeguards. The United States arranged to develop three training modules on the new CPC, as well as providing training in oral trial skills and in techniques for investigation of money laundering. The U.S. Embassy organized seminars for journalists and academics to explain the new code and facilitated communication to the public of the new approach to enforcement of the law.

The United States helped finance initiatives to de-

sign and implement better administration of courts and public defense offices, in a pilot project for three leading prosecutorial offices. U.S. technical assistance enabled the Office of the Attorney General to select and hire 100 young lawyers for a five-month training course, producing the first corps of Dominican prosecutors with standardized professional qualifications. The United States provided support for the program that included formal written testing of aptitudes and skills of the entire corps of 773 prosecutors, certifying professional competence of most, and identifying 167 who were subsequently discharged for failure to meet minimal standards. For 40 of the qualified prosecutors, the United States underwrote training in criminology and oral trial skills.

The United States provided technical assistance to the new agency in charge of providing free legal assistance to the poor, making possible the training of 80 public defenders for six offices across the country. The United States provided support and training to NGOs offering legal aid to indigents. The number of indigents receiving legal counsel rose from 1,992 in 2004 to 14,309 in 2005.

The United States and other international participants provided support for training law enforcement officials in procedures required by the new CPC. The Embassy developed and initiated a project to strengthen the Dominican National Police by standardizing procedures and training while reinforcing the principle of respect for human rights. Reformed curricula for basic and in-service training covered modern law enforcement techniques, the new CPC, planning, automated case tracking, and internal affairs. U.S. funding supported the Police Abuse Reporting Center, an avenue of recourse for citizens.

The United States stressed respect for legal rights in a course for police and prosecutors on interviewing and interrogation techniques. The Embassy funded attendance of two senior police officers at the Latin American Law Enforcement Executive Development Seminar, which included components on human rights and adherence to legal procedure. The Embassy hosted the executive director of the Independent Review Panel of Miami-Dade County for a week

of seminars on preventing police abuse, reaching a diverse audience.

When tensions in rural communities and poor neighborhoods between Dominicans and Haitians prompted authorities to relocate and repatriate individuals who appeared to be illegal migrants, the Ambassador and officers from the Embassy and the U.S. military repeatedly stressed to Dominican officials of all levels the international obligation to respect human rights and to follow due process.

The United States sponsored Dominican government officials to participate at the Human Rights Implementation Meeting in Guatemala City, Guatemala as well as the Southern Cone Regional Human Rights Initiative Conference in Montevideo, Uruguay.

The United States helped address the worst forms of child labor by dedicating multi-year funding to the Timebound Program, through which more than 4,000 children were removed from exploitative work in the agricultural sector. The United States funded a regional project for Central America and the Dominican Republic to identify exploited and at-risk children and provide them with educational opportunities.

The Embassy used the evaluations of the country in the annual U.S. Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report to emphasize to officials the need for vigorous prosecutions. At mid-year the Embassy hosted a discussion with government officials and NGO representatives to improve Dominican interagency anti-trafficking coordination and highlight the areas for improvement. The United States carried out a five-day program in the Dominican Republic focusing on trafficking, exploitation, and asylum concerns. The Embassy sponsored programs, including digital video conferences, which brought together leaders in combating TIP. U.S. assistance funded a formal assessment of Dominican anti-trafficking efforts, designed to provide recommendations for further programming.

Ecuador

Ecuador's democratically elected Government gener-

ally respected human rights. However, a weak rule of law and underdeveloped government institutions contributed to human rights abuses. There were credible reports that security forces killed citizens using unwarranted lethal force, although members of the security forces did face prosecution and prison sentences for some violations. Police tortured and otherwise mistreated prisoners and detainees, often with impunity. Prison conditions remained poor. Persons were subject to arbitrary arrest and over 60% of the detainees in jail had not been formally sentenced. Corruption and denial of due process within the judicial system were problems. Although there is a free and vigorous press, government censorship and some self-censorship occurred in the print and broadcast media. Pervasive discrimination against women, the indigenous, and Afro-Ecuadorians continued to occur and included occasional violence. Trafficking in persons (TIP) remained a problem, especially commercial sexual exploitation of minors. The United States ranked Ecuador among Tier 3 nations in 2005.

The U.S. strategy in Ecuador focused on supporting democracy and good governance, as well as advocating respect for human rights. U.S. efforts included helping strengthen the judicial system and the rule of law, promoting human rights education, assisting Colombian refugees, and combating child labor and TIP.

A wide range of U.S. programs supported Ecuador's democratic institutions, and throughout the year the Ambassador, other Embassy officials, and visiting high-level U.S. officials publicly advocated respect for those institutions and constitutional processes. The United States sponsored Ecuadorian participants in programs providing in-depth looks at the administration of justice, responsible policing, grassroots democracy, drug control policy, responsible media, indigenous community development, economic and agricultural development, and improving educational systems.

The U.S. Government sponsored Ecuadorian visitors to the United States to learn about topics including combating corruption, transparency and good gov-

ernance, human rights in a democracy, combating TIP, and the role of the media in a democracy. The Embassy sponsored performances of “Dialogues of Liberty,” which emphasized the importance of individual liberty and personal responsibility in a democracy through dramatic speeches by actors impersonating Ecuadorian historical figures. The United States also sponsored an exhibit of informational posters on human rights and coordinated a series of debates among more than 4,000 high school students on the issue of human rights.

The United States funded a program which worked with local Afro-Ecuadorian organizations to provide political leadership training, increase voter participation, promote dialogue with political parties, monitor the participation of Afro-Ecuadorians in elections, and increase awareness of Afro-Ecuadorians among the general population. A U.S.-funded program provided training in conflict resolution to indigenous human rights ombudsmen and bilingual education supervisors throughout Ecuador. The United States supported the professional development of Ecuadorian journalists through funding participation in training seminars in the United States and participation in reporting tours. The United States also provided training in professional journalistic standards through the International Visitors Leadership Program and provided ongoing free research support to investigative journalists through the Embassy’s Information Resource Center.

The United States presented grants to local partners to organize seminars on grassroots democracy and sponsored a major youth democracy conference that drew more than 400 participants from throughout the hemisphere. The United States also supported a series of initiatives developed by local NGOs to promote democratic values. These NGOs and other civil society groups peacefully demonstrated against the irregular removal of Supreme Court magistrates by Congress.

To support the efforts to establish a new Supreme Court to replace the one installed by Congress in 2004, the United States backed the creation of a coalition of 47 Ecuadorian NGOs that monitored the

selection of new Supreme Court judges, ensuring transparency in the selection of the most qualified candidates. The United States also supported OAS observers of the process.

Ecuador’s judicial system is plagued by inefficiency and corruption that undermine the rule of law and hinder timely and fair trials. In efforts to help contain and reverse this trend, the United States funded a number of projects to strengthen judicial effectiveness and fight corruption. This included training of the judicial police and training and technical assistance to help implement a new accusatory system. A pilot program designed to strengthen the institutional capacities of the lower courts and prosecutorial offices in the city of Cuenca produced a 41 percent reduction in unnecessary detentions and a reduction in the average time to assign cases within the judicial system from 36 to 20 hours. The United States also financed eight legal clinics in six cities where over 3,600 indigent defendants received legal counseling and defense services.

The United States expanded its program to increase effectiveness and transparency in government, working with 64 local governments and four additional provinces. Citizen participation processes were consolidated in 34 local governments while citizen oversight mechanisms monitored service improvements in 28 local governments. The program also assisted with the development of legal proposals to decentralize the government.

The United States continued military-to-military contact focused on promoting fundamental human rights and humanitarian outreach, including medical assistance and peacekeeper exercises. Human rights training was integrated into all U.S.-supported military exercises and operational training conducted in the country.

The United States implemented two programs to fight sexual and domestic violence against women and children. A domestic violence and gender program in Quito continued to improve the city’s monitoring of domestic violence cases and processing of sex crime cases. A second program established an



observatory in five provinces to oversee and monitor prosecutions in sexual crime cases, seeking to reduce impunity and increase transparency in these cases. Local organizations that participated in these efforts provided legal assistance to victims of sexual and domestic violence.

The United States funded a research project to investigate the economic, legal, social, ethnic, and gender-related situation within Ecuador's prisons. The study, completed in January 2006, provided recommendations for improving the formulation of public policies regarding prisons and rehabilitation.

Throughout 2005, more than 7,000 Colombians sought refugee status in Ecuador. The actual number of displaced Colombians who entered Ecuador was much larger. To help this vulnerable population, the United States provided funding to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the IOM, the American Red Cross, and the Pan American Health Organization to support refugee centers and provide infrastructure, such as potable water, and public health projects for this group.

The United States funded three major programs to support the Government's efforts to combat child labor. One program targeted indigenous children at risk of engaging in the worst forms of child labor. A four-year project aimed at meeting the educational needs of child laborers and children at risk of entering the banana and flower industries was in its second year of operation. An ongoing project targeted the worst forms of child labor in the agricultural and construction sectors, as well as the exploitation of minors in the commercial sex industry. The United States advocated the strengthening of Ecuador's labor laws and practices, including reform of the labor code to ensure the right of association without fear of retribution, and raised specific labor rights cases of concern with the Government.

In addition to combating the worst forms of child labor, the United States repeatedly raised with Ecuadorian officials the need for coordinated action against TIP. The United States funded a grant to the American Bar Association to review proposed TIP

legislation and train judges, prosecutors, and law enforcement on the trafficking issue as well as how to effectively combat it. After the passing of an anti-TIP law in June, there were four arrests in two TIP cases by the end of the year. The United States also began work with local governments to fight TIP by assisting their efforts to dismantle alien smuggling organizations. Cooperation between U.S. and Ecuadorian officials led to the dismantlement of 34 alien smuggling rings and the arrest of 205 alien smugglers. The United States provided equipment at airports and border crossing areas to allow authorities to better monitor travelers, in part to limit human trafficking. The United States also supported the design of a national database for missing persons.

Guatemala

Guatemala is a democratic republic in which parties across the ideological divide participate freely in the political process. The law provides for freedom of speech, press, association, and assembly, which the Government generally respected. Justice system abuses continued, however, including unlawful killings by police, harsh and dangerous prison conditions, arbitrary arrest and detention, and failure to ensure due process. Poorly trained and equipped police, prosecutors, and judges were further disabled by corruption within their ranks and by intimidation and killing of their peers. Increased levels of societal violence committed by gangs, organized crime, vigilante groups, and unknown actors exacerbated human rights abuses. Groups engaged in promoting human rights continued to suffer from intimidation and violence. Weaknesses in these government institutions prevented adequate investigation and prosecution of all crimes, including numerous killings around the country, as well as threats and violent acts perpetrated against civil society activists and some NGOs engaged in exhumations of victims of the 36-year internal armed conflict. These weaknesses allowed for continuing impunity for human rights abuses committed during the internal armed conflict. The effectiveness of government programs to combat persistent violence and discrimination against women and indigenous communities, trafficking in persons, and

lack of enforcement of labor laws was limited. Such consistent failures by weak government institutions eroded citizens' confidence in governmental authorities and democratic principles.

The U.S. strategy in Guatemala focused on helping the Government build the capabilities of its democratic institutions while encouraging transparency, accountability, and respect for human rights and the rule of law. U.S. efforts in Guatemala aimed to strengthen the capacity of civil society to be a practical partner in the struggle to consolidate democracy.

One of the challenges to Guatemala's democratic system is low citizen participation in the political process. The United States developed a joint project with the OAS to help Guatemala's Supreme Electoral Tribunal implement new reforms to the Electoral Law. Those reforms included, among others, decentralizing poll centers for the 2007 general elections to encourage widespread citizen participation. The United States worked with 15 municipalities and municipal associations to strengthen decentralization, citizen participation, and transparency in local governance.

The United States also sponsored programs on the local government level in the areas of citizen participation, leadership, conflict resolution, and participatory planning, with particular emphasis on including disenfranchised groups.

While the press in Guatemala is free to report and criticize, it has not always enjoyed a productive working relationship with government institutions, particularly the National Civilian Police. The United States sponsored training to instruct both law enforcement and the press in crime scene protection. As a result, relations between these traditionally antagonistic groups improved, which also increased press access and ability to report the news.

Guatemala boasts a strong, if fragmented, civil society that played an important role as watchdog and advocate for democratic principles. In 2005, the Ambassador and other representatives of the U.S. Government met frequently with journalists, human rights defenders, labor leaders, and other activists to



Guatemala Human Rights office worker inspects destroyed police documents that may have held clues to atrocities in the 1980s. (AP Photo)

publicly express support for their work. The Embassy also continued to urge the Government to investigate threats and provide additional protection when appropriate.

Many NGOs reported burglaries of their offices after suspecting burglars were targeting sensitive information about their activities. U.S. officials met repeatedly with activists and encouraged the Government to carry out investigations. Responding directly to organizations' need to protect potentially sensitive data, the Embassy hosted a data security seminar. The seminar, conducted by Embassy personnel, focused on simple, low-cost ways to safely store electronic files offsite. The seminar was well received and was attended by more than 40 individuals from various

human rights organizations.

The United States advocated for the Guatemalan Congress to approve two government initiatives to strengthen the observance of human rights and rule of law. In July 2005, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights opened a local office at the Government's invitation. The United States endorsed government efforts to re-launch a UN Commission to Investigate Illegal Bodies and Clandestine Security Apparatus (CICIACS). The Constitutional Court had ruled against the original initiative in 2004, and the United States urged the Government to follow through on its pledge to submit a revised proposal.

One of the serious threats to democracy in Guatemala is its weak justice system. The United States provided substantial material and technical assistance to build the capacity of justice sector institutions and to initiate needed reforms. In an effort to improve prosecutions of serious crimes, the United States provided technical assistance in case analysis methodologies to the Public Ministry. That program also helped create an analysis unit that provided services to other prosecutors' offices in corruption and money laundering cases. The project helped the Guatemalan judiciary implement oral pretrial procedures in Guatemala City. It was the first time such procedures were implemented since the law prescribing them was passed 11 years ago.

In January 2005, the United States began providing technical assistance to the Government and civil society organizations to help implement the Inter-American Convention Against Corruption and to develop a national agenda against corruption. To increase the capacity of the National Civil Police to investigate police officers implicated in crime or corruption, the United States helped create an Inspectorate General to oversee the Office of Professional Responsibility. U.S. law enforcement advisors helped the new inspectorate define its mandate, structure, and operational guidelines.

The United States provided material support and training to the Special Prosecutor for Human Rights and the Special Prosecutor for Crimes against Wom-

en, Children, and Victims of Trafficking in Persons. The United States continued to provide technical assistance to the office of the Human Rights Ombudsman to improve its capacity to monitor, register, and fight violations of due process in criminal cases.

In previous years, the United States funded expansion of a network of justice centers intended to modernize and streamline judicial processes while bringing them within reach of more citizens. The success of the justice centers had a multiplier effect, promoting local initiatives such as a shelter for domestic violence victims, a legal aid office at the University of San Carlos for non-criminal cases, and improvements in administrative services provided by other justice sector institutions. The United States secured a commitment from the Government to allocate resources for 15 centers in 2006.

At-risk youth are vulnerable to recruitment by the increasingly powerful gang structure, a trend that posed serious threats to citizens' security in recent years and undermined citizens' confidence in government. In 2005, the United States supported crime-prevention activities in 16 different Guatemalan jurisdictions. Another U.S.-funded program helped create local "crime prevention councils" to promote awareness and community involvement with at-risk youth. In addition, the program supported a local NGO in its efforts to develop model centers called "youth houses."

Unresolved issues from Guatemala's 36-year internal conflict continued to fester. Many victims of political and human rights crimes remained missing while the accused perpetrators enjoyed impunity. The United States funded a project that developed legal cases related to human rights violations committed during the conflict. The project aimed to overcome institutional obstacles to prosecution that allowed for continued impunity. This project helped lay the groundwork for future prosecutions that could be applied in other human rights cases. In 2005, exhumations were conducted at 128 sites. Embassy personnel also visited sites to demonstrate support for forensics workers and victims' families. In December, the National Reparations Program, one of the products of a three-year human rights project sponsored by the

United States, made its first reparations payment to civilian victims of the internal conflict.

In past years, the United States encouraged the Defense Ministry to incorporate human rights training into its curriculum and provided technical assistance. In 2005, approximately 400 members of the military received formal training in human rights; all military personnel are now required to receive human rights training and it is embedded into every Guatemalan military school.

Historically, women and indigenous persons have been largely excluded from positions of influence in both politics and industry. To encourage greater representation, particularly in the political forum, the United States actively recruited women and indigenous persons to participate in its International Visitors Leadership and Fulbright Programs. An indigenous woman and city council representative participated in the program “Grassroots Democracy for Young Leaders.”

Land conflicts, one of the sources of broader political conflict in the past, were particularly acute in the Alta Verapaz area. The United States funded a local NGO to mediate land conflicts and introduce their methodology for mediation to local authorities. U.S. funding helped provide training to Public Ministry staff in women’s rights, launch an awareness campaign in several languages, and develop a graduate certificate program for justice sector professionals, indigenous women, and civil society advocates.

The United States is concerned with building the capacity of government institutions to fight such ills as child labor and trafficking in persons (TIP). The United States funded projects to improve labor law compliance and to minimize the incidence of child labor. Through these projects, the United States supported the efforts of the Ministry of Labor and NGOs to train labor inspectors, educate employers and workers about their rights and responsibilities, and provide educational opportunities to children who would otherwise be forced to work.

The United States supported civil society’s effort to

reform the penal code to provide for increased penalties for traffickers. Taking advantage of interest in trafficking generated by that effort, the United States sponsored a three-day joint training session for police, prosecutors, and victims’ assistance providers. The United States also funded a regional anti-TIP conference, co-hosted by the Guatemalan Government and the OAS, which was aimed at coordinating national anti-TIP efforts.

Haiti

The human rights record of the Interim Government of Haiti remained poor. After Jean Bertrand Aristide resigned as president and departed the country in February 2004, Boniface Alexandre, chief justice of the Supreme Court, assumed office as interim president in accordance with the Constitution. In March 2004, Gerard Latortue was installed as prime minister of the Interim Government upon recommendation from a Council of Eminent Persons to President Alexandre. While civilian authorities generally maintained control of the security forces, there were frequent instances in which elements of the security forces acted independently of government authority. State-orchestrated abuses ceased under the Interim Government. However, there were credible allegations of extrajudicial killings by members of the Haitian National Police, incidences of retribution killings and politically motivated violence, and kidnappings for ransom. Prison conditions remained poor, and prolonged pretrial detention continued to be a problem. Legal impunity remained a major problem, and police and judicial officials often failed to respect legal provisions or pursue and prosecute suspected violators. Child abuse, violence and societal discrimination against women, trafficking of children, and child domestic labor remained problems. Endemic corruption, a deteriorating judiciary, and worsening economic and social conditions exacerbated this situation.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy in Haiti focused on providing stability and assisting in the reconstruction of democracy and democratic processes, including respect for the rule of law and



Voter Education and Civil Society Strengthening project at work in Haiti. (CARE-Haiti)

for human rights. Given the security and political situation on the ground, the initial focus was on assisting the Interim Government election efforts, reconstructing the criminal justice system, disarming all nongovernmental forces, supporting good governance, assisting human rights organizations and supporting reconciliation, reconstruction, and social reintegration efforts.

In preparation for national and local elections, the United States provided technical assistance, training, and support for elections planning, development of a new electoral law, implementation of a voter roll, and creation of a Provisional Electoral Council (CEP). Efforts by the United States to increase voter awareness and political representation included journalist training and voter and civic education programs through a U.S.-supported community radio network, establishment of a media unit and elections results center within the CEP, support for political party development, support for domestic and international elections observers, and public opinion polling. Party poll monitors from each department and at the national level received training in monitoring the entire electoral process and support to implement an elec-

tion-day poll watching campaign. An international team of 10 long-term pre-elections observation experts was deployed in five separate departments to assess the adequacy and transparency of the electoral process. Also, civil society organizations with members throughout the country received training and organizational assistance, enabling them to prepare a 5,000-member nation-wide domestic election observation effort.

Numerous high-level delegations visited Haiti to express support for elections, including the Secretary of State and the Under Secretary for Political Affairs. On her September

27 visit, the Secretary of State underscored U.S. support for inclusive and fair elections in Haiti. During her press conference, the Secretary urged Haitians to exercise their right by using the powerful weapon of the vote, noting that “elections can be a very important and precious step along the road to democracy.”

The United States sponsored a pre-election presidential debate series that was broadcast twice on National Radio and Television. The debates were covered by both daily newspapers as well as by major and provincial media outlets.

The United States funded journalist training for elections coverage and a network of 40 community radio stations. The Embassy sent 20 attorneys, civil society leaders, judges, journalists, scholars, government officials, and human rights activists to participate in International Visitors Leadership Programs in the United States on judicial reform and human rights, drug demand reduction, anti-corruption, and humanitarian response to disasters and crises.

In honor of Martin Luther King’s birthday, the Embassy issued a press release with translated excerpts

of Dr. King's March 25, 1965 speech, which called for universal participation in elections and engagement in the political process. The Embassy presented its civic education program, "Democracy for All," which emphasized citizens' rights and duties in democracy and elections participation to over 1,000 residents of Cite Soleil, Port-au-Prince's largest slum. The majority of program graduates decided to register to vote as a result of the program and several declared their candidacies for local office.

Following the departure of President Aristide, the United States initiated a comprehensive administration of justice assistance program with the Government. U.S. assistance to the national police included technical assistance, equipment, training, and human rights vetting for new recruits. In early 2005, the United States initiated a training program for judges and prosecutors to improve their capacity to investigate and prosecute criminal cases, improve transparency in the judicial system, and address urgent issues such as high levels of pretrial detention. This project trained more than 800 judges, prosecutors, clerks, and other judicial personnel nationwide. It trained 20 civil society organizations on advocacy and lobbying techniques, preparing them to advocate for the adoption of relevant legislation and measures aimed at improving judicial independence, impartiality, and accountability. The project also sponsored special prison and court hearings as well as legal assistance in order to reduce the backlog of pretrial detainees. During a press conference concluding a U.S.-sponsored human rights training for members of the Haitian Coast Guard, then-Ambassador Foley publicly denounced the poor functioning of the judicial system and the state of pretrial detention, which he termed a violation of detainees' human rights. Then-Ambassador Foley called on the judicial authorities either to charge or release those awaiting judicial determinations in their cases.

In public statements, the Ambassador condemned politically motivated violence, stressing the importance of general respect for the human rights of all citizens. During a December 9 press conference in recognition of International Human Rights Day, then-Chargé d'Affaires Carney renewed U.S. sup-

port for Haitians in their efforts to exercise the fundamental human rights guaranteed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Then-Chargé Carney also underscored the importance for Haitians to practice one of the most vital human rights: the right to elect freely their own leader. In conjunction with the press conference, the Chargé presented certificates to the winners of an Embassy-sponsored essay contest on the subject of democracy, human rights, justice, and national dialogue. The winning eight youths, four each from secondary and university levels, were highlighted on media programs throughout Port-au-Prince in the following months. The Embassy held three book discussions on the topics of non-violence, conflict resolution, and the U.S. judicial system.

The United States supported civil society strengthening and civic education programs. The Civic Forum program provided citizens with knowledge, skills, and encouragement to participate in the democratic process and engage their local officials in areas of common concern. Haitians formed committees that were able to propose solutions that rely on local resources and increase citizen participation. The United States supported a government anti-corruption unit and worked with local organizations that advocated for greater transparency and trained public officials in anti-corruption measures.

Under the Victims of Organized Violence program, the United States partnered with three local NGOs, four local hospitals, and three non-profit international organizations to assist 682 victims of violence and human rights abuses. Grants and training enabled local organizations to provide legal aid as well as medical and psychological assistance to victims of organized violence.

The United States focused on combating child labor practices in Haiti, particularly internal and external trafficking of children as domestic workers or *restaveks*. The United States funded an anti-trafficking program to shore up government efforts to fight child trafficking and provide services to victims. Haitian officials participated in the anti-trafficking training programs for government officials held around the country during the year.



Honduras

Honduras is a constitutional democracy. In November, Jose Manuel Zelaya Rosales of the Liberal Party won the presidency in elections judged by domestic and international observers to be free and fair. The ability of the former Maduro administration to respect and promote the human rights of citizens was compromised by government corruption, impunity for violators of the law, and violence perpetrated by gangs and organized crime. Serious problems existed in a number of areas. Members of the police, private security forces, and vigilantes reportedly committed extrajudicial killings and arbitrary and summary executions. Human rights groups accused former security force officials and the business community of colluding to organize “death squads” that engaged in extrajudicial killings, particularly of street youth. Prison conditions remained harsh and dangerous, and detainees often did not receive due process. Members of the economic, military, and political elite enjoyed considerable impunity regarding violations of the law. Violence and discrimination against women and discrimination against indigenous people continued, including the Government’s failure to address long-standing land rights disputes over territories traditionally claimed by indigenous communities. The administration of justice was problematic due to an inefficient, understaffed, and under-funded police force, as well as public prosecutors and judicial officials who were subject to corruption and political influence. Child labor, particularly in rural areas, and trafficking in persons (TIP) remained serious problems.



The U.S. strategy in Honduras continued support for democratic political processes and emphasized the need for improvements in human rights conditions, particularly in the areas of the rule of law and combating TIP.

The Ambassador and other U.S. officials worked closely with Honduran government officials, NGOs, labor unions, and other organizations to discuss areas of particular concern and to encourage reforms. A senior U.S. official discussed these issues with senior officials of the Maduro Administration during two visits in the summer and fall. The U.S. Government also sent various civil society leaders and government officials on International Visitors Leadership Programs in 2005, on topics such as the administration of justice, the rule of law, anti-corruption, civil society, democracy, and journalism.

The United States provided assistance for the February 20, 2005 open primary elections and the November 27, 2005 general elections. Efforts sought to increase the voting public’s awareness of significant recent electoral reforms, including the new method of direct election of members of Congress. The United States also provided assistance for the elections through support for the Supreme Electoral Tribunal, the National Registry of Persons, and the International Foundation for Election Systems under a Cooperative Agreement with the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights’ Center for Electoral Assessment and Promotion. The United States helped fund the Honduran Federation of NGOs (FOPRIDEH) to support a nonpartisan voter education campaign and provided funding to the OAS for an Election Observation Mission for both the primary and general elections. During the February 2005 open primary elections, the Embassy had more than 40 election observation volunteers. For the November 2005 general elections, the Embassy assisted with approximately 60 trained international observers and provided significant logistical support to facilitate the 112-member OAS observation mission.

The United States continued its efforts to promote

democracy through the development of transparent and accountable democratic institutions at the local level. The United States provided funds for municipal development efforts to promote decentralization and increase the capacity for basic service delivery in 32 municipalities. The United States also financed a program that promoted civic participation and democratic planning by facilitating dialogue between NGOs and local government.

The United States supported a program to promote free press in Honduras through training journalists and improving public awareness of the importance of independent media.

The United States promoted the rule of law and administration of justice in areas such as police reform, judicial reform, and anti-corruption initiatives. To foster the development of a more professional police force and to reduce human rights abuses, the United States provided a third year of support to assist the Police Internal Affairs Office in investigating complaints, including those from private citizens, and made recommendations on how to respond to substantive complaints, ranging from administrative disciplinary action to criminal charges. U.S. officials also conducted numerous basic criminal investigation courses to improve police and prosecutorial effectiveness.

The United States continued to support the Strengthened Rule of Law Program. In its third year after implementation, progress associated with the Criminal Procedure Code (CPC) continued. More than 3,200 oral trials were held nationwide, including more than 1,400 in the program's pilot courts in Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula. The CPC provides non-trial case resolution procedures similar to plea bargaining or conciliation, and more than 3,200 cases were closed through this mechanism. The United States also supported the drafting of the new CPC that, if passed, would modernize procedures relating to commercial and private transactions, including land tenure and inheritances. The United States also supported the efforts of the Supreme Court "purging unit" to clear backlogged cases dating back to before the implementation of the new criminal code. By the end of

fiscal year 2005, 176,000 cases were closed. The U.S. Government contributed to reaching the unit's goal of completing all cases by December 2006 by developing an Internal Operations Manual making the purging process more efficient through uniform procedures. The manual also regulated potential abuses and ensured accountability.

FOPRIDEH, with U.S. assistance, promoted broader and more effective civil society participation in justice sector reforms and in exercising oversight of the public policy process.

To improve the country's fight against corruption, the United States provided funds for transparency and anti-corruption efforts. Activities included improving the capacity of the Government's Superior Audit Institution, developing and implementing a Transparency and Anti-Corruption Public Awareness Campaign, strengthening independent national and local anti-corruption institutions, and supporting civil society social auditing efforts to provide oversight and monitoring of the use of public funds. The Embassy encouraged the Government and the Attorney General's office to pursue vigorously cases that involve corruption, particularly those involving government officials.

The Embassy hosted a Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) Human Rights Initiative seminar for 65 military and civilian personnel. During this week-long exchange, the military worked with SOUTHCOM staff and a cross-section of government and NGO participants to implement training programs and establish working relations to promote and protect human rights. Human rights were integrated into all levels of military academic and field training, enhancing the commitment to international human rights norms and the rule of law.

U.S. officials repeatedly engaged government, private sector, and labor union officials on the importance of enforcing labor law and ensuring that core labor rights are protected. The United States funded a project to strengthen labor systems in Central America titled, "Comply and Win." Another U.S.-funded project supported efforts to improve the function-



ing of regional labor markets while strengthening the protection of core labor standards. It provided assistance to the Secretariat for Central American Economic Integration and forged alliances with international private businesses and NGOs, including the Continuous Improvement in the Central American Workplace project.

Child labor continued to be a significant problem in Honduras. The United States supported the International Labor Organization's International Program on the Elimination Child Labor, as well as other organizations that conducted projects aimed at combating and gathering information on the worst forms of child labor. These projects worked to combat the commercial sexual exploitation of children and to reduce child labor in the agricultural sector. The Government participated in a U.S.-funded regional project to combat child labor through education, which included direct action in Honduras. A U.S. expert spoke at seminars organized by the Honduran Manufacturer's Association on the prevention and eradication of forced child labor in Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula.

Honduras is a source and transit country for trafficking in persons for sexual and labor exploitation. A U.S. NGO led a seminar in Tegucigalpa for government officials and NGO representatives on techniques for interviewing trafficking victims. The United States provided training, technical assistance, and equipment to police investigators and prosecutors working to combat TIP, as well as public awareness campaigns on TIP. The United States also provided funds to support the Frontier Police to prevent and interdict the transportation of illegal immigrants, including trafficked persons. A U.S. NGO led a U.S.-sponsored seminar on techniques for interviewing trafficking victims in Tegucigalpa for government officials and NGO representatives.

Jamaica

The Government of Jamaica generally respected the human rights of its citizen, however, there were serious problems in some areas. Members of the se-

curity forces committed unlawful killings. Mob violence and vigilante killings against those suspected of breaking the law remained a problem. Police and prison guards were accused of abusing detainees and prisoners. Although the Government moved to investigate incidents of police abuses and punish some of those police involved, continued impunity for police who commit abuses remained a problem. The judicial system was overburdened and lengthy delays in trials were common. Homophobia was present and sometimes virulent, characterized by discrimination and violence against individuals suspected or known to be homosexuals and/or living with HIV/AIDS. Trafficking in persons (TIP) continued to be a concern.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy in Jamaica focused on promoting democracy and good governance and increasing the government's ability to enforce the rule of law and protect the human rights of Jamaican citizens. Target areas included support for civil society, increasing citizens' ownership and sense of responsibility for their government and society, improving community-police relations, building capacity within the security forces, and addressing the rights of children and persons living with HIV/AIDS.

The United States provided capacity building to civil society groups. Through coalition building, networking, and advocacy, these groups pioneered policy changes to combat the high levels of crime and violence in Jamaican society. U.S. programs also focused on improving community-police relations and law enforcement in an inner-city community.

In an effort to promote media freedom and freedom of speech, the United States hosted a digital video conference on the topic of ethical reporting with local press organizations, practicing journalists, and academics in recognition of World Press Freedom Day. Visiting U.S. academics spoke with journalism students, media, and other academics to discuss media ethics and the impact of broadband Internet on the media.

The United States provided assistance to a local NGO

to establish two research and documentation centers, which provided central repositories of information on citizens' rights. As a result, this information was accessible in greater volume to the public over the Internet.

In an effort to strengthen the capacity of the legal system, the United States provided 12 case management systems to Jamaican courts. These systems increased the ability of the local judiciary to process cases through the court system and expedite resolution of cases. Other projects increased the level of training for court reporters to improve the efficiency of record taking and storage. Both initiatives provided a valuable reference point for citizens requiring legal information and increased citizen access to public information.

The United States provided assistance for the development of a new curriculum for the Justice Training Institute and for the training of magistrates, judges and prosecutors in a variety of subjects, including evidence, money laundering, intellectual property, sentencing, extradition proceedings, and legal writing.

The United States conducted nine management training workshops and created 27 policy and position papers that were utilized to support new policies. Several workshops were held with command officers throughout the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) on the topic of use of force and the proper planning of police operations. The United States developed a template for operational planning that included such critical points as risk assessment, threat assessment, rules of engagement, use of force briefings, command and control, and community revitalization and social intervention.

The development and implementation of the JCF Professional Standards Branch was completed in 2005. It consolidated several separate units that were responsible for officer conduct into one internal affairs and anti-corruption unit. Specialized training and equipment enabled this new unit to investigate police conduct more professionally. The JCF removed approximately 50 members for misconduct or corruption.

The United States continued to support a community policing program in the Kingston inner-city community of Grants Pen, designed to facilitate the creation of a model community police station. Seventy specially trained police officers were selected and assigned to duty in Grants Pen.

In conjunction with local civil society groups, the United States continued to develop, produce, and distribute educational materials used in primary schools throughout Jamaica to improve understanding of human rights norms and the roles and responsibilities of the citizenry. The books emphasized the inherent rights of children and allowed educators to incorporate human rights into the national curriculum.

U.S. officials frequently raised issues with Jamaican officials and civil society leaders regarding respect for the rights of women, children, and persons with disabilities. The stigmatization of people with HIV/AIDS in Jamaica is a critical issue, with accusations of mob violence and denial of police assistance. The United States provided technical assistance to the Public Defender's Office to draft anti-discrimination legislation supporting the rights of women, children, persons with disabilities, and other marginalized groups, including those with HIV/AIDS. The Ambassador's Fund for HIV/AIDS supported education outreach to all parishes and a U.S. grant sponsored a program that focused on prevention and combating stigmatization that was aired on national television for World AIDS Day.

U.S. funding provided training to 72 members of the Jamaica Defense Force (JDF). JDF members received training in a variety of courses, including human rights instruction. The training prepared enlisted personnel who assisted local police units in patrolling high crime areas in Jamaica. It included units on basic leadership, operations in urban terrain, civilian control of the military, and the role of the military in a democratic society. Courses aimed at senior military officers highlighted the impact of the rule of law on human rights as well as how to incorporate human rights considerations into the planning and conduct of military operations.

U.S. officials maintained an open dialogue with the Government of Jamaica on the prosecution and criminalization of TIP cases. U.S. officials worked with NGOs and relevant government ministries to press for vigorous enforcement of the Child Care and Protection Act, particularly the clause prohibiting the trafficking or sale of children. The United States provided funding for a TIP awareness program that worked with young persons across the country to educate them about the risks of the island's sex trade and human trafficking. It also conducted a medical awareness campaign that briefed journalists and spoke directly to the public about the definition and costs of trafficking. The United States pushed the Government to conduct police raids of businesses around the island where credible evidence of TIP existed.

Peru

Peru continued its transition to democracy. The administration of President Alejandro Toledo placed a high priority on respect for democracy and human rights and was committed to running a free and fair election to select Toledo's successor in 2006. Peru has a vibrant and diverse media that was not constrained in criticizing the Government and an active NGO sector that closely monitored human rights. The Government continued to reform key institutions, including the judiciary, the police, and the military, although significant challenges remained. Peru suffers from high levels of poverty and inequality, and the Government faces significant resource constraints. There was growing public impatience with perceived governmental inefficiency and the slow pace at which the benefits of economic growth reached the majority of the population. The judicial system suffered from both inefficiency and corruption. Poor prison conditions and occasional excesses by security forces contributed to human rights problems. There were reports of police abuse of detainees. Violence against women and children and discrimination against persons with disabilities, indigenous people and racial and ethnic minorities took place. Labor advocates alleged that labor laws restricted collective bargaining rights. Child labor remained a serious problem in the

informal sector.

The U.S. fostered democracy and human rights in Peru by fighting corruption; promoting economic transparency, decentralization, judicial reform; and strengthening the National Congress through support to watchdog civil society groups. The United States supported follow-on recommendations from Peru's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (CVR), efforts to fight child labor and child sexual exploitation, and programs to promote greater political participation by marginalized groups. The United States also supported an innovative public schools program that promoted a culture of lawfulness in a long-term effort to fight corruption, a key weakness of Peru's nascent democracy.

The United States funded activities to support legislative reform and civil society oversight of Congress. Working with Peruvian civil society organizations, the United States provided technical assistance to increase legislative transparency, strengthen congressional committees, improve congressional capacity to draft effective legislation, and enhance citizen oversight of the legislature. These efforts led to a reduction in the number of congressional committees and the establishment of a center for parliamentary research in Congress.

The United States supported the regional governments formed in 2003 as newly elected mayors assumed their positions, many for the first time. The United States supported activities to improve transparency, citizen participation, and governmental accountability. The Government of Peru has made significant advances in furthering decentralization by transferring a large number of authorities and resources to regional and municipal governments. By September 2005, 70% of authorities scheduled to be transferred were completed, and 16% and seven percent of the national budget were transferred to regional and municipal governments, respectively. Despite the failure of an October referendum to create macro-regions out of existing regions, the decentralization process continued, if at a slower pace in this pre-electoral period.

In 2005, the U.S. Government continued its support for the National Decentralization Council and expanded the provision of technical support to all 537 local governments located in San Martín, Ucayali, Huanuco, Pasco, Junín, Ayacucho, and Cusco. Assistance included training in budget preparation, citizen participation in budget decisions, and oversight of budget expenditures. The Special Incentive Fund, created by the United States last year, made its first awards this year to each of 17 municipalities. The awards co-finance small-scale infrastructure projects and benefit municipal governments.

Peru is one of four nations worldwide participating as a pilot country in the G-8 anti-corruption and transparency initiative, of which a major goal is strengthening democracy. Funding, including U.S. contributions, supported implementation of the G-8 compact with Peru. As part of the G-8 compact, the U.S. Government also supported the initiative of Peru's Superior Council for State Acquisitions to form an Inter-American Organization Government Procurement Institution, in order to promote greater transparency in the procurement practices of regional governments in the Western Hemisphere.

Throughout 2005, the United States supported the development of the judiciary. As a result of U.S. assistance, the number of permanent judges increased to over 90 percent. In addition, in April, the judiciary established specialized commercial courts, which have reduced average case processing time from two years to two months. The average time for enforcement of decisions in commercial cases fell from three years to less than six months.

The United States promoted additional reforms in diverse areas. The Ministry of Education formally incorporated into its national curriculum a class on "values and citizenship" based on a U.S.-funded program that promotes a culture of lawfulness.

An array of outreach and public awareness programs, including International Visitors Leadership Programs, speakers, and public videoconferences with U.S. and Peruvian experts, promoted better public awareness of judicial issues, transparency, the costs of corruption,

race and ethnic relations, and the rights of women.

The United States also funded police training in human rights and non-lethal crowd control. To establish a police presence in zones east of the Andes, where illicit coca is cultivated, the United States funded three special academies that graduated 400 new police officers in 2005. All U.S.-Peru military training missions incorporated human rights training. In addition, the Military Assistance Group sponsored a number of seminars that featured both military and civilian participation and that dealt with issues directly related to democracy, including civil-military relations, civilian control of the military, military justice reform, and legal aspects of the fight against terrorism.

The United States helped finance efforts to implement the recommendations of the CVR. The United States continued to support projects initiated in 2004, including providing support to the Ombudsman to open a documentation center. The United States also supported NGO activities to clear unsubstantiated arrest warrants for terrorism and to provide psychological treatment to victims of violence and torture.

The U.S. Embassy played an active role in promoting human rights. In May 2005 British journalist Sally Bowen was convicted of slander for citing a source who stated that drug kingpin Fernando Zevallos was a narco-trafficker. The Ambassador spoke out against the decision, joining ambassadorial colleagues and Peruvian advocates of democracy and press freedom advocates in the outcry over this miscarriage of justice. Subsequently, the decision was reversed, the judge in the case was suspended, and Fernando Zevallos was sentenced to prison for narco-trafficking.

After former CVR President Salomon Lerner received threats against his life, the Ambassador hosted a highly visible public lunch for CVR members, which was attended by other members of the diplomatic community, to show support and concern for the safety of this eminent democracy rights activist and his colleagues.

The Embassy also supported and monitored U.S. programs to combat child labor in Lima and in the

mining sector. The United States funded various programs to support Peruvian NGOs in their efforts to implement anti-trafficking programs in alliance with the Government. These programs included the development of a statistical database and related police training for tracking trafficking in persons cases, as well as campaigns to promote additional legislation and greater public awareness of this vital human rights issue. On April 27-28, the Government of Peru and the OAS hosted an international seminar on “Combating Trafficking in Persons,” in coordination with the U.S. Embassy.

Suriname

Suriname is a constitutional democracy. The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens, and the civilian authorities generally maintained effective control of the security forces. National Assembly elections in May 2005 were judged to be free and fair in accordance with international standards, and incumbent President Ronald Venetiaan was subsequently reelected by indirect vote. Problem areas included police mistreatment of detainees at the time of arrest, abuse of prisoners by guards, and overcrowding of local detention facilities. A shortage of judges resulted in a significant case backlog and lengthy pretrial detentions. Self-censorship by some media continued. Instances of corruption in the executive branch were more visible. Societal discrimination against women, minorities, and indigenous people persisted, as did violence against women. While the Government took significant steps to combat trafficking in persons (TIP), trafficking remained a problem, with women and children in the commercial sex industry constituting the majority of the victims. Child labor in the informal sector also remained a problem in spite of government activities to combat it.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy is to strengthen Suriname’s weak law enforcement institutions and democratic processes and to address critical human rights issues in broader programs targeting transnational crime, HIV/AIDS, health, education, media professionalism, and economic development.

U.S. officials routinely and publicly highlighted the need for improvements in human rights conditions in Suriname. The Ambassador and other Embassy officers also worked privately with officials, NGOs, and other organizations to identify areas of particular concern and promote systemic reforms.

The United States contributed funding to the Organization of American States Electoral Observation Mission, which brought 16 parliamentary election observers to Suriname in May 2005.

A U.S. journalism professor and former journalist trained 30 Surinamese journalists on broadcasting techniques to help the media effectively convey facts via radio and television.

The Government generally respected the rights of freedom of assembly and association, and NGOs and civic groups generally operated free of government interference. The U.S. Government continued promoting support for the growth of civil society by discussing these issues with the Government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights.

To foster professionalism, strengthen respect for the rule of law, counter transnational crime, and improve security in order to foster economic development, the United States provided both training and material support to several elements of the Suriname Police Corps and the prosecutor’s office to strengthen their counter-narcotics and overall law enforcement capabilities.

The United States continued to work with the Government to improve the quality of the Surinamese Armed Forces, enabling it to support police efforts to combat transnational crime and to enhance humanitarian assistance to citizens. Two officers received training on legal and human rights issues.

The United States continued to promote greater attention to the issue of HIV/AIDS in Suriname, providing funding for government and NGO programs aimed at prevention, fighting discrimination against persons living with HIV/AIDS, technical assistance, and institutional capacity building. U.S. Government

funding was directed toward the training of dozens of Voluntary Counseling and Training providers and trainers, key to the resounding success of a new national know-your-status campaign the Government kicked off in December 2005. The Ambassador and other Mission officials made several public speeches to encourage awareness and reduce discrimination. The 2005 U.S. Ambassadors' Fund for HIV/AIDS provided financial support to several projects, addressing HIV/AIDS awareness and stigma and discrimination against infected persons.

TIP for sexual exploitation remained a serious concern in Suriname. The United States strongly and consistently urged government action against trafficking in persons and continued funding a two-year program to assist Suriname in that fight. As part of this program, the U.S. Government conducted a train-the-trainer workshop on investigating and prosecuting TIP and interviewing TIP victims. Government and NGO participants included members of the anti-trafficking commission founded in 2003, composed of various ministries and a local NGO, and headed by the Ministry of Justice and Police. The United States also funded a visit by a U.S. federal judge to meet with Surinamese judges to discuss TIP and other concerns. A digital videoconference featuring a presentation by a high-level U.S. official on the roll-out of the U.S. Department of State's 2005 Trafficking in Persons Report, with participation of government and NGO officials, raised awareness and sharpened subsequent media coverage and attention to TIP for months ahead. A visit by a U.S. anti-trafficking official generated in-depth media coverage of TIP, and together with continuous advocacy by the Ambassador and other mission officers, helped keep TIP at the forefront of the government agenda. Embassy-organized events to bring together government officials and representatives of source countries contributed to improved coordination in combating TIP.

A prominent government official was successfully prosecuted for TIP and sentenced to two years in prison. At year's end, police arrested the owner of the largest brothel in the capital of Suriname for trafficking a female victim into Suriname for sexual exploitation. The trial was pending the conclusion

of police investigation. Police investigations of TIP-related cases increased, showing a significantly more proactive approach than in the previous years and an improved coordination resulting from greater attention to TIP at higher levels of government. These developments appear to be a direct consequence of U.S. anti-TIP advocacy and U.S.-sponsored training programs for public and NGO officials. The Ambassador also wrote letters to members of the National Assembly, providing information to those who expressed concern about TIP.

Venezuela

President Hugo Chavez, in office since 1999, has increasingly consolidated power within the executive branch, extending its control over the country's other branches of government. Legislative elections in December 2005 further solidified Chavez's power. His party and its allies secured all 167 National Assembly seats, following a decision by the main opposition political parties to boycott the elections due to concerns that the secrecy of the vote would not be guaranteed. Record low voter turnout and concerns over the independence of the National Electoral Council demonstrated a decline in public trust in political institutions and processes. Continued politicization of an already corrupt and inefficient judiciary, implementation of new laws governing libel and media content that further restricted freedom of speech and press, and official harassment of the political opposition characterized the human rights situation during 2005. In addition, other serious problems remained. Police and military units killed criminal suspects in "confrontations," which eyewitness testimony often categorized as executions. The attorney general's office reported that of the more than 6,000 police officers implicated in killings during the last five years, only 88 were convicted. The condition of Venezuela's prisons remained harsh, and the authorities were unable to contain prison violence that contributed to 304 deaths and 517 injuries in prisons through September 2005. Child labor and violence against women and children continued to be problems, and the Government took insufficient steps to combat trafficking in persons (TIP).

The United States supported the efforts of the Venezuelan people to strengthen independent civil society, particularly groups working for deepened respect for democracy, the rule of law, and human rights. Senior U.S. officials continued to speak publicly on behalf of freedom of association, freedom of the press, and other human rights. The United States worked closely with other governments to coordinate support for democracy and human rights in Venezuela, especially in defense of the press and civic associations facing increased government pressure and harassment.

To help strengthen political parties in Venezuela, the United States supported non-partisan initiatives by the National Democratic Institute and International Republican Institute. With participation across the political spectrum, these projects focused on political party renewal and internal democratization and provided technical assistance to political parties. These programs trained members on issues such as how to choose and position a candidate, how to reach the masses with a campaign message, and how to raise funds.

The Embassy also began a series of exchanges between young political leaders from the United States and Venezuela that included representation from across the political spectrums of both countries. To foster communication between pro-Chavez National Assembly deputies and members of the opposition, the United States sponsored a workshop on conflict resolution led by a U.S. mediation expert.

In the lead-up to the December 2005 National Assembly elections, the United States consulted with election observation groups, including those from the OAS and EU. The United States also supported a program to conduct an audit of the Venezuelan electoral registry.



U.S. officials continued to publicly express concern that the media law passed by the National Assembly in December 2004 threatened freedom of the press. Embassy officials expressed the same concern in private conversations with Venezuelan officials. The Embassy invited visitors, including judicial experts, to speak about the negative ramifications of the media law on press freedom. The Embassy hosted a series of conferences and events around Press Freedom Day to send the strongest possible message to the Venezuelan media that the United States supported its struggle to maintain press freedoms.

Grants were provided to support media involvement in human rights reporting and strengthen the media's investigative journalism skills.

The United States worked to strengthen the human rights NGOs in Venezuela, some of which worked in a climate of intense government pressure and harassment. One grant provided technical assistance to train human rights organizations and practitioners in successful strategies employed by human rights defenders in other countries. The program also sought to increase the institutional capacity of NGOs through exchanges with other human rights groups in the region and solidified links between Venezuelan human rights activists and other key human rights activists in Latin America. The Embassy brought speakers from the United States to talk about prison reform and property rights as human rights.

The United States also assisted local NGOs focused on encouraging peaceful debate and conflict resolution, supporting democratic institutions, and promoting civic education. The United States sent a group of Venezuelan student political leaders to Ecuador for a U.S. Embassy-sponsored international forum on building grassroots democracy.

To address extrajudicial killings and torture, the United States arranged a series of digital videoconferences between U.S. law enforcement officials and local police that focused on protecting human rights in daily police activities. One NGO provided database technology to local human rights groups to assist them in tracking and documenting extrajudicial killings.

The Venezuelan Government used the justice system selectively against the political opposition and NGO leaders. U.S. officials observed criminal proceedings against opposition leaders to demonstrate U.S. concern regarding due process. The United States invited opposition leaders under investigation, along with government supporters, to Embassy events to demonstrate U.S. support for democracy and political tolerance and rejection of judicial intimidation. Embassy officers, congressional delegations, and visiting U.S. officials also delivered messages to the Government in defense of NGO leaders accused of treason for accepting U.S. funding for non-partisan purposes.

The United States continued to express concern that the Government should do more to combat TIP. In 2005, Venezuela was placed in the Tier 3 list of countries, a strong indication that the Government must increase anti-trafficking efforts. The Venezuelan mission to the OAS impeded efforts by the OAS, IOM, and the United States to host the first hemispheric anti-trafficking experts conference in Washington, and in its place proposed to hold the conference on Margarita Island.



WESTERN HEMISPHERE

2005 HUMAN RIGHTS AND
DEMOCRACY ACHIEVEMENT
AWARD WINNER

This fourth annual edition of *Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2005-2006* demonstrates that the United States is engaged in supporting indigenous efforts to build democratic institutions that are central to protecting human rights and democratic principles. The advancement of human rights and democracy will enable diverse nations and people to choose governments that are accountable to the governed, that exercise the rule of the law, and that respect human rights.

The annual Human Rights and Democracy Achievement Award for exceptional achievement in the field of human rights and democracy recognizes the work by officers of foreign affairs agencies abroad. It is intended to pay tribute to outstanding research and reporting on human rights and democratic developments and, above all, the advancement of strategies and institutions that will deepen respect for human rights and democracy.

Eric Richardson of Embassy Beijing was selected as winner of this year's award for exceptional achievement in the field of human rights and democracy. Mr. Richardson was selected from an impressive group of nine candidates and one country team nominated by their Ambassadors during a year when democracy and human rights issues were often at the forefront of U.S. foreign policy.

In the challenging human rights environment of China, Eric succeeded in advancing the human rights agenda. Eric was nominated by his Ambassador for "tracking one of the world's most complicated human rights stories." Eric was instrumental in supporting the tough negotiations that contributed to China's decision to meet long-standing U.S. Government requests for human rights improvements. The negotiations he supported resulted in concrete steps by the Chinese on religious education; opening of an International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) office; visits by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, and U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF); and release of a key political prisoner. In addition, he solicited proposals from independent NGOs that led to U.S. Government funding for programs that support AIDS outreach, provision of social services by faith-based NGOs, and work with the disabled. Eric tracked over 50 political prisoner cases and regularly raised them with the Chinese Foreign Ministry. Eric has worked tirelessly to support the human rights components of high-level visits, including arranging visits for the Secretary of State and the Defense Secretary.



Assistant Secretary Barry F. Lowenkron presenting the 2005 Human Rights and Democracy Achievement Award to Eric Richardson of Embassy Beijing. (U.S. Department of State)

Choosing the winner of this year's award was a challenge because of the high qualifications of other nominees. All nominees were remarkable for the demonstrated commitment to advancing human rights and democracy in their host countries and all of them deserve the Department's praise and gratitude. The other nominees were:

In Laos, **Greg Chapman** demonstrated exceptional achievement in human rights and democracy. Through Greg's efforts, several NGOs established projects on rule of law and good governance. On religious liberty issues, Greg met frequently with religious groups to discuss their concerns on religious intolerance. Furthermore, Greg worked exhaustively to find a resolution to the Hmong insurgency.

In Kyrgyzstan, **Jennifer Croft** was acknowledged for her role in the "dramatic transformation of Kyrgyzstan this year," which included the removal of an increasingly autocratic leader and the first democratic transition of presidential power in the history of Central Asia. Jennifer is a USAID democracy specialist who contributed to post reporting, organized the deployment of 50 Embassy election monitors, coordinated U.S. assistance to support reforms, and encouraged other donors and embassies to support democratic change.

Kathleen Fitzgibbon in Chad was nominated for her "energy, initiative, and will to make a difference, which led to excellence at her post in N'Djamena, Chad." Kathleen worked with human rights NGOs to document abuses, which led to the release of some prisoners. Kathleen was responsible for the "Rights to Know" radio program covering civil and political rights education. In addition, she created a Child Protection Network among government, NGO, and multilateral organization officials.

Richard Michaels in Kuwait was nominated for his success in the fields of democracy and women's rights. Richard led the Embassy's coverage of the Kuwaiti women's suffrage struggle, coordinating reports, enlisting assistance of his Embassy colleagues, and producing weekly cables. Additionally, Richard compiled reports from media and web logs, a growing medium for political expression among Kuwaiti youth.

Patrick Murphy was commended for his "courage, perseverance, and compassion in support of democracy and human rights in Burma." Patrick's investigative and reporting skills bolstered U.S.-led international pressure that has moved the regime to take small, but significant steps: curtailment of some forced labor practices and arrests of local officials for labor violations; ICRC access to the country's prison and labor camps; freeing and sentence reduction for several hundred political prisoners; and establishment of anti-trafficking legislation.

Marc Nordberg, Carson Relitz, Lyle McMillan, Dmitry Semenov, and Alla Vikhnina were nominated as a team for working "in unison to advance the cause of human rights and democracy in Belarus." This team effort toward comprehensive and analytical reporting contributed significantly to developing and strengthening U.S. foreign policy vis-a-vis Belarus in the months leading to that country's 2006 presidential election. The team has been proactive in producing press statements on human rights trends and continuously provided support to the country's only independent newspaper.

In Colombia, **Kiersten Stiansen** was recognized for her "thorough, concise, and objective reporting combined with her superb outreach skills and keen policy instincts." Kiersten's contacts in government, the NGO community, and with the Colombian Armed Forces have ensured that threatened human rights activists received government protection, which in turn saved their lives. Through her keen diplomatic engagement with key government officials, she urged an impartial investigation into the massacre of eight members of a peace community.

Michael Sweeney in Thailand is commended for being “a tireless and deeply committed promoter of universal human rights,” and for expanding democracy-related capacity building programs. Michael actively reported on the Tak Bai incident, during which 80 protestors died. Michael’s efforts on democracy programs include successfully implementing a Department grant supporting Thais applying for full Thai citizenship, and a program on press freedom. He was also responsible for tireless efforts on behalf of Burmese in Thailand, and reported extensively on opposition groups in Thailand.

Noah Zaring is recognized as a leading expert on human rights and religious freedom in Vietnam. Noah’s human rights reporting and analysis contributed directly to a bilateral religious freedom agreement with Vietnam, which President Bush praised as a “landmark” agreement. Noah met tirelessly with government officials, religious leaders, and community activists to discuss these ongoing issues. Further, Noah worked on the release of several high-profile and relatively unknown political and religious prisoners.

Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record is produced by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. Just as we have many partners in the work of strengthening human rights and democracy, we have benefited from the contributions of many others to this report. Other bureaus of the State Department and U.S. Embassies abroad, the U.S. Agency for International Development and other U.S. Government agencies come together to advance democracy and human rights in many ways. We hope that this volume captures the totality of what we do as a team to identify and respond to the world’s most pressing human rights and democracy needs.

Barry F. Lowenkron
*Assistant Secretary of State
for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor*

Права человека и демократия

DIREITOS HUMANOS E DEMOCRACIA

DROITS DE L'HOMME ET DÉMOCRATIE



حقوق الإنسان والديمقراطية

HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY

人权与民主

DERECHOS HUMANOS Y DEMOCRACIA

BUREAU OF DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS AND LABOR