

United States Department of State

SUPPORTING HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY:



THE U.S. RECORD 2004 - 2005



“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.”

President George W. Bush
2005 Inaugural Address

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THE U.S. RECORD 2004-2005**



Contents

Preface	i
U.S. Human Rights and Democracy Strategy	ii
Purpose and Acknowledgements	iv
The Regions	
AFRICA	2
EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC	70
EUROPE AND EURASIA	106
MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA	174
SOUTH ASIA	214
WESTERN HEMISPHERE	250
The 2004 Human Rights and Democracy Achievement Award Winners	290

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Preface



The past year has seen what we hope represents a dramatic shift in the world's landscape. The participation of Palestinians, Afghans and Iraqis in elections and the "Orange Revolution" in Ukraine have been examples of the universal aspiration of all people to make their voices heard and to govern themselves.

Today, more than fifty million people who lived under brutal regimes in Afghanistan and Iraq are on the road to democracy.

Afghan President Hamid Karzai is leading his war-torn nation forward, after 23 years of conflict and instability.

Iraq has taken the initial steps to joining the growing community of democracies in the world. In Iraq we witnessed citizens - despite the threat of terrorist violence - voting to ensure their voices were heard for the first time in decades. Elsewhere, Palestinian voters replaced an antiquated leadership with one that seeks peace with its neighbors, and held their first municipal elections since 1976.

In another region of the world, Ukrainians proved that they would not stand for an election to be rigged and stolen. The result ultimately was a presidential election that truly reflected the will of the people.

What these dramatic events graphically illustrate is that citizens of nations around the world share the desire to live in free societies founded on a profound commitment to the dignity of each individual and respect for human rights. Although individual freedoms and rights can be repressed for a time by authoritarian and corrupt regimes, history shows us that progress toward democracy is inevitable and encourages our support of the inalienable rights of freedom-loving people everywhere.

This volume illustrates our strategy to promote democracy and human rights worldwide in 2004 and 2005, and the policies and programs designed to carry it out. Democracy and governance programs provide technical assistance and other support to strengthen governing capacity and develop democratic states and institutions that are responsive and accountable to citizens. The President recently set forth in his second Inaugural and State of the Union addresses a policy of supporting democratic movements in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world.

We recognize that each country has a unique history and traditions that will shape its quest for freedom. Whatever the path or pace, however, the United States is prepared to stand with those who seek freedom for themselves and their fellow citizens.

The defense of human rights is a universal responsibility. We must all be defenders of human rights. I take this opportunity to salute all of those who fight for personal freedom and liberty, wherever you are. You each play an important role in building a world that respects the inherent dignity and equal and inalienable rights of all. Your work is an inspiration to us all.

Condoleezza Rice
Secretary of State

U.S. Human Rights and Democracy Strategy

The United States, under the leadership of President Bush and Congress, has made promoting freedom the bedrock of foreign policy. The President's vision of a world where freedom reigns has been clearly articulated throughout his tenure, but nowhere more vividly than in his recent Inaugural and State of the Union addresses. This same vision is reflected in foreign affairs legislation which gives us the tools necessary to make this vision a reality.

Freedom and human dignity are indivisible. It follows that our policies are aimed at expanding liberties. Our policy to foster democracy and human rights springs from American ideals and our national interest. We pursue this policy both because it is right and because it addresses the fear, hatred and inequality that contribute to injustice, terrorism, violence and instability.

The United States devotes significant energy and resources toward the promotion of democracy globally. The Department of State takes a leading role in integrating our democracy promotion efforts into all aspects of our foreign policy.

In implementing its human rights and democracy strategy, the United States employs a wide range of diplomatic, informational, and economic tools to advance its foreign policy objectives. American officials engage governments, multilateral institutions, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and individuals around the world to encourage improved human rights practices and transition to democracy.

The annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, the International Religious Freedom Report and this report are examples of the use of such informational tools. The United States also offers economic, financial and technical assistance to countries and organizations seeking help to address human rights or democracy challenges, including through bilateral and multilateral programs, as well as via international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

Democracy and governance programs provide technical assistance and other support to strengthen capacity and develop democratic states and institutions that are responsive and accountable to citizens. Programs are organized around core concepts considered the key building blocks of democracy. Democracy programs promote the rule of law and human rights, transparent and fair elections coupled with a competitive political process, an open and free media environment, stronger civil society, greater citizen participation in government, and governance structures that are efficient, responsive and accountable.

For governments that have shown the will to reform, the United States offers financial, technical and political assistance to their efforts. For governments that lack the will to reform, as a longstanding pillar of its foreign policy, the United States can withhold support for, or suspend such assistance when a country fails to take sufficient steps to achieve progress in its human rights practices. In either event, the United States will work with and provide assistance to those within a society who are working peacefully for democratic processes.

The timing and selection of the tools' uses are tailored to each situation. We choose the tool or combination of tools that we believe will best advance the President's foreign policy goals. A list of some significant legislation on this subject can be found at www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/42314.htm.

Our fight for human rights will continue so long as regimes infringe upon the freedom of their citizens and until the citizens are able to build strong, democratic institutions of their own design that are capable of protecting those freedoms in the future. Although this challenge is formidable, we are committed to upholding the principal and practice of democracy. Working together as Americans and with our friends and allies in the community of democracies, we can forge a path toward freedom for all persons around the globe.

Freedom and
human dignity
are **indivisible.**

Purpose and Acknowledgements

Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2004-2005

This report is submitted to the Congress by the Department of State in compliance with Section 665 of P.L. 107-228, the FY 03 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 third annual submission complements the longstanding Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2004, and takes the next step, moving from highlighting abuses to publicizing the actions and programs the United States has employed to end those abuses.

Unlike the 196 *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, *Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2004-2005* highlights U.S. efforts to promote human rights and democracy in only 98 countries and entities – those with the most human rights abuses. References to Hong Kong, Macau and Tibet have been incorporated into the China report, and Western Sahara is mentioned in the Morocco report. To make this report consistent with the criteria in the legislation, this report also includes a number of additions: Bahrain, the Maldives, and Serbia - as well as a number of deletions: Belize, Comoros, Djibouti, Fiji, Lesotho, and Niger.

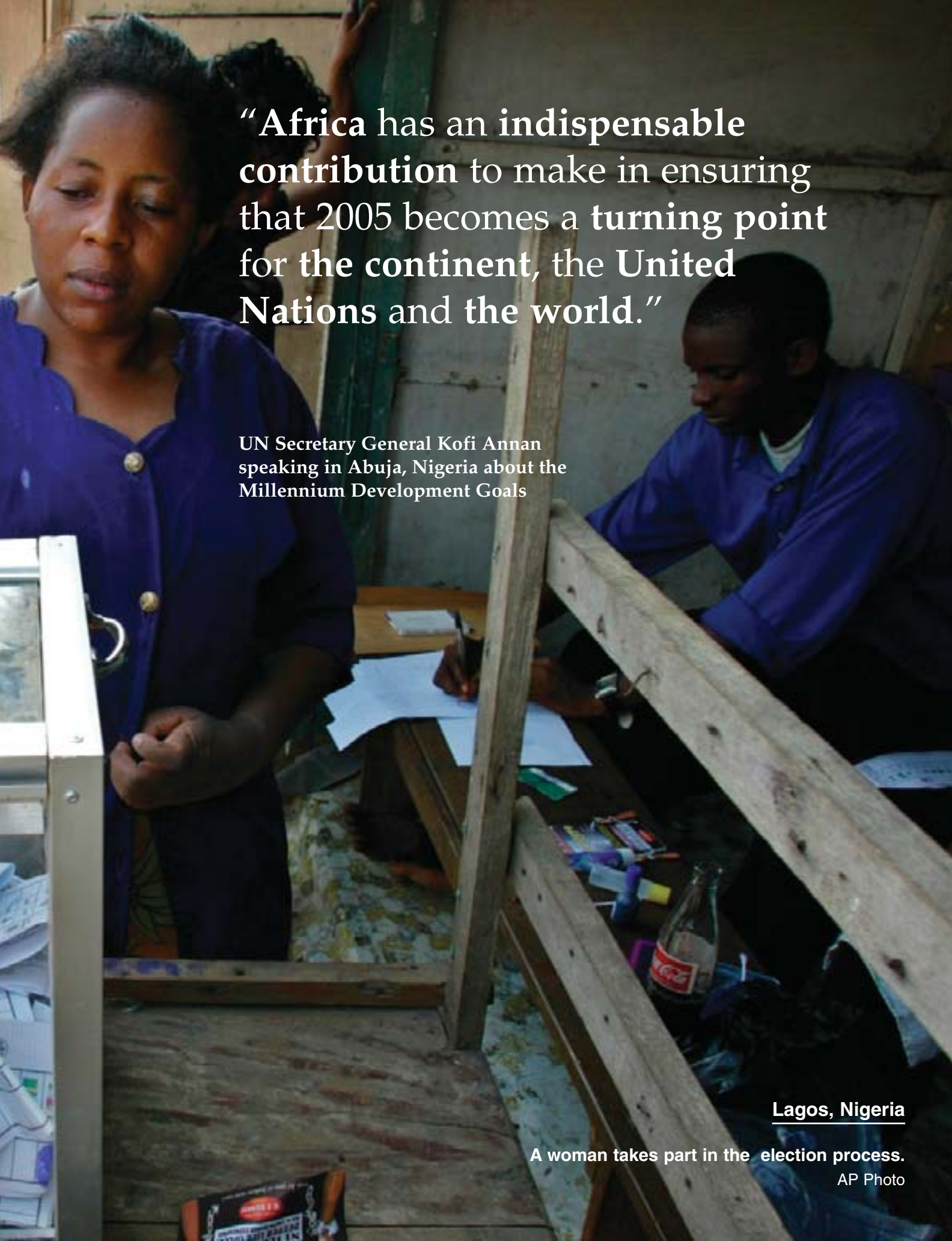
Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2004-2005 reflects the dedicated effort of hundreds of State Department, U.S. Agency for International Development and other U.S. government employees, as well as the employees of numerous non-governmental organizations. U.S. embassies and consulates 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 the Bureau of Public Affairs and other State Department offices and other 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 2004-2005 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.

Within the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, the editorial and production staff of the report consists of: Senior Editorial Advisors - Ambassador Michael G. Kozak, Gretchen Birkle, Michael Butler, David M. Denehy, Gene Bigler and Elizabeth Dugan; Senior Producer and Senior Editor- Sally Buikema; Senior Editor – Oscar de Soto; Deputy Senior Editor - Kent Brokenshire; Editor and Producer, - Patrick Harvey; Graphic Designer - Regina Cross; Editors -Charmaine Coleman, Stuart Crampton, Kara Cumberland, Jeannette Davis, Molly Davis, Patricia A. Davis, Pamela Erickson, Carol G. Finerty, Calli Fuller, Saba Ghorri, Karen Gilbride, Vanessa Golding, Sondra Govatski, Donna Ifill, Ann Marie Jackson, Yvonne Jackson, Eunice Johnson, Kari Johnstone, Christina Jun, Lisa Kaplan, Jennifer King, Catherine Kuchta-Helbling, Jeff Le, Ramiro Martinez, Catherine Newling, Michael Orona, Susan O'Sullivan, Sarah Fox Ozkan, Dhyna Parker, Jennifer Pekkinen, Katitia Pitts, Wendy B. Silverman, Rana Siu, Diedra Spencer, Vonzella Taylor, Julie Turner, Lynda Walker-Johnson, and Danika Walters; Janice Clark, Supervisory PA Specialist; USAID Photo Librarian – Patricia Adams; and Web Editor - Monica Roll; Multi Media Services – William Palmer; Interns – Monica Davis, Liam Fitzsimmons and Claudia Mercado.

Africa





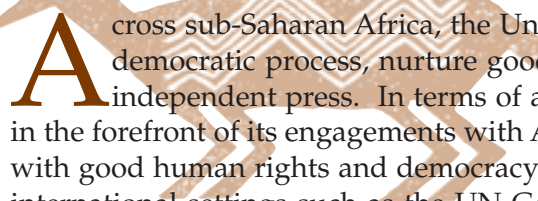
“Africa has an indispensable contribution to make in ensuring that 2005 becomes a turning point for the continent, the United Nations and the world.”

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan speaking in Abuja, Nigeria about the Millennium Development Goals

Lagos, Nigeria

A woman takes part in the election process.

AP Photo



Across sub-Saharan Africa, the United States promotes initiatives that increase participation in the democratic process, nurture good governance and encourage democratic institutions such as an independent press. In terms of advocacy, the United States places democracy and human rights in the forefront of its engagements with African governments. The United States also encourages nations with good human rights and democracy records to set examples of leadership, both in the region and in international settings such as the UN General Assembly and the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva.

The Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) is a centerpiece of the U.S. policy in Africa and includes strong emphasis on democracy and human rights. AGOA encourages democratic rule by granting trade benefits to countries that make sustained efforts in addressing democracy, good governance, human rights and labor issues. The Millennium Challenge Account, President Bush's landmark initiative to prioritize accountability in foreign assistance, stands to benefit Africa with unprecedented assistance programs. Through this comprehensive and holistic approach, the United States is confident that those countries still ruled by governments that do not respect human rights will soon feel the tide of freedom spreading throughout the world.

The series of elections in Ghana, Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia and Mali send a signal that the people of Africa are prepared to cast their ballots in favor of governments that are accountable to the governed and respectful of human rights.

In December 2004, the Government of Sudan and the Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement/Army moved toward peace by negotiating and then signing an agreement ending over two decades of civil war in Sudan. However, in Darfur, the Department of State between July and August 2004 dispatched a documentation team to conduct interviews with Sudanese refugees who fled the violence in Darfur and sought shelter in camps along the Chad/Sudan border. Based in part on the information gleaned by the documentation team, Secretary of State Colin Powell in September 2004, labeled the violence in Darfur as "genocide," and stated that the "Government of Sudan and Jinjaweed bear responsibility." The United States has committed many resources to improve the humanitarian and security situation in Darfur.

In Zimbabwe, members of civil society, the media and the political opposition continue to press for democratic reforms and respect for basic human rights. In Cote d'Ivoire, the African Union and the international community continue to press the Government to adhere to the framework for peace and democracy agreed to by the Government of Cote d'Ivoire and the New Forces in the Linas-Marcoussis/Accra III framework.

The United States continues to work closely with the nations of sub-Saharan Africa to overcome these difficulties. The people of Africa have already benefited from institutional reform and sustainable development. Sustained African commitment and U.S. support will strengthen the foundation to further promote democracy and human rights.

Darfur Documentation Project

In 2004, reports of violence continued to come from Darfur but due to lack of direct access to the region, the international community was left unaware of the frequency and type of atrocities taking place. The United States Department of State, through the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL), assembled and dispatched a team to conduct interviews with Sudanese refugees living along the Chad/Sudan border who had been displaced by the violence in Darfur.

The team included members of DRL, the Bureau of Intelligence of Research, USAID and experts from two non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Between July and August 2004, the team conducted interviews in some of the most remote and inhospitable territory.

The documentation team achieved its twin objectives of producing an initial assessment of atrocities committed in Darfur based on 200 interviews and a more detailed assessment based on approximately 1,136 interviews. The team coordinated its efforts with the UN High Commission for Refugees and established its base of operations in Abeche, Chad. Each team was comprised of four to five interviewers, interpreters and drivers. Members of the team camped near refugee camps for three to four days at a time before moving to another location in order to reach a broad population of refugees.

On September 9, 2004, Secretary Powell, based on information gathered in the field and other information available to him, concluded, "Genocide has been committed in Darfur and that the Government of Sudan and Jinjaweed bear responsibility and that genocide may still be occurring."



Angola

The Republic of Angola is a country in transition following its 27-year civil war that ended in 2002. The legacy of a colonial war and protracted civil war characterized by poor governance, corruption and the need for greater technical capability and capacity within government ministries, has limited the capacity of the Government to provide basic services to most citizens. Government reconstruction efforts increased in 2004, but limited institutional capability and capacity have adversely affected the sustainability of many projects and raised the concern of opposition political parties and the international community. Although there were improvements noted in a few areas during 2004, serious concerns remained regarding the Government's overall human rights record, such as allegations of unexplained disappearances and restricted freedom of the media to broadcast outside the capital. Elections have been scheduled for 2006.

The United States strategy for improving human rights and democratic governance in Angola has four main goals: strengthen civil society, prepare for upcoming elections, support independent media, and support the rule of law. To reach these goals in 2004 the Embassy partnered with several international and local non-governmental organizations to foster Angolan civil society input on human and civil rights issues, worked with World Learning to build advocacy capacity and information dissemination of civil society, worked with the International Republican Institute (IRI) to train political parties on democratic political strategies, worked with the National Democratic Institute (NDI) to help civil society understand their role in the upcoming elections, advanced the dissemination of independent information through the training of local journalists, and utilized the United States Department of Commerce's Commercial Law Development Program (CLDP) to improve judicial administrative capacity and respect for due process.

The establishment of strong democratic norms and institutions is a critical component of United States policy in Angola. Angolan President Jose Eduardo

dos Santos confirmed the commitment of the Angolan Government to hold elections in 2006 during a May 2004 meeting with President Bush.

Due to continued commitment by the Angolan Government to developing democratic processes, the Mission allocated a significant portion of its Economic Support Funds (ESF) to support NDI and IRI in efforts to establish a strong political and electoral environment. In FY04, NDI and IRI continued to prepare civil society organizations and political parties for national elections. NDI supported the expansion of a civil society-coordinated national election network. This network, currently active in 8 of Angola's 18 provinces, is critical for broadening citizen involvement in the election process. IRI held numerous training seminars that focused on strategic planning, message delivery, and constituency relations. All political parties that have seats in the National Assembly, including the ruling Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), participated in 2004 IRI events. Heavy media coverage of IRI training for the opposition party Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) provoked MPLA complaints and threats of reprisals against UNITA. The Embassy is working closely with IRI to emphasize the untapped opportunities for all Angolan political parties.

Civil society networks also focused on preparations for the upcoming elections. A local non-governmental organization (NGO) was a leader in these efforts. Separate conferences on the electoral process and national reconciliation and reconstruction brought together a number of civil society leaders to discuss these important issues. These events were crucial for starting the educational process necessary for elections. The continued development of these groups as viable political actors is critical for free and fair elections in 2006 and long-term democratic consolidation.

The Embassy continued its efforts to support independent media in 2004, including support of four training seminars for journalists. With almost 100 participants in four different provinces, these seminars focused on the challenges facing Angolan journalists, objectiveness necessary to educate the citizenry and how to best cover the upcoming

elections. The Embassy also provided English language training to over 100 Angolan citizens, many of whom are journalists.

The Angolan Government's hesitation to permit nationwide FM broadcasts by its largest non-governmental radio network, Radio Ecclesia, has yet to be resolved and remains a continuing concern. The Embassy pursued high-level efforts to support Radio Ecclesia's expansion to the provinces, including discussions with President dos Santos, the Ministry of Social Communications, and the MPLA's Director of Information Policy. During a May 2004 Voice of America interview, President dos Santos stated that Radio Ecclesia could broadcast nationally. Nevertheless, Radio Ecclesia is still unable to broadcast nation-wide on FM. The United States Ambassador worked closely with a group of like-minded diplomatic counterparts to find a solution to outstanding issues, especially the amount of local content necessary for regional stations.

The Embassy also utilized the 2004 U.S. presidential elections as a training opportunity for Angolan journalists. The two individuals selected for this event used their visit to the United States to gain knowledge on media coverage of elections. The Embassy also continued its support of Voice of America's "Linha Directa" service. During the final portion of the year, this service was transferred to the local media outlet that had been working as Voice of America's implementing partner in Angola.

Efforts to improve the legal system are a critical factor in the political and economic development of Angola. The United States Government-supported CLDP legal assistance project with the Ministry of Justice provided consultative services to Angolan lawmakers, regulators, and judges. Focusing on procedural issues, CLDP proposed and implemented new case management techniques, including random assignment of judges to make corruption less likely. CLDP facilitated a conversation between the Portuguese Government and the Angolan Government regarding sharing of technologies for future automation of case management of the Angolan judicial system. Numerous visits to Luanda by CLDP teams

helped establish them as a strong partner for the Ministry of Justice. The Embassy plans to use this success to leverage complementary programming by other donors.

The focus on human rights throughout 2004 underscored the important connection between the protection of human rights and a strong relationship with the United States. The Embassy regularly discussed human rights issues with government officials at all levels and attended human rights events. The Ambassador attended a December 10 Human Rights Conference organized by the National Assembly, and made regular visits outside the capital during which human rights issues were discussed.

The Embassy continued to monitor the human rights situation in Cabinda province and to encourage civilian and military officials to further control troops stationed there. Church leaders – critics of the presence of troops in Cabinda and supporters of increased autonomy – commented to the Ambassador during her visit on January 19, 2005, that their careful record of human rights abuses continued to show a decline in incidents over the last year. This trend began with the installations of a new governor and military commander. In 2005, the Embassy plans to continue personal advocacy by the Ambassador and other Embassy personnel with Cabindan officials, continue its public-private partnership with Chevron-Texaco to improve public services in Cabinda and will propose military training on human rights.

The Embassy helped local NGOs implement awareness programs on human rights and promote government response to key human rights issues such as children rights to education, land rights and rights of people living with HIV/AIDS. These NGOs reached out to local citizens through town meetings, seminars, print media and local radio broadcasts. Some of the most successful of these initiatives were radio programs focused on topics such as the importance of accepting those with HIV/AIDS and a monthly publication of educational newsletters on various human rights issues to a circulation of 56,000.

Throughout FY04, civil society organizations (CSOs), with U.S. financial or logistic support, organized 190 debates, workshops, and community meetings that reached 19,579 Angolans. Through these programs and 1,333 formal meetings between CSOs leaders and government officials, coalitions made notable contributions to the Angolan public policy process in 2004. Presidential ratification of a land tenure law and National Assembly passage of an HIV/AIDS law highlighted the ability of CSOs to help shape national policy. Since civil society efforts to help shape the land law were not completely successful, continued efforts are underway to address disputed provisions of the legislation. The Angolan Government has increasingly recognized the relevance of these coalitions' activities and the contributions they make in developing policies.

During 2004, the Embassy also focused on children's issues, especially health and education. The Ministry of Education's recognition of the civil society coalition "Ensino Gratuito Ja" as a national development partner helped institutionalize the role of civil society in improving education. Health programs focused on the needs of children, including the prevention and treatment of malaria and continued to provide basic health care for those unable to access limited government resources.

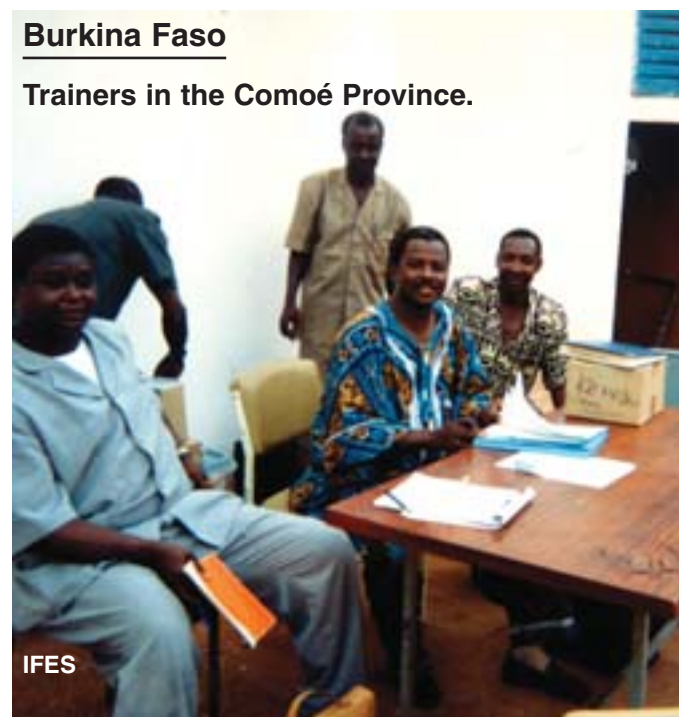
Burkina Faso

The overall trend for human rights and democracy in Burkina Faso is guardedly positive, though there are numerous areas for concern and improvement. Political rights, particularly the right to change their government, are not fully exercised, the judiciary is subject to executive influence and individual members of security forces continue to commit human rights abuses. To address these issues, the U.S. Embassy in Burkina Faso initiated a number of program and advocacy support to draw attention to international human rights norms, to emphasize accountability and transparency in government, enhance capacity building of political parties and further ease political tensions. The focus for many of these efforts is the 2005 municipal and presidential elections. Several of the Embassy's regular inter-

locutors have noted that they see the American Embassy as the best and strongest advocate in the country for human rights and democracy.

The United States funded programs focused on enshrining democracy in Burkina Faso by stressing capacity building of political parties and promoting inter-party dialogue needed to maximize the competitiveness of the November 2005 presidential and municipal elections, a core focus of our strategy to promote democracy and human rights. The United States provided a grant to carry out these actions.

The present program is aimed at upgrading the political and organizational skills of opposition parties (103 in total, of which 14 are represented in the National Assembly), who captured 49 percent of the seats in the May 2002 parliamentary elections. This program has been a success, especially in generating good will from civil society and political parties while also garnering respect from the Government and the ruling Congress for Democracy and Progress (CDP). The program has involved participants from the entire political spectrum, including members of the ruling CDP party and members of the moderate and radical opposition. All have appreciated the current program of inter-party dialogue and training on party platform and message formation. U.S. funded



programs played a key role in the success of the 2002 elections and are expected to do so again in the crucial 2005 Presidential and municipal elections.

As part of the International Visitors Program (IVP), in 2004 and 2005, the United States sent a number of professionals in the areas of democracy, good governance, conflict resolution, civic education and journalism to the United States.

United States funds have been used to sponsor programs on the rights of persons with disabilities, produce radio programs on human rights, democracy and the electoral process, support local associations that promote human rights, development of the judicial system and the rights of women and sponsor awards for journalists who have published articles involving investigative journalism.

The United States also used funds to help Burkinabe journalists create an alert system to notify each other and the public whenever a journalist is harassed. This system demonstrated its utility when the police briefly detained two editors. In response to a public outcry, they were released within a day of their arrests.

The United States has provided training to military personnel and civilians on maintaining civilian control over the military in a democracy.

Furthering the U.S. policy of promoting religious freedom, the United States has sponsored a number of workshops and discussions exploring different religions and the importance of tolerance. The United States also sent three participants on an IVP about Islam in a democracy, and participants reported that the visit positively influenced their attitudes. The Embassy's Public Affairs Section also regularly meets with Burkina Faso's Muslim community for discussions and exchanges. The United States recently provided scholarships to a number of Muslim secondary students to study English. During the recent month of Ramadan, the U.S. Embassy hosted an Iftaar dinner where an American-Muslim employee shared his experiences as a Muslim in America.

In addition, the United States funded several projects in the fight against trafficking in persons. A Burkinabe non-governmental organization (NGO) will rehabilitate and reintegrate 70 repatriated children in two U.S.-funded centers. The same NGO is also producing a documentary on local anti-trafficking laws. Additionally, the United States is midway through a multi-year project intended to reduce child trafficking by creating locally relevant curricula in rural schools. By providing children with skills that are of immediate benefit to rural families, the United States should be able to reduce the incentive to traffic in children.

Through the Democracy and Human Rights Fund, the U.S. Government provided funding for several notable projects. The United States funded the transmission of public service announcements to help educate Burkinabe women about their rights and how to seek help if they are abused, in addition to several workshops on children's and women's rights,

Burundi

The Government of Burundi, led by President Domitien Ndayizeye, continues to implement the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement of August 2000, as well as accords signed with rebel groups. The Arusha Agreement calls for a return to elected government, protection of minority rights, respect for individual rights, reform of the army and an accounting for the crimes of the past.

The Arusha Agreement specified that the transitional period would end on October 31, 2004, with an election of the first post-transition president by an elected Senate and National Assembly. On October 20, 2004, the Government of Burundi approved an interim Constitution that provided for the continuation of transitional institutions until a constitutional referendum could be held. Burundi's Independent Electoral Commission scheduled the referendum for February 28, 2005.

On December 31, 2004, President Ndayizeye signed laws establishing integrated army and police forces that incorporate the National Council for Defense of Democracy–Forces for the Defense of Democracy (CNDD-FDD) and other former

rebel groups. One rebel group – the PALIPEHUTU-FNL – continues armed opposition to the Government. The United States has called upon the PALIPEHUTU-FNL to renounce violence and to join the peace process.

Burundi's last democratically elected president was assassinated by army elements in 1993, an event that triggered mass violence, displacement of civilians and a decade-long crisis. Since 1993, the United States has advocated the return to democracy and constitutional rule while providing humanitarian assistance to Burundi.

The Transitional Government's human rights record remained poor, and the Transitional Government continued to commit numerous serious human rights abuses. Security forces continued to commit numerous arbitrary and unlawful killings. There were credible reports of disappearances, and the security forces continued to torture, beat, rape and otherwise abuse persons. Despite some improvements, prison conditions remained very poor in general and sometimes life threatening. Impunity and the continuing lack of accountability for those who committed past abuses remained serious problems. Arbitrary arrest and detention and lengthy pretrial detention were problems, and there were reports of incommunicado detention. The court system did not ensure due process or provide citizens with fair trials. The Transitional Government controlled the media and restricted the freedoms of speech, association and movement, and at times it restricted the freedoms of press and assembly. Violence and discrimination against women continued. The use of child soldiers was a problem, though considerable progress was made with the demobilization of 2,913 former government and rebel child soldiers. Discrimination against the indigenous Twa population and state discrimination against Hutus remained problems. Societal discrimination between the Hutus and Tutsis continued. Incidents of ethnically motivated property destruction and killing occurred throughout the country. Rebels also continued to commit numerous serious human rights abuses against civilians, including killings, kidnappings, rapes, theft, extortion, the forcible recruitment and employment of children as child soldiers, and forced labor.

The United States human rights and democracy goals in Burundi include helping to build a just and lasting peace based on democratic principles, protecting human rights and relieving human suffering. To protect individual rights during the ongoing conflict, the Embassy has regularly raised specific cases and broader patterns of abuses with leaders of both the Government and rebel groups. USAID Director Andrew Natsios visited Burundi in September and highlighted human rights and democracy concerns with Burundian President Domitien Ndayizeye and Vice President Alphonse-Marie Kadege. Director for Central Africa in the Bureau of African Affairs Alan Eastham visited Burundi in the wake of the August 13 massacre of Congolese refugees at the Gatumba transit center. Mr. Eastham visited the site of the massacre, met with survivors and discussed the massacre and other human rights concerns with the president, vice president and leaders of the major political factions in Burundi.

United States programs in 2004 included a grant to Search for Common Ground and local human rights groups. This program provided for medical, legal and psychological support to victims of torture and rape, as well as for human rights monitoring and advocacy.

In addition, the United States provided funding to Search for Common Ground and Global Rights to fund democracy and human rights projects as well as support local civil society organizations. To support civil society and women's rights, Search for Common Ground funds the Women's Peace Center, a grouping of women's associations. Search for Common Ground also supports local radio stations which produce and broadcast radio shows on human rights, conflict resolution and democratic principles.

Global Rights has created networks of local civil society actors to lobby parliamentarians to support legislation that gives the force of law to provisions of the Arusha Agreement. For example, Global Rights supported local groups that advocated for a bill, signed into law in December 2004 that establishes a National Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The United States provided a grant to IFES to provide training, electoral materials and technical support to Burundi's Independent Election Commission for the holding of a constitutional referendum and subsequent local and national level elections.

In the provinces of Gitega, Ruyigi and Karuzi, the United States provided financial support to two non-governmental organizations to assist victims of war as well as 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 finances a variety of smaller projects that advance 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.

Cameroon

Cameroon is a republic dominated by a strong presidency. Despite the country's multiparty system of government, the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) has remained in power since the early years of independence and the president has ruled since 1982. The Constitution provides for an independent judiciary; however, the judiciary has been subject to significant executive influence and has suffered from corruption and inefficiency. Despite significant improvement, Cameroon's human rights record remained poor. Police continued to commit numerous abuses and to use arbitrary arrest and detention. Child labor and trafficking also remained problems in 2004. To strengthen Cameroon's democratic institutions and improve respect for human rights, the United States has actively engaged officials from all levels of the Cameroonian Government, local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) members of civil society and the media.

In preparation for the presidential elections, which took place in October 2004, the United States primary focus was on developing a more free, fair and transparent electoral process and preparing the media to effectively cover the elections. The United States sent the largest observer team and covered all ten provinces to observe during the days preceding the election and on election day itself. The United States and most international and domestic observers agreed that, despite some irregularities, the election results expressed the will of the people. The United States continued to take advantage of the opportunity to work with donors and the Government on ways to reform the electoral process, especially the registration of voters. Such work takes advantage of the period of several years until the next elections. Near the end of 2004, the Embassy's overall priorities shifted from the promotion of democracy toward promoting good governance by highlighting the negative impact of corruption on all aspects of life in Cameroon.

United States personnel met repeatedly with high-level Cameroonian officials, including President Biya, to encourage that concrete action be taken to reach the Government's stated objective of holding a free and fair election. The Embassy attended a donors' working group initiated by the Embassy in 2003, to coordinate policy and assistance expenditures in support of the election. The Ambassador attended meetings on Cameroon's elections and successfully lobbied reluctant donors for additional funding for electoral reform. On the legislative side, the United States worked with members of the Government and the National Assembly to strengthen the National Elections Observatory (NEO), and to encourage it to take an active role in observing and overseeing the election. With the election over, the Embassy continued to work with donors, NEO and the Government on the changing role of the NEO and election reform in general.

In order to promote democracy and decentralization, the United States has worked to develop the capacity of local government leaders. The United States organized a one-day seminar for twenty-five mayors and other elected officials on public involvement in democracy. Additionally, the

United States held several interactive dialogues on democracy and human rights with Washington and other African posts through the African Network Digital Video Conference (AFNET) program.

To complement the U.S. programs with local government leaders and the press, the United States organized two workshops to train leaders in civil society on political organizing and the local registration process for NGOs. The United States also awarded two grants to local NGOs for elections related projects. The United States awarded one NGO a grant to distribute an elections guide in seven local languages nationwide, provide training in approximately 250 villages on elections procedures, civic responsibility and the application of electoral law, and hold a seminar to train print and radio journalists on coverage of elections. The United States awarded another grant to distribute a series of educational posters in French, English and seven local languages related to election themes, such as encouraging people to vote and explaining voter's rights. The group plans to hold meetings in five provinces of Cameroon to train local authorities, opinion leaders and youth groups to participate in the elections education campaign. The United States conducted a series of civic education conferences throughout all ten provinces in the run up to Cameroon's presidential elections.

United States officials regularly worked together with Cameroonian government officials, the media, NGOs and other representatives of civil society to improve the democratic and human rights environment throughout the country. The United States has also been involved in a number of high profile public outreach efforts to help develop a free press, advance democratic reform and lower the effects of corruption on Cameroon's development.

The United States has been active in developing an independent and professional media in Cameroon. In the run up to Cameroon's presidential election the Embassy conducted numerous training seminars and workshops for journalists that focused on effective election reporting which were attended by more than 200 journalists, media unions and

media owners. The Embassy also conducted several workshops on investigative journalism that were widely covered by the local media, increasing their impact.

Despite the 2000 law authorizing the creation of private radio and television stations, media licensing remains a problem in Cameroon. The Embassy has continued to work closely with the Ministry of Communications to make progress on this issue, which is expected to be resolved in 2005. One tangible result of the Embassy's collaboration with the Ministry of Communication was the establishment of a "Media House" that works as a liaison to Cameroon's many ministries for the local and international media.

The United States awarded a Democracy and Human Rights Fund (DHRF) grant to support local NGOs implementing projects on promoting a fair judicial system, democracy and civic responsibility, and the rights of disabled persons and ethnic minorities. One of the DHRF projects funded was to empower Pygmies to better resist exploitation by other tribes by educating them on their rights as citizens and help them obtain appropriate identification documents such as birth certificates and national identification cards. Since identification cards are required when registering to vote, aiding the Pygmies to obtain these documents also enabled them to actively participate in public affairs and elections. Another DHRF project involved designing a civic education program for primary and secondary school aged children. The objective of the program was to educate young people on their civic responsibilities and to help them become responsible citizens who will be more likely to participate in the economic, social and political life of their country. A third DHRF project sponsored a program to analyze the role of assessors (assistant judges) in the judicial system and build their capacity so that they will be better able to fulfill their responsibilities.

In order to increase respect for human rights, the United States worked closely with the military and police to curb abuses by law enforcement. In compliance with the Leahy Amendment, the Defense Attaché's Office worked to foster more professional security forces by sending members of the

Cameroonian Government to military schools in the United States. These professional education courses addressed civil military relations, military peacekeeping operations, military subordination to civilian authorities as well as a broad range of legal and human rights topics including the Law of Land Warfare. The United States used funds toward the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program for the Cameroonian military through the Expanded-IMET program.

In the area of religious freedom and tolerance, the Public Affairs Section 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. The Ambassador also reached out to the Muslim community of Cameroon by hosting an Iftaar dinner during the holy month of Ramadan.

The United States worked to advance women's rights and the rights of disabled persons throughout the year. The United States organized a variety of seminars that included a workshop on "Women as Political and Economic Leaders" and a AFNET program on "Women Inspiring Hope and Possibilities" which involved approximately 300 women leaders. In conjunction with the Embassy's HIV/AIDS Task Force, the Public Affairs Office conducted a series of regional leadership workshops for young women. Through a DHRF grant, the United States helped a local organization of disabled persons to organize a six-day training seminar for 30 leaders of disabled persons' organizations in an effort to improve their management skills and allow them to more effectively defend the rights of the disabled. The goal of the project is to facilitate the social and economic integration of the disabled in Cameroon by building the operational capacity of organizations dedicated to their advancement.

In an effort to combat trafficking of women and children, the Embassy assisted the International Labor Organization in Cameroon in obtaining two grants from the United States to develop new anti-trafficking legislation and train local law enforcement and the judiciary on implementation of the new legislation.

Central African Republic

The Central African Republic's human rights record remains poor. On March 15, 2003 former Armed Forces Chief of Staff General Francois Bozize declared himself President, suspended the Constitution, and dissolved the National Assembly. During this period, pro-government and rebel forces engaged in widespread looting, beating, and assaults on civilians.

The country is now in a period of political transition, seeking to recapture democratic governance. Bozize has appointed cabinet members from across the political spectrum, including respected oppositionists, established the parliament-like National Transitional Council, completed a national dialogue, and published a roadmap for a return to constitutional government. In January 2004, Bozize followed through on recommendations stemming from the national dialogue, publishing an electoral calendar setting legislative and presidential elections for early 2005, and stating his intent to create an independent commission to oversee the process. The Independent Electoral Commission has since been created, and is working closely with the UN Development Program (UNDP) to ensure proper oversight and conduct of parliamentary and presidential elections in March 2005. In December 2004, a popular referendum overwhelmingly approved a new Constitution for the country.

Although the Bozize Government has made some positive progress, instances of extra-judicial killings, harsh prison conditions, arbitrary arrest, prolonged detention without trial, and infringements on privacy continue. Violence and discrimination against women, female genital mutilation, child prostitution, discrimination against indigenous people, trafficking in persons, and child labor also continue.

The United States also continues to investigate avenues for providing humanitarian aid and promoting democratic processes as permitted by U.S. law.

Bangui, Central African Republic

People waiting in line to vote.



AP Photo

Suspended in 2003 due to the unstable security situation throughout the country, normal Embassy operations will resume in January 2005 with the arrival of a Chargé d'Affaires. In accordance with U.S. law, the Government remains largely ineligible for assistance from the United States.

However, U.S. efforts to encourage the Government to improve its human rights and democracy records are diverse and ongoing. The 2004-2005 U.S. strategy for human rights and democracy in the Central African Republic focuses on supporting the Government's stated intention to return to democratic governance, and calls for concrete, verifiable, and sustained improvement in human rights.

The United States is pursuing an ongoing dialogue with other donor countries to draw attention to the severity of the situation and to explore efforts to reduce the prevalence of human rights violations. Officials monitor closely instances of violations, and continue to investigate avenues for providing humanitarian aid and promoting democratic processes as permitted by U.S. law. Supporting the electoral process is arguably the most strategic support any partner can offer the people of the Central African Republic at this critical time in their history.

The United States will continue to encourage the Government to implement policies that lead to a decrease in human rights violations throughout the country.

Chad

The Government of Chad's human rights record remains poor. Security forces committed extrajudicial killings and continued to intimidate the public. The judiciary remained subject to executive interference. Corruption is a problem. Violence and societal discrimination against women is common. The Government restricted freedom of the press by harassing and detaining journalists. Landmines remain a key problem in northern Chad, where over one million mines are left over from the civil war. The lack of respect for women's rights and trafficking in persons are problems.

President Idriss Deby 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 election and the April legislative elections. Currently, the Government is proceeding with amendments to the Constitution to allow unlimited presidential

terms. If the public referendum on the amendments passes, Deby would be able to stand for election again in the next presidential elections in 2006. Chad deserves credit for hosting over 200,000 refugees from Sudan fleeing the war and genocide in the Darfur region of that country.

The United States human rights objectives in Chad include strengthening respect for rule of law, professionalization of Chad's security forces, bolstering the judicial system and the independent media, the transparent management of the country's oil revenues, outreach to the Muslim community, advancing women's issues and support for efforts to resolve the humanitarian crisis in eastern Chad. United States strategy for improving Chad's human rights situation focuses on engaging directly with key government officials and improving interaction between the Government and human rights groups. Efforts are also being made to strengthen the credibility and capacity of civil society groups and governmental institutions in addressing human rights abuses, including involving them in the visits of high-level U.S. Government officials. One goal of the United States is to help human rights groups and other civil society organizations become a resource for both the Government and Chadian people on human rights issues. In the absence of a USAID mission, the United States seeks funding from a number of sources to find ways to meet its goals. An example of a low or no cost way of facilitating dialogue is creating opportunities for activists and government officials to interact together in professional and social settings. A reception in honor of a Chadian human rights activist who won the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Prize was attended by government ministers, human rights activists, journalists and opposition politicians.

To strengthen the Chadian media's ability to promote human rights and good governance, Economic Support Funds are being used to provide equipment and training to print and broadcast journalists. A Human Rights and Democracy Fund (HRDF) grant funded the creation of a private radio station in the far north. A training workshop was held for Arabic media with a speaker from Voice of America. The Embassy interacts regularly with the Chadian media and

facilitates coverage of U.S. Government events. The promotion of civil rights and civil liberties is being funded by the HRDF. The funding for a bi-weekly radio broadcast covering a wide range of human rights issues and civil liberties and civil rights education will be the first of its kind in Chad. The program "The Right To Know" will be shared with other radio stations and translated into several local languages to help increase public awareness of their basic rights. The talk show will be supported by town hall meetings in several cities to encourage discussion between citizens and their local government and security officials on their rights.

Human rights activists and government officials acknowledge that strengthening Chad's weak judicial system is critical to addressing human rights violations in a systematic and meaningful way. To this end, the United States is using ESF to provide manual typewriters and copies of relevant legal codes to the courts as well as training for magistrates. The Public Affairs Section sponsored an International Visitors Program (IVP) on the U.S. judicial system. HRDF is being used to support legal assistance to victims of human rights abuses through a local non-governmental organization. Several government ministries expressed support for the program and offered their assistance if needed.

United States support for good governance and transparency also included an IVP on Grassroots Democracy for Young Leaders, a speaker program on the links between good governance, accountability and transparency, and a book program on how to fight corruption. In addition, the U.S. Treasury continues to provide technical assistance to the Oil Revenue Management College, the accountability mechanism that is reviewing the projects financed by Chadian oil revenues. The Ambassador hosted a U.S. election coverage event that was widely attended by government officials, Chadian political parties and journalists. At this event and in meetings between Chadian government officials, Embassy officers and visiting delegations emphasized the importance of the election process in sustaining democratic transitions.

The ongoing humanitarian crisis in Darfur, Sudan deeply affects Chad. Over 200,000 refugees have sought safety in eastern Chad and the United States is the largest donor to the ongoing humanitarian efforts. In July and August, the United States undertook a comprehensive survey of Sudanese refugees in Chad, which resulted in the Darfur Atrocities Report and Secretary Powell's finding that genocide is occurring in Sudan. In addition, the Embassy is an active participant in the implementation of the Darfur Humanitarian Cease-fire Agreement, which includes monthly meetings of a Joint Commission. The United States has contributed personnel to the Inter-Sudanese Peace Talks on Darfur and remains a key interlocutor with the Government of Chad, the rebel movements and the African Union on the Darfur peace process. The United States has also facilitated the work of human rights organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGO) working on protection issues for refugee women and children.

The Embassy has provided several grants for the purpose of eliminating the practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). Its support to a local NGO resulted in the drafting and enactment of a law that criminalizes FGM, and in FY 2004, it funded an education program to publicize and distribute copies of the law. The Public Diplomacy Section held a panel discussion on female genital mutilation and gender and development in an effort to promote women's rights. The visit of an American imam to eastern Chad also promoted a better understanding of women's rights and equality issues under Islam. In addition, Embassy officers engaged government and NGOs on trafficking in persons and began planning to facilitate a child protection network to bring together concerned government officials, police and NGOs on a range of issues affecting children. The promotion of girls' education has also been a focus of the United States efforts during the 2000-2004 period, using funds from the Ambassador's Girls Scholarship Program to encourage the education of girls. During the 2003/2004 school year, an estimated 5,000 elementary school girls and their families received support under this program, and the rate of female attendance at the 60 pilot schools where the program was implemented increased

significantly. In addition, Embassy employees are funding school tuition for a group young girls. Congressional visitors have also met with key officials and non-governmental organizations on women's issues.

The United States is using 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 Chadian government officials to emphasize the importance of working together on human rights. The annual human rights report is being used as a basis for collaboration. To date, government officials have been candid and responsive. Visiting Congressional delegations have supported the United States human rights agenda.

The professionalization of Chad's security forces is a key component of the U.S. strategy for improving the country's record. Department of Defense programs include the 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. United States Marines trained 170 members of the Republican Guard in June and July in Chad. In addition, 48 Chadian police officers and immigration officials received anti-terrorism training in the United States and Chad. All training candidates were vetted through the Department of State's screening system to ensure compliance with the Leahy Amendment. The Embassy's Public Affairs Section held a public seminar on the role of the military in a democracy. The United States also funds de-mining activities in northern Chad.

The United States Muslim outreach programs continue. The United States supported a program promoting bilingualism with a respected local organization that promotes cross-cultural understanding. A week-long speaker program in Abeche, eastern Chad, with an American imam sparked a great deal of interest and exchange of information with Chadian Muslims. This visit advanced religious freedom through the promotion of dialogue between faiths and among Muslims on key human rights issues. The Embassy funded micro scholarships for 75 chil-

dren as part of its efforts to reach out to underserved populations.

Congo, Democratic Republic of

The Democratic Republic of the Congo emerged in 2002 from a war that claimed more than three million lives. With the assistance of the international community, the former government, rebel groups, civil society, and the political opposition formed a transitional government in 2003. The Transitional Government is preparing for democratic elections in 2005, the first elections in more than 40 years. The Transitional Government has made some progress in unifying the country; however, the country remains effectively divided into two zones: territory under the control of the Government (areas that remained under the nominal control of the Kinshasa-based Government throughout the conflict) and most of the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, which is territory under marginal government control (areas controlled by various rebel groups during the conflict). Echoes of the war still haunt Congolese civilians, especially in the east, where they continue to be chased from their homes, attacked by various armed groups and government soldiers, and subjected to widespread human rights violations. A prominent U.S. non-governmental organization (NGO) estimates that more than 31,000 people die each month in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, making it the deadliest humanitarian crisis in the world. The UN estimates that 2.2 million Congolese are internally displaced, and 360,000 are refugees.

In western parts of the country, the human rights record remained poor, and numerous serious abuses occurred; in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, conditions were even worse. Armed groups and government soldiers continue to commit numerous, serious abuses, particularly in North and South Kivu, Maniema, Equateur, northern Katanga, and the Ituri District of Orientale Province. Armed men committed massacres, summary executions, practiced cannibalism, mutilation, kidnapping, and torture. These men also burned and looted villages, extorted money and belongings from impoverished

rural communities, and held civilians, NGO workers and the UN Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) peacekeepers for ransom. Particularly violent and widespread rape, forced labor - including sexual slavery - and the recruitment of child soldiers were severe problems. Armed groups attacked local and international NGOs and killed MONUC peacekeepers, usually with impunity.

The United States is responding to the human rights and democracy crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo via a multi-faceted approach that includes the provision of support to the Transitional Government and its efforts to organize elections. The approach also includes assistance to victims of human rights violations, training and education programs to support a change in the prevailing social climate, efforts to restore the crippled justice system, and military education programs through the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program to begin the long process of unifying and professionalizing the Congolese military.

In 2004, Secretary of State Powell and then-National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice spoke to President Joseph Kabila by phone several times emphasizing U.S. support for the Transitional Government and the need for continued progress on political reform, security sector reform and human rights concerns. Additionally, President Kabila and other Congolese leaders met on numerous occasions with senior State Department officials who stressed the importance of adhering to the election schedule established by existing peace accords.

The United States is one of 14 members that comprise the International Committee to Accompany the Transition, a unique body that advises and assists the Transitional Government. The Embassy also works closely with MONUC and the Congolese Independent Electoral Commission to develop the most transparent and effective system possible for conducting elections. The United States is working with appropriate international agencies, as well as Congolese ministries and commissions to implement the national Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) plan.

Mission staff visited all 11 provinces during the year and used discussions with local officials, student groups, NGOs, church organizations and members of the local media to underscore the importance of democratic elections, basic human rights, religious tolerance and inter-community reconciliation.

The United States sponsored a program to create stability in war-torn areas; the program includes training for 16,800 people in 280 communities on tolerance, the promotion of the rights of women and people of other ethnicities and religions, and democracy and governance. This program supported independent media by funding Radio Okapi (a nation-wide network) and five community radio stations. The United States allocated funds to two international NGOs to reintegrate former combatants into their communities and provided a staff member and extensive technical support to the national DDR program.

The United States used funding to meet key benchmarks in the transition process such as improving local security and stability, including human rights; drafting key legislation, such as the constitution; and strengthening the Democratic Republic of the Congo's Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), political parties and key parliamentary subcommittees.

The United States provided expert technical and logistical support through IFES and the National Democratic Institute to support the development of a sound electoral system and improved political party capacity. As a result, the IEC became operational at the national level, and the groundwork was laid for the Elections Law itself. Five Democracy Resource Centers are now operating in Kinshasa and four important provincial locations, providing vital information and training on the transition process, particularly on elections, to thousands of Congolese citizens in provincial capitals and isolated areas.

Global Rights (GR), with support from the United States, helped organize a series of national seminars bringing together Congolese politicians and civil society - especially women and youth - to ensure that popular input was included in key electoral, human rights, and justice-related legisla-

tion. Global Rights also created Strategic Rights Groups in five of the Democratic Republic of the Congo's provinces; these groups are intended to serve as permanent mechanisms for advocating human rights and justice sector reform with government authorities at the local and national levels.

In addition, GR increased pressure for access to justice at the provincial level and reduced criminal impunity in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo by focusing on the rights of vulnerable groups and by selecting cases of appalling violence against women and children to be submitted to appropriate regional bodies, such as the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.

The United States supported a community stabilization and conflict management program that has engaged thousands of participants, including ex-combatants, in community rehabilitation projects. The U.S. Government is assisting communities in former conflict zones to productively reintegrate ex-combatants and resolve local conflicts occurring during the transition. Through the International Foundation for Education and Self Help, 2,000 ex-combatants are being reintegrated in 50 communities, 4,000 jobs were created, and local capacity to mediate conflict was strengthened in 75 communities, producing a positive impact on over 60,000 residents of these communities. As of February 2005, more than 900 ex-combatants had been registered and 400 were engaged in reintegration projects.

The United States has been actively working to combat sexual violence in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo since 2001. In January 2004, the Embassy conducted an assessment mission, published an extensive report entitled "Sexual Terrorism: Rape as a Weapon of War in Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo," and developed a broad gender-based anti-violence strategy. The United States Agency for International Development provides funding to experienced international organizations that work with local NGOs, health structures, and community-based organizations to provide support to survivors. The International Rescue Committee supported 12 local NGOs in North and South Kivu,

which provided health, psychosocial, socio-economic reintegration, and judicial services to rape victims. Since mid-2002, the project has assisted over 10,000 victims of rape, their families, and their communities, and it aims to assist another 7,000 over the next 18 months. Over the past year and a half, with U.S. support, a local organization called Action for Rights' Education (AED) won 57 of the 60 rape cases it brought to court, including eight convictions against members of the military. In late 2004, AED received a grant to expand its services in South Kivu.

Cooperazione Internazionale (COOPI), with support from the United States, provides psychosocial and socio-economic reinsertion activities for rape victims in Maniema and the Ituri District of Orientale Province. As of February 2005, it had assisted over 3,000 rape survivors, ranging in age from 3 to 84. Cooperazione Internazionale planned to assist another 5,000 survivors over the next 18 months. CARE recently started a new project in Maniema to provide health clinics with medicines and improve doctor and nurses' treatment and counseling skills. Global Rights is working to improve rape victims' access to the judicial system.

World Vision and Save the Children received a Displaced Children's and Orphans' Fund grant to help street children, many of whom have been accused of sorcery.

The United States provided IMET funding for military education programs. For example, in 2004, the U.S. Department of Defense began the process of re-establishing an English language lab in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, sent officers to military training in the United States, and conducted on-site surveys to develop seminars on civil-military relations and the role of the military in a democracy.

The Embassy sent a number of International Visitors Program participants to the United States to participate in democracy and human rights-related programs; the focus of the programs included conflict resolution and human rights, the role of the media in the United States, and transparency and good governance. Through the Democracy and Human Rights Fund, the Embassy

also provided technical assistance to local organizations that taught people about democracy, human rights and the national transitional government. Groups developed teaching materials and trained trainers in church groups and schools; produced radio broadcasts, books, and pamphlets; and developed programs to protect prisoners' rights. An excellent civic education module for high school students, which was developed by an Islamic human rights organization using democracy funds, is currently being distributed to schools in several provinces.

Embassy officials met with the Government several times to promote progress in trafficking-in-persons issues, especially the trafficking of children associated with armed groups. For example, embassy officials worked with UNICEF to encourage the Government to finalize official demobilization certificates for child soldiers. The United States also provided a grant to the International Labor Organization in four countries, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to help former child soldiers return to civilian life.

Congo, Republic of

The Republic of Congo is ruled by a government in which most of the decision-making authority is vested directly in the executive branch. Denis Sassou-Nguesso was elected president in March 2002, and in May and June of that year legislative elections were held for the Senate and the National Assembly in all jurisdictions except for the Pool region, where most of the 1997-2002 civil war was fought and instability occurred. Both the presidential and legislative elections were determined "not to contradict the will of the people" by independent monitors.

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

For most of 2004, the Government's human rights record improved, but major challenges and problems still remained. There were reports that security forces were responsible for extrajudicial killings as well as summary executions, 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, under-funded, and subject to political influence, bribery and corruption.

Promoting respect for human rights served as the basis for U.S. Embassy programs with the Government, press, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and international organizations.

To promote good governance, the Embassy provided a grant to a local NGO to conduct seminars on anti-corruption education for regional government officials and administrators. It also organized a Public Diplomacy Speaker Program on anti-corruption for 30 government and NGO officials.

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. After initial difficulty, the Government met minimal requirements for a Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF).

In order to build general awareness of human rights among the population, the Embassy focused its efforts on youth, women and minorities. The United States used the Human Rights and Democracy Fund (HRDF) to support programs on the rights of key minority groups, such as the Pygmies, and on prevention of trafficking in children. Other United States grants provided funds for educating the minority Pygmy population about their rights, and protecting their environment and traditional ways for the next generations. Other programs included anti-corruption seminars; sessions on refugee assistance; job training for women and orphans; food production, shelter and school supplies for internally displaced persons in the Pool region; and projects combating trafficking in persons.

Through civil-military dialogue and military training exchanges, the U.S. Government encouraged greater military discipline, professionalism, and respect for human rights. A high commission was established in 2002 for the reinsertion of former rebel militia members into civil society and, for some, into the military. In 2004, reinsertion programs continued and a new disarmament program began to address the Ninja combatants from the March 2003 accords. The March 2003 peace accords included a commitment from President Sassou that former Ninja militia would receive amnesty if they laid down their arms. 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 a two-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.

Cote d'Ivoire

The Ivorian political crisis deepened in November 2004 with the Government of Cote d'Ivoire's decision to resume hostilities against rebel forces in the north. The bombing of a French garrison during these attacks and the retaliatory destruction of much of the Ivorian Air Force by French troops resulted in several days of anti-French rioting in the country's commercial capital, Abidjan, and other locations around the country. The cease-fire line established after the 2002 coup attempt continues to divide the country geographically and politically. Both the Government of Cote d'Ivoire and the rebel New Forces (NF), who control the northern half of the country, have continued to commit serious human rights abuses in a climate of increasing impunity. There were credible reports of pro-government death squad activity, extrajudicial killings and disappearances. Security forces frequently resorted to lethal force to combat widespread violent crime and sometimes beat detainees and prisoners. The Government generally failed to bring perpetrators of abuses to justice, and

members of the security forces operated with relative impunity. Prison conditions improved but remained harsh and sometimes life threatening. Arbitrary arrests and detention were common; numerous persons, including opposition members, journalists and military officers, were detained for long periods without trial.

The judiciary system did not ensure due process. Police harassment and abuse of non-citizen African immigrants continued. Privacy rights continued to be restricted severely. The Government restricted freedom of speech, assembly, movement and the press. Discrimination and violence against women, abuse of children and female genital mutilation remained serious problems. There were incidents of violent ethnic confrontation; societal discrimination based on religion and ethnicity remained a problem. Child labor as well as some reports of forced child labor and trafficking in children and women also persisted.

The NF's human rights record was extremely poor. The rebels in the north summarily executed persons, killed numerous civilians, arbitrarily arrested and detained persons and conducted arbitrary *ad hoc* justice. The rebels severely limit freedom of movement within and from the territory they hold and forcibly conscripted persons, including child soldiers. Rebels and mercenaries committed par-

ticularly grave abuses in the western region of the country and in the north.

The promotion of human rights is one of the highest priorities for the United States in Cote d'Ivoire. The United States strategy to support human rights and democracy encompasses supporting the national reconciliation process, strengthening civil society and reducing the impunity that prevails throughout the country. The Ambassador and other senior U.S. officials frequently press these themes with interlocutors in the Government and the NF and throughout Ivorian society. The United States long-term objective is to help Cote d'Ivoire consolidate its democratic multiparty system in which all Ivorians have a voice and which is characterized by good governance, respect for fundamental human rights, an independent judiciary and a strong civil society.

To that end, the United States has focused on promoting implementation of the January 2003 Linas-Marcoussis Accords (LMA), which led to a cease-fire and set out the key actions that must be carried out in order to resolve Cote d'Ivoire's crisis peacefully.

To press for LMA implementation as the basis for reconciliation on which to build democracy and respect for human rights, U.S. officials have main-



Port Bouët, Cote d'Ivoire

Civic Education Campaign launch in Port Bouët.

IFES

tained an extensive dialogue with the Government and all political parties and factions. The Ambassador is a key member of the UN Monitoring Committee for LMA implementation and regularly presses the Ivorian President, the rebel NF and all other political parties to implement LMA as the way toward reconciliation and free and fair elections in 2005. United States officials frequently lobbied the Government, civil society representatives and others on the need for enhanced protection of human rights and encouraged efforts to build democratic institutions. The United States has issued strong public statements on human rights and condemned the Government's November attacks on the NF-held northern region of the country, receiving widespread local press coverage.

The United States also continued its support of the Women Leaders' Caucus, numbering 156 ministers, parliamentarians, businesswomen, lawyers and teachers, which is working to strengthen the peace-making efforts of women's groups, increase the number of women elected to public office, enhance women's roles in civil society and play a role in negotiating an end to the country's crisis.

The local press has often worked to aggravate grievances and inflame tensions in Cote d'Ivoire, both before and after the outbreak of rebellion in September 2002. The United States is using a grant for a multi-layered media project focused on projects to professionalize the media to make media reporting more impartial and balanced.

The Constitution provides for an independent judiciary. However, in practice the judiciary is subject to executive branch, military, and other outside influences. Although the judiciary is independent in ordinary criminal cases, it follows the lead of the executive in national security or politically sensitive cases. There are credible reports that judges submit to political pressure and financial influence. The judiciary is slow and inefficient. To help foster greater understanding of the importance of an independent, impartial judiciary, the United States organized a roundtable discussion on "Justice and the State of Law." Participants in the discussion included the Minister of Internal Security, a Justice from the Supreme Court,

Ministry of Justice officials, law professors, law students and others. The United States also organized a WorldNet dialogue on "Corruption in Public Administration" and a discussion on *Marbury v. Madison* to promote the rule of law.

At the UN, the United States played an instrumental role in the adoption of two UN Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR) concerning Cote d'Ivoire: UNSCR 1528, in February 2004, which called on all parties to prevent further violations of human rights and international humanitarian law and established the UN Operation in Cote d'Ivoire to enhance UN support for the peace process, and UNSCR 1572, in November 2004, which condemned the Government's air strikes against rebel forces in the north, imposed an arms embargo on Cote d'Ivoire and called 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 the adoption of UNSCR 1572, the United States has played an active role in the process of identifying the individuals who should be subject to these sanctions.

To help build compromise and understanding in divided and crisis-ridden Côte d'Ivoire, in 2004 the United States organized a discussion to mark Martin Luther King's birthday and to promote his philosophy of non-violence and a round table discussion on anti-terrorism for 88 senior security officers - gendarmerie and police commanders - members of the National Assembly, government officials, leaders of Human rights organizations, leaders of religious bodies and journalists.

The United States used the International Visitors Program to broaden the experience of Ivoirians who can make a difference in democracy and human rights. The United States sent eleven Ivorian political figures to the United States to participate in a program on conflict resolution. Two Ivorian legal experts were sent to the United States for a workshop on human rights issues. Additionally, one Ivorian political figure participated in a session in the United States on transparency and another came to learn about the American political process. For the 2004-2005 cycle, the United States put forward prominent

speakers for programs on "U.S. presidential elections – The Primaries," "Human Rights Issues," "Role of the Media in the United States," "Regional Stability and Conflict Resolution" and "U.S. Society and Political Process: A Project for Emerging Muslim Leaders."

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion and the Government generally respects that right. However, after 2002, the Government has 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. To help support these efforts, the United States organized an Iftaar dinner for Ivoirian Muslim leaders, at which the Ambassador and other embassy officials discussed with the Ivoirian guests the different ways religious leaders can help resolve the conflict.

The United States continued to fund a multi-year International Labor Organization (ILO) program on Commercial Agriculture that targets Cote d'Ivoire's cocoa industry along with those of four other major West and Central African producers. The United States funded another ILO program targeting child trafficking for exploitive employment in nine West and Central African countries including Cote d'Ivoire.

Equatorial Guinea

Equatorial Guinea nominally is a multiparty constitutional republic. President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo has ruled since seizing power in a 1979 military coup d'etat. One-party rule formally ended with the 1991 introduction of a multiparty system. Nevertheless, Obiang's Democratic Party of Equatorial Guinea (PDGE) remains overwhelmingly dominant in politics and the economy, as does the majority Fang ethnic group and Obiang's Mongomo sub-clan. Obiang was re-elected in a December 2002 election marred by extensive fraud and intimidation. In the legislative and municipal elections of April 2004, the opposition Convergence for Democracy Party won only two seats in the national legislature. Of the other 98, 68 were retained by the ruling PDGE and 30 by a coalition of six "loyal" opposition groups.

The Government's human rights record remained poor, and the Government continued to commit serious abuses. United States intervention has resulted in positive developments, such as the release of a half dozen persons detained without charge. The position of "second vice prime minister over human rights and public administration" was created to improve and monitor the human rights situation in the country. Ricardo Mangué Obama Nfube was instrumental in drafting and securing support for the anti-trafficking legislation in parliament. He also established the Interministerial Commission on Human Rights and began to revitalize the Moribund Center for Human Rights and Democracy by appointing a young, new director whose goals include an automated database of reported human rights abuses and cases of trafficking in persons. Security forces continued to abuse their power, although in some cases, persons were relieved of duties when abuses came to international attention. Physical abuse of approximately 20 prisoners and suspects was reported directly to Embassy officials, and citizens claim that such abuse is a very common practice; there were also instances of arbitrary arrest, detention, and incommunicado detention, particularly following the attempted coup d'etat in March 2004. It was reported that approximately 300 non-Equatorial Guinea citizens of primarily West African and South African origin were detained or removed from homes during a sweep after the coup attempt. Hundreds reportedly took asylum in their embassies until arrangements were made for them to be repatriated. Most undocumented persons were incarcerated until they were deported.

Most abuses connected to the coup took place in a three week period following the failed attempt. Until the president gave an address demanding an end to the abuse of foreigners (which included the looting of homes, destruction of identity documents, abuse of women and demands for money), some security forces were out of control. Victims had little faith in the justice system, feared reprisals from government agents and many did not press charges.

The presidency continued to dominate all sectors of the Government. The judicial system remained subject to executive pressures and repeatedly

failed to ensure due process; however, there were exceptions. For example, the Supreme Court overturned a lower court ruling that had reportedly favored a relative of the ruling family. In the trial of the mercenaries involved in the March 2004 coup attempt, none received the death penalty requested by the prosecution.

The Government continued to severely restrict press freedom; however, international journalists were finally permitted to fully cover the trial of the mercenaries involved in the March 2004 coup attempt. Local journalists work primarily for state-controlled media and practice self-censorship to keep their jobs.

There were no effective domestic human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs), but the United States has engaged actively with UN organizations promoting human rights and the Government's new Inter-Ministerial Commission on Human Rights. In 2004, a series of workshops began both on the island and mainland to educate official and civil leaders about responsibilities under the UN Conventions on Human Rights and Rights of the Child.

The Government continued to permit 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. Prison conditions continue to be life-threatening: no meals are provided, many prisoners are kept in shackles and subjected to abuse, access to medical care is very limited (usually only available when a prisoner is near the point of death) and no rehabilitation for re-entry to society is provided. Despite laws to the contrary, persons are detained routinely without charges.

On July 15, an extensive investigation by the U.S. Senate revealed the misappropriation of at least \$35 million of oil revenues from foreign oil companies by President Obiang, his family, and other senior government officials since the mid-1990s when the country started exporting oil. The report found that in many cases the money went straight into accounts controlled personally by the president and his close associates. The Government has refuted the allegations of oil revenue misap-

propriation. Oil companies have paved roads in Malabo, upgraded the island's electricity generating system, and funded a variety of health and environment projects designed to improve citizens' well being. However, there has been some concern regarding the use of irregular payments made by oil companies into bank accounts controlled personally by the president and the ruling elite. Most of the oil wealth remained in the control of the Government with little distributed to the majority of the population, which remained poor. There was some evidence, including several infrastructure projects, which the Government started to use the country's oil wealth for the public good.

The expansion of democracy and the promotion of human rights remain the United States primary objectives in Equatorial Guinea. Efforts to achieve these objectives were accomplished by active engagement with the Government, the opposition, the media and community representatives. To speed progress towards these objectives, the U.S. Embassy was reopened in Malabo in October 2003. In 2004, the United States funded and implemented public diplomacy programs aimed to further aid the development of Equatorial Guinea's historically weak civil society. United States officials established an amiable relationship with the new university in Malabo, and looked towards establishing an American Corner and partnership links with American universities. United States officials encouraged American companies' cooperative involvement to reinforce the U.S. message on the importance of transparency, rule of law and respect for human rights, and worked with international organizations to further reinforce the message.

The October 2003 re-inauguration of the small U.S. Embassy was a tangible symbol of U.S. commitment to concrete democratic development in Equatorial Guinea. A single officer, who acts as Chargé d'Affaires in the Ambassador's absence, staffs the Embassy. The U.S. Ambassador to Cameroon concurrently remains U.S. Ambassador to Equatorial Guinea. Embassy Yaoundé personnel have continued to be actively engaged in all substantive and administrative areas, including on the human rights agenda.

The Embassy provides an outlet for more vigorous and continuous on-the-ground promotion of respect for human rights and democracy. The chargé immediately assumed an important, publicly visible role in regularly and directly communicating U.S. concerns to local government officials. In-country representation allowed Embassy officials to observe and report local activities directly and accurately. Subsequently, U.S. officials were able to address issues in Equatorial Guinea in a more precise and expedient manner.

United States personnel made regular visits to the island and mainland in 2004, including monthly visits by the Ambassador to both Malabo and Bata. The Ambassador and other officers have an ongoing dialogue with officials on the need for the development of true civil institutions and respect for justice and human rights. The Ambassador raised concerns with the president and high-level ministers over trafficking in persons, transparency, good governance 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 Equatorial Guinea's small opposition movement to address their concerns, and subsequently challenged national security officials over unlawful detention of political activists.

Equatorial Guinea suffers from an outdated media infrastructure and has no independent/private media. The United States coordinated a series of media training workshops designed to promote interest in and government support for independent media. United States officials met several times with senior officials, including the Minister of Information and the Director General of the National Radio and TV in an effort to facilitate an affiliation agreement between the Government and the Voice of America. In all of their meetings with government officials, U.S. personnel have reiterated the importance of enhancing the country's media profile to include independent/private media and finding ways to use the national/public media outlets for the broadcast of independent voices.

The United States continued efforts to actively encourage effective and transparent management of the country's oil wealth for equitable social and economic development. A serious engagement with the Government, international organizations, the diplomatic community, and civil society representatives began in 2004 on the use of government revenue to address identified humanitarian needs of the Equatoguinean poor and disenfranchised. This was initiated through a grant from the United States that developed a needs assessment and working relationship with stakeholders, including U.S. industries resident in Equatorial Guinea.

In meetings with high-level Government officials, U.S. officials pressed for improved transparency in public finance and the management of the oil sector. Results are forthcoming. Following high-level statements of commitment to transparency in the oil and gas sector, Equatorial Guinea has worked seriously (with technical assistance from the World Bank) to qualify to participate in the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative; the Government has also expressed interest in participating in the G-8 Transparency and Good Governance Initiative.

Last year, U.S. funds provided an NGO with a grant to excavate and install two high-quality, durable community wells in two villages. The wells save villagers from having to travel approximately three kilometers to obtain potable water. The United States also provided funds to a group of nuns, who were highly involved in girls' education, to provide books, uniforms, educational materials and room and board to needy girls. These programs - in an effort to promote civic participation and sustainable rural development - provide real aid to grassroots communities that have been left behind in the country's recent oil boom.

Equatorial Guinea permits freedom of religion by law. The country is predominantly Catholic, with a number of traditional religions as well. Any new church that wants to establish itself must be approved first through the Ministry of Justice, Religion, and Penal Institutions. This process could prevent the entry of undesired religious groups, but no such cases have come to the

Embassy's attention. There are some mosques in the country, and Muslims generally are not discriminated against openly. Some government officials have made public statements to the effect that proselytizing is unwelcome in the country.

United States engagement with Equatorial Guinea resulted in the country developing and passing a strict law addressing trafficking in persons in that country. Through U.S. engagement, especially from the direct engagement of the U.S. Ambassador to Equatorial Guinea, the country is more aware of trafficking issues and is taking measures to address them.

United States officials based in Yaoundé and Malabo maintained a positive working relationship with American oil companies in Equatorial Guinea and have encouraged cooperative efforts between the companies and the Government. Beyond promoting health, education and environmental assistance programs, these companies act as positive role models for transparent employer operations, with clear hiring policies and good labor relations. Furthermore, the companies have reinforced U.S. messages on transparency, rule of law and human rights. The companies all strongly reject allegations emanating from the Riggs Bank investigation that they have engaged in illegal or unethical practices in Equatorial Guinea.

Eritrea

Respect for human rights and democracy suffered a major setback in 2001 when the Government of the Eritrea arrested, without charges or due process, individuals who voiced their opposition to government policy. The Government also proceeded to shut down the nascent free press, arrested most of the country's independent journalists, and postponed national elections indefinitely. In October 2001, two Foreign Service National employees of the U.S. Embassy were also arrested and continue to be held without charge. The Government's human rights record remains poor. Arbitrary arrests, lack of due process and poor prison conditions are also major concerns. The Government's national military service program, for all males aged 18 to 40, was originally estab-

lished to last 18 months but in most cases has been prolonged indefinitely. The military has also been found to use violent methods to round-up persons suspected of evading national service.

In 2002, the Government barred certain religious denominations from holding services and has arrested and imprisoned adherents of these groups sporadically since that time. Since 2002, the Government's respect for religious freedom for religious minority groups has continued to decline. In 2004, Eritrea was designated by the United States as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC). Eritrea's Constitution, which contains safeguards of basic human rights, was ratified in 1997, but has not been implemented. The legislature has not met since 2002 and the courts, particularly "special courts" run by the military, remain under executive influence. Elections of judges to community courts were largely free and fair. However, elections for regional assemblies were held in 2004 but voting was not done by secret ballot and the Government did not allow campaigning beyond the posting of names and photographs.

The United States has maintained an active dialogue with government officials on human rights and democracy despite general suspicions with what the Government of Eritrea perceives as unacceptable meddling in its internal affairs by foreign powers. Government officials, most of whom participated in the successful 30-year fight for independence from Ethiopia, state that they have always envisioned a democratic Eritrea that fully respects its citizens' human rights. They point to their performance from 1993 - 1998, a period during which Eritrea enjoyed a flourishing free press, respect for religious liberty and fewer cases of arbitrary arrest.

In their conversations with Eritrean officials at all levels, the Ambassador, Deputy Chief of Mission and Embassy officers make clear in the strongest terms that the United States sees national security and human rights as complementary, not issues in conflict with each other. Embassy officials continually make the point that addressing the Government's human rights violations – particularly ending the open-ended nature of national

service and widespread arbitrary arrests - will be vital to improving Eritrea's disastrous economic and food security situation. In this connection, Embassy officers also consult regularly with European diplomats, who have undertaken a formal dialogue with the Government in the context of the EU-Africa, Caribbean, Pacific (ACP) Cotonou agreement.

The Government's inaction regarding concerns that the United States has raised about its commitment toward democracy and human rights has led to limits on some U.S. assistance. United States officials have made clear that demonstrated improvement with respect to democracy and human rights could lead to increased cooperation with the United States. The Embassy is cautiously optimistic about a renewed bilateral dialogue begun in early December 2004, which addressed human rights concerns, as well as possibilities for future cooperation.

The Embassy's strategy to promote respect for human rights and democracy also included efforts to extend access to information throughout the country. The Embassy provides free access to materials on U.S. values, policies and culture, as well as free access to the Internet (a rare commodity in Eritrea) at its Information Resource Center (The American Center) in Asmara and two Embassy-sponsored "American Corners" in libraries outside the country's capital. In 2004, the Embassy opened American Corners in the predominantly Muslim cities of Keren and Massawa.

The United States, which was instrumental in bringing the Internet to Eritrea, provides technical assistance to increase the capacity and reliability of Eritrea's telecommunications link to the rest of the world in order to expand the availability and efficiency of Internet access. The Embassy distributed materials regarding U.S. policy and daily press releases. In a country with no independent media, these tools have proven vital in promoting 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 holds regular functions for alumni of U.S. Government exchange programs to promote discussion of U.S. culture, democracy, human rights and other issues. The Embassy also arranges regular speaking engagements featuring U.S.-based speakers, and broadcasts of the "Africa Journal." In addition, the Embassy recruits Eritrean government officials and others for the International Visitors and Voluntary Visitors Program. The Embassy's Security Assistance Office offered courses for Eritrean military officers in democracy and human rights through the Expanded International Military Education and Training Program, although no officers took advantage of these courses in 2004.

In addition to this important dialogue, Embassy officials continue to engage a wide range of Eritrean officials and members of minority religious groups in an effort to promote greater respect for religious freedom. The U.S. Government's designation of Eritrea as a CPC in 2004 provided an opportunity to reemphasize the importance of religious liberty for minority faiths and to engage Eritrean officials about the possibility of U.S. support for the creation of mechanisms promoting interfaith dialogue, as well as support for low-key visitors who can address legal and other aspects of respecting minority religious rights.

The Embassy's strategy is also designed to contribute to political and economic devolution so that citizens can exercise more control over their affairs. The Embassy has implemented programs that promote the devolution of political power and economic resources by providing resources and expertise to strengthen the development of community-based organizations. Three USG-funded non-governmental organizations continue to provide humanitarian assistance and community development programs that extended opportunities for grass roots participation by working with parent-teacher associations, water associations and local health committees.

Ethiopia

The Ethiopian Government continued and expanded its effort in 2004 to devolve authority to regional and district governments as part of its policy of ethnic federalism. Ethnic conflict, lack of human capacity, and unfamiliarity with democratic concepts complicated this process. Ethiopia saw some improvements in the area of human rights, but serious problems remained. Federal and local police forces lacked proper training, and continued to employ excessive force, resulting at times in numerous killings. Arbitrary arrest and detention were sometimes used. The judiciary remained overburdened and lacked capacity, resulting in lengthy pre-trial detentions. The Government continued to restrict freedom of the press and assembly. Trafficking in persons (TIP) remained a serious problem as well as societal discrimination and violence against women, although the Government has formed a task force and begun to address some TIP issues.

United States Embassy officials consulted with host government officials, local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), opposition political party members and other embassies, to identify constructive means of intervention. A significant element of U.S. Government strategy in promoting human rights and democracy is building the capacity of host country government and community leaders. Workshops, seminars and other training sessions are important elements of this approach.

To promote democracy and political freedoms, the Embassy, working with other embassies, engaged local officials and the National Election Board (NEB) regarding complaints from opposition political parties about harassment of their members by ruling party members. The Ambassador also met with NEB senior officials to underscore U.S. interest in preparations for the May 2005 national elections. Embassy representatives traveled to eastern Ethiopia to observe local district-level referendums, which would determine the districts' state affiliation. Embassy officials met regularly with

opposition party officials regarding allegations of illegal detentions, harassment and torture of opposition party supporters by local ruling party cadres, following up with police and others.

The 2004 U.S. elections provided an excellent opportunity for programming on democracy, which included a large-scale event for hundreds of secondary students from the capital area as well as programming targeted at the country's political and social elite. The Embassy has also been a strong voice for freedom of the press, providing training to journalists and participating in the international community's response to the country's draft press law.

The United States continued to fund a program conducted by the Federal Supreme Court to help build the capacity of Ethiopia's judicial system. In 2004, the Federal Supreme Court trained 1,157 Supreme Court, High Court and First Instance Court judges, as well as 15 Addis Ababa Municipal Court judges on the Ethiopian Civil Procedures Code. More than three thousand judges nationwide, including 226 women judges, have benefited from this training since the program's inception.

In 2004, the Embassy funded a total of 13 Democracy and Human Rights-related projects. For example, one project enabled the Addis Ababa Muslim Women's Association to hold a series of workshops and discussion groups to stimulate awareness of women's rights vis-à-vis Ethiopia's Constitution and Shari'a law in the Muslim-populated Afar region of eastern Ethiopia.

The Ambassador and other officers have been vigorous advocates for human rights by raising the issue in various speeches and public statements. The Ambassador engaged government officials, privately at times, to seek clarification on government actions that could infringe upon human rights.

Visiting senior U.S. officials, including, State Department Africa Affairs Bureau Assistant Secretary Constance Newman and USAID

Administrator Andrew Natsios, have also raised human rights in their discussion with senior Ethiopian Government officials, including the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister, among others.

To call attention to problems of ethnic violence, the Embassy engaged the Ethiopian Government at several levels, including with the Minister of Federal Affairs, to ensure that proper investigations were conducted in the wake of December 2003 ethnic violence in Gambella. In addition to tracking the Gambella investigations during 2004, the Embassy, working with the federal and local government, initiated two conflict mitigation programs designed to reduce the risks of violence and improve human rights protection by building local and NGO capacity to prevent and mitigate conflict.

The Embassy provided funding to support training and technical assistance to the Ethiopian Federal Police. The funding is being used to establish and support projects designed to improve the capacity of the federal police to effectively train recruits in basic policing skills. The skills-based recruit-training project will include modules on human rights and police ethics. United States funding will also be used to assist the federal police with developing a community-oriented policing strategy designed to improve police-citizen relations. Ethiopian law enforcement officials also receive human rights training as part of their courses of study at the U.S. Government funded and supported International Law Enforcement Academy in Gaborone.

As part of U.S.-Ethiopia military-to-military cooperation, United States training programs provide Law of War and Human Rights training as part of the curriculum of peacekeeping instruction given to the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF). Under the U.S. African Contingency Operations Training and Assistance program, U.S. contractors and military have trained four ENDF battalions, including battalions which are currently deployed on UN peacekeeping missions in Burundi and Liberia.

The U.S. Ambassador met regularly with religious leaders to promote HIV/AIDS awareness. The Embassy worked closely with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the Mekane Yesus Church, the Ethiopian Kale Hiwot Church and the Missionaries of Charity Sisters to support HIV/AIDS programs.

To combat the trafficking of women and children from Ethiopia to the Middle East, the U.S. Government continued to oversee a grant to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), to educate high-school students in Addis Ababa and other localities about the dangers of trafficking in persons. IOM experienced some delays in implementing this project. Major accomplishments in 2004 included establishment of a radio program to increase public awareness of illegal employment brokers, providing support to repatriated victims and making counseling available at the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs to those considering seeking employment outside of Ethiopia. A 24-hour hotline was established in Addis Ababa to provide confidential counseling and support information.

The Embassy pressed the Government to lift its suspension on licensing adoption agencies. The efforts bore fruit when the Government issued licenses to two adoption agencies, thus discouraging efforts of illegal adoption brokers. The Embassy and the Government have an excellent working relationship regarding curbing illegal adoptions. Whenever the Embassy identifies a suspected illegal adoption broker, the Government, with its limited resources, investigates and, if necessary, shuts down the broker's operation.

The U.S. Government and the Centers for Disease Control collaborated with host government officials in curbing discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS. To commemorate World Aids Day, the Embassy sponsored a number of activities in Addis Ababa to highlight the problem and encourage people to combat such discrimination.

Gabon

Gabon is a republic dominated by a strong presidency. The Gabonese Democratic Party (PDG) has remained in power since 1968 and has circumscribed political choice. PDG leader El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba, president since 1967, was reelected for a seven-year term in a 1998 election marred by irregularities. President Bongo is the longest serving head of state in Africa. In July of 2003, parliament passed a constitutional amendment removing the provision that had limited the president to two terms in office.

The Government of Gabon's human rights record remained poor. Although there were some improvements, serious problems remained. Security forces reportedly beat and tortured prisoners and detainees, arbitrary arrest and detention remained concerns, and the judiciary remained subject to government influence. Forced labor, child labor and trafficking - particularly in children - remained problems.

Gabonese opposition parties remain small, disunited, under funded, and marginalized. New parties are difficult to form, and many older parties have been co-opted to support the ruling party. The United States maintains contacts and consults regularly with all major opposition groups in Gabon, monitoring and reporting on their ability to participate freely within the Gabonese Political system, while encouraging the Gabonese leadership to increase efforts on democratization.

Gabonese media outlets have been subject to government control and censorship, with some private newspapers and television stations shut down or suspended by the Government. Embassy officials discussed the suspension of a TV and radio station for allegedly violating community decency standards with the Gabonese Government, which later reversed the suspension.

The Gabonese legal system is slow, inefficient, and subject to corruption. The United States has encouraged greater transparency and respect for human rights in contacts with Gabonese law

enforcement agencies and also encouraged information sharing in weapons smuggling and child-trafficking.

Six mid-level law enforcement officers were sent to the United States for training that included human rights components. The U.S. Coast Guard conducted a training seminar for 30 Gabonese sailors on ship-boarding which included a block of instruction on respecting human rights while performing law enforcement activities.

Gabon had no known cases of restrictions placed on the free exercise of religion in 2004, but the Embassy maintains contact with all major religious groups in Gabon, including U.S. missionary groups, to support and reinforce the already tolerant environment in Gabon.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy in Gabon has made the problem of child trafficking a high priority. The Ambassador and Embassy personnel have continued to approach government officials at all levels, including parliamentary leaders, ministers, and the President, to persuade them of the need for concrete measures. The United States has also maintained close contacts with activists and the non-governmental organization (NGO) community concerned with this issue. The United States provided a vehicle for use in conjunction with a UN International Children's Emergency Fund-operated hot-line for the rescue of trafficking victims. A law prohibiting trafficking in persons was passed by the National Assembly in 2003; it was passed by the Senate and Cabinet, promulgated, and signed into law by the president late in 2004.

The United States made available a grant to a Gabonese NGO to conduct a seminar for community leaders, journalists, and public health officials in conjunction with the Minister of Health in the area of protecting the rights of HIV/AIDS victims and their family members.

The Gambia

The human rights situation in The Gambia improved significantly in recent years. United States engagement on human rights encouraged the more favorable environment. After President Yahya Jammeh took power in a non-violent coup in 1994, his military Government restricted freedoms, committed extrajudicial killings and harassed political opponents. There were credible allegations of torture and mistreatment at that time. Most foreign observers did not recognize the legitimacy of the 1996 presidential elections, which failed to meet democratic standards. However, in late 2001 and early 2002, The Gambia completed a full cycle of presidential, legislative and local elections, all of which were deemed by international observers to have been generally free and fair, despite some shortcomings. In March 2002, the United States determined that a democratically elected government had assumed office in The Gambia and thus lifted Section 508 of the Foreign Operations Appropriations Act that had imposed sanctions as a result of the 1994 coup. Effective January 1, 2003, the United States also granted The Gambia eligibility for the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) based on the criteria set forth in the law, including a commitment to democracy and human rights. AGOA eligibility was renewed in 2004 and again in 2005.

The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, there were problems in some areas. Security forces harassed or otherwise mistreated journalists, opposition members and detainees. Arbitrary arrest and detention were problems and there were reports of a case of incommunicado detention. Prolonged pre-trial detention was a problem. Detainees were denied fair and expeditious trials by a slow, inefficient and corrupt court system that was at times subject to executive branch pressure. The Government at times infringed on citizens' privacy rights. The Government limited freedom of speech and the press by intimidation and restrictive legislation. Some journalists practiced self-censorship. There was at least one attempt to restrict freedom of assembly in 2004. On December 22, organizers of a solidarity march by journalists to protest the

shooting death of newspaper publisher Deyda Hydera were told that the procession would only take place on condition that no one outside the media fraternity was asked to join. The march took place with paramilitary police on the roadside to prevent other sympathizers from joining in. Violence and discrimination against women were problems. The practice of female genital mutilation remained widespread and entrenched. Child labor persisted, mainly on family farms, and there were some instances of child prostitution. There were reports of trafficking, and the Government took positive steps to eradicate the problem, including the establishment of a multi-agency taskforce to combat trafficking in persons.

The United States established a frank, constructive dialogue with the Government of The Gambia on human rights and other sensitive topics using the successful presidential election in October 2001 as well as the legislative and local elections in 2002 as a foundation. The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy promotes three core values: democratic freedoms, the rule of law and human dignity. The United States emphasizes that the restoration of democratic rule and respect for human rights will bring the benefits of improved relations with the United States.

The United States uses all the opportunities at its disposal to promote the democratization process and respect for human rights in The Gambia. These include the public diplomacy program, various military assistance programs, Economic Support Funds, the Democracy and Human Rights Fund and the USAID regional programs for West Africa on HIV/AIDS, conflict resolution and business initiatives.

The United States continues to make strong efforts to promote and consolidate democracy in view of the upcoming 2006 presidential election and subsequent legislative elections. In 2004, the United States supported the Government decentralization program by providing training on good governance and the provisions of the new Local Government Act to about 100 newly elected ward council members. The United States helped the Independent Electoral Commission set up a website that will enable all Gambians, especially those

outside the country, to participate in all national elections. The United States is developing a program to assist all political parties and the IEC in preparing for the elections.

Because the legislature remains a relatively weak branch of the Government, the United States used a grant to support democracy by providing the offices of the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker, the clerk and the permanent staff with training, equipment, supplies and other improvements that will help increase the National Assembly's ability to play its full constitutional role.

United States engagement with the Government produced significant dividends in 2004 with the repealing of the controversial National Media Commission Act. While the Embassy public praised the Government for this move, it also expressed its concern at the passage of new laws that could negatively affect the country's independent media and urged the Government and the media to work together to ensure free and responsible news reporting.

United States officials have easy and frequent access to government officials at all levels. The United States also maintains contacts with the opposition, the media and civil society. It coordinates with other diplomatic missions, as appropriate, when addressing specific human rights concerns and issues of good governance.

United States advice on accountability and transparency in government likely contributed to the anti-corruption campaign begun in late 2003. This campaign has focused on the most egregious cases of corruption inside the Government and in business circles purportedly close to the Government. It has resulted in the dismissal and arrest of several allegedly corrupt officials, the conviction and imprisonment of a prominent political figure and the deportation of a highly influential business tycoon. The anti-corruption campaign, dubbed "Operation No Compromise" has continued with the setting up of a Presidential Commission of Inquiry to probe the assets of all former and serving ministers and senior government officials. The Commission's hearings have already led to further investigations into corrupt activities. Moreover,

the anti-corruption function has been added to the mandate of the Office of the Ombudsman.

The United States funded a civic education campaign being carried out by the National Council for Civic Education and disseminated by City Limits Radio. The campaign has been explaining the Gambian Constitution to the general public using simplified language. The "All About the Constitution" programs have reached a large audience as they are broadcast in the two main local dialects.

The United States resumed non-lethal military assistance immediately after Section 508 sanctions were lifted in an effort to foster more professional security forces and reduce the tendency for human rights abuses. Military officers are educated on their proper role in a democracy through programs such as Expanded International Military Education and Training, which highlights civil-military relations.

Religious harmony is the norm in The Gambia. To bolster religious freedom and understanding, the Embassy hosted several Iftaar dinners during Ramadan that were attended by many Muslim spiritual leaders as well as members of the minority Christian clergy. The Embassy also hosted a forum for Muslim clerics to discuss the International Visitors Program tour of the United States made by a prominent imam.

United States efforts to end discrimination against certain disadvantaged groups include funding for a national women's non-governmental organization (NGO) and the local chapter of the Special Olympics. The women's NGO project is aimed at orienting council members on their role and responsibilities under the 1999-2009 National Policy for the Advancement of Gambian Women, which will enable them to participate more fully in national decision-making processes. The United States is supporting the introduction of the Special Olympics curriculum into schools at all levels as a way to encourage disabled children.

The United States has provided sorely needed assistance for workshops and training seminars, purchasing office furniture and equipment for an

NGO that has been effective in creating awareness about sexual exploitation, which is one of the most serious challenges to children's health, education and general well being.

Guinea

The Republic of Guinea held presidential elections on December 21, 2003, reelecting President Lansana Conte to a third term. After all major opposition parties boycotted the elections because of concerns over the transparency and fairness of the electoral process, President Conte ran virtually unopposed. A few arbitrary detentions of politicians and military personnel occurred in the period prior to elections. The Government of Guinea's human rights record remains poor, with areas of serious concern. Political rights and freedom of speech remain curtailed. Although there are no political prisoners in the country and serious violations have been few, human rights violations continue to occur. There were four unlawful killings by security forces during 2004. Civilian and military security forces beat and otherwise abused civilians. Members of the security forces committed abuses, often with impunity. Prison conditions were inhumane and life threatening. Arbitrary arrest and prolonged pretrial detention were problems. The Government restricted freedom of speech, the press, assembly and association and infringed on freedom of movement. Violence and societal discrimination against women, prostitution of young girls, female genital mutilation (FGM), ethnic discrimination, child labor and reports of trafficking of women and children continued.

The United States has a multi-faceted human rights and democracy strategy in Guinea, including programs tailored for specific aspects of human rights and democracy. It also includes widespread communication about human rights and democracy with various levels of Guinean society, including the Government, political parties, civil society, local government and the military.

The United States influences the democratic process at the grassroots level by training citizens, locally elected officials and representatives of gov-

ernment technical services and from the top-down by facilitating dialogue and building capacity to respond to citizen demands at the national level. The United States supports efforts to liberalize the media and to promote civil society through civic education. The United States funds activities to increase citizen participation and promote better and more transparent governance at the local level. The United States also funds activities promoting dialogue between political parties and encouraging greater participation of women and youth in political parties. The United States assistance targets three areas; increased citizen participation in local governance, support for improved political processes and capacity-building for civil society organizations to provide civic education and better advocate for citizen interests with the administration.

The U.S. two-year program for Strengthening Civil Society fortifies civil society organizations and builds coalitions. The initiative supports facilitating dialogue and advocacy for reform on critical issues of national interest. The program also provides training in citizens' rights and responsibilities through civic education campaigns.

The Ambassador consistently presents human rights and democracy as a cornerstone of U.S. policy in Guinea, emphasizing the need for progress on these issues in his speeches and meetings with interlocutors. The Ambassador continued to urge the Government, opposition parties and civil society to begin earnest political dialogue to consolidate and build democracy and stability in Guinea. The United States consistently reminded government interlocutors about their obligation under multiple international treaties and agreements concerning refugees, and praised them for hosting up to 700,000 refugees over the last 14 years. In addition, the United States retains close ties and meets regularly with opposition parties, political dissidents and local and international human rights non-governmental organizations.

The United States promotes democratic values in virtually all its presentations, Fulbright scholar exchanges, and engagement with the media and library. This year, they showcased a humorous, yet incisive play on corruption by a group of university students.

The United States Local Governance program improves local governance through active citizen participation. Technical assistance and training is provided to assist development planning and strengthen leadership of local governments. Civil society organizations are also strengthened in cooperative and business development to foster economic viability and to improve their advocacy for transparency.

The United States Budget Support Initiative provides budgetary assistance to the Government. A Treasury official, placed within the Government Ministry of Finance, provides technical training and support, and advocacy for a more transparent budget process and for budget plans that are responsive to the needs of the people.

United States public outreach programs are based on respect for the right of individuals to express their views freely, the right of the public to have access to information, especially information about government actions, policies and programs, and the right of a people to choose their leaders. These programs encourage open discussion on all topics relating to United States - Guinean relations and particularly American concepts of democracy and human rights. United States support for democracy and human rights is also expressed by sending Guineans on International Visitors Programs related to human rights and democracy.

In 2002, the United States provided military training to a full battalion (approximately 800 troops) from the Guinean Armed Forces. One full week of the training was devoted to human rights, treatment of refugees and other non-combatants and the role of a military in a democracy. The training reinforced these themes throughout the six-month program. In 2003 and 2004, the United States continued to emphasize the benefits of good governance and a responsible military through numerous engagement activities. The training modules present the Guinean military with materials to demonstrate its proper role within a democratic society. To reinforce the training, the civil-military seminars and modules target Guinea's military leadership to build appreciation of the rule of law and human rights.

The Guinean Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report, and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion; however, the Government reportedly favors Muslims over non-Muslims.

Relations between the various religions generally are amicable. However, in some areas, strong social pressure discourages non-Muslims from openly practicing their religion, and the Government tends to defer to local Muslim sensibilities.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights.

The United States has funded projects promoting the rights of women, students and teachers and victims of HIV/AIDS, combating FGM, and providing training in conflict resolution and responsible media over the past two years. The United States has also funded projects researching the role of the press in local elections and providing Internet access to legal documents.

Funding continued to flow from United States for the multi-year International Labor Organization project to eliminate the worst forms of child labor from the cocoa sector of commercial agriculture. Guinea is one of five countries participating in the regional project.

The United States three-year Basic Education on Human Rights and Responsibilities plan empowers human rights based education in 120 rural villages and urban centers, using methodology and materials adapted to the socio-economic context of the participants. The United States sponsored two government officials for anti-trafficking consultations in the United States as part of the International Visitor's Program.

Guinea Bissau

At the beginning of 2004 the human rights and democracy situation in Guinea-Bissau was gradually improving. The Transition Government, formed after the September 2003 coup that ousted autocratic President Kumba Yala, made some improvements, including allowing the Supreme Court to elect its leadership and resume hearing cases and allowing civil society, labor and the press to freely assemble and express opinions.

March elections brought a democratic government to power, led by Prime Minister Carlos Gomes Junior, who took office in May. The parliament, which had ceased to function in November 2002, took up normal business. The Gomes Junior Government actively engaged Bissau-Guineans and the international community in a dialogue aimed at restoring democracy and protecting human rights. As illustrated by the October 6, 2004, military mutiny, during which time soldiers murdered the Chief of Defense and his aide, serious problems threaten these efforts. The primary threat to human rights and democracy in Guinea-Bissau continued to be a bloated, outdated military that does not always respect civilian authority. 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. The other major obstacles to human rights and democracy in Guinea-Bissau were a weak economy and fragile democratic institutions.

With extremely limited resources (no funding available in 2004 for bilateral USAID, Democracy and Human Rights Fund, Special Self-Help, or other programs), the U.S. strategy for supporting human rights and democracy is to encourage free and fair elections and support the democratic Government of Guinea-Bissau; strengthen nascent democratic institutions such as the parliament and courts; and encourage the Bissau-Guinean military toward reform and respect for civilian authority.

The United States responded to the Bissau-Guinean military's undemocratic behavior by care-

fully coordinating with the international community. Following the October 6 mutiny, the international community, represented by the UN Secretary General's Representative in Guinea-Bissau, the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries, and the Economic Community of West African States, was best placed to help the Government of Guinea-Bissau ease tensions in the country. The United States supported these efforts by sharing information with international partners and preparing public statements in support of Guinea-Bissau's democratic Government.

The United States also responded to the mutiny by identifying the appropriate long-term strategy toward the Government, the military and civil society. The Gomes Junior Government is widely recognized as the most competent and well-meaning Government Guinea-Bissau has had in 30 years since independence from Portugal. The Government requires support to retain legitimacy, gain full control of the military, and develop the economy to promote stability.

Since the 2003 coup, the U.S. Ambassador to Guinea-Bissau and other Dakar-based officials met frequently with the Transition Government, pressing the Bissau-Guineans to hold legislative elections. The U.S. Embassy in Dakar, Senegal, sent a team to observe the March legislative elections and concurred with the other international election observers' assessment of the elections as free and fair. In recognition of this democratic advance, the United States lifted bilateral sanctions against Guinea-Bissau that had been imposed following the 2003 coup. Through frequent face-to-face contact with the new leaders of Guinea-Bissau, the United States now continues to remind the Bissau-Guineans of their commitment to hold a presidential election in 2005. The United States also urges political, military, and ethnic leaders not to interfere with the presidential election.

The United States has funded a program to strengthen Guinea-Bissau's Parliament. In 2004, the United States re-initiated the International Visitors Program in Guinea-Bissau, sending a Guinean-Bissau participant on a well-received regional program on democracy and citizen partic-

ipation. This allowed the participant to make contacts in the United States for bolstering human rights activities in Guinea-Bissau as well as to share experiences with participants from Angola and other countries that have faced challenges similar to those in Guinea-Bissau. The participant, a human rights activist and lawyer, continues to be a strong voice for human rights and democracy.

The United States has renewed efforts to maintain working contacts with these local media outlets by providing them with regular press releases and information. Guinea-Bissau has several newspapers read by a small group of educated elite, numerous community radio stations and a local television station. Unlike in previous years, Guinea-Bissau's media operated without government restriction or interference.

The rule of law has improved significantly since September 2003, with the presidency no longer impeding the work of parliament, courts, the Government and the press. However, weaknesses remain, including a military that sometimes operates outside its legal authority, unprofessional police who sometimes abuse their authority and courts that do not have sufficient resources or capacity to act. Also, in many rural areas state institutions do not exist. In these areas, locals occasionally resort to traditional justice or vigilantism instead of formal legal remedies.

The United States is particularly concerned about Bissau-Guinean women and children's rights. FGM is still a common practice in many parts of Guinea-Bissau. One local non-governmental organization has achieved some success in sensitizing local communities about the dangers of this practice, providing alternative means of initiation and social acceptance for women and girls and providing alternative employment for those who practice FGM.

As the aggressor in the October 6 mutiny, Guinea-Bissau's military requires reform and downsizing to transform it into a "republican army." The United States is pursuing a strategy of cooperation aimed at pushing the Bissau-Guinean military toward reforms and away from de-stabilizing activities. The United States is planning programs

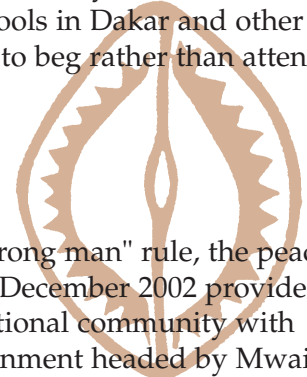
on civil-military relations and military justice to teach the Bissau- Guinean military how to behave in a democratic society. The United States can begin implementing these programs as soon as the Government formally indicates its political will to cooperate in these areas.

Animism, Islam and several denominations of Christianity have followers in Guinea-Bissau. Relations among these groups are good and there is no evidence of government interference in the free practice of religion. The United States maintains ties with representatives of all these groups. In fact, the United States hosted events to bring Guinea-Bissau's Muslim community together in 2004.

In all employment sectors in Guinea-Bissau there are occasional strikes concerning wages, due to Guinea-Bissau's dire economic situation. Though evidence is only anecdotal, many Bissau-Guinean boys sent to Quranic schools in Dakar and other regional cities are forced to beg rather than attend school.

Kenya

Following 24 years of "strong man" rule, the peaceful political transition in December 2002 provided Kenyans and the international community with hope that the new Government headed by Mwai Kibaki would enact meaningful reforms to create a new constitution, combat corruption, jump-start the economy, and improve human rights. Few of these hopes have been fulfilled. The Government has passed anti-corruption legislation and removed some allegedly corrupt judges. The Government successfully prosecuted, and then released, one mid-level official for corruption, but to date, there have been no arrests or prosecutions of senior officials involved in any number of large-scale corruption cases. The constitutional review process is mired in political in-fighting, unemployment is close to 50 percent and more than one-half of all Kenyans continue to live on less than one dollar a day. Despite some progress, Kenya's human rights record remains troubled. The Government has made some improvements in prison conditions, but overcrowding, long periods



of pre-trial detention, and physical abuse of prisoners by guards continued to be major problems. The police still arrest people arbitrarily, abuse detainees, and occasionally commit unlawful killings. Although the Government arrested and prosecuted a number of police officers for abuses, most officers who committed abuses were neither investigated nor punished. Female genital mutilation, child labor and trafficking in persons (TIP) also continue to be problems.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy consists of combating corruption, resolving conflict, and strengthening electoral processes, rule of law, civil society and the media. To build on the success of the 2002 general election, the United States continued to support the electoral process in Kenya. The United States, through USAID, continues to work with IFES, which received a grant during the reporting period to improve the capacity of the Electoral Commission of Kenya (ECK). The program focuses on improving the ECK's use of information technology in administering elections and in ECK internal operations. Embassy staff continued to use private meetings and public engagements with Kenyan government officials to urge improvements in democratic institutions and human rights practices.

A cornerstone of U.S. human rights and democracy strategy in Kenya is strengthening the rule of law. A key objective is the adoption of a new Constitution (to replace the 1963 authoritarian constitution) that includes a better balance of authority among the executive, legislative and judicial branches and provides for devolution of authority to sub-national units of government. During a visit to Kenya, Secretary of State Powell urged the Government of Kenya to follow through with its promise to implement a new Constitution.

In 2004, the United States continued to assist civil society organizations. The International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) has been working for the past three years under a U.S. Government grant. The ICJ continued to utilize public perceptions of the Kenyan judiciary as a lobbying tool to advocate for judicial reforms as well as press for an empowered and independent judiciary in the new Constitution. Through a U.S. Government

grant awarded in 2003, the Federation of Women Lawyers continued their work during the reporting period to improve the legislative and policy framework for women's rights. In 2004, the Embassy supported the creation of a Resident Legal Advisor to work with specialized prosecution units in the Kenyan Government targeting anti-corruption and counter-terrorism investigations and trials. The United States was also an active partner in the Government-led sector wide reform program known as the Governance, Justice and Law and Order Sector (GJLOS). This five-year initiative promotes respect for justice, integrity, human rights and the rule of law.

In 2004, the United States also provided assistance to help strengthen the Kenyan Parliament, in particular parliament's committee system, its capacity for analysis, investigation and decision-making, and its links with civil society. To this end, the United States provided a grant to the State University of New York. Now in its fourth year of implementation, the program strengthens parliamentarians' ability to effectively represent the will of the Kenyan people, participate in policy reform and serve as a check on the executive. This program was complemented by grants to civil society organizations, which provided technical assistance and research to parliamentarians. For example, the Institute of Economic Affairs received a grant to improve parliamentarians' ability to effectively analyze the budget. Before these programs began, the Kenyan Parliament was seen as a rubber stamp. It now acts more independently and is increasingly serving as a check on the executive.

A closely related U.S. objective is helping Kenya make further progress in the fight against corruption. In 2004, the Government completed its appointments to the Kenya Anti-Corruption Commission, which has the mandate to investigate and root out corruption. A U.S. Government grant to Transparency International's Kenya chapter was in its fourth year of implementation. Similarly, the Center for Governance and Development was in the second year of a two-year U.S. grant to address corruption and bad governance in Kenya by working with the parliament and stakeholders to help draft legislation to further the democratic process.

The U.S. Embassy, with considerable support from U.S. Government agencies, supports press freedom and other democracy and human rights objectives through a number of its annual programs. In Fiscal Year 2004 more than one-half of the Embassy's annual allotment of 20 international exchange visitors participated in programs that fit broadly under this rubric, including two East African regional small group projects. Similarly, Fulbright Fellowship grants supported three Kenyan and two American scholars doing research or pursuing degrees in peace studies, conflict resolution, women's rights or legal systems. The Embassy's Information Resource Center featured outreach projects on responsible media, U.S. courts, trafficking in persons and state and local government. In 2004, with Embassy support, the new Kenyan Government established a press spokesman's office to help articulate government policy and field requests for access to government information.

After a temporary decline in the early months of 2004, ethnic violence—some of it politically motivated—increased again in late 2004 and early 2005. In addition, inter-communal violence occasionally crosses borders with Uganda, Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia. To address this problem, the Government has been helping warring factions in Sudan and Somalia resolve their differences and has been working to promote national unity within the context of non-ethnically based political diversity. Within its conflict management program, the United States supported the Addis Ababa-based Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN). Activities by CEWARN activities in Kenya have focused on building capacity among government and non-governmental organizations to address conflict in the cross-border area of Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan and Uganda (the Karamoja cluster), and in the cross-border area of Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia (the Somali cluster).

Two of the State Department's Human Rights and Democracy Fund (HRDF) awards implemented in 2004 were for resolution of conflict among cattle raiders in the Northern Rift Valley and among warring ethnic groups in the Tana River area of Coast Province. Three additional HRDF grants

were awarded to grassroots organizations in Kenya. These awards targeted improvements in the legal and human rights of young women slum dwellers in Nairobi, Maasai women in southern Kenya and Muslim women in Nairobi. Four additional HRDF grants got underway in the fall of 2004. Three address women's rights, the other conflict resolution in North Eastern Province. In addition, the State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor drew upon the Human Rights and Democracy Fund to support a women's political empowerment project that equipped women candidates in Kenya with the skills necessary to run effective political campaigns.

The Ambassador and other Embassy officials met frequently with religious and other civic leaders to foster an atmosphere of tolerance and understanding. The Embassy maintains regular contact with a diverse groups of religious communities and utilizes these contacts to promote dialogue on religious freedom throughout the country.

Another focus of U.S. Government attention was on labor practices. The U.S.-funded American Center for International Labor Solidarity (ACILS) helped local trade unions strengthen capacity and consolidate gains achieved in 2003. Workers in Kenya's Export Processing Zones (EPZs) are now free to join unions and the first-ever collective bargaining agreement in an EPZ was signed with the assistance of ACILS.

The United States also funded the International Labor Organization to implement the Time Bound Program for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor. The program will identify, withdraw and rehabilitate children working under hazardous conditions and provide families with viable alternatives to child labor. The Solidarity Center-Kenya, in conjunction with Kenya's Coalition of Trade Unions, received a grant from the United States to focus on raising awareness within trade unions of the human trafficking problem in Kenya.

The Embassy designed the various components in its strategy to be complementary. Better governmental checks and balances and an improved judi-

cial system help combat corruption and create a more attractive environment for badly needed economic investment. Together the components of the U.S. democracy and human rights strategy in Kenya are helping the country achieve better governance and a better way of life for Kenyans.

Liberia

Liberia is a republic. The current National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL), which is not an elected government, was agreed upon as part of the Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) signed in Accra, Ghana, on August 18, 2003. The CPA followed months of intense fighting between the troops of the former Government of Liberia, and the rebel groups Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL). The deployment of international peacekeepers by the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), on October 1, 2003, signaled the effective end to the war and began a new era in Liberia. Former President Charles Taylor stepped down on August 11, 2003, and his vice president and successor stepped down on October 14, 2003. The NTGL was established that day and is headed by Chairman Gyude Bryant.

Under the Taylor Government, the state security forces (military, paramilitary, militia and police) committed numerous, serious abuses, including unlawful killings, excessive use of force, and torture. Police officers committed arbitrary arrests and detentions and beat persons in custody. Prison conditions were extremely harsh and life threatening. Fair and expeditious trials were problematic due to an inefficient, understaffed and under-funded judiciary, which was dominated by the executive branch and subject to corruption. The abuse of children, particularly in the form of forced conscription as child soldiers, was a problem. Women were raped and forcibly conscripted. LURD and MODEL also committed many abuses.

In 2004, although many of the former practices of the police have been curtailed, some serious abuses continued under the NTGL. The NTGL did not

have much presence beyond the capital and its immediate environs until the second half of the year. Through the first quarter of 2004, LURD and MODEL controlled significant towns and territories within Liberia. Liberians not under the protective umbrella of UNMIL still faced abuse by elements of LURD, MODEL and former government troops. There were reports of arbitrary arrests and detentions, extrajudicial killings, rapes and other abuses.

In April, demobilization, disarmament, reintegration and rehabilitation (DDRR) of ex-combatants began in earnest. By June, UNMIL had deployed throughout Liberia with its full complement of up to 15,000 peacekeepers and 1,100 international police (CivPol). Through CivPol, UNMIL is currently training and supporting an interim police force, since the Liberian National Police (LNP) force has been disarmed. UNMIL is also training a new Liberian Police Service. On October 31, DDRR exercises were completed, and on November 3, LURD, MODEL and ex-GOL were formally dissolved as military entities.

In support of national elections for Liberia's transition to democracy, the United States has awarded grants to various programs run through implementing partners. These programs are designed to help strengthen political parties, support voter registration, train polling place officials, and otherwise support preparations for elections scheduled for October 11 2005. The United States, through USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives, is providing a grant to help develop the capacity of the NTGL and civil society organizations to encourage transparency and good governance and to promote human rights. The United States is contributing funds to activities designed to strengthen democratic institutions and rule of law. The United States is funding a program that establishes community development committees and community radio stations.

The United States has highlighted corruption-related issues repeatedly and publicly throughout the peace implementation process and in meetings with the NTGL and other interested parties. The United States has supported the establishment of a

Treasury Department Residential Advisor Program to work with the Ministry of Finance, the Central Bank and other relevant ministries to encourage transparency and the fight against corruption.

Since many of the human rights abuses occurred within the security and justice sectors, U.S. strategy focused on assisting UNMIL and the NTGL with DDRR and on training the Liberian police force. The United States is also addressing human rights issues by concentrating programs in areas such as political party development and the education of the public on civic responsibility and human rights.

United States officials routinely highlighted publicly the need for improvements in human rights conditions. As part of peace implementation, U.S. officials worked privately with Liberian officials, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other organizations to identify areas of concern and encourage systemic reforms. Following the departure of Taylor and the signing of the CPA, 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 UNMIL and other implementing partners and donors.

The United States is supporting a wide variety of programs designed to consolidate the peace and foster respect for human rights. The United States is providing significant assistance to Liberia through, among others, USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, Office of Food For Peace, Office of Transition Initiatives, as well as through USAID development assistance.

The centerpieces of the U.S. efforts to create a sustainable peace are the Liberia Community Infrastructure Program (LCIP) and Women and Child Soldier Rehabilitation and Reintegration Program (WCRR), which are designed to provide an alternative to the industry of war and its contingent human rights abuses for the ex-combatants and others. LCIP is designed to promote the social reintegration of more than 20,000 ex-combatants and others. At year's end, more than 8,000 ex-combatants were participating in the program. The United States is also directing funds toward

assisting up to 10,000 former child soldiers and women ex-combatants. WCRR is being implemented through cooperative agreements with the International Rescue Committee, Christian Children's Fund and Save the Children UK. The United States contributed to DDRR initially through a contribution to the UN DDRR Trust Fund as well.

The United States is directing monies for rehabilitation of the forest sector and is providing another large grant to help the NTGL install the Kimberly Process, an international certification process designed to prevent the trade of so-called "conflict diamonds" for weapons.

Madagascar

President Marc Ravalomanana was elected in 2001 but did not take office until May 2002 due to disputed election results that led to widespread violence. Democracy has been consolidated through parliamentary and municipal elections over the past two years. The Government generally respects the rights of its citizens; however there were still problems in some areas. Arbitrary arrests and detention occurred. Journalists practice self-censorship and the Government at times limited freedom of assembly.

The Embassy advanced democracy and human rights through its monthly Human Rights Working Group (HRWG), democracy and governance activities, and support of technical assistance programs with special Ambassadorial funds. These activities reached a broad cross-section of the Malagasy population. The Human Rights Working Group conducted outreach designed to improve public understanding of basic human rights. Embassy programs strengthened civil society, facilitated national reconciliation and supported women's rights. The Embassy worked in close coordination with the Government of Madagascar to combat trafficking in persons, and funded other grassroots human rights initiatives through the Ambassador's Human Rights and Democracy Fund.

The Embassy continues to coordinate and chair the monthly HRWG. In 2004, the HRWG

remained a significant forum for official and civil society to discuss wide-ranging human rights issues. The standard format is a focused presentation on a single subject, followed by an opportunity for attendees to introduce and discuss matters of current interest. At each meeting, the Embassy provided additional information on U.S. policy that pertained to the day's main topic(s). Topics discussed during the year included freedom of the press, freedom of assembly and guaranteeing children's rights through nationwide birth registration. In December, the HRWG conducted a series of awareness and educational activities for International Human Rights Week. The HRWG also has been active in lobbying the Government of Madagascar on human rights. For example, the Malagasy Constitution requires the Government to create apolitical organizations that promote and protect human rights. However, the governmental National Commission for Human Rights has been inactive since the 2002 political crisis, when its members' terms expired. Throughout 2004, the HRWG actively lobbied for the Government to reinstate the commission.

The Embassy strengthened the capacity of civil society groups, including organizations that deal directly with human rights issues such as violence against women and freedom of information. The Embassy also worked with leading civil society organizations to establish the country's first National Civil Society Organization Platform. The platform's objective is to ensure better coordination, encourage greater communication, and strengthen the voice of civil society as an advocate and government partner. One component of the new platform deals specifically with human rights.

The Embassy continues to address ethnic tension by supporting a conflict resolution program known as Fihavanana, from the Malagasy word for solidarity and community consensus. During 2004, Fihavanana activities were implemented in all of the country's six provinces and ranged from grassroots meetings to inter-provincial teleconference debates. Reconciliation activities included creation of the country's first Christian-Muslim platform for dialogue in the province of Mahajanga, one of the most religiously and ethnically diverse areas. In 2004 a "lessons learned"

assessment of the Fihavanana program revealed that lack of access to information made citizens vulnerable to political manipulation. The Embassy intensified efforts to increase information access to address this source of conflict.

In 2004, Madagascar was selected as a focus country for the Women's Legal Rights Initiative in the Africa region. The U.S. Government commissioned the nation's first study on women's knowledge of their rights. Violence against women, a topic rarely discussed in Malagasy society, was highlighted as a common occurrence. This was a very important step as the survey showed that Malagasy women unanimously asserted that violence against women is a "private affair" that is shameful to reveal in public, and local authorities typically consider domestic violence a personal matter, only intervening when the "peace is disturbed."

In June 2004, Madagascar was placed on the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Tier Two Watch List. Working in conjunction with the Government of Madagascar, the Embassy developed a national action plan to combat TIP. At the Embassy's request, the President's Chief of Staff established a special inter-ministerial committee devoted to combating trafficking. This committee adopted the Embassy action plan verbatim as Madagascar's anti-trafficking program. Subsequently, the Government of Madagascar began a comprehensive review of existing anti-TIP legislation, initiated an awareness campaign, increased enforcement of laws barring minors from nightclubs, and increased efforts to rehabilitate child prostitutes in "Welcome Centers." During the year the International Labor Organization launched a countrywide multi-year project to combat the worst forms of child labor, specifically in commercial sexual exploitation, domestic work, quarry mining and the rural and urban informal sectors.

The Embassy promoted key human rights through Democracy and Human Rights Fund II (DHRF II) grants. In 2004, DHRF II enabled Malagasy non-governmental organizations across the country to initiate programs advocating the rights of the physically handicapped, protecting child rights, and combating sexual tourism. The Embassy's

Public Affairs section sent several Malagasy candidates to the United States under the International Visitors Program to study issues such as grassroots democracy for young leaders, the role of the media in the United States, and the American judicial system.

Mauritania

Mauritania is a highly centralized Islamic republic dominated by a strong presidency. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania's human rights record remained poor in 2004. Although there were improvements in some areas, several problems remained.

Democratic institutions remained rudimentary and the Government circumscribed citizens' ability to change their government. Some members of the security forces reportedly used excessive force, beat or otherwise abused detainees and used arbitrary arrest and detention and illegal searches. The Government continued to refuse to officially recognize some non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and human rights organizations.

Discrimination against women continued. Female genital mutilation (FGM) remained a widespread problem, despite some government efforts to halt the practice. Despite government efforts to eradicate the practice, local and international reports continued to say that slavery in the form of involuntary servitude persisted in some areas, and that former slaves continued to work for former masters. Child labor in the informal sector was common. The Government ratified a revised Labor Code during the year that imposed substantial criminal penalties for forced labor and related practices.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy in Mauritania is to promote democratization and respect for fundamental human rights, develop civil society and responsible media, promote religious freedom and tolerance and combat forced labor, child labor and trafficking in persons. The United States raised human rights and democracy on a high-level with the Government throughout 2004. In his April 2004 visit to Mauritania, Congressman James Gibbons discussed the U.S. Government's continued interest in human rights

with several Mauritanian government Ministers. Then-Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Lorne Craner raised human rights concerns with the Mauritanian Ambassador to the United States. In addition, a Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs visited Mauritania in January 2004, and raised human rights issues with Mauritanian officials, in particular trafficking in persons and how to promote democratic development. Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Michael Kozak raised human rights and democracy issues with the Foreign Minister of Mauritania on his visit to the United States this year.

United States funds are also being used to implement a program by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) to support the development of democratic institutions in Mauritania through the Consortium for Elections and Political Processes. NDI's program is aimed at improving the institutional capacity of NGOs. Activities by NDI will assist NGOs to become more engaged in democratic development programming and to serve as agents of change.

The U.S. Embassy celebrated International Press Freedom Day on May 3rd, for the first time in Mauritania. A day-long conference, attended by senior staff from a wide variety of local newspapers, highlighted the rights and responsibilities of an independent press. A United States-sponsored reporters' writing competition attracted over 40 essays from a local press corps that includes less than 20 regular newspapers. These essays discussed the merits of democracy, freedom of the press and social and religious tolerance.

The United States funded a project to compile all of Mauritania's laws, for the first time, into a single reference book which was then distributed to lawyers nationwide. The United States sponsored the participation of reporters from two independent Mauritanian newspapers in a 2004 International Visitors Program (IVP) program on "The Democratic Process" conducted by the State Department's Education and Cultural Affairs Bureau. Both reporters followed the run-up to the U.S. presidential elections and, upon their return

to Mauritania, briefed their counterparts on the electoral process in the United States.

In January 2004 the United States sponsored a seminar on civil-military relations. Seminar moderators challenged participants, including senior military leaders and the Secretary-General of the Defense Ministry, to understand each other's perspectives and roles in a developing democracy. The program was well received and publicized, including at least two news stories on national television and radio. The United States reviewed human rights records of members of military and security forces who participated in training conducted by U.S. civilian or military personnel. United States 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, and of requiring human rights training for security and military personnel.

Officials from the United States and various U.S. visitors discussed religious freedom and tolerance with senior government officials and religious leaders. The United States also engaged religious leaders in the fight against HIV/AIDS, developing a close working relationship that also provided opportunities to discuss and promote religious tolerance. The United States sponsored a dialogue between generations of Mauritians, moderated by several imams, in which prominent Mauritians discussed issues of terrorism, religious tolerance, and the applicability of Islam to these concerns. In March 2004, the U.S. Embassy sponsored a Muslim professor at an American university to speak before several audiences and the press about religious freedom in the United States, including that enjoyed by followers of Islam. In May 2004, the United States sponsored an American professor to speak about democracy and the rule of law.

Democracy and Human Rights Fund grants gave the United States the opportunity to sponsor assistance projects in the areas of workers' rights, combating FGM and violence against women, and the victim care and retraining for young female vic-

tims of household violence. Throughout the year, U.S. officials encouraged the Government to adopt and implement key international agreements on trafficking of persons. The Bureau for Combating Traffic In Persons provided a \$180,000 grant to train Mauritanian law enforcement officials in anti-trafficking in persons techniques and methodology, and to compile, translate and disseminate to Mauritanian legal officials all of the country's laws and conventions against human trafficking, slavery, and forced labor. United States officials aggressively investigated reports and allegations of slavery and slavery-related practices. Embassy officials urged the Government to engage the International Labor Organization (ILO) in a technical mission to assist Mauritania in implementing its obligations under the ILO conventions against forced labor. The ILO mission completed its work this year and the report is pending. Embassy officials also emphasized the need for the Government to make statistical evidence of its anti-trafficking activities publicly available. In July 2004, Mauritania ratified and publicly promulgated a revised Labor Code that significantly upgraded workers' rights in some areas, in line with current ILO standards. This new Labor Code included clear definitions of forced labor and related crimes, as well as applicable criminal penalties for those found guilty of such violations.

Mozambique

Mozambique has made progress in strengthening its democratic institutions, but the country remains vulnerable to corruption and human rights safeguards are weak. In December 2004, Mozambique held its third general (presidential and legislative) election. President Joaquim Chissano, who had held office since 1986, did not run for re-election. Armando Guebuza of the FRELIMO party was elected president with 64 percent of the vote. Mozambique under FRELIMO has moved away from its Marxist beginnings to become an increasingly open society. The trend toward openness generally continued in 2004, as evidenced by greater freedom of the press and media coverage during the election. Government performance remained weak in other areas, however, such as independence of the court system



Maputo, Mozambique

Election trainer giving instructions to voters.

AP Photo

and anti-corruption efforts. Human rights abuses were not widespread, but there were notable areas of concern such as discrimination against people with HIV/AIDS and trafficking of women and children to South Africa.

In 2004, to help Mozambique improve its democratic and human rights performance, the U.S. Embassy carried out a range of programs: strengthening Mozambique's electoral process, supporting anti-corruption efforts with key government agencies, and providing support to upgrade the police and military, among other initiatives.

The December 2004 general election was the focal point for U.S.-funded democratization programs throughout the year. To strengthen Mozambique's ability to establish credible election results, the U.S. provided support to the Carter Center and other non-governmental organizations, in coordination with Mozambican civil society, to establish a parallel vote tabulation system. Also, Mozambican election observers received training through U.S. supported NGOs. The U.S. Embassy sent 17 election observers to eight provinces and provided funding for Carter Center observation efforts.

To strengthen Mozambique's democratic institutions, the U.S. Embassy increased its emphasis on anti-corruption programs, including activities with both the Government and civil society. The U.S. worked to upgrade the Anti-Corruption Unit (ACU) in the Attorney General's office by providing funds to train prosecutors and to establish new offices in Beira and Nampula, the second and third largest cities in Mozambique (previously the ACU was confined to the capital, Maputo). The Embassy also provided a local NGO with a grant to carry out a two year anti-corruption campaign, with a focus on mass media activity and the formation of anti-corruption reporting centers in major cities. The U.S. Embassy used its Democracy and Human Rights Fund (DHRF) to support a local NGO in drafting a Freedom of Information Act for Mozambique, since the very limited amount of public information available makes it possible to hide government corruption.

Mozambique made progress on press freedom issues, as evidenced by very open general election coverage and the willingness of journalists to cover politically sensitive cases. Many television, radio, and print media news outlets still cannot be classified as fully independent from government or political party control. The U.S. Embassy used funding to support greater independence through grants to radio and print media organizations.

The U.S. Embassy continued its activities to foster a more professional police force, which is expected to be less prone to commit human rights abuses. The U.S. Embassy provided assistance for management training and curriculum development to Mozambique's Police Sciences Academy (ACIPOL). This help was provided primarily by a long-term International Criminal Investigative Training Program (ICITAP) advisor. Funding also was used to upgrade facilities at the academy. The first ACIPOL class graduated in 2004. The U.S. Government provided assistance for ten high-ranking police officers and ten prosecutors from the Attorney General's office to participate in courses at the International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) regional center in Botswana.

There was progress in Mozambique in 2004 in protecting women's rights. In August the Government approved a family law that clarifies property and child custody rights for women, particularly women in common-law marriages. The U.S. Embassy used DHRF program assistance to support the work of NGOs focused on human rights issues confronting women. The U.S. Embassy used the International Visitors Program (IVP) to send a group to the United States to participate in a "Women as Political Leaders" seminar. The U.S. Embassy also used the IVP to send a children's human rights advocate to participate in a trafficking in persons course in the U.S. Upon the return of the IVP participant, the U.S. Embassy organized a human rights seminar for members of civil society.

In 2004, the U.S. Government continued working to improve labor relations in Mozambique by establishing a formal labor mediation program. The U.S. Embassy also hosted seminars on Mozambique's labor law that included participation by all stakeholders.

Nigeria

Notwithstanding the elaborate legal structures in place, Nigeria has not made much progress on human rights since multiparty general elections in 2003 that were marred by fraud and irregularities. The Government's record on democracy, the rule of law, corruption, trafficking in persons, preven-

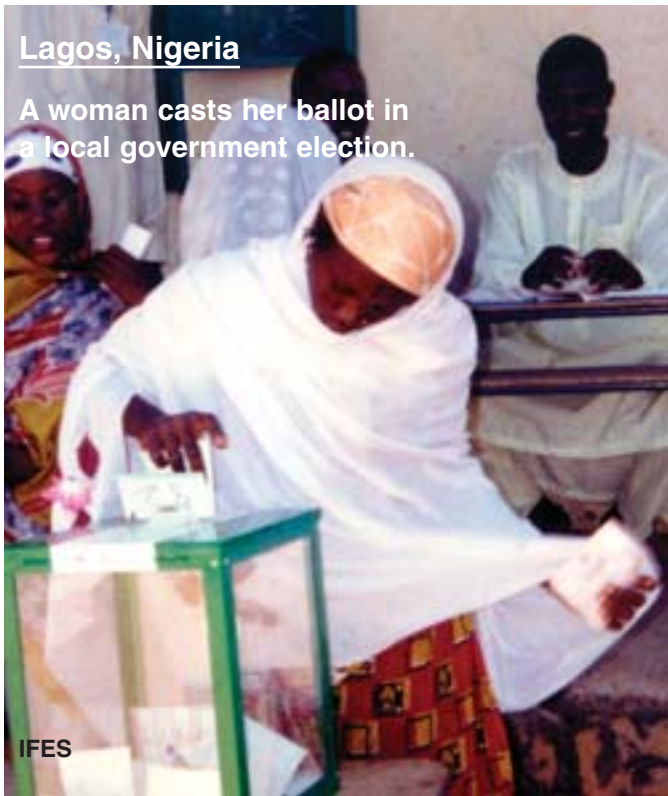


tion of internal conflict and the welfare of its citizens remained problematic, although overt violence related to electoral politics declined in 2004 compared to the previous year. Nationwide local government elections during 2004 were largely ignored, with turnout of less than ten percent but announced results of often more than fifty percent of registered voters. In general, the announced results overwhelmingly favored whichever party was in power in each state.

Credible judicial reviews of challenged results from the 2003 elections were often hampered by lack of cooperation from the executive branch. 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, and is a participant in the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI). The Government established institutions to tackle rampant corruption, but as yet those institutions have not brought trials of senior officials to either conviction or acquittal. Religious and ethnic divisions beset Nigeria, and the Government sometimes has been as much a part of the problem as of the solution. Growing poverty and poor governance in many areas around the country have added tension to the political climate.

Lagos, Nigeria

A woman casts her ballot in a local government election.



The United States human rights and democracy strategy seeks to assist efforts in Nigeria to build an accountable, transparent democracy with a robust civil society, respect for human rights, rule of law, governance, and conflict resolution. United States officials routinely comment on the need for the Government to improve the environment for free and fair elections and to strengthen rule of law. Politically motivated violence, corruption, ethnic and religious violence, flaws in the electoral process and concerns over judicial independence were among many themes pursued by U.S. officials in Nigeria.

United States officials regularly met with local, state, and federal officials to discuss human rights trends in policymaking and law enforcement, especially regarding respect for integrity of the person, trafficking in persons, respect for civil rights, refugees and internally displaced persons. They also worked closely with many civic and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on such issues as worker rights, religious freedom, prison conditions, and women's, children's, and minorities' rights. The International Visitors Program brought representatives from

NGOs, the host government and civil society to the United States for a variety of programs, including human rights advocacy, leadership development for women, trafficking issues, and women's participation in politics.

The United States combined programs to improve democracy and governance through increasing transparency/accountability and institutionalizing peaceful political processes, strengthening the rule of law through increasing access to justice, revising legal frameworks and institution building, managing conflict through mitigation and peace-making, and mitigating the causes and impact of trafficking in human beings, especially women and children. United States Government activities to improve governance included elections support, political party and legislative strengthening, 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 is funding an American NGO in northern Nigeria in a program to promote good human rights reporting. The program includes a comprehensive training regimen for selected reporters, and is capped by an annual ceremony and award presentation to the reporter who has made the greatest achievement in human rights reporting over the course of the year.

The United States sponsored a community-policing program in the Nigerian Police Force with the Kaduna command as a pilot project. Community policing promotes tactics aimed at crime reduction, while it improves 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 sponsored one Expanded-International Military Education and Training seminar conducted by the Defense Institute of International Legal Studies that focused on con-

ducting domestic security operations in accordance with the rule of law and human rights. A Counter-Terrorism seminar attended by Nigerian officers also contained human rights training. All students who receive military training in the United States are also exposed to human rights training as part of their curriculum.

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 the problems and to advocate resolution. United States 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 inter-faith celebrations of tolerance. A Christian pastor and Muslim imam from Kaduna that USAID trained in Vermont in 2003 then trained members of the Kaduna Peace Committee in 2004. The United States paid for radio and television programs where the pastor and imam could discuss conflict issues in Kaduna and Kano. In 2004 the pastor and imam received the prestigious Common Ground Award from the well-known NGO Search for Common Ground, in recognition of the success of their peacemaking efforts.

United States 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 activities to mitigate the causes and consequences of human trafficking included: providing support and shelter for trafficking victims, providing skills training to facilitate re-integration within the community and disseminating anti-trafficking materials via public media. Nigeria continued to receive U.S. funding for a program transitioning veterans into civilian occupations. The United States continued support for a hostel for human trafficking victims.

Nigeria had an International Labor Organization country-wide program to reduce the worst forms of child labor (especially in commercial sexual

exploitation, domestic service, and the informal sector); 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 workers, and to help it become a center for conciliation, mediation, and arbitration training for both labor and industry representatives.

Rwanda

In May 2003, a countrywide referendum resulted in the approval of a new Constitution, which provides for a multiparty system but provides few protections for parties and their candidates. In August and September 2003, the country held its first multi-candidate national elections since independence in elections that were peaceful but seriously marred. During 2004, there was a contraction in civil and political space in Rwanda. There was no significant political party activity during 2004, and local elections were not considered free and fair. Although the independent print media continued to face harassment, causing two editors and three journalists to flee the country, the Government granted licenses to four independent radio stations.

The judiciary was non-operational for most of the year as the country implemented judicial reforms. A Foreign Service National (embassy employee), who was arrested in April 2002 in connection to the case against former President Pasteur Bizimungu, was finally brought to trial in March 2004, and sentenced to five years in prison in what was widely considered to be a political trial. In June, the parliament released a report that accused human rights groups, journalists, churches, and local government officials of "genocide ideology"; the Government subsequently justified arbitrary arrests and the effective dismantling of the country's independent human rights organizations as part of its campaign against "divisionism." The status of the Local Defense Forces continued to be a concern.

To address these problems, the U.S. human rights and democracy strategy seeks to increase the capacity of Rwandan civil society through the decentralization of local government functions. At the same time, it supports activities designed to make government institutions more responsive to citizens. The United States seeks to promote long-term stability, both in the country and in the region, through the promotion of reconciliation and judicial transparency. Finally, it aims at strengthening respect for human rights among Rwandan officials and opinion leaders.

Strengthening human rights and democracy involves U.S. officials in Washington and the entire Embassy, from the Ambassador to first-tour officers, and reflects a collaborative effort among the State Department's reporting officers, USAID, the Defense Attaché's Office, the Public Diplomacy Section, the Center for Disease Control and the Diplomatic Security Service. To implement its strategy, the Embassy utilizes a range of diplomatic tools, including monitoring and reporting of human rights abuses, providing technical assistance and training to promote government accountability and respect for human rights, and enhancing capacity-building to strengthen Rwandan institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society.

The Embassy sponsored public outreach for political parties and university students on democratic institutions including best practices. In addition, Rwandan professionals participated in International Visitors Programs (IVP) in the United States on print journalism, the role of the media, grassroots outreach and coalition building and democracy and transparency and good governance.

The United States funded the Associates in Rural Development (ARD) Legislative Capacity Strengthening Project which supported citizen advocacy that helped the national parliament increase its engagement with constituents. Citizen organizations learned how to effectively represent constituent views. Reflecting the increased engagement, committees of the Chamber of Deputies are now open to the public. The two chambers of parliament implemented joint proce-

dures for voting on bills, and established formal procedures to receive visitors to the parliament. The growing independence of the parliament is encouraging.

The U.S. supported civil society organizations (CSOs) to promote pluralism and public dialogue. The CSOs organized district-and provincial-level town hall meetings to create opportunities for direct contact and information exchanges between citizens and government officials. The majority of the town hall participants were women. In other evidence of increased public dialogue, citizen visits to both houses of parliament and provincial, district and other government offices increased.

With the Ministry of Local Government, and in partnership with ARD, the United States supported a fiscal decentralization project to support democratic local government and decentralization. The United States developed the manuals of two main systems covering Budget and Treasury. At least 85 percent of the districts in the country are consistently producing the new accounting reports.

The Coexistence Network, a forum specifically designed to allow national and international NGOs and government representatives to openly debate difficult and controversial topics, received a Democracy and Human Rights Fund (DHRF) grant. The grant provided funding to expand the concept outside of Kigali City.

In March, the visiting U.S. Treasury Under Secretary for International Affairs raised human rights concerns with Finance Minister Donald Kaberuka. The U.S. delegation to the April commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the Genocide, led by the Ambassador-at-Large for War Crimes and USAID's Deputy Administrator, raised democracy and human rights concerns with President Kagame. The Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs had multiple occasions to raise democracy and human rights concerns with a variety of Rwandan officials.

The U.S.-supported International Rescue Committee (IRC)/Kibungo's community radio station began broadcasting in 2004 and is one of four

new stations serving the country. The project facilitated the creation of ten listeners' clubs that provide feedback on broadcasts.

Through its Human Rights and Democracy Fund, the Embassy is supporting a number of human rights related projects. It provided a grant to a local human rights NGO providing training to secondary school students. During 2004, this NGO produced materials and posters on sexual-and gender-based violence that were praised by the Rwandan Ministries of Education and Gender.

The U.S. Government provided funding for a children's after-school center through another local NGO. The NGO helped the children produce comic book-style treatments of social themes, such as drug abuse, the difficulties faced by girls who want to attend school, and strategies for dealing with conflict. These books have stimulated debate and discussion on difficult issues and encouraged positive models of conflict resolution.

To encourage the participation of women in decision-making, DHRF grants were given to the Foundation for Justice and Development and to NGOs specializing in women's rights and communication. One NGO trained women's groups in communications skills and encouraged women in listeners' groups to participate more actively in a new community radio station. Another trained representatives from women's groups in family law issues from which women had been traditionally excluded, such as property rights or visitation and custody rights.

Following a three-year suspension, the U.S. Security Assistance Program in Rwanda was reinstated by the State Department in 2003, and Rwanda received a complete International Military Education and Training program (IMET) budget for 2004. The newly reinstated program emphasized the need to respect human and civil rights as well as civilian control of the military and promoted understanding of the proper role of a military in a democracy. In 2004, the Embassy organized a seminar taught by U.S. military officers; the seminar assisted in strengthening the civilian and military justice systems and vividly illustrated the need to respect human rights.

In addition, members of the Rwanda Defense Forces attended IMET courses in the U.S. which explored such important topics as the development of a professional army, civil-military strategies for internal development, military peace support operations in support of law of land warfare, defense management, and democracy and decision making.

The United States was actively engaged in programs designed to build the capacity of both civil society organizations and local government institutions. To improve community-based reconciliation efforts, the Government of Rwanda's Genocide Survivors Fund, with U.S. Government support, funded secondary education to approximately 26,744 students; primarily children orphaned by the Genocide who are currently in secondary school.

The U.S. Government also funded IRC's sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) program, which trained 551 judges in the rural justice system, Gacaca, in 2004. These trainees used SGBV training materials to train others at the district, sector and cell level. The training of 43,260 Gacaca judges in matters related to SGBV at the sector level is continuing under the supervision of the Government of Rwanda's National Service of Gacaca Courts. Prior to the sensitization campaign, only 55 percent of genocide survivors were willing to testify regarding crimes of sexual violence. Genocide survivors have created 106 networks, one in each local government district, with two facilitators in each of the 1,545 administrative sectors of Rwanda. The United States also provided material support to the National Service of Gacaca in the form of computers and database-management training.

To strengthen democratic national governance institutions and enhance reconciliation and peace, the United States supported the National University of Rwanda's partnership with University of Maryland, College Park. The partnership has produced graduates in computer science and has supported distance education modules on science and mathematics in secondary schools.

Through the World Links/Dot-Com primary schools computerization project, U.S. Government funds contributed to the development of basic computer literacy among Rwandan youth and primary school teachers. A computer was offered to each school that had electricity and teachers were trained in troubleshooting, teaching techniques and the integration of information and communication technology. The electricity challenge prompted parents to take the initiative to contribute money to connect more than 20 schools to the national grid.

To strengthen civil society, the United States supported CARE's Civil Society Strengthening Project to assist 16 partner CSOs with training to make them more effective and sustainable. Training enabled CSOs to improve on a broad range of functions, including the defining of objectives, resource acquisition, financial management, program design, and monitoring and evaluation. Strengthened organizational capacity attracted new members, particularly women, and increased CSOs' membership fee revenues.

The project supported civic education on good governance, human rights, citizen participation, and advocacy. Through a training of trainers approach, 1,032 trainers in civic education trained 17,742 citizens through 1,139 civic education workshops in 59 districts. A Government of Rwanda initiative to develop a single civic education manual for all organizations undertaking civic education in the country restrained the ability of some partners to implement civic education activities.

Embassy officials met with religious leaders and members of a wide range of religious communities to promote interfaith dialogue and discuss religious freedom. The important issue was also a subject of regular meetings with local and international NGOs involved in peace reconciliation efforts.

In recognition of the tenth anniversary of the 1994 Genocide, the United States pledged \$1 million to assist Rwanda in addressing the ongoing legacy of that tragedy. Half of the money has been designated to support Rwanda's justice sector, while the other half will support reconciliation projects. The

United States remains committed to assisting in Rwanda's recovery while at the same time supporting its development into a full-fledged democracy.

Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone continues to recover from the devastating 11-year civil war that ended in January 2002 and the egregious human rights violations that accompanied it. The return to peace allows Sierra Leoneans to turn their attention to economic and agricultural development, the fight against corruption in public and private sectors, the strengthening of democratic institutions and the decentralization of state power. In May, the first local elections in 32 years were held in 311 wards nationwide. Although turnout was relatively low and there was later evidence of significant electoral fraud, the elections themselves were peaceful and an independent report determined that "there was no proof that the outcome of any particular election was actually changed by the fraud."

The Government generally respected the rights of its citizens; however, there were serious problems in several areas. In 2004, one man died in police custody. Security forces raped women and children; members of the UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) were accused of murdering a prostitute. Although conditions in some prisons improved, many detention centers were overcrowded and unsanitary, resulting in numerous deaths. Members of the Sierra Leone Police (SLP) continued to arrest and detain persons arbitrarily. There were reports of extortion by police. Prolonged detention, excessive bail and insufficient legal representation remained problems. The Government at times limited freedom of speech and the press during 2004. The criminal libel law received extensive public attention during the year when a Sierra Leonean journalist was sentenced to a two-year jail term for seditious libel.

Instability in border areas, as well as occasional incursions into the country by Liberian combatants who sometimes raided villages for food continued during 2004. Violence, discrimination against women, and prostitution remained prob-

lems. Female genital mutilation (FGM) remained widespread. Abuse of children was a problem; however, numerous children who fought as child soldiers participated in reintegration programs during the year. There were reports of trafficking in persons (TIP), and new TIP legislation was sent to parliament. Residents of non-African descent faced institutionalized political restrictions. Forced child labor continued to be a problem.

The United States focused well in advance on programs to make the May 2004 elections successful. The United States sponsored three speakers in Freetown and outlying provinces, including the hard-to-reach diamond district, to encourage voting and candidacy for women. These efforts paid off, as U.S. officials traveling upcountry frequently encounter women who have won seats in district and town council elections.

The United States also created an umbrella body on election issues made up of international donors, National Election Commission officials, civil society groups and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The weekly meetings, which were held in the Embassy's Information Resource Center, ultimately had a positive influence on election policy and execution and helped spur election monitoring. The umbrella group showed continuing vitality as it took the lead in supervising post-election analysis and education efforts.

In the weeks preceding the election, the United States also worked with media partners to create a "Meet the Candidate" national radio show. Candidates who completed a position-paper questionnaire were given free radio time to outline their platform to constituents. This was a first for Sierra Leone, as candidates normally do not run on substance, but on popularity alone.

The Embassy sponsored a popular three-day journalism workshop that had as its underlying purpose creating conditions to overturn Sierra Leone's criminal libel laws. The Ambassador opened the workshop with a speech strongly condemning the criminalization of libelous speech or writing, a message that he repeated to numerous Sierra Leonean officials throughout the year.

The primary U.S. priority in Sierra Leone remains the consolidation of the peace as the UN peace-keeping mission draws down, and Sierra Leone's army and police force assume responsibility for security. Achievement of this objective requires the promotion of stable, democratic governance, transparency and the broader participation of Sierra Leone's people. All U.S. personnel made a concerted effort to support the preparation for and conduct of the local elections in May.

An overly centralized government made up of weak and corrupt leaders was one of the major elements that led to the 11-year civil war in Sierra Leone. The United States strongly supports the efforts of the Government to decentralize and to increase transparency and accountability. The United States spent considerable funds in 2004 to support district-level governance. In addition to direct support for the local elections, this assistance provided nation-building skills training to over 300 community leaders and other participants. The training included good leadership and democratic community representation practices as well as training for community members in understanding their own responsibilities in the post-war era.

The United States also made significant advances in stimulating Sierra Leoneans' collective awareness of their human rights, justice, and corruption. The United States contributed money to mobilize civil society on anti-corruption issues and expand access to justice. As a part of this program, the Lawyers' Center for Legal Assistance developed a community paralegal training manual. The United States also sponsored training for 117 paralegals who developed sample work plans for monitoring cases of human rights abuses, and replicating basic human rights training in their communities. After the training, paralegals reported significantly more cases to the police, such as early or forced marriages, domestic violence, rape, sexual assault and traditional wife inheritance. Other paralegals who attended the training sought and received permission to monitor conditions in the Sierra Leone Police detention cells. After the visit, the paralegals alerted the

District Magistrate and human rights organizations to the appalling state of the facility and moved officials to address these issues.

The United States continues to participate in the UK-led effort to remake the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) and SLP into effective forces under civilian authority. Three American military personnel (two officers and a chief petty officer) embedded in the International Military Advisory and Training Team (IMATT) provided experienced military advice, guidance, and training, contributing to IMATT's capabilities. Exceptionally poor civil-military relations have been a chronic impediment to democratic governance in Sierra Leonean society. The Defense Attaché organized several conferences to promote improved civil-military relations for the RSLAF and civilian members of the Sierra Leonean Ministry of Defense.

The United States remains the largest financial contributor to the Special Court of Sierra Leone, providing Economic Support Funds (ESF) for the past three years. The Special 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 Sierra Leone since 1996. The Ambassador and his country team are in regular contact with senior Special Court officials to determine how the United States can most effectively support the court. Successful implementation of the Special Court's mandate will send a strong message throughout the African continent that the culture of impunity is ending.

Sierra Leone is religiously diverse: 60 percent of the population is Muslim, 30 percent is Christian, and 10 percent is animist. There is a high degree of religious tolerance both by the Government and by society at large.

The United States provided ESF to support the Amazonian initiative movement to reduce the incidence of FGM in northern Sierra Leone through education about the dangers of this traditional practice. Although the practice has deep cultural resonance and is still widespread, this largely taboo subject is becoming a topic of discus-

sion as parents and girls question the safety of the practice. Traditional practitioners in women's secret societies are seeking viable alternatives for what is for many a primary source of income.

Although the Government increased the minimum wage from \$9 (21,000 Leones) per month to approximately \$16 (40,000 Leones) per month, the increase was the first since 1997 and still did not provide civil servants with a decent standard of living. On numerous occasions the Ambassador addressed the need to provide workers with a living wage to the president, vice president and other high-level Government officials.

Bonded and child labor continue to represent serious human rights abuses in Sierra Leone's alluvial diamond fields. Through strong intervention from USAID, the United States continues to address these and other issues in an attempt to make diamond mining a legitimate, more transparent, more humane and effectively monitored activity.

Somalia

Somalia has been without a central government since its last president, dictator Mohamed Siad Barre, fled the country in 1991. The human rights record remained poor, and serious human rights abuses continued. Factional violence and clan-based fighting continued throughout the country, resulting in numerous deaths. In October 2002, a reconciliation conference was convened in Kenya under the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), with the goal of producing a transitional governing entity capable of reestablishing governance and stability inside Somalia.

The Somalia National Reconciliation Conference concluded in October 2004 following the formation of a 275-member clan-based Transitional Federal Assembly (TFA). In October, the election of a Speaker of the Assembly took place, followed by the election of a Transitional Federal President,

Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed. The President later appointed Ali Mohammed Ghedi to serve as Prime Minister. A cabinet was named in December. All these Transitional Federal

Institutions (TFI) were to function for a five-year period. As of end of 2004 the TFI's had not yet relocated from Kenya to Somalia.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy in Somalia is to achieve national reconciliation, nurture democratic institutions and the rule of law, and mitigate conflict. Since the United States does not have diplomatic representation in Somalia, the "Somalia Unit" at the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi is responsible for Somalia. Embassy officers continued to encourage participation in Somali reconciliation efforts to develop countrywide democratic institutions, and also addressed human rights violations on an individual basis when aware of them. In 2004, the Embassy used the Democracy and Human Rights Fund (DHRF) for a project promoting conflict resolution at the local grassroots level. As of September 2004, Embassy Nairobi's Somalia Unit has been actively engaged in the Somalia Reconciliation Process.

The self-proclaimed Republic of Somaliland, in northwestern Somalia, held presidential elections in April 2003. As of December 2004, parliamentary elections were scheduled to take place on March 29, 2005. The United States maintains informal contacts with Somaliland authorities, as it does with a number of other Somali groups, including the semi-autonomous region of Puntland and northeastern Somalia. The United States does not have an official relationship with Somaliland and, therefore, did not provide direct electoral assistance to the Somaliland authorities. However, the United States did provide technical financial assistance to non-governmental organizations for political party development activities through the International Republican Institute. United States officials visiting Somaliland have encouraged Somaliland's political leaders to develop democratic institutions. One of Embassy's strategic objectives for Somalia has been to strengthen Somali capacity for local governance and conflict mitigation. In 2004, the U.S. supported a civil society expansion program in Somaliland. This program is designed to provide technical support and funding to local organizations and communities that have the capacity to implement developmental services in cooperation and collaboration with local authorities. The pro-

gram aims to increase the capacity of selected civil society organizations to design and implement sustainable projects that improve maternal health, access to education and livelihood security. Civil society groups are now key partners in carrying out conflict awareness and management programs. The United States provided a no cost extension to the War-torn Societies Project (WSP). This is an innovative field-oriented research-cum-action project, which seeks to help create an environment conducive to the consolidation of peace and sustainable development. WSP supports three local participatory research organizations, one in Somaliland, one in Puntland and one in Mogadishu for south-central Somalia that are designed to be successor organizations to the project.

Sudan

Last year was a momentous year in Sudan, with the world's attention focused on the crisis in Darfur as well as the peace negotiations between the Government in the North and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement in the South. The negotiations to end the civil war in the South led to a peace agreement at year's end, but progress was overshadowed by events in Darfur. The United States actively worked to bring the North-South negotiations to a close and to try to resolve the ongoing crisis in Darfur. The Government's overall human rights record remained poor and, although there were improvements in some areas, serious abuses continued. Authorities did not ensure due process in civilian or military courts. The Government continued to infringe upon citizens' privacy rights and freedom of speech, assembly and religion. Restrictions on press freedom continued, as the Government suspended or closed publications and arrested editors and journalists who were critical of government policy.

The situation in Darfur deteriorated during the year. Government and government-supported militia committed serious abuses, including bombing and razing hundreds of villages. Based on a study conducted between June and August, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that up to 70,000 civilians were killed or died as a result of the conflict. In addition more than 1.5

million civilians were internally displaced, and over 200,000 refugees fled to neighboring Chad by year's end. In testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on September 9, Secretary of State Powell concluded, "genocide has been committed in Darfur and that the Government of Sudan and Jinjaweed bear responsibility and that genocide may still be occurring." The situation in Darfur received significant international attention, including visits by the Secretary of State and the Secretary-General of the UN. Numerous other official visitors and Members of Congress traveled to Sudan during the year and met with top government officials to press for improvements in Darfur. The United States led international efforts to improve the situation in Darfur, working within the UN, with the African Union and bilaterally.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy in Sudan supported conflict resolution, promoted respect for fundamental human rights and combated trafficking in persons. During the past year much of the U.S. effort in Darfur was geared towards ending the human rights abuses occurring there. Embassy officers stressed to government officials at all levels the importance of human rights benchmarks throughout Sudan to improve bilateral relations and to facilitate the eventual loosening and lifting of economic sanctions, emphasizing press freedom, religious toler-

ance, an open political process, and freedom of speech, movement and assembly. The Chargé d'Affaires, in conjunction with Western donor Ambassadors, used the Joint Implementation Mechanism (JIM) to elicit meaningful commitments from the Government to eschew forced relocations of internally displaced persons and to establish a JIM sub-commission for dealing with specific humanitarian issues.

The Chargé d'Affaires and other embassy officers and official Washington visitors maintained continuous dialogue with a variety of interlocutors, not only on Darfur but also on the full range of human rights issues. Embassy officers met regularly with opposition politicians and political leaders from around the country as well as with religious leaders, human rights activists and members of the media. The Embassy ran its own programs to explore how freedom of expression manifested itself in the United States, including an event during one of the U.S. presidential debates, and the Embassy supported other programs during the year that promoted democracy and human rights. A Public Diplomacy grant supported a UN University of Peace Conference on the Roots of Conflict in Darfur, which focused on human rights issues. The Chargé d'Affaires and Washington visitors held numerous press conferences and interviews for local, regional and international media.

Sudan

Refugee children outside Tine in eastern Chad bordering western Sudan.



AP Photo/Andrew England

Chad

A Sudanese woman cradles her daughter, left, and the daughter of her sister, who was killed by gunmen in their African village.



AP Photo/Karel Prinsloo

The Sudanese press suffered from suspensions, arrests and harassing lawsuits. The Embassy actively monitored press freedom, delivered statements to the newspapers and the Government protesting press suspensions and detentions and met with those involved. The Embassy conducted a series of meetings with local media outlets to discuss freedom of the press during the year and organized two seminars on freedom of the press and journalistic ethics. To better support the establishment of independent media in southern Sudan, the United States awarded a cooperative agreement to establish a local-language short wave radio service for southern Sudan and provided a grant to the "Sudan Mirror", the first independent newspaper in southern Sudan.

In FY 2004, the United States supported humanitarian assistance and protection activities in Darfur and programmed Disaster Assistance Response Team protection officers as part of its humanitarian relief efforts. The United States spent additional funds to support programming in other areas of Sudan, including programs to promote the peace process in the South that included peaceful return of displaced populations to their places of origin.

Embassy officials work closely with the Sudan Inter Religious Council and the Sudan Council of Churches to help foster inter-religious dialogue

that would contribute to a stable peace. The Embassy also promoted several public diplomacy outreach programs discussing religious freedom. The United States continued to provide funding, assistance and support to the Civilian Protection Monitoring Team (CPMT), the Nuba Mountains Joint Monitoring Mission and the Verification Monitoring Team. The CPMT objectively documents military attacks against civilians occurring in warring areas and brings them to the attention of the Government, the Sudanese Peoples Liberation Movement (SPLM) and the international community. Incidents have decreased significantly since the monitoring began in 2002. The CPMT posts its reports on the Internet (www.cpmtsudan.org) and provides them to local media for publication. The 12-nation Nuba Mountains Joint Military Commission continued to monitor Government and SPLM adherence to a cease-fire in the Nuba Mountains. The United States also provided funding to support the African Union's (AU) monitoring efforts in Darfur. The AU's mission in Darfur deployed troops in an effort to curb the violence and report on ceasefire violations, including human rights abuses.

The government-sponsored organization, the Committee for the Eradication of Abduction of Women and Children (CEAWAC), continued its efforts to facilitate reintegration and family reunifi-

cation of abductees. Embassy officials met with CEAWAC officials and continued to push for the return of abducted persons and to promote CEAWAC outreach programs to further its work.

Swaziland

Swaziland is a modified traditional monarchy with executive, legislative, and limited judicial powers ultimately vested in the King. The 2004 municipal elections and the 2003 parliamentary elections increased representative government; however, political power continues to rest largely with the King and his circle of traditional advisors, including the Queen Mother. Political parties are banned. The Court of Appeals, which resigned in protest in 2002, was reconstituted in November 2004. However, the King and other government officials infringe on the judiciary's independence by influencing court decisions. The Government's human rights record is poor, and it continues to commit serious abuses. Police use excessive force on occasion, and there are reports that the police tortured and beat suspects. Lengthy pretrial detention and impunity are problems. Legal and cultural discrimination, violence against women, and abuse of children remain ongoing problems. Worker rights remain limited.

In light of these concerns, the U.S. strategy to combat human rights abuses and bolster democracy consists of highlighting the importance of respect for the rule of law, developing ways to improve administrative efficiency within the judicial system, increasing women's political awareness, and improving respect for internationally recognized workers' rights. Embassy officials also worked to improve public understanding of constitutional principles and democracy.

Swaziland is at a turning point on the issue of the rule of law. The draft constitution, the first since the prior one was abolished in 1973, is currently undergoing legislative review and will likely be ratified in 2005. Members of the international community, including the United States, and local civic groups representing a variety of interests, have concerns with both the drafting process and the text of the proposed Constitution. The

Constitution could play a critical role in addressing several key concerns, including separation of powers. The Embassy sent five important political stakeholders, including representatives of banned political parties, to the Third Assembly of the World Movement for Democracy. In the continuing dialogue with political figures and civil society, Embassy officials underscored the importance the Constitution could play in Swaziland, and urged the Government to use an inclusive process to address central issues such as separation of powers, political parties and respect for human rights.

In November 2004, the Court of Appeals reconvened after a two-year absence. It immediately threatened to disband upon learning the Government had yet to abide by one of the two court decisions precipitating the original crisis in 2002. U.S. and domestic pressure convinced the Government to allow the return of the Macetjeni and KaMkhweli evictees, and the Court of Appeals continued to hear cases until its normal recess at the end of 2004. In response to the crisis, the Embassy placed a statement in Swaziland's largest daily newspaper, reaffirming the Embassy's support for the rule of law and human rights for the people of Swaziland.

Earlier in 2004, the Embassy used Economic Support Funds to support judicial skills training in the areas of human rights, judicial ethics, case flow management and legal drafting, as well as practical training on mediation and information technology skills. The Embassy sponsored a visit by Former Ambassador to Gambia, George Haley. Drawing on his extensive legal affairs background, he discussed integral ways that legal systems promote and protect civil rights. In addition, two of Swaziland's top judicial leaders visited the United States to see first-hand how the U.S. judicial system works and how courts are managed.

Women and children are traditionally disadvantaged groups in Swaziland. The Embassy used Democracy and Human Rights Fund (DHRF) resources to bolster respect for and improve the rights of women and children. Half of the Embassy's total DHRF allotment supported a training program for pastors focusing on the rights of women and children, as well as methods for

providing counseling and support services to victims of abuse. The Ambassador's Girls' Scholarship Fund provided scholarships for over 800 disadvantaged girls in elementary and high school. The U.S. Government supported a well-respected Women's Legal Rights Initiative (WLR) for Southern Africa out of Swaziland. The Embassy sent a prominent non-governmental organization representative to the United States to participate in a program dedicated to leadership development for women and hosted a conference with the U.S. Permanent Ambassador to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Constance Morella, on the role of women in American politics and U.S. elections.

Increasing government and business community interest in internationally respected workers' rights is a vital part of the Embassy's strategy to promote human rights. The Head of the Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions attended a workshop in the United States highlighting the role of civil society in a political system. Representatives from the American Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service came to Swaziland to conduct workshops on labor-management relations. The president of the Swaziland Federation of Labor toured the United States, focusing on U.S. organized labor.

The U.S. Government also funded two important labor initiatives in the southern African region. One is a regional project that works in Swaziland, Botswana, Lesotho and Namibia to improve the capacity of governments to enforce labor laws. The second supports countrywide concerted actions against the worst forms of child labor in Swaziland, Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, and South Africa. The American Institute for Research, through a grant from the U.S., is conducting a project to combat exploitive child labor among children in vulnerable situations, especially those affected by HIV/AIDS in the same five countries.

Tanzania

While there have been improvements with respect to human rights in recent years, the Government of Tanzania's overall human rights record remains poor, and serious problems remained. In the lead-up to the 2005 elections, respect for political freedoms declined. Members of the police and security forces tortured, threatened and mistreated suspected criminals. The judiciary is inefficient, understaffed and subject to corruption, limiting the right to fair and expeditious trials. Prison conditions remained harsh and life threatening. There was an increase in the number of instances in which the Government refused persons seeking asylum or refugee status, forcibly returned refugees to countries where they feared persecution. Trafficking in persons (TIP) and child labor remained problems.

Tanzania is a multiparty state, although it is dominated by the long-ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) party. President Benjamin Mkapa's term will end in October 2005. Zanzibar, although integrated into the country's governmental and party structure, has its own president and legislature and exercises considerable autonomy.

The U.S. democracy and human rights strategy aims to improve respect for human rights and to foster an environment for free and fair presidential and parliamentary elections in 2005. Following the 2001 post-election violence, the United States has focused on decreasing tensions on Zanzibar between the CCM party and the main opposition political party, the Civic United Front. In 2004, embassy officials met frequently with representatives from both parties. Embassy officials also met regularly with Zanzibar's Joint Presidential Supervisory Committee and the Zanzibar Electoral Commission to voice continued U.S. support for the bipartisan "Muafaka" reconciliation accord.

In 2004, the U.S. Government supported the creation of a Zanzibar permanent voter registry called for in the reconciliation agreement; the registry is an important prerequisite for free and fair elections in 2005. Economic Support Funds (ESF) supported the purchase of equipment for the per-

manent voter registry on Zanzibar. ESF funds were also used to fund a local non-governmental organization (NGO), the Tanzania Elections Monitoring Committee, which is observing the registration process on Zanzibar.

Following violent confrontations at a few voter registration sites on Zanzibar, which left a teenage student dead and several others injured, the Chargé d' Affaires met with the president of Zanzibar to urge the Zanzibar Government to ensure that voter registration could continue, according to established procedures and in an environment of peace and security.

The Embassy's democracy assistance program focuses on long-term efforts to build civil society and parliament for a more robust, accountable democracy. The United States supported a multi-year project to strengthen the national parliament's representative, lawmaking, and oversight functions. In the budget presentations this year, parliamentary members more effectively exercised their oversight function by questioning and amending several requested appropriations.



Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Well-organized voting at a local school.

IFES

To ensure that all Tanzanians are able to exercise their right to vote in the 2005 elections, the Embassy targeted potentially disenfranchised voters, persons with disabilities and the youth. The Embassy awarded a grant to a local Tanzanian NGO to conduct a civic and voter education seminar for blind and visually impaired Tanzanians. This group wants to improve the participation of blind persons in the coming 2005 elections by enabling more blind persons to register to vote, contest seats in local government councils, municipal bodies, and the parliament, to attend campaign rallies, and to ask candidates political questions or present critical issues for discussion during campaign meetings. The Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC) is conducting workshops on civic-peace education for religious and youth leaders to ensure that the youth understand the electoral process and their role as citizens/voters. The GNRC will also work with religious leaders to focus on the electoral process and on the role of religious leaders in promoting free, fair and peaceful elections and in enhancing good governance.

The United States also works to strengthen civil society organizations involved in advocacy for policy changes. After the passage of the controversial 2002 NGO Act, civil society organizations successfully lobbied to have the Government amend the law, a process that was ongoing as of February 2005.

The U.S. Embassy worked to support a free press. In 2004, the Embassy donated computers to press clubs in Tanzania to help them conduct research for news articles. The U.S. Embassy also hosted a workshop on investigative reporting for local journalists. In addition, the project targets journalists for International Visitors Programs (IVP) concerning human rights issues.

Judicial backlogs and limited police investigation skills hinder the right to fair and expeditious trial, a factor that aggravates severe prison overcrowding. The U.S. State Department provided funds to support a forensic laboratory that will improve police investigation skills, speed up investigations, and reduce the number of wrongful arrests and convictions.

The Embassy also pursued more targeted outreach for government policymakers. Under the IVP, an outspoken female politician accompanied local ruling party officials on a conflict resolution study tour. The Embassy honors Martin Luther King by naming a "Drum Major for Justice" laureate each year. The prestigious award receives widespread publicity and attracts senior level government attendance. In 2005, Gertrude Mongella, president of the Pan-African Parliament, received the award for her pioneering work supporting woman rights.

The U.S. Government has consistently engaged the Tanzanian Government on the issue of refugee protection for the approximately 400,000 Great Lakes refugees in Tanzania. Demarches were made during the year to urge the Government to continue their tradition of hosting refugees. In addition, the State Department supported programs to decrease the amount of rape and domestic violence in the refugee camps.

The U.S. Government continues to support a large multi-year program through the International Labor Organization (ILO) to reduce the worst forms of child labor in Tanzania. The Timebound program, used by the ILO, focuses on reducing the number of children engaged in the worst forms of child labor through the use of advocacy and targeted supported for vulnerable children. An additional U.S. Government program provides an educational component to the Timebound program.

The U.S. has been active in raising awareness about trafficking in persons. This year the Embassy hosted a digital videoconference that attracted senior policy makers, civil society, and the press. The resulting news coverage helped inspire the Government to move faster to target traffickers. Embassy officials also met with members of civil society and government officials and traveled to rural source areas to better understand and document the nature of human trafficking in Tanzania. The Presidential Anti-Trafficking Initiative identified Tanzania as a focus country and will provide \$2 million dollars of anti-trafficking assistance. The Chargé d' Affaires met with President Mkapa to gain government support for working with the United States on these anti-trafficking programs.

Togo

In February 2005, President Gnassingbe Eyadema, Africa's longest-ruling strongman, died after 38 years in office. The military moved quickly to install Faure Gnassingbe, Eyadema's son, as President, ignoring the constitutional provision that the leader of the National Assembly would serve as interim president until new elections are held within 60 days. The National Assembly changed the Constitution retroactively to allow Gnassingbe to serve out the three and a half years remaining in his father's term, until 2008. Deep distrust between the regime and opposition prevails. In April, the Government entered into formal consultations with the EU, agreed to 22 democracy and human rights-related commitments and made modest progress in implementing them. The Government released approximately 500 prisoners in August, including several detainees described by human rights groups and opposition parties as political prisoners. It also revised the draconian press code, eliminating prison sentences for most transgressions but substantially increasing the fines for many offenses.

Significant continuing problem areas in human rights include strong-arm methods by security forces, harassment of journalists, violence and discrimination against women and trafficking in children. There were a few instances of prisoners dying while in detention, and of security forces beating civilians with impunity. The Government jailed and at times abused political opponents and critics. Arbitrary arrest and detention were problems, and long periods of pretrial detention were common. The judiciary did not ensure fair and expeditious trials. Prison conditions remained very harsh. Favoritism among certain ethnic groups remained a problem. The Government limited workers' rights to collective bargaining, and child labor was a problem.

Promotion of democratic reform and improvement in the human rights environment is United States top priority. The United States has worked to raise the profile of human rights in its contacts with government officials, opposition parties, civil society, international financial institutions and other donors. Specifically, the United States has

pressed for energetic fulfillment of the Government's 22 democracy and human rights related commitments to the EU, and encouraged all key players to remain engaged constructively in the political process. In meetings with former President Eyadema and several of his cabinet ministers, the Ambassador regularly raised concerns about specific human rights cases.

The Embassy used U.S. election events, such as the presidential debates, as the basis for general discussion of democracy, freedom of the press, and civil rights. The United States used funds to support a range of initiatives. It brought together teachers, parents and students for a workshop on democracy and civic education for girls. One program emphasized the importance of participation of women in politics. This funding was also used to support a project emphasizing the need for women to have identification documents to assure access to government services and a project that addressed the problem of sexual harassment in schools. Additional activities included educating students about electoral laws and peaceful resolution of election-related conflicts, and funding the production of 3,100 copies of a prisoners' rights guide.

The United States devoted much of its effort in 2004 to the promotion of democracy. It organized a well-attended, week-long workshop entitled "Relations Between the Media and the Government." In addition, the United States organized a variety of events promoting HIV/AIDS awareness, addressing de-stigmatization and discrimination.

The United States issued small grants to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and government agencies to provide HIV/AIDS training to 150 illiterate women, and to translate - from English into French and local languages - television ads aimed at de-stigmatizing AIDS victims. Often international visitors from Togo were sent to the United States on programs addressing democracy and good-governance issues.

Limited security assistance allocations for Togo are dedicated to professionalizing the military and expanding its sensitivity to human rights issues. International Military Education and Training (IMET) funds were used, for example, for a seminar in Togo focused on the rule of law in peace-keeping operations. In order to convey the image of a just military sensitive to humanitarian concerns, the U.S. military's European Command funded the building of wells in addition to the construction of an HIV/AIDS clinic and a secondary/middle school. IMET funds were also used to develop the English language capacity of military officers, thereby enabling them to participate in a wide range of courses. In 2003, the United States allocated monies toward a five-year program to combat child trafficking, which is a serious human rights issue in Togo.

Togo's Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and this right is generally respected. The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom. The United States discusses religious freedom issues with the Government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights.

In 2004, the United States funded a program that assisted with the reinsertion of a number of returned children into their families, provided educational support to 4,000 children, pressed for passage of anti-trafficking legislation, helped establish a coalition of NGOs involved in the fight against trafficking, and provided training to parents on the importance of keeping their children in school.

The United States purchased and donated equipment for a new office in the Ministry of Labor dedicated to the fight against child trafficking. Togo also participates in a sub-regional project of the U.S. Department of Labor/International Labor Organization for HIV/AIDS Workplace Education. This multi-year project is designed to combat discrimination against people living with AIDS in the workplace.

Uganda

The Government of Uganda made important progress in democratization last year when, under court pressure, it relaxed restrictions on the operation of political parties. A referendum in 2005 is expected to endorse the Government's push for a multiparty system. However, democratization could suffer a setback if members of the ruling National Resistance Movement are successful in removing presidential term limits from the Constitution. Under the current constitution, President Yoweri Museveni must step down after he completes his current term in early 2006. President Museveni has been in power since 1986. Uganda has never had a democratic handover of power from one leader to another. Both the parliament and the judiciary have shown independence, but neither institution is strong enough to serve as a counterbalance to the powerful executive. Constitutional changes proposed by President Museveni's cabinet, which are scheduled for a vote this year, would make the executive still more powerful. The Government's human rights record remained poor; although there were some improvements in a few areas, serious problems remained. Torture and detention by security forces were a serious problem. Political party activity was subject to both legal and administrative restrictions. Corruption is a significant problem. In Northern Uganda, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) is responsible for having abducted more than 21,000 children during its 18 year campaign of terror.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy in Uganda promotes democratization, respect for human rights, honest and accountable institutions, decentralization and transparency. The strategy also combats domestic violence, child labor, and trafficking in persons. The Ambassador and other mission officials regularly addressed these issues in public forums, and in meetings with a wide range of local and national government officials. The Ambassador held meetings with the president specifically to discuss constitutional issues and corruption. Two visiting U.S. senators, Mary Landrieu and Sam Brownback also raised many of these issues with President Museveni and cabinet-level officials.

Uganda's Parliament, which will take up a series of highly controversial political questions in 2005, was a particular focus of mission outreach. In meetings with Members of Parliament from across the political spectrum, the Ambassador and his team stressed the importance of respecting the Constitution and strengthening the balance of power between different branches of government.

The United States funded programs that enhanced understanding of democracy and respect for human rights at the grassroots level. The United States also conducted seminars on democracy and human rights issues for Uganda's opinion leaders and sponsored travel under the International Visitors Program for community leaders and government officials. The United States contributed to efforts to combat child labor and trafficking in persons.

To support Uganda's continued democratization, the United States targeted significant resources to strengthen parliament. Funds were used to improve the capacity of parliament and parliamentary staff to carry out their representative, legislative and oversight responsibilities. Assistance to the Parliamentary Budget Office and to key parliamentary committees enabled lawmakers to better research issues and influence pending bills. Field visits to several districts by parliamentary committees, supported by the United States, improved parliament's oversight of government-funded programs and strengthened constituents' access to their representatives. The United States also funded a multi-month media campaign designed to broaden lawmakers' knowledge on key issues, including conflict corruption.

Another major focus of U.S. support was the promotion of political pluralism (including the development of political parties) and support for the electoral process. The International Republican Institute (IRI), the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and IFES all carried out the programs to support these objectives. IFES, for instance, provided training to electoral officials and helped evaluate and revise key election manuals. IRI and NDI engaged political and civic organizations to strengthen their capacity to participate effectively in the political process.

The United States sponsored programs and supported organizations that promoted freedom of speech and press. United States funds supported Uganda's first nationwide celebration of World Press Freedom Day. In major cities around Uganda, more than 130 journalists, government officers, Members of Parliament and academics participated in discussion on the state of press freedom in Uganda and on the pending Freedom of Information Act.

Good governance at the local level is also important for Uganda's democratization. United States-funded programs built the capacity of local government officials to better manage local revenues and central transfers, and to improve service delivery to local communities. This initiative helped eight local governments improve revenue collections, six of which collected more than 50 percent of local revenue targets. To complement training in better revenue collection, the United States also funded the training of local officials on planning, budgeting, and funds accounting.

An important focus for the U.S. strategy to protect and strengthen human rights has been assistance to the victims of a brutal insurgency in northern Uganda. The United States helped fund several "reception centers" for children and adults who had been abducted recently by the LRA. Most had suffered torture and other abuse and had been forced to become soldiers and sex slaves. The United States funded reception centers that provided basic shelter, psychosocial counseling and other assistance to returnees. The United States also supported efforts to reunify formerly abducted children with their families, and to reintegrate them into the local community. The United States supported efforts to promote dialogue and reconciliation in northern Uganda, and worked with a variety of NGOs to improve their capacity in human rights, peace building, and community-resilience programming. For example, the United States funded the training of 50 paralegals to raise awareness on human rights, resolve community disputes, and refer human rights violations to higher courts. These initiatives supplemented extensive humanitarian assistance, including a major contribution to the World Food Program to provide food to displaced persons.

To promote the status and rights of women in Uganda, the Embassy awarded a Democracy and Human Rights Fund (DHRF) grant to an organization that trains volunteers to prevent domestic violence. The grant recipient estimates that the project will reach more than 7,000 women. A second DHRF grant was awarded to a local NGO to help victims of "acid violence," the practice of dousing individuals with acid as retribution in interpersonal conflict. Typically, women are the principal victims. The money from this grant is being used for the production and distribution of training manuals on legal, medical, and social support for survivors. In a separate activity, the United States sponsored a two-day retreat for female NGO, parliamentary and academic leaders on women's leadership. The participants reviewed political party manifestos for inclusion of women's issues and began development of a training program for new women political leaders. A follow-on session was scheduled to advance these strategies further.

In support of religious freedom, the United States supported programs to involve faith-based organizations in all aspects of U.S. programming. Special emphasis was put on involving Muslim leaders in democracy projects. One DHRF grant sponsored training organized by the National Association of Imams and Duats to educate Muslim leaders and clerics on their role in an evolving democracy. The training also addressed broader issues of religious tolerance, human rights, and democracy in a diverse society. A second DHRF grant was awarded to a local Muslim NGO to organize a series of workshops on democracy, Islam, and good governance. These workshops targeted more than 150 Muslim and non-Muslim youth leaders.

The United States also funded several programs to combat child labor and trafficking in persons. Ongoing U.S. assistance to programs in northern Uganda have supported the screening and rehabilitation for 2,846 victims of LRA abductions. Most of these abductees were children. A U.S. program administered by the International Rescue Committee assisted in the reunification of more than 2,000 former abductees and child soldiers with their families and equipped over 1,700 children with education and vocational skills. The

United States also funded four different programs to combat the worst forms of child labor. The "Building Foundations for Eliminating the Worst Forms of Child Labor" initiative strengthened the technical skills and capacity of the Government and NGOs to implement policies to prevent the worst forms of child labor, including reintegrating children back into their home communities. A separate initiative focused on withdrawing and rehabilitating child laborers in commercial agriculture, commercial sexual exploitation, domestic work and the informal sector. Children in communities that are ravaged by HIV/AIDS throughout Uganda and that are disrupted by war in the north are at risk of being attracted to the worst forms of child labor. Recognizing this, the United States is also funding a regional education initiative to provide affected children with non-formal and transitional education, as well as a sector program of the International Labor Organization's International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor, which is intended to provide assistance to HIV/AIDS orphans and affected children and enhance community awareness of the negative effects of child labor. The United States is also funding a four-year HIV/AIDS workplace education program.

Zambia

After restoring multiparty politics in 1991, the Republic of Zambia has been governed by the Movement for Multi-Party Democracy, the party of both President Levy Mwanawasa (from January 2002) and his predecessor, Frederick Chiluba (1991 through 2001). Zambia has made strides toward democratic governance that protects human rights, but many challenges remain. The December 2001 election that brought President Mwanawasa into office was tainted by alleged irregularities and remains the subject of a legal challenge. Parliamentary by-elections from 2002 through 2004 have shown continuing weaknesses in Zambia's electoral system, but there have been signs of improved performance by the Electoral Commission. The Government's human rights record remains poor. There are 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. There were reports of trafficking in persons.

In view of Zambia's poor human rights record, and building on the demonstrated will of leaders both inside and outside of government to undertake reforms, the U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Zambia focuses on democratic governance and the professionalism of law enforcement agencies. An inter-agency working group chaired by the Ambassador coordinates U.S. democracy and governance activities undertaken in Zambia.

United States efforts to foster democratic, transparent and fair governance in Zambia include support and technical assistance for legal and institutional reform. In the area of institutional reform, the main focus is 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, rather than a rubber stamp for the executive branch. In 2004, the PRP contributed to a greater level of activity within the committees of the National Assembly. The committees held more frequent public hearings and were more effective in holding the executive accountable, especially with respect to spending. The project also improved communications between voters and parliamentarians through establishment of several constituency offices on a pilot basis. The National Assembly is now seeking to establish such offices in all constituencies.

In 2004, the Embassy used its Democracy and Human Rights Fund to help the judiciary procure computers and other equipment to support elec-

tronic record keeping. This should improve the efficiency of judicial administration and, ultimately, support speedier delivery of justice.

The United States supports training with significant human rights components for Zambian law enforcement officers. Through 2004, 211 Zambian police officers had received training at the International Law Enforcement Academy in Gaborone, Botswana. These courses included significant human rights components.

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). In 2004 the PPCA continued to hear complaints and ordered disciplinary action against the officers involved. The Government has endorsed the PPCA's power to order such action, including dismissal in some cases, but the police are sometimes slow to follow the PPCA's instructions. In 2004 the PPCA also conducted a broad public awareness campaign to educate people about their rights, including broadcasts of radio advertisements in five languages.

Embassy officials met with a wide spectrum of religious representatives to promote inter-religious dialogue and collaboration on several issues. The U.S. Ambassador appeared on national television on several occasions with religious leaders and has been active in supporting inter-denominational efforts to increase HIV-AIDS awareness. The U.S. Government also hosted a local Islamic scholar for a three week International Visitors Program.

The U.S. provided assistance to Zambia's Task Force on Corruption, which coordinates the work of investigators and prosecutors in a wide range of landmark corruption cases. This work helps the Zambian Government and civil society establish an improved climate of accountability, the best defense against corruption. In 2004, investigations completed by the task force led to indictments against former military commanders, senior civil servants, and managers of state owned enterprises that are now on trial for offenses including abuse of office and theft. Former President Chiluba and senior officials from his administration are also on trial over a range of corruption charges.

Child labor and child prostitution are Zambia's most serious manifestations of trafficking in persons. In 2004, the Ambassador engaged Zambian cabinet ministers on the subject of trafficking in persons. As a result, the Government acknowledged that trafficking was a problem and began to take action. Parliament passed comprehensive child labor legislation that addressed trafficking and child exploitation. The Government also formed an inter-ministerial anti-trafficking committee and began to implement a strategy to provide shelter and protection to street children, including prostitutes. Furthermore, police successfully intervened in several cases of suspected trafficking.

Zimbabwe

The Government of Zimbabwe's human rights record remained poor and it continued to commit abuses. Since its disputed victories in the 2000 parliamentary and 2002 presidential elections, the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) has pursued repressive policies designed to maintain its dominant position in the country. In the run-up to parliamentary elections scheduled for the spring of 2005, the regime has closed independent newspapers, harassed opposition and civil society activists and passed repressive legislation.

In 2004, over the objection of opposition leaders, parliament passed a spate of repressive legislation, including a bill that restricts non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and bans foreign funding for NGOs engaged in human rights or governance activities and a bill that the president recently signed imposing harsh criminal penalties on journalists for not registering with the Government. Under regional and international pressure, the ruling party has embarked on modest electoral reforms. However, despite the opposition's decision to participate in elections, these reforms fall short of complying with the Southern African Development Community (SADC) standards for free and fair elections. Moreover, the Government continues to bar the opposition from access to certain media outlets, and the only independent daily newspapers remain closed. Independent weeklies and a semi-independent daily continue to operate.

Although the ruling party maintains its monopoly on power, Zimbabwean civil society remains a vibrant force in the country, despite ever-greater restrictions. Other institutions, including the judicial system, retain limited independence. For instance, Morgan Tsvangirai, president of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), was acquitted on charges of treason. Nevertheless, political manipulation of the judicial system by the ruling party remains commonplace. The Government ignores the decisions of the courts when it is in its perceived interest to do so.

The Government continued to use the state media to denigrate Western, especially U.S. and U.K. criticisms of human rights violations as a neocolonial effort to quash Zimbabwe's sovereignty. However, the Government's anti-Western rhetoric moderated during the last half of 2004, one of several signals that the regime wanted to reduce Zimbabwe's international isolation and to seek international assistance in restoring its economy.

The return of a stable political environment that respects the rule of law and allows democratic institutions to function is crucial to improving the human rights situation in Zimbabwe. The United States must support and sustain democratic elements and institutions in Zimbabwe to build the base for democratic change in the future. The United States efforts are important to creating an atmosphere that enables political participation and gives voice to those who call for an end to human rights abuses.

The U.S. human rights strategy in Zimbabwe focuses on supporting civil society and the democratic opposition that are dedicated to expanding democratic space. Resolving Zimbabwe's political turmoil is necessary for improvement of its human rights situation. The United States continues to communicate to the ruling party the importance of improving the political situation, including cessation of human rights abuses. United States financial and travel sanctions on key Zimbabwean officials expanded to additional ruling party and government officials. Statements by U.S. officials received prominent coverage in the government-controlled and quasi-independent local media. United States diplomats emphasized in substan-

tive contacts with government and party officials the importance of reducing human rights abuses in Zimbabwe. The Embassy widely circulated its human rights-related reports among civil society, Government, and party officials. United States officials continue to engage governments in the region and urge them to bring pressure on the regime to support good governance and respect for human rights.

In response to human rights abuses, the United States gathered information about cases of alleged abuses. In addition, U.S. diplomats interviewed victims of political violence. United States diplomats maintained a visible presence at significant events, such as trials, including the treason trial of Morgan Tsvangirai, the president of the MDC. United States officials observed parliamentary by-elections and the pre-election environment in contested areas. The State Department sponsored a Zimbabwean student on a Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship to study human rights law.

The United States disseminated information in order to counter Government propaganda. The Embassy provided access to information and supported efforts to increase public debate. The Embassy provided support to local citizen groups and local authorities to improve transparency and municipal service delivery. The United States funded a program to strengthen good governance, which has resulted in an increased debate in parliament and stronger participation by the committees in amending legislation drafted by the Executive. The United States hosted a Zimbabwean on a Humphrey Fellowship to study independent media and two Zimbabwean journalists on an International Visitors Program (IVP) to learn how NGOs can support freedom of the press. The Embassy sponsored six other IVPs on programs related to human rights, democracy, leadership and two others on the role of civil society.

To encourage respect for the rights of women, children, minorities, and people with disabilities, the United States supported programs by NGOs on a variety of social welfare issues. A Human Rights and Democracy Fund (HRDF) grant helped furnish a center for victims of rape, abuse and

domestic violence who are pursuing legal action. The Embassy sponsored teleconferences between speakers from the United States and audiences of Zimbabwean women interested in women's rights. An American judge participated in a dialogue with Zimbabwean jurists and activists on sexual harassment.

In support of religious freedom, the United States widely disseminates relevant reports on religious rights. United States officials privately and publicly emphasize concern regarding intimidation and harassment of religious officials who are critical of the Government. The United States supports efforts by religious leaders to sustain dialogue to resolve Zimbabwe's political situation.

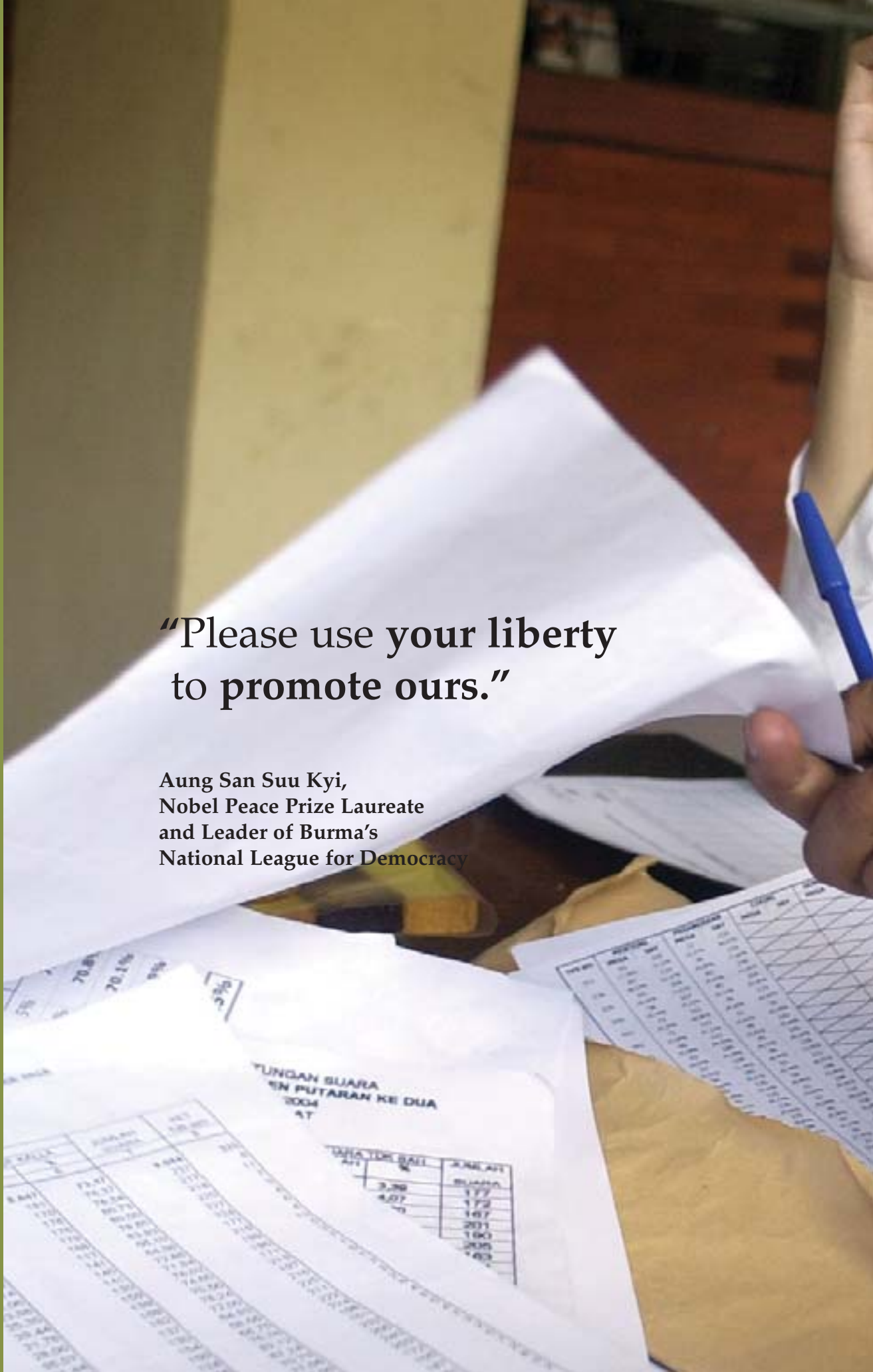
The United States funded a Solidarity Center program to support workers' rights. The program sought to help trade unions respond to and better represent the interest of their members. A grant to the Academy for Educational Development supported an HIV/AIDS workplace education program.

The United States promoted efforts by the Government to combat trafficking in persons. United States officials met with government representatives to convey U.S. interest in the issue and promote cooperation and sharing of best practices. United States officials disseminated relevant reports widely and participated in local and regional meetings to address the issue.

East Asia and Pacific

**“Please use your liberty
to promote ours.”**

**Aung San Suu Kyi,
Nobel Peace Prize Laureate
and Leader of Burma’s
National League for Democracy**



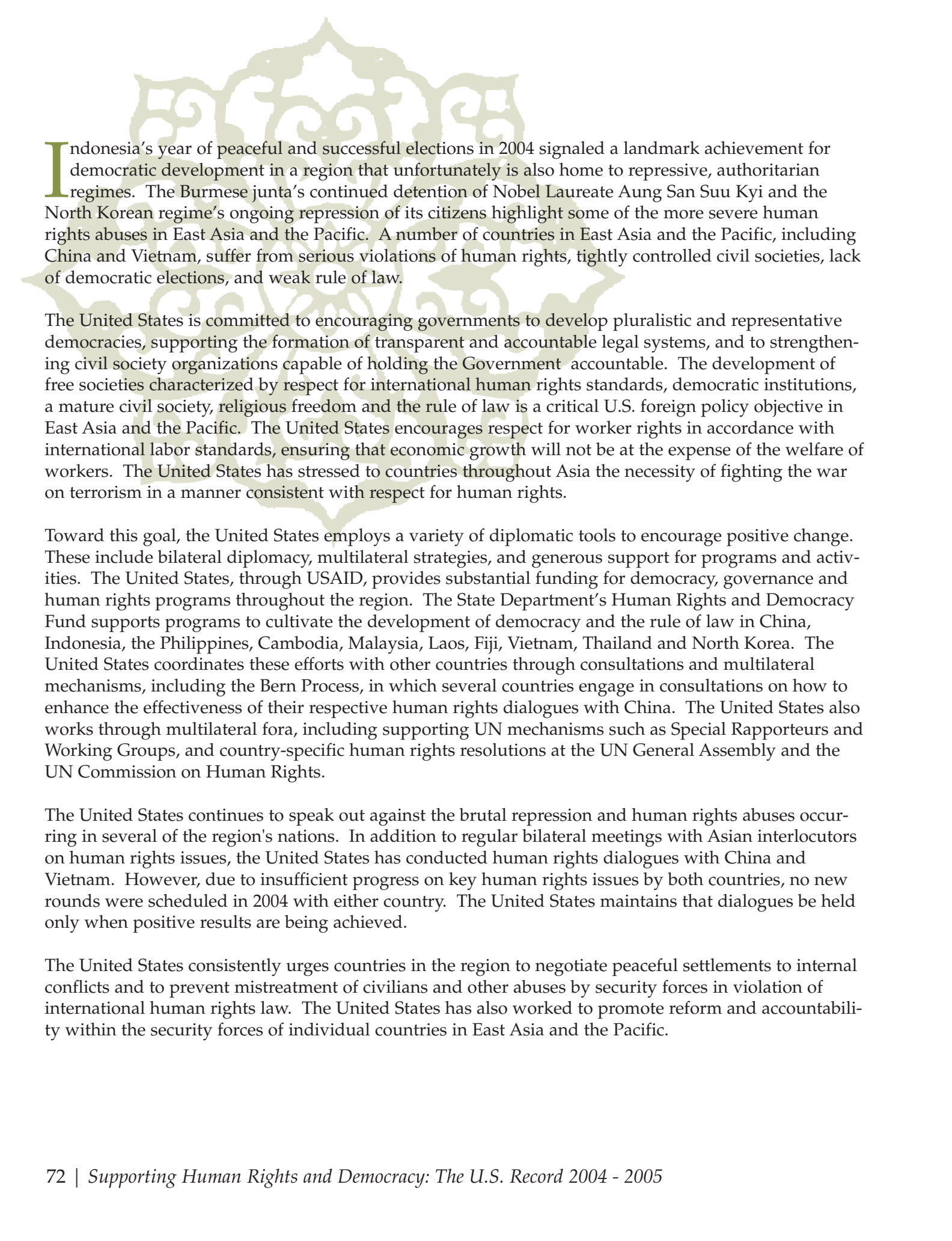
TUNJANGAN SUARA DARI PUTARAN KE DUA 2004 AT	
TUNJANGAN TERDAFTAR	
NO. DAFTAR	JUMLAH SUARA
1	3,388
2	4,077
3	1,672
4	1,667
5	2,031
6	1,600
7	3,335
8	1,483



Jakarta, Indonesia

Election workers tabulate votes at a local counting center.

AP Photo



Indonesia's year of peaceful and successful elections in 2004 signaled a landmark achievement for democratic development in a region that unfortunately is also home to repressive, authoritarian regimes. The Burmese junta's continued detention of Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi and the North Korean regime's ongoing repression of its citizens highlight some of the more severe human rights abuses in East Asia and the Pacific. A number of countries in East Asia and the Pacific, including China and Vietnam, suffer from serious violations of human rights, tightly controlled civil societies, lack of democratic elections, and weak rule of law.

The United States is committed to encouraging governments to develop pluralistic and representative democracies, supporting the formation of transparent and accountable legal systems, and to strengthening civil society organizations capable of holding the Government accountable. The development of free societies characterized by respect for international human rights standards, democratic institutions, a mature civil society, religious freedom and the rule of law is a critical U.S. foreign policy objective in East Asia and the Pacific. The United States encourages respect for worker rights in accordance with international labor standards, ensuring that economic growth will not be at the expense of the welfare of workers. The United States has stressed to countries throughout Asia the necessity of fighting the war on terrorism in a manner consistent with respect for human rights.

Toward this goal, the United States employs a variety of diplomatic tools to encourage positive change. These include bilateral diplomacy, multilateral strategies, and generous support for programs and activities. The United States, through USAID, provides substantial funding for democracy, governance and human rights programs throughout the region. The State Department's Human Rights and Democracy Fund supports programs to cultivate the development of democracy and the rule of law in China, Indonesia, the Philippines, Cambodia, Malaysia, Laos, Fiji, Vietnam, Thailand and North Korea. The United States coordinates these efforts with other countries through consultations and multilateral mechanisms, including the Bern Process, in which several countries engage in consultations on how to enhance the effectiveness of their respective human rights dialogues with China. The United States also works through multilateral fora, including supporting UN mechanisms such as Special Rapporteurs and Working Groups, and country-specific human rights resolutions at the UN General Assembly and the UN Commission on Human Rights.

The United States continues to speak out against the brutal repression and human rights abuses occurring in several of the region's nations. In addition to regular bilateral meetings with Asian interlocutors on human rights issues, the United States has conducted human rights dialogues with China and Vietnam. However, due to insufficient progress on key human rights issues by both countries, no new rounds were scheduled in 2004 with either country. The United States maintains that dialogues be held only when positive results are being achieved.

The United States consistently urges countries in the region to negotiate peaceful settlements to internal conflicts and to prevent mistreatment of civilians and other abuses by security forces in violation of international human rights law. The United States has also worked to promote reform and accountability within the security forces of individual countries in East Asia and the Pacific.



Supporting Independent Media

With the support of a two-year grant from the United States, the Media Development Loan Fund began a partnership with Indonesia's only independent nationwide radio news agency, Radio News Agency 68H, to produce and develop an indigenous news program "Asia Calling." The weekly 30 minute program, in English and Indonesian, now reaches an estimated 2 million listeners and is an innovative approach to the promotion of democracy and human rights in the world's third-largest democracy and home to the world's largest Muslim population.

At a time when many nations are struggling against extremism, "Asia Calling" offers indigenous voices of tolerance and openness on the most pressing current affairs impacting the people of Asia today. In addition to "Asia Calling's" general coverage of Indonesia's 2004 presidential elections, the program also featured reports on the impact of terrorism on the elections, as well as the inauguration of President Yudhoyono and the hopes for his administration. "Asia Calling" has featured important programming on religious tolerance. This program addressed repression of religious freedom in Vietnam, the Liberal Islam network in Indonesia and its impact on society, and violence in southern Thailand, and repression of Uighur Muslims in China. When the tsunami devastated the Aceh province, 68H Radio staff helped to rebuild local radio stations, and reported on the tsunami, covering the situation in Aceh and its political ramifications, the global relief effort, the impact on Burmese migrants in Thailand, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations tsunami conference.

With local and regional correspondents, "Asia Calling" is now a trusted indigenous news source with an ever-growing audience. Soon to broadcast in other countries in Southeast Asia, it will help promote a common understanding of the challenges facing the region and encourage greater citizen participation in public life.



Photo: V. Golding

Burma

Burma continues to be ruled by a brutal authoritarian military junta that reinforces its firm grip on power with a pervasive security apparatus. During 2004, the Government's extremely poor human rights record worsened and it continued to commit serious abuses. Citizens still do not have the right to change their government. Security forces continue to commit extrajudicial killings, rape and forcible relocation of persons, use forced labor, and conscript child soldiers. The military junta continues to be hostile to all forms of political opposition and dissent. It has effectively barred participation of the main opposition party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), in the sham National Convention, which reconvened in May and is designed to secure a new Constitution granting the military a predominant role in any future government. The NLD's top leaders, Aung San Suu Kyi and U Tin Oo, remain under house arrest. All of the party's nationwide offices, except its Rangoon headquarters, remain forcibly closed. Despite the release of a small number of political prisoners in 2004, harassment, arrests, and disappearances of political activists continued. Members of the security forces tortured, beat, and otherwise abused prisoners and detainees.

United States human rights and democracy goals include helping Burma establish a constitutional democracy, promoting respect for human rights – including the restoration of civil and political rights, the release of all political prisoners, an end to abuses in ethnic minority regions, and combating trafficking in persons. The United States works with other like-minded countries to maintain maximum international pressure on Burma. This includes robust bilateral and multilateral sanctions, public diplomacy and democracy programs.

The United States is a vocal advocate for democratic activists in Burma, including Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi. President Bush has publicly condemned the deplorable human rights situation in Burma and has spoken out on behalf of Aung San Suu Kyi and the democratic opposition on numerous occasions. In 2004, President Bush

addressed the UN General Assembly (UNGA) and demonstrated U.S. support for Burmese democracy by quoting Aung San Suu Kyi's remarks on democratic values: "We do not accept the notion that democracy is a Western value. To the contrary; democracy simply means good government rooted in responsibility, transparency, and accountability." Secretary of State Powell stated publicly in March 2004, "I have seen no improvement in the situation [since the sanctions were imposed]. Aung San Suu Kyi remains unable to participate in public political life in Burma, and we will not ignore that. We will not shrink back from the strong position we have taken." Following the December 2004 announcement that Aung San Suu Kyi's detention would be extended by another year, the White House released a statement condemning the junta's action and strongly supporting her and the Burmese people in their struggle for freedom.

The United States, members of the EU and other nations have imposed a variety of sanctions on the Burmese junta. These sanctions are designed to signal international disapproval, exert pressure on the junta to end its human rights abuses, and allow for genuine democracy in Burma. In July 2003, President Bush issued Executive Order 13310 and signed the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act (BFDA), adding stringent economic sanctions to already existing U.S. sanctions. The BFDA was renewed in July 2004 by an overwhelming margin in both U.S. houses of Congress.

United States sanctions now include a ban on the export of all financial services to Burma by U.S. persons, a ban on all imports from Burma, an arms embargo, and a ban on all new U.S. investment in Burma. Sanctions also include the suspension of all bilateral aid to the Government, including counter-narcotics assistance, the withdrawal of Generalized System of Preferences privileges, and the denial of Overseas Private Investment Corporation and Export-Import Bank programs. The United States also maintains visa restrictions on Burma's senior government officials, and opposes all new lending or grant programs by international financial institutions. The Government of Burma refuses to honor the results of the 1990 democratic elections in which the NLD

won over eighty percent of seats. Since that time, the United States has maintained diplomatic representation at the Chargé d’Affaires level.

The United States works multilaterally to press for change in Burma. Such efforts include support for the efforts of UN Special Envoy Razali Ismail and UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, as well as the work of the International Labor Organization (ILO), the International Committee of the Red Cross, 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.

The 2004 UNGA resolution, adopted by consensus, called for a fully inclusive National Convention; restoration of democracy and respect of the results of the 1990 elections; the immediate and unconditional release of the NLD leadership; and an independent investigation of the May 2003 attack on Aung San Suu Kyi, and her NLD convoy and supporters. United States officials also consistently raised concerns about Burma during bilateral meetings at all levels with other nations in the region. The United States urges these nations to take a more active role in addressing the problems that such a repressive government causes for regional organizations like the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. The Government of Burma has not allowed UN Special Envoy Razali to visit Burma since March 2004.

The Government of Burma does not allow domestic human rights groups to function independently and dismisses outside scrutiny of its human rights record. Despite pressure exerted by the United States, EU and UN, the junta did not allow UN Special Rapporteur Pinheiro to visit Burma in 2004. The United States funds several groups working along Burma’s borders that document human rights abuses inside Burma, including rape and forced labor. The United States also supports journalist training, media development, and several scholarship programs to prepare Burmese youth for leadership roles once political transition occurs.

The United States promotes the rule of law and democracy by providing information exchange and civic education programs in Burma on human rights, democratic values, and governance issues. In 2004, the United States dedicated funds for speaker programs, exchange programs, publications, and other information outreach in Burma. In addition, the United States provided support to the Burmese opposition and ethnic minority groups in fiscal year 2004. The majority of these funds are programmed through the National Endowment for Democracy, focusing on democracy promotion and capacity-building activities for Burmese exile groups, as well as the collection and dissemination of information on democracy and the human rights situation both inside and along the borders of Burma. All U.S. humanitarian or democracy-related assistance is channeled through non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and none of the funding benefits the Government of Burma.

The United States also seeks an end to the egregious human rights abuses perpetrated by the Burmese army against ethnic minority civilians in border regions. During travel throughout Burma and along the Thai-Burma border, U.S. officials have personally interviewed victims of political and other violence and facilitated access for other U.S. and UN investigations into human rights abuses. Furthermore, the United States maintains frequent contact with influential members of the political opposition regarding initiatives that support the struggle for democracy in Burma.

A key aspect of U.S. advocacy is our persistent call for the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners in Burma. More than 1,000 people continue to languish in Burma’s jails for the peaceful expression of their political views. The Government released 76 political prisoners in 2004, though authorities arrested at least 85 pro-democracy supporters during the same period. Of the 85 pro-democracy supporters arrested in 2004, authorities released 42. The other 43 were charged, tried, and imprisoned.

There has been no change in the Government of Burma’s limited respect for religious freedom. The Government continues to monitor meetings and

activities of virtually all organizations, including religious ones; systematically restricts efforts by Buddhist clergy to promote human rights and political freedom; discourages or prohibits Muslims and Christians from constructing new places of worship, and in some ethnic minority areas, coercively promotes Buddhism over other religions. In 2004, the United States responded by redesignating Burma as a “Country of Particular Concern” (CPC) under the 1998 International Religious Freedom Act. This is the sixth consecutive year Burma has been defined as a CPC.

The United States also funds several groups along Burma’s borders that provide information on the serious problems faced by minority ethnic and religious groups in Burma, including Rohingya Muslims and Chin, Karen, Karenni, and Naga Christians.

The United States continued to press the junta in Burma to allow workers’ rights and unions and to discontinue its use of forced labor. The United States supported the continuation of a liaison office of the ILO in Burma that made efforts to bring the Government into compliance with its international labor standards. The United States also designated Burma as a Tier III country, the most severe category, in its 2004 report on trafficking in persons. To address this serious problem, the United States approved funding for an NGO-implemented anti-trafficking in persons program intended to raise awareness among vulnerable Burmese, and to support anti-trafficking efforts of local NGOs.

Cambodia

The promotion of democracy and good governance, as well as the continued improvement of human rights, are two of the United States main foreign policy objectives in Cambodia. In July 2003, Cambodia held its third National Assembly elections, but no party won the two-thirds majority required to form a government. In July 2004, two of the three parties that won National Assembly seats, the Cambodian People’s Party (CPP) and the National United Front for an Independent Neutral Peaceful and Cooperative Cambodia (FUNCINPEC), formed a coalition gov-

ernment, while the third party, the Sam Rainsy Party (SRP), remained in opposition. Cambodia’s human rights record remained poor, and the Government continued to commit abuses. During the year there were a number of allegations of political killings, and a climate of impunity for violence continued. There were credible reports that some members of the security forces tortured, beat and otherwise abused persons in custody, often to extract confessions. Citizens often appeared in court without defense counsel and were effectively denied the right to a fair trial. Prison conditions remained harsh and the Government continued to use arbitrary arrest and prolonged pretrial detention. Although the number of trade unions grew, and unions became more active, anti-union activity continued and union activists were frequently the victims of violence. Bonded and forced child labor continued to be a problem in the informal sector of the economy. Domestic and cross-border trafficking in women and children, including for the purpose of prostitution, remained a serious problem.

The United States supported democracy promotion and human rights protection activities by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including the East-West Management Institute, The Asia Foundation (TAF), the International Republican Institute (IRI), the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-CAM), the American Center for International Labor Solidarity (ACILS), Planning and Development Collaborative International and International Justice Mission (IJM). United States officials cooperated closely with civil society, international organizations, government officials and international and local NGOs to monitor and advocate respect for human rights and the need for the Royal Government of Cambodia to address the persistent climate of impunity in Cambodia. United States officials highlighted publicly the need for improvement in human rights conditions. During the post-election period, the United States implemented a sustained diplomatic effort with senior Cambodian officials to urge the peaceful formation of a new coalition government in conformance with the Cambodian Constitution. United States Government officials, including the Ambassador and senior embassy staff, engaged

the Prime Minister and senior officials on numerous occasions, stressing the critical role of peaceful transitions of power in developing democratic systems and urging the inclusion of the opposition SRP in the committees of the National Assembly.

The United States supported 43 forums on decentralization and local government in ten provinces and four cities and municipalities. Nearly 2,000 local officials, NGO staff and community representatives attended these forums. Using U.S. funds, NDI organized nine Constituency Dialogues attended by National Assembly members from the SRP and the FUNCINPEC parties in which 4,250 citizens from three provinces attended. Fifty-eight community volunteers were trained to organize additional dialogues and to follow up on issues raised during the meetings. All the public forums and dialogues received print, radio and TV media coverage, broadening the impact of their activities. Using U.S. funds, TAF developed and completed 51 Commune Citizen Rating Report surveys designed to gain the public's assessment of commune council performance. This data is used to provide councilors with feedback on the role citizens expect the Commune Council to play.

Cambodia's three major political parties sent a total of 864 representatives to attend U.S. supported training focused on party reform, party structure assessment, meeting management, event organization, communication and inter-party cooperation. This training resulted in the CPP reviewing its communication practices and international outreach strategy, the FUNCINPEC reducing the number of Deputy Secretary General positions from 23 to 5 and increasing the autonomy of the women's movement within the party, and the SRP launching an overhaul of party structure including the party constitution, fundraising, election of officers and candidates and policy development process.

By promoting democracy education and solidarity in the Muslim community through funding a Cambodian Muslim student's organization the United States addressed the threat of radical Islam by strengthening established networks to promote peaceful dialogue toward moderate alternatives. The student organization also conducted human

rights and democracy training in Phnom Penh and Kompong Cham Province to increase awareness of human rights within the Khmer Muslim community. 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 U.S. also supported an Muslim NGO that began human rights training for the Muslim community in several provinces in the western part of the country.

In 2004, the United States launched the first series of secondary school English language micro scholarships for in-country English language study, aimed at Cambodian Muslim students in four target areas in Cambodia. Through small grants, the United States partnered with four NGOs to select ten suitable candidates in each of four provinces. The support network offered by a local NGO partner helped to ensure that students given this opportunity are enabled to succeed. The NGO partners also served as a monitoring body to ensure local schools provided services as contracted, increasing organizational capacity among the NGO partners while strengthening the English skills of the students selected. English language scholarships expand the educational and economic opportunities for Cambodia's most educationally marginalized population, which includes ethnic minorities and those living in the most remote rural areas. Learning English increases the chances that these students will graduate from secondary school and potentially move on to college, find gainful employment and open up new worlds of ideas about structures of civil society that are different from what already exists in Cambodia. In addition, most of these scholarships are given in locations where an American Corner is located, increasing the students' access to English materials on democratic principles and practices.

United States officials, including the Ambassador and Deputy Chief of Mission also engaged the judicial sector on numerous occasions to press for strengthening the rule of law and independence of the judiciary, with particular attention to deficiencies in the current method of disciplining judges. Ambassador Ray continued to press for a credible, professional investigation into the January 2004

killing of union leader Chea Vichea. The United States funded a major Corruption Assessment Report that was released in November, capturing both domestic and international headlines and bolstering calls for reform during the December Consultative Group donor meeting. During the Consultative Group, the Ambassador called on the Cambodian Government to take concrete action to promote good governance, include civil society in decision-making and fight corruption. United States officials from the Department of Justice and Department of Homeland Security, meeting with the Minister of Justice and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in January 2005, also outlined areas for judicial reform and programs the United States views as best practices for combating corruption.

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 government policy, which helped other partners develop the will and capacity to bring more cases of human rights abuses to court. A Cambodian legal defense NGO continued to provide legal aid services for the poor and undertook the high profile representation of two men arrested for the January 2004 murder of labor leader Chea Vichea. The Community Legal Education Center, through the Public Interest Legal Advocacy Project, pioneered the use of class action cases on behalf of communities that are challenging illegal land concessions made by a forestry official in Ratanakiri Province and negotiated with Phnom Penh city officials on behalf of 350 families threatened with eviction without just compensation in a road widening project.

United States support enabled over 20 key human rights NGOs to monitor, investigate and report on human rights violations including unlawful arrests, extrajudicial killings, abuse of power by government officials, restrictions on speech and the right to assemble and intimidation of human rights workers. An advocacy campaign on the right of assembly, spearheaded by a Cambodian NGO, resulted in two peaceful demonstrations in late 2004. The United States, through IRI, support-

ed a Cambodian human rights NGO in conducting 24 public forums throughout the country that directly reached approximately 18,000 citizens and stimulated public discussion on local human rights issues and matters affecting local communities. This NGO also continued to broadcast its Voice of Democracy radio program, where human rights issues are raised and discussed, that has become one of the most popular and broad-reaching sources of independent programming in Cambodia. With U.S. support, a Cambodian youth group continued to organize youth forums to encourage political parties to pay greater attention to youth issues.

The United States also continued to support the core activities of DC-CAM in investigating and documenting the crimes against humanity committed by the former Khmer Rouge regime to help build a record that would be useful in bringing those responsible for the atrocities to justice. In addition to these core activities, U.S. support allowed the Center to produce its first film, a 30-minute documentary of a rape survivor from the Khmer Rouge period. Using U.S. funds, DC-CAM also opened a public information room allowing for public access to critical documents on the Khmer Rouge regime by nearly 1,000 visitors. The Center has also continued to do public outreach, engaging Cham Muslim leaders, Buddhist nuns and members of youth and student associations. The United States supports bringing to justice senior Khmer Rouge leaders responsible for the atrocities committed under the Khmer Rouge regime.

The United States continued support for the participation of women in politics and the training of women in leadership skills, including NDI sponsored "Women in Politics" conferences. A local NGO held public forums on "Women in Politics," which featured female candidates and were later broadcast on local radio stations. An NGO focusing on young women built the capacity of girls and young women for self-reliance, self-esteem and assistance to their own communities, including training focused on rights and responsibilities, democracy and the culture of peace. The United States also sponsored a two-day train-the-trainer workshop for nearly 50 Cambodian domestic violence experts and caseworkers to promote peaceful

solutions to social conflict. The workshop presented creative, hands-on techniques that helped Cambodian NGOs better define, recognize and analyze patterns of violent behavior. United States-funded TAF continued its support for FM 102, a radio station run by women with programming specifically for women, including financial support for The 80% Show: Towards Zero Point, a program designed to reduce violence against women, particularly rape.

On numerous occasions throughout the year, Embassy officers urged Cambodian authorities in both the Foreign Ministry and Ministry of Interior to meet Cambodia's obligations to permit the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to have access to and provide protection for persons seeking asylum in Cambodia. Following an influx of Montagnard asylum seekers, ethnic minorities from Vietnam's Central Highland region, in the beginning of April the U.S. Ambassador joined the diplomatic community in calling on the Cambodian Government to allow the asylum seekers access to the resident office of the UNHCR. The Regional Refugee Coordinator met with Cambodian officials to explain U.S. refugee processing procedures. United States officials also traveled to meet with local officials in Ratanakiri and Mondolkiri Provinces to investigate reports that Cambodia had sealed its border with Vietnam and to urge respect for human rights.

Union activists were frequently the victims of violence. On January 22, the president of the Free Trade Union Workers of Cambodia (FTUWKC), Chea Vichea, was gunned down on a busy street in Phnom Penh. At year's end, two suspects remained in custody pending further investigation of the case. On May 7, Ros Savannareth, a factory-level union leader and steering committee member of the FTUWKC, was also killed. A soldier from a paratroop unit was arrested as a suspect in the killing, and appeared in court on July 25. He awaits trial while in detention. In addition, on June 23, Lay Sopheap, the president of a union affiliated with the FTUWKC was attacked and left for dead. No suspect has been arrested.

As part of multiyear projects, the United States funded International Labor Organization (ILO)

programs to protect the rights of workers through monitoring labor conditions in garment factories, creating a labor arbitration mechanism, bringing HIV/AIDS education to the workplace and combating the worst forms of child labor. The ACILS, with U.S. support, trained union leaders in union building and provided legal aid to garment union leaders and activists. The Cambodian Labor Arbitration Council, an ILO project funded by the United States, continues to carry out its mandate to arbitrate labor disputes impartially. The Labor Arbitration Council has been a model of legal credibility and transparency in an environment where the lack of rule of law remains the norm.

The Arbitration Council and other U.S. programs have also benefited the labor movement beyond the garment sector. Tourism unions have turned successfully to the same mechanisms and won important attention to their efforts. In other areas, U.S. support for public school teacher unions allowed this new sector of organized labor to use its growing numbers to win several battles against corrupt school officials. The ILO garment factory monitoring project, funded by the United States, monitors and reports on working conditions and labor rights in Cambodia's 200 garment factories. This project has helped Cambodia grow economically by attracting socially conscious garment companies to buy from Cambodia and has increased respect for and protection of labor rights and standards. The NGO World Education commenced a project that increased school enrollment and attendance of children who are at high risk of falling into the worst forms of child labor, such as child trafficking or commercial sexual exploitation. In addition, the United States supported a week long speaker program, including intensive training for labor arbitrators, in July 2004.

The United States highlighted the continuing need for convictions of human traffickers, including corrupt officials involved in or benefiting from trafficking. In partnership with local law enforcement, the IJM assisted in 18 prosecutions during the year, resulting in 8 convictions carrying sentences of up to 20 years. Other traffickers were convicted in less well-known cases. During the year, the United States and the Cambodian Government cooperated in the investigation of

five alleged American child exploiters; three of these individuals were deported from Cambodia to face prosecution in the United States under U.S. child protection laws. This initiative continued to be a major priority of the U.S. Government and received consistently strong cooperation from the Cambodian Government.

The Ambassador, Director of the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, visited Cambodia in February to assess the Government's work in combating human trafficking and to express the need for judicial reform as key to Cambodia's anti-trafficking efforts. Cambodia was subsequently one of eight countries identified by the Presidential Anti-Trafficking Initiative for support to combat human trafficking. In November, the United States partnered with three other countries to sponsor a major national anti-trafficking conference in Cambodia which both the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister/Co-Minister of Interior attended. Delegates from the conference, including police, government officials, NGOs, international organizations and diplomatic missions created a list of action points for combating human trafficking that was presented to the Cambodian Government for consideration in its national plan.

In December, the Department of State issued a strong condemnation of an attack on a Phnom Penh NGO shelter for trafficking in persons victims, calling on the Cambodian Government to take immediate steps to protect the women and girls present at the shelter during the attack and the NGOs working in the trafficking in persons sector. Secretary of State Powell urged the Prime Minister to conduct a full investigation into the events at the shelter and the release of eight suspected human traffickers. The Ambassador, Deputy Chief of Mission and senior Embassy staff also warned senior Cambodian officials that a lack of action in response to the incident would call into question the Government's commitment to combating trafficking.

The United States continued to provide support to NGO activities to combat trafficking in persons. Through one grant to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United

States supported an information campaign to combat trafficking in women and children. The project included a provincial and district-level multi-media information campaign that was expanded beyond the original program scope, which included village-based activities designed to foster community networks to combat trafficking and the development of a counter-trafficking database. A total of 60,000 persons were reached during this phase of the campaign. Another related IOM project provided psycho-social training and support to trafficking victim recovery and reintegration. The project provided care to trafficked women and children, including their families. The program also provided psychological support to trafficking victims and NGO workers.

Through TAF, the United States continued support for local NGOs to run shelters with training and reintegration programs for former trafficking victims and victims of rape and domestic violence. TAF provided sub-grants and technical assistance to 17 local NGO's focusing on protection, prevention and prosecution. A local NGO, with the support of the United States, launched a women's economic empowerment program targeted at women at risk for being trafficked.

China

China's authoritarian Government continued to suppress political, religious and social groups, as well as individuals, that it perceived to be a threat to regime power or national stability. The Government's human rights record remained poor, and the Government continued to commit numerous and serious abuses. It refused to allow social, political or religious groups to organize or act independently of the Government and the Communist Party. Those who tried to act independently were often harassed, detained or abused by the authorities. In March, the Government amended its Constitution to include protection of human rights and throughout the year adopted legal reforms to strengthen oversight of government action. However, it is unclear how or to what extent the constitutional amendment and other legal reforms will be enforced. Other rights protected by China's Constitution are sometimes infringed and those whose rights are denied

often have little legal recourse. Human rights abuses continued, including torture and mistreatment of prisoners, abuse in custody that resulted in death, forced confessions, arbitrary arrest and detention, incommunicado detention and denial of due process.

The United States employs multiple strategies to promote human rights, democracy and the rule of law in China. This comprehensive strategy includes bilateral diplomatic efforts, multilateral action, and support through government and non-governmental channels. The United States seeks 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 worker rights and women's rights, improve transparency in governance and strengthen civil society. United States Government officials at all levels also work with Chinese officials, domestic and foreign non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and others to identify areas of particular concern and encourage systemic reforms.

The United States continues to place a high priority on urging China to bring its human rights practices into compliance with international standards, and on working to secure the release of Chinese prisoners of conscience. During the year,

President Bush, Secretary of State Powell, the Ambassador and other U.S. officials repeatedly raised specific human rights cases in public remarks and in private meetings with Chinese officials. President Bush raised human rights issues when he met with President Hu Jintao during the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation ministerial meeting in November. Vice President Cheney also raised human rights concerns with Chinese leaders and in a speech at Fudan University during his April visit to China. Secretary Powell raised human rights concerns during his visit to Beijing in October and during a meeting with Foreign Minister Li in Washington, D.C. in September. Then-Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Lorne Craner discussed the need for progress on human rights issues with a visiting Chinese Government delegation in March 2004. Then-Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Elizabeth Dugan traveled to Beijing in November 2004 to press China for improved human rights cooperation.

In 2004, Tibetan nun Phuntsog Nyidrol and political dissident Liu Jingsheng were released early from prison. In March 2004, China Democracy Party activist Wang Youcai was released to the United States on medical parole. United States appeals also helped others gain early release from



Anhui Province, China

People cast their votes in a village committee election.

Photo: E. Dugan

prison. In February, a team of Chinese and U.S. legal experts discussed parole and sentencing reduction for those still serving sentences for political crimes that have been eliminated from the 1997 Criminal Law.

A key objective of the United States is to promote systemic improvements in China's human rights situation. Toward that goal, the Department of State funds a multi-million dollar program to promote legal reform, encourage judicial independence, increase popular participation in government and foster the development of local level elections and civil society in China. Under this program, more than a dozen projects are currently being implemented, including projects that strengthen the provision of legal services, reform criminal law and enable average citizens to seek protection under the law. The United States also supports a small grants program administered by the U.S. Embassy in Beijing. Among the 11 grants in 2004 are criminal law reform projects and capacity building for state-linked and independent NGOs.

United States officials at all levels regularly engaged with Chinese officials and researchers to discuss legal reform. Undersecretary for Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky and other senior officials discussed human rights and rule of law with visiting Supreme People's Court President and Chief Justice Xiao Yang and other Chinese officials in October 2004. Influential government officials and researchers in law, criminal justice, environmental protection and media participate in the State Department's International Visitors Program.

The President and senior officials consistently called upon the Chinese Government to respect international standards for religious freedom for people of all faiths. Additionally, the United States urged the Chinese Government to enter into dialogue with the Vatican and the Dalai Lama. Emissaries of the Dalai Lama visited Tibetan areas of China three times in the past three years, the first such visits in decades. Lodi Gyari, the Dalai Lama's Special Envoy, and Kelsang Gyaltzen, the Dalai Lama's Envoy, made a trip to China in September 2004 to continue discussions with Chinese officials that began in September 2002. In addition, 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.

At the last round of the formal Human Rights Dialogue session in December 2002, the Government agreed to invite the UN Special Rapporteurs for Torture and Religious Intolerance, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom to visit China. In September 2004, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention visited China. The other promised visits have yet to take place. The United States declined to schedule another round of the Dialogue until these and other remaining commitments are fulfilled.

During the year, 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 human rights dialogues with China to share information about human rights strategies and democracy, human rights and rule of law programming. Under U.S. leadership, cooperation among like-minded missions in Beijing expanded. The U.S. Government sought to focus international attention on the human rights situation in China at the 60th session of the UN Commission on Human Rights. As in past years, the China resolution tabled by the United States did not come to a vote because of a successful "no-action motion" introduced by the People's Republic of China delegation. In March, following the announcement that the United States would sponsor a China resolution, the People's Republic of China announced that it was suspending the bilateral Human Rights Dialogue with the United States and placed conditions on legal cooperation with some U.S. organizations. In addition, China also suspended regular human rights working-level discussions until November 2004.

The U.S. Mission in China also brought internationally recognized speakers to China to address Chinese audiences on various topics, including democracy, human rights, religious freedom, corporate social responsibility and rule of law. Facilitated by the U.S. Mission in China, Members

of Congress, their staff and staff of the Congressional Executive Committee on China travel regularly to China to explore these issues and raise concerns with Chinese officials.

The United States has devoted significant resources and time to urging Chinese government officials to put an end to China's coercive birth limitation program. In 2002, the U.S. Government began discussions with the China regarding its birth planning law. There have been six rounds of such talks with the most recent round held in November when Assistant Secretary for Population, Refugees and Migration Arthur E. Dewey traveled to Beijing to press senior Chinese officials for reforms. In these discussions, the United States urged China to respect the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 1994 Cairo Declaration on Population and Development, which urge nations not to use coercion, in any form, in their population policies. The United States also urged China and the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) to restructure UNFPA's China program so that UNFPA does not support or participate in the management of China's coercive program. In December, Acting Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Michael G. Kozak and Assistant Secretary Dewey testified before the House International Relations Committee on the case of civil activist Mao Hengfeng, who has challenged the Government's family planning practices.

The United States has raised concern for the rights of ethnic minorities. The United States publicly and privately urged China not to use the war on terror as justification for cracking down on Uighurs expressing peaceful political dissent. But minorities in Xinjiang, Tibetan areas and Inner Mongolia continue to suffer repression. United States officials have also pressed China not to forcibly repatriate North Koreans and to allow the UN High Commission for Refugees access to this vulnerable population, as required by the 1951 Convention on Refugees and the 1967 Protocol on the Status of Refugees, which China has signed. During his November trip to China, Assistant Secretary Dewey appealed to China to allow the United States to establish a system by which North Korean asylum seekers could apply for and

be considered for resettlement to third countries. The Government of China continues to insist that North Koreans are illegal economic migrants.

The United States also promotes compliance with international labor standards. The United States Mission in China works 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 U.S. Department of Labor supported programs of technical cooperation to advance labor rule of law and coalmine safety as well as exchange programs in the areas of occupational safety and health, mine safety and health, wage and hour administration, administration of private pension programs and collection of labor statistics. The Department of Labor has also funded a program, implemented by the International Labor Organization (ILO), to combat discrimination associated with HIV/AIDS in the workplace. With funding from the U.S. Department of State, the ILO is implementing a program to improve the ability of labor institutions to combat trafficking in persons for labor purposes.

Through the Partnership to Eliminate Sweatshops (PESP), the U.S. Government supports programs that address unacceptable working conditions in manufacturing facilities that produce goods for the U.S. market. PESP supports programs that advance the development of a more stable international political and economic climate and builds a surer foundation for U.S. corporate investment abroad by advocating corporate social responsibility and building local capacity. It engages the private sector to address worker rights violations and working conditions. PESP has provided funding to improve educational resources to create local capacity to safeguard labor standards and worker rights, to improve worker-manager relationships and to increase Chinese company compliance with Chinese labor law. PESP is funding a program to improve workplace conditions by strengthening the capacity of Chinese government regulators to ensure compliance based on national labor standards and self-regulation by the toy industry.

The U.S. Mission in China continues to encourage China to improve its efforts against trafficking in women and children. While the Ministry of Public Security has arrested more than 20,000 traffickers and rescued more than 42,000 victims in recent years, it can do more to cooperate with foreign organizations.

Hong Kong

Hong Kong is a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People's Republic of China 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, was approved by China in 1990. It provides for the protection of fundamental rights and civil liberties and calls for progress toward universal suffrage and further democratization after a 10-year period, starting with Hong Kong's July 1, 1997 reversion to Chinese sovereignty. The judiciary is independent and the Basic Law vests Hong Kong's highest court with the power of final adjudication. In April, the Standing Committee issued a controversial decision on the scope and pace of constitutional reform that delayed universal suffrage until after the 2007 Legco and 2008 Chief Executive elections. The 2004 elections were seen as generally free, open and widely contested, but there were allegations in the months leading up to the election of intimidation of voters and political commentators.

The Government generally respected the human rights of residents, and the law and judiciary provide effective means of dealing with instances of abuse. A number of human rights problems existed, including limitations on residents' ability to change their government and the power of the legislature to affect government policies. Violence and discrimination against women and ethnic minorities also continues to persist. Restrictions on workers' rights to organize and bargain collectively and trafficking in persons for the purposes of prostitution remain issues of concern as well. Despite the ban on the Falun Gong in mainland China, the Falun Gong remained legally registered and practitioners continued their activities in Hong Kong.

President Bush raised Hong Kong's democratic development in his meetings with senior Chinese officials, including President Hu and Premier Wen. Secretary Powell also discussed Hong Kong's democratic development with senior Chinese officials, as well as with Hong Kong officials during their visits to the United States. Following the September 2004 Legco elections, Deputy Assistant Secretary for East Asian and the Pacific Affairs Randall Schriver voiced the U.S. Government's interest in Hong Kong's democratic development at a hearing by the Congressional Executive Commission on China. The United States Consul General has actively affirmed U.S. support for greater democratization in Hong Kong privately with Hong Kong government officials, and through speeches and remarks to the press. His comments, as well as related opinion pieces placed by the Consulate General, have been featured prominently in local and international newspapers, reaching a wide cross-section of Hong Kong society. Democracy has figured prominently in Consulate General-sponsored speaker and International Visitors Programs this year. The Consulate General has also facilitated local debate and discussion of democracy-related subjects. The U.S. Government also supports activities to strengthen civil society in Hong Kong.

Indonesia

Indonesia made substantial democratic progress during the year, taking further steps in its transition from three decades of repressive and authoritarian rule to a more pluralistic and representative democracy. The country held free, fair, and peaceful direct presidential elections and is the world's third largest democracy and home to the world's largest Muslim population. An estimated eighty percent of eligible voters participated, which means approximately 117 million people exercised their right to vote. Previously, the legislature had chosen the president. In accordance with amendments to the Constitution, the Government reduced the formal political role of members of the police and military, who lost their appointed seats in the parliament in October when the new legislature was sworn in. However, the overall human rights record remained poor. Although there were some improvements in a few areas, serious prob-

lems remained. Soldiers and police officers committed violations, including extra-judicial killings and torture, notably in Aceh and Papua Provinces. A weak and corrupt judicial system frequently failed to hold violators accountable. The military took greater steps to punish human rights abusers within its ranks but - as with the civilian justice system - the punishment in many cases did not match the offense. The Government frequently failed to uphold adequately the fundamental rights of children, women, peaceful protestors, disabled persons, 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 often publicly highlighted the need for protection of human rights, and put time, energy and resources into helping counter problems such as trafficking in persons (TIP), religious intolerance and threats to press freedom. Because many human rights violations involved the military and police, known collectively as the security forces, the United States focused its human rights efforts on pushing for military reform and accountability, professionalizing the police and developing civil society institutions essential for sustaining demo-

cratic transition. United States officials, particularly the full-time human rights officer at Embassy Jakarta, frequently worked with student groups, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), labor activists, representatives of religious and ethnic minorities, leaders of indigenous groups and others.

The United States provided extensive and crucial election assistance to support the remarkable democratic transition in Indonesia. This support bolstered the election process in a country with 543,000 polling stations and more than 145 million voters, who speak more than 250 languages and dialects. The United States provided assistance that included technical support to national and regional electoral authorities, voter education programs, and domestic monitoring initiatives to protect ballot integrity and international observers. The U.S. Embassy in Jakarta took an active role in monitoring the elections, fielding over 60 observers for each of the three rounds of voting.

In outreach efforts to the Muslim community, the United States sponsored speakers from dozens of Muslim boarding schools (pesantren), day schools (madrasahs) and Muslim institutions of higher learning, to exchange views on pluralism, toler-



Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia

Election workers aid a blind resident at a Community Home as she votes in Indonesia's first presidential election.

AP Photo

ance and respect for human rights. The Embassy sent a total of 80 pesantren leaders to the United States for a three-week program on religious pluralism, civic education and educational development. In addition, the Embassy sent 38 students and six teachers to the United States for four weeks on an Muslim Youth Leadership Program, and, through the Youth Exchange and Study (YES) program, over 60 Muslim students entered one-year programs at high schools throughout the United States. Journalists from approximately ten Muslim-focused media outlets traveled to the United States on reporting tours. At the university level, a multi-year grant helped implement a civic education program throughout the Muhammadiyah university system. A separate grant helped an Islamic studies institute in Yogyakarta conduct training on human rights and establish courses promoting tolerance. Grants were also provided to two U.S. universities for conflict resolution training and exchanges and to establish five mediation centers at Muslim institutions.

In support of long-term outreach, five American Corners opened in Muslim institutions of higher learning across Indonesia. 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 to promote an international level of discourse on progressive interpretations of Islam. The United States also 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 in the pesantren through the empowerment of male and female pesantren leaders. Promoting an environment where Indonesians can freely exercise their civil and political rights is critical to the U.S. foreign policy objective of fostering pluralism and tolerance to counter extremism.

Press freedom came under strain, with thugs occasionally assaulting journalists, and politicians and tycoons punitively pursuing criminal or civil legal actions against editors and reporters. The U.S.-

funded South East Asian Press Alliance monitored the extent of violence and intimidation against journalists in Indonesia. Senior U.S. officials conveyed to the Government concern over the growing number of peaceful protesters jailed for "insulting the President" or "spreading hatred against the Government." U.S. diplomats closely monitored and were present at several criminal prosecutions against the press, including the trial of noted journalist Bambang Harymurti who was charged under the criminal code for libel. 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 out of Jakarta.

To strengthen respect for the rule of law, the United States provided professional training programs both in Indonesia and regionally, with the goal of increasing the capacity and professionalism of prosecutors, police and judges on issues ranging from ethics to money laundering. The United States continued to provide technical assistance to the Supreme Court Reform Team, which has been given the mandate to implement the recommendations set out in the series of judicial blueprints or reform plans that have been drawn up. The United States also provided the necessary expertise to the Constitutional Court to assist it in resolving electoral disputes. This assistance strengthened the capacity of Constitutional Court personnel to conduct the relevant legal research and in preparing the legal memoranda for the justices hearing the cases.

The United States assisted the Attorney General's Office in formulating guidelines on the role of prosecutors and a Code of Professional Standards. These standards will provide the basis for the future development of the prosecutorial profession in Indonesia, particularly on recruitment, oversight, training and the institutional development of the Attorney General's Office. The United States also helped the NGO Indonesia Corruption Watch address judicial corruption by monitoring court sessions.



Jakarta, Indonesia

Election workers hold up a ballot.

AP Photo

The United States continued efforts to help the national police make the transition to a civilian law enforcement agency, predicated on the principles of democracy and human rights. A training initiative entitled Transition to Democratic Policing (TDP) began with U.S. police training 30 Indonesian police instructors, allowing them to instruct others in TDP. With help from the U.S. trainers, the 30 Indonesian instructors taught 300 additional instructors how to integrate democracy and human rights into police work. The national police are now conducting their own TDP training nationwide in order to convey the principles of policing in a democracy to over 175,000 police officers. In Yogyakarta, central Java, the development of the Community-Oriented Policing Program continues to provide a positive impact, including broader support from the local government and the business community. The local government has agreed to expand the pilot project into other sub-districts, issued local regulations and allocated the budget appropriations necessary to support Community-Oriented Policing Programs in other areas.

The Embassy closely monitored all trials involving persons indicted for crimes against humanity, and spoke out when actions (or inaction) by prosecutors called into question the overall fairness of the

judicial process, as was the case at the East Timor Tribunal. The United States has stressed the importance of achieving credible accountability for the crimes against humanity committed in East Timor during and after the referendum there in 1999. In a December meeting with Indonesian Foreign Minister Wirajuda and East Timor Foreign Minister Ramos-Horta, Secretary of State Powell stressed the importance of accountability and reaffirmed U.S. support for a UN Commission of Experts to go out to both nations to evaluate the current accountability mechanisms and recommend next steps.

The United States encouraged the military to improve from the inside out, through continued exposure to the Expanded International Military Education and Training program. This program, which also included a number of civilians, emphasized non-combat related professionalization programs, highlighted ways to strengthen civilian oversight of the military, improve the military justice system and promote respect for human rights. Some courses sought to improve the military justice system, while others boosted the investigative capacity of military police. United States officials frequently met Indonesian military officials and encouraged military reform.

In Aceh, armed conflict between the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and the Indonesian security forces (TNI) has continued for years, severely deteriorating the human rights situation in the province and jeopardizing the fragile civil society. The state of military emergency (martial law), introduced in May 2003, continued until May 2004, when the Indonesian Government instituted a state of civil emergency. Fighting between the GAM and TNI continued unabated during the civil emergency, as did restrictions on civil liberties. The United States frequently urged the Government of Indonesia to protect noncombatants' rights and allow access to humanitarian groups and journalists. The United States also supported civil society organizations that assisted human rights victims, advocated peaceful resolution of the conflict, and helped fund the treatment of torture victims. More than a quarter of a million Acehenese are believed to have perished in the earthquake and tsunami that struck the province on December 26 2004. The United States immediately began to provide emergency relief to victims through U.S. implementing agencies in Aceh. The Embassy coordinated the U.S. response with military commands, achieving a rapid response by U.S. armed forces, including sending the USS Lincoln Battle Group to the tsunami disaster area. The USAID Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance also rushed appropriate emergency relief and additional resources to the region. United States assistance fulfilled dire humanitarian needs, while also supporting Indonesia's emerging democracy and stability at a critical juncture. In the face of such massive destruction and human suffering, GAM declared a ceasefire and the Government opened tsunami-affected areas in Aceh to international humanitarian workers and journalists.

In Papua, where the Indonesian military also 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. The Indonesian authorities cooperated with the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigations in investigating the murders. The U. S. District Court for the District of Columbia

indicted Anthonius Wamang, an alleged renegade separatist rebel, in connection with the killings, but as of this report he remained at large. The United States continued to press the Indonesian authorities to arrest and try Wamang.

Maluku and North Maluku Provinces experienced minimal sectarian violence in 2004, except for a flare-up in April sparked by the anniversary celebration of a predominantly Christian separatist movement. Staff from U.S. Consulate Surabaya traveled to both provinces to meet with leaders and encourage continued efforts at reconciliation and effective conflict resolution. In 2004, Central Sulawesi continued to suffer sporadic outbreaks of violence, including still-unsolved shootings at local churches and the bombing of a bus near the city of Palu. All three provinces continued to need extensive reconciliation and reconstruction work. United States funding helped the NGO CARE move forward with community development projects and build homes for those displaced by the conflict. In Central Sulawesi Province and in Maluku, U.S. funding helped the NGO Mercy Corps aid those rendered jobless by the conflict by making available income-generation programs. The NGO International Medical Corps used U.S. funds to provide emergency and primary health care to Maluku residents on remote islands where sectarian violence had destroyed health facilities. United States Government officials regularly met religious and civil leaders to urge mutual respect and cooperation, while at the same time calling for justice for those in the past who had perpetrated severe human rights abuses.

To safeguard women's rights, 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 programs; supported creation of a national database of potential women candidates for political parties; and through the Foundation to Assist in the Protection of Women, studied how police treat female TIP victims. The United States placed a number of women-related documentaries and news clips on local television. Dozens of women took part in the International Visitors Program,

Voluntary Visitor, Fulbright Summer Institute and other programs, many of which focused on human rights issues. United States support of the National Commission on Violence Against Women resulted in the Government of Indonesia's decision to establish regional women's crisis centers. The United States-funded Women's Journal Foundation produced a monthly magazine and weekly radio show that reached 158 stations.

The United States worked with the International Labor Organization and the Solidarity Center to raise awareness of and combat the problem of child labor. The Department of Labor devoted significant funding to protect children from sexual exploitation, trafficking in persons, trafficking and production of narcotics, mining and work on fishing platforms and in footwear factories. 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. United States funding provided for a "safe house," where children could receive counseling and education.

Tens of thousands of Indonesians fell victim to trafficking in persons. Sub-grants to 48 NGOs and community groups resulted in local anti-trafficking actions focused on prevention, rehabilitation and advocacy. United States funding supported the creation of new shelters for victims. The United States trained hundreds of police officers and some prosecutors, resulting in more arrests and prosecutions and longer jail sentences for some traffickers.

United States-funded NGOs such as the Solidarity Center and the International Catholic Migration Commission, helped the Government develop standard operation procedures for handling victims, contributed to the passage of local laws in two provinces and provided technical assistance leading to the introduction in parliament of the anti-trafficking bill. United States-financed NGOs quickly investigated rumors of trafficking of victims from Aceh after the December tsunami.

Democratic People's Republic of Korea

As President Bush noted when he signed into law the North Korean Human Rights Act of 2004, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) remains one of the most repressive countries in the world and stands in stark contrast to democratic governments elsewhere in Asia. North Korea, one of the world's most militarized societies, is a dictatorship under the absolute rule of Kim Jong Il, General Secretary of the Korean Workers' Party. An estimated 150,000-200,000 persons are believed to be held in detention camps in remote areas for political reasons, and defectors report that many prisoners have died from torture, starvation, disease, exposure or a combination of these causes. Reportedly, North Korean officials prohibited live births in prison and forced abortions were regularly performed, particularly in detention centers holding women repatriated from China. Defectors alleged the testing on human subjects of a variety of chemical and biological agents. The regime controls many aspects of citizens' lives, denying freedom of speech, religion, the press, assembly and association. The regime also severely restricts freedom of movement and worker rights. There are widespread reports of women and girls being trafficked across the Chinese border.

United States officials work to raise awareness of the severity of North Korea's human rights abuses and humanitarian issues with the international community and before American audiences. In addition, when possible, U.S. officials raise these concerns directly with the North Korean regime. During Six-Party Talks with North Korea in Beijing in February and June of 2004, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs James Kelly reiterated U.S. concerns about North Korea's human rights violations. Then-Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, Lorne W. Craner raised awareness of the deplorable human rights conditions inside North Korea through speeches before U.S. audiences and through testimony before the Congressional Human Rights Caucus. The United States regularly raises concerns about North Korea

with other governments in both multilateral and bilateral fora. United States officials urge other countries to make concrete, verifiable and sustained improvements in North Korean human rights a central component of their bilateral relations with North Korea.

In response to serious concerns over North Korea's human rights record and the ongoing humanitarian crisis faced by the North Korean people, the U.S. Congress enacted the North Korean Human Rights Act of 2004. It authorizes significant funding for each of the fiscal years 2005 - 2008 for humanitarian assistance to North Koreans. The Act authorizes additional funds during the same timeframe for private non-profit programs aimed at promoting human rights, democracy, rule of law and a market economy in North Korea, and additional funding to increase the availability of non-government-controlled sources of information in North Korea. The Act also establishes the position of Special Envoy on Human Rights in North Korea to enhance U.S. diplomatic efforts in this area.

Because the isolation and secrecy of the regime render standard human rights monitoring very difficult, the United States continues to support National Endowment for Democracy (NED) grants to South Korean non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In 2004, the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor awarded a grant to NED to support NGOs based in South Korea to improve and expand monitoring and reporting on the human rights situation in North Korea.

To address the ongoing humanitarian crisis that is part of the overall human rights situation in North Korea, in 2004 the U.S. pledged 50,000 metric tons of humanitarian food aid to North Korea through the World Food Program. United States decisions on food aid to North Korea are based on three criteria: demonstrated need, competing needs elsewhere and the extent to which humanitarian organizations can access all vulnerable groups and monitor distribution. The United States remains concerned that aid workers are unable to verify that aid consistently reaches its intended recipients

due to various restrictions on monitoring and access, including a requirement that the humanitarian organization request the North Korean Government's permission in advance to make monitoring visits. United States officials have presented these concerns directly to North Korean officials, while also working with the World Food Program and other donors.

The involuntary return of North Koreans from China to North Korea is a matter of deep concern to the United States. Many repatriated North Koreans face persecution and some of them may have been executed upon their return, as provided for in North Korean law. United States officials have, on multiple occasions, expressed to the Chinese Government strong objections to any such actions, drawing attention to China's international obligations and pressing the Government to refrain from returning any individual to North Korea against his or her will. The United States consistently urges China to fulfill its international obligations under the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees and as a signatory to the 1967 Protocol on Refugees, and to allow the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to assess the needs and status of this vulnerable population. The United States has addressed the issue of North Koreans in China with the UNHCR and sought to coordinate our approach with allies who share our concerns.

The United States worked with other concerned governments to win passage of a resolution condemning the human rights record of North Korea during the 60th session of the UN Commission on Human Rights. The resolution specifically condemned the North Korean Government's use of torture and forced labor, as well as its severe restrictions on freedom of expression and assembly. The resolution called on the North Korean Government to fulfill its obligations under human rights instruments to which it is a party, to invite UN special representatives to visit North Korea and to ensure that humanitarian organizations have free access to the country.

In 2004, Secretary of State Powell again designated North Korea a "Country of Particular Concern"

under the International Religious Freedom Act for severe violations of religious freedom. North Korea is also subject to U.S. sanctions for its failure to address trafficking in women and girls.

Laos

Laos remained a one-party authoritarian state, dominated by the Lao People's Revolutionary Party (LPRP), which permitted no opposition and offered no avenues for citizens to express their opinions. Through its system of mass social organizations like the Lao Women's Union, Youth Union and Lao Front for National Construction, the Party insinuated itself into the daily lives of Laos' citizens and ensured its control over the country would be unchallenged. The LPRP controlled all decisions related to the political, economic and social course of the nation. Almost without exception, senior members of the Government, provincial administrations and National Assembly members were Party members. The Lao Government's human rights record remained poor, and it continued to commit serious abuses. Members of the security forces abused detainees, especially those suspected of insurgent or anti-government activity. Prisoners were sometimes abused or tortured, and police used arbitrary arrest, detention and surveillance. Lengthy pretrial detention and incommunicado detention were problems. The Party and the Government continued to deny their citizens many basic human rights, such as freedom of speech and expression. The Government closely controlled the print and local televised media and prohibited any expressions of dissent with the political regime, threatening to arrest those who challenged its authority.

The Government also continued to deny the existence of an ongoing insurgency, comprised mostly of ethnic Hmong, the remnant of the "Secret Army" that fought against the Communist Pathet Lao during the Indochina War. As international interest in resolving this long-running conflict increased, the Government reluctantly began to engage in a dialogue on the subject. However, reports suggested that Lao security forces increased efforts to forcefully expel the last of

these groups, now made up mostly of women and children, from their forest refuges.

Although President Bush signed into law legislation extending Normalized Trade Relations to Laos in December 2004, the United States continues to be concerned about the Lao Government's human rights record. The Lao Government regarded any outside interest in its human rights situation as "interference" and was openly critical of U.S. human rights efforts. In this restrictive environment, the United States had only very limited access to the Lao Government.

Securing improvements in Laos' human rights picture has been a cornerstone of U.S. Government programs in Laos for a number of years. The United States has made human rights a salient feature of all meetings with senior Lao government officials. The Ambassador highlighted human rights as a special concern during her confirmation hearings before the Senate in April 2004, noting the particular importance of religious freedom, ethnic minority rights, and democratic reform. In all meetings with senior officials since her arrival in Vientiane, the Ambassador raised these human rights issues and urged the Lao leadership to do more on the human rights front. The Ambassador also formally demarched the Government to urge a transparent and full investigation of reports of atrocities by Lao soldiers against the ethnic Hmong population. In an unusual turn, the Lao press issued a public denial of these reports in response to the Ambassador's demarche.

In November 2004, then-Deputy Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Elizabeth Dugan visited Vientiane and met with senior officials to reinforce again the importance of improving the Government's respect for its citizens' human rights, and particularly to press the Government on the continuing problems regarding Laos' poor prison conditions, the status of the Hmong and the need to respect the beliefs of religious minorities. Other high-level U.S. officials, including then-Assistant Secretary for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs Robert Charles, Assistant Secretary for Oceans, Environment and Science John Turner, and Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for

Economic Affairs Shaun Donnelly, used their visits on other issues to raise specific human rights concerns during calls on senior government leaders.

Promoting good governance was an important component of the U.S. human rights strategy. Under the Department of Justice's Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance and Training (OPDAT) program, a U.S. Deputy District Attorney assigned temporarily to the U.S. Embassy in Vientiane worked closely with Lao justice sector officials on vetting key pieces of legislation, including a bill on women's protection and an anti-money laundering bill. The OPDAT attorney also conducted two seminars for Lao officials, one on the country's new appeals court system and another on the new law on the enforcement of court decisions. In addition, the OPDAT program sponsored a study trip to the United States for a group of senior judges to learn about the U.S. justice system.

The United States worked closely with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) active in the area of good governance, especially The Asia Foundation and the International Republican Institute. Both NGOs successfully conducted good governance projects in Laos. In addition, the Embassy sent three people on International Visitors Programs focused on this topic: two Lao officials attended a program on "Women's Participation in U.S. Politics" and one attended a program on "Leadership Development for Women." The United States sponsored one NGO staff member to attend a leadership course at the East-West Center.

The United States also sponsored and organized a month-long course on comparative political systems held at the Institute of Foreign Affairs. This program provided information on international political systems, practices and norms, including the importance of the rule of law and development of a civil society. Thirty Lao diplomats and officials from a dozen ministries and offices attended.

United States diplomats also worked with journalists to improve their ability and willingness to expand media coverage beyond the usual government meetings. They organized two two-week

workshops for TV news producers, covering all aspects of preparing TV news programs, including presentation of multiple points of view on controversial subjects. The United States also reached wider and younger Lao audiences with information about good governance through the Embassy's website, donations of materials to more than a dozen libraries and educational institutions and distribution of State Department publications to more than 100 individuals daily.

United States diplomats traveled widely throughout the country to obtain first-hand information on conditions of some former insurgents. The Lao Government, however, continued to restrict access for diplomatic and international observers to other areas where many Hmong live, particularly in the military-controlled Saisomboun Special Zone. The Ambassador and other U.S. diplomats met with senior officials, including members of the Politburo and provincial governors, to discuss the problem of insurgents still living in the forest and to urge the Lao Government to resolve this conflict through peaceful means. The Ambassador also engaged other like-minded Embassies and international organizations to make separate approaches to the Lao Government to push for the peaceful settlement of the insurgency. These efforts produced some positive results, with the Government agreeing to allow some international assistance to reach recently-surrendered insurgents.

International public attention was drawn to the insurgency following the publication of an article in "Time" magazine in August 2004 alleging that Lao soldiers killed five Hmong from an insurgent group. The United States closely followed this developing story, consulting with other governments and international organizations interested in the issue to determine the best way to press the Lao Government for a transparent and impartial investigation of the incident. The Government did not permit an open investigation. Although the Government asserts that it conducted an internal investigation of the matter, it refused to share its investigation with members of the international community.

Although there are signs that the Lao Government has sought to improve conditions in some of its better-known jails, Lao prisons rank among the

worst in the region. Stories of mistreatment and even torture of prisoners are routine. Laos limited foreign access to its prison system, in spite of efforts by international organizations to establish prison monitoring programs. United States diplomats raised with Lao officials on many levels the need for the Government to allow international monitors into the prisons for first-hand observation in order to improve conditions. United States officials 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. Along with other embassies in Vientiane, the Embassy closely followed the cases of known political prisoners, raising their plights with high-level officials and urging their quick release. This pressure from the diplomatic community in part led to the Lao Government freeing a number of political prisoners during the year, including two prisoners, jailed for 14 years for political dissent, whose cases had attracted international attention.

The United States engaged in an ongoing dialogue with the Lao Government to promote religious tolerance. In February 2004, former Ambassador Seiple of the Institute for Global Engagement (IGE) visited Laos and conducted a State Department-funded seminar on religious freedom for local officials. More than 50 officials from district and provincial administrations attended the one-day seminar, the first of its kind in Laos. Ambassador Seiple also traveled to church communities in southern Laos. With U.S. assistance, the IGE built a kindergarten school in a community in Savannakhet Province, helping put to rest a long-standing religious conflict there.

The United States cooperated extensively with the Lao Front for National Construction, the government body overseeing religious issues, to resolve cases of religious intolerance by local officials. Persecution of religious minorities, especially Christians and Baha'i, by local-level officials was less of a problem than in past years, but persisted in some localities. When cases of religious persecution arose in the provinces, U.S. diplomats used their working relations with provincial governors and officials to bring these cases to the attention of

authorities, often resulting in a quick resolution of problems. On several occasions, U.S. interventions resulted in the quick release of those detained for their religious faith by local authorities unfamiliar with central government policy promoting religious tolerance.

Combating human trafficking was another key component of the U.S. human rights strategy. In 2004, the United States Department of State and USAID provided funding to locally-based NGOs to conduct anti-trafficking projects, focused on public education and alternative vocational education for those most vulnerable to trafficking. The United States funded the participation by two Lao officials in regional conferences on trafficking in persons, and the OPDAT advisor vetted the draft Law on Women, which contained many anti-trafficking provisions. This bill, a key piece of legislation dealing with trafficking, later passed the National Assembly.

Malaysia

Malaysia has a parliamentary system of government based on periodic multiparty elections. Opposition parties actively contest elections but face significant obstacles in competing with the ruling National Front Coalition, which has held power for more than 45 years. The Malaysian Government acknowledges that it restricts certain political and civil rights in order to maintain social harmony and political stability. This policy has led to some human rights abuses, including detention of persons without trial, limits on the impartiality and independence of the judiciary and restrictions on freedom of the press, association, assembly and religion. The Government of Malaysia generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, there were problems in some areas. The Constitution provides for an independent judiciary; however, government action, constitutional amendments, legislation and other factors have undermined judicial independence and strengthened executive influence over the judiciary.

Malaysia does not receive direct bilateral economic and developmental assistance, but the United States conducts a range of programs and activities

aimed at strengthening the development of civil society institutions. Areas where the United States is pressing for reform include relaxing government control over the press, encouraging greater independence of the judiciary and heightening law enforcement sensitivity to human rights and trafficking in persons (TIP).

In addition to working with government counterparts, the United States maintains active communications with political opposition parties, human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society representatives. In 2004, the United States sponsored a number of seminars and workshops intended to promote greater awareness of political and civil rights issues. These included a program to expand citizen involvement in public policy through civic education training in middle schools and to engage high school students in analyzing and working through social issues in multi-ethnic, mixed-gender groups. The program included a major regional civic education conference in Penang and a workshop on training elementary school teachers in teaching civic education. The Embassy also supported a workshop in Penang on alternative dispute resolution and a program for Malaysian parliamentarians to create an avenue for interaction and sharing of ideas in areas that are pertinent to the development of human rights in Malaysia.

In support of press freedom, the Embassy sponsored visits to the United States for several key journalists, who returned with an increased awareness of the challenges and benefits of a free media. During the year, the Embassy supported a grant to an independent media development center to enhance the capacity of independent Internet news providers to expand the content and improve the quality of regional Internet news.

To address concerns about the independence of Malaysia's judiciary, the State Department provided funding to send a senior jurist to the United States on a program on the rule of law and judicial reform. The Embassy also sponsored U.S. visits by two officers of the Malaysian Bar Council to study the U.S. judicial system. A prominent lawyer participated in a program in the United States relating to human rights advocacy. The United States also

continued to raise with the Government its concerns regarding the politically motivated conviction and imprisonment of former Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim. In 2004, Embassy officials attended every court appearance by Anwar to demonstrate continued U.S. interest in his case and in Malaysia's commitment to judicial independence. In September, the country's highest court vacated Anwar's sodomy conviction and released him from prison.

To underscore U.S. concern about the treatment of illegal migrants and asylum seekers, Embassy officials regularly met with Malaysian government officials, representatives of the UN Human Rights Commission, international organizations such as the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and NGOs that work on migrant issues. In October, the Embassy sponsored a local human rights activist's visit to the United States for a program about immigration and refugee issues in the United States. In response to expressions of concern from the United States and the international community, the Government delayed deportation of many asylum seekers to allow the UNHCR time to consider their applications. In October, the Government agreed to allow Burmese Rohingya refugees to stay "temporarily" in Malaysia, obtain work legally and have access to healthcare and education. In December, the Government agreed to cooperate with the UNHCR to ensure safe access to the UNHCR, and so that refugees holding UNHCR documentation would not be detained or deported during sweeps against illegal migrant workers.

Focusing on the role of religion and the challenges faced in pluralistic societies, the Embassy sponsored a series of public dialogues during the year in different states of the country on the topic of science, religion and development. Target groups included in the dialogue ranged from influential intellectuals to social activists and professionals in the community from various religious traditions.

The United States continues to engage the Government of Malaysia, political parties and NGOs to raise awareness and press for concrete steps to combat TIP. United States efforts focused

on passage of specific anti-trafficking 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.

The United States has sent several Malaysian government officials and human rights activists to the United States for programs focused on anti-trafficking activities. In 2004, members of the Malaysian Human Rights Commission attended a U.S.-sponsored regional conference on counter-trafficking in Tokyo. In February, members of the Malaysian police attended a U.S.-sponsored conference intended to strengthen law enforcement operations to combat TIP in Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia. In October, the United States facilitated a workshop in Kuala Lumpur hosted by the Malaysian Human Rights Commission that drafted a national plan of action to counter trafficking. As a result of these activities, regional counter-trafficking operations have improved significantly and the Malaysian Government is increasingly focused on combating trafficking. In December, the Ministry for Women, Family and Community Development opened a shelter specifically intended for foreign women who were victims of trafficking. The Government also took significant steps to prevent the trafficking of children orphaned by the December tsunami.

Papau New Guinea

Papua New Guinea is home to an estimated 5.5 million people, with more than 800 distinct indigenous languages and tribes. The country has a federal parliamentary system, which is based on universal adult suffrage. There were localized instances of voter intimidation and violence during the most recent general elections, which were held in June 2002. The Government of Papua New Guinea generally respected the human rights of its citizens, but there continue to be areas of concern.

The Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary maintains internal security, assisted from time to time by the Defense Force, including during elections. 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. For instance, members of the constabulary committed a number of serious human rights abuses, including use of excessive force. Good governance and economic growth are critical to improving respect for human rights in Papua New Guinea. However, a pervasive lack of law and order, continuing poor economic growth, low national incomes and standards of living, severely deteriorated infrastructure and ineffective delivery of government services are all barriers to progress on human rights.

In the 1990s, the United States ended most of its programs in Papua New Guinea (including USAID, the Peace Corps, then-United States Information Service and the resident Defense Attaché), making the Embassy a small one with very limited resources with which to promote change. However, the United States continues to advocate high standards for democratic processes and consistent respect for human rights.

In 2004, the United States supported the implementation of Australia's expanded assistance effort in Papua New Guinea, which focuses on better law enforcement, strengthened court and trial operations and improved practices in the Finance, Internal Revenue (including Customs) and Justice Ministries. The State Department funded several small grants that bolster non-governmental organization activity in Port Moresby and its surrounding villages. The most ambitious of these grants provides funding for the non-governmental organization Family Health International, which works to increase HIV/AIDS awareness in the National Capital District. Another project focuses on capacity building for a local women's group based in Pari village. Current grant projects have strong human rights components with a focus on empowering women and children and combating the stigma of living with HIV/AIDS.

The United States also provided training on respect for human rights to defense and other security personnel through the International Military Education and Training program, Title X military conferences, and regular small-scale exer-

cises. United States counterterrorism efforts in Papua New Guinea and the region also emphasize the human rights element in this worldwide effort, both through specific course material in training modules, and through small unit training with U.S. forces that emphasize the importance of relations with local populations. The Embassy again utilized slots in Multi-Regional International Visitors Programs to provide exposure to future leaders to U.S. systems and values. In 2004, the Embassy sent the Director for Commercial Enforcement and Intelligence of Papua New Guinea's Internal Revenue Commission to the United States for a month-long program on transnational crime and port security.

United States efforts in Papua New Guinea aim to assist in the country's return to a higher standard of law and order, reduced corruption and better governance, which will set the stage for critically needed economic and social development for its people.

Philippines

The Republic of the Philippines is a vibrant democracy with an elected president, an elected bicameral legislature, and a fractious but functioning 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 responsible for arbitrary, unlawful, and, in some cases, 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.

United States Government efforts to promote human rights and democracy in the Philippines are numerous and broad-based. The Mission focuses on building respect for human rights in the security forces, promoting rule of law and transparent practices in government and the judiciary, and strengthening civil society.

Strengthening democracy is an essential Mission goal. Numerous programs at both the local and national level promote equity, transparency, and popular participation – all key factors in the

healthy functioning of democracy. A grant from USAID to the Consortium for Political Process Strengthening provided assistance in monitoring of the May 2004 elections, and a follow-on grant offers post-election technical assistance to enhance electoral modernization programs. USAID's 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 Ombudsman prosecutors and field investigators and support for assessing selected government agencies for their vulnerability to corruption.

The USAID-funded Transparent and Accountable Governance (TAG) program, also implemented by The Asia Foundation, works at the local and national levels to promote better governance, increase public participation in governance through conferences and other public forums, and reduce opportunities for corruption. Among other activities at the national level during 2004, 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 seven city governments to implement a range of anti-corruption and good governance reforms, and six more cities will join the program in 2005. The United States, through TAG also assisted 56 municipalities in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) to reform and increase citizen participation in their budgeting and planning processes.

The United States seeks to encourage greater participation in government by empowering women to be effective local government leaders. To this end, the Bureau of East Asia and Pacific Affairs, in partnership with The Asia Foundation, is offering leadership training to 75 women counselors from selected cities throughout the Philippines. The project involves production of media documentaries to raise the public's awareness of the political roles played by women.

To encourage respect for human rights among members of the Philippine National Police (PNP) and other law enforcement agencies, the Embassy sent approximately 150 law enforcement officials to the International Law Enforcement Academy for courses with human rights, ethics, rule of law and anti-corruption components. In addition, the Legal Attaché's Office coordinated with the Philippine Public Safety College to train senior executives from Philippine law enforcement agencies on ethics, human rights, jail management, and American law enforcement standards. A separate U.S. Department of Justice program sent senior management officials from the PNP, National Bureau of Investigation, and Bureau of Immigration to the FBI's National Academy in Virginia for training on similar topics. The International Criminal Investigative Training and Assistance Program, funded by The Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement, provided the Embassy with a temporary police attaché to conduct a series of classes for Philippine police officers with rule of law and ethics components. The Department of State's Anti-Terrorism Assistance Program in the Philippines also sends Philippine law enforcement officials to the United States for training, and has a rule of law component. The Legal Attaché, a Department of Justice Attaché, and U.S. law enforcement officials representing other U.S. agencies bolster rule of law by assisting in prosecutions and extraditions and emphasizing human rights in their outreach meetings with local contacts.

To strengthen rule of law, USAID institutionalized alternative dispute resolution systems at various levels, increasing judicial transparency and improving case management in the courts. At the community level, USAID's Barangay Justice program worked in some 500 barangays (precincts) in the ARMM during 2004, enabling marginalized groups to gain access to the judicial system. As a result, community disputes are resolved more rapidly, greatly reducing caseloads in municipal courts.

Building respect for the rule of law is a key challenge in conflict-affected areas where armed separatist groups have clashed with government troops and continue to solicit support from local

communities. To strengthen the credibility of the national and local governments in these regions, the Embassy's Joint U.S. Military Assistance Group (JUSMAG) helped the Government deliver much-needed public services to local communities in Mindanao and nearby Basilan and Jolo islands. For example, JUSMAG built solar dryers to help local farmers increase productivity and efficiency. Other components of this program included the donation of medical equipment to local hospitals and construction of wells to provide residents with access to safe drinking water.

The Embassy works to strengthen the Philippine Commission on Human Rights (CHR), an independent agency tasked to monitor and investigate alleged human rights abuses. A U.S. Department of State Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor program administered through The Asia Foundation provided CHR 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 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that separately track human rights abuses such as disappearances and torture. Embassy officers continue to coordinate closely with the CHR, which provides human rights training for members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the PNP, and vets officers for promotion.

The International Military Education and Training (IMET) program is an important component of U.S. 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 populate top AFP ranks and actively promote close and professional U.S. and Philippine military-to-military relationships. The Philippine Defense Reform, a major new joint initiative begun in 2004, works to make the Armed Forces of the Philippines a more transparent, professional, and well-run institution.

The Philippine Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respected this right in practice. Muslims comprise the largest religious minority in the Philippines, and

historically they have been victims of societal prejudice by the Christian majority. Embassy officials routinely meet with representatives of all major Philippine faiths to learn about their concerns on a variety of issues. In 2004, the Ambassador for the third year in a row hosted an Iftaar dinner for senior Muslim leaders. The U.S. Government, working through the U.S. Institute for Peace, continues to offer assistance to the Philippine Government and Moro Islamic Liberation Front in their efforts to conclude a peace accord to end a long-standing insurgency in Mindanao. The United States provided a new grant in 2004 to promote the integration of the madrasah educational system into the national mainstream. Making use of programming tools such as the State Department's American Speaker program, the Embassy's Public Affairs Section organized numerous public conferences and gatherings throughout the year across the country to promote interfaith dialogue among Filipinos. The State Department funded a program that sent a group of 35 young people from Mindanao, a mix of Muslims and Christians, to the United States for a one-month program focused on conflict resolution and interfaith dialogue.

In 2004, the Embassy sent both Muslim and Christian leaders on International Visitors Programs to the United States, covering 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 Program Alumni Association — the largest and most active organization of this type in the world, with approximately 300 members—has its own working group focusing on peace and Muslim-Christian relations.

To strengthen worker rights, the U.S. Department of Labor has an ongoing project to develop an early warning system to prevent possible deterioration of labor standards compliance. Another Department of Labor project focuses on combating the worst forms of child labor.

Trafficking in persons (TIP) is a serious problem in the Philippines. The Embassy has undertaken efforts to assist the Government and NGOs in the areas of prevention, protection, and enforcement. A State Department grant in late 2004 will strengthen efforts by the International Justice Mission to provide assistance with TIP-related prosecutions to the Philippine Department of Justice. A grant to the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women provides preventive education for vulnerable communities. A grant to the National Office of Mass Media assists in the preparation and provision of anti-TIP public information. A grant to End Child Prostitution and Trafficking helps to increase awareness through better education and legislation and to assist child victims. A State Department program implemented in conjunction with the American Center for International Labor Solidarity helps raise awareness of trafficking, especially among those most likely to become victims — economically disadvantaged women and children. The State Department's Bureau of East Asia and Pacific Affairs helps fund halfway houses in the Manila and Davao ports to assist victims of trafficking and to develop a handbook to assist prosecutors in the implementation of anti-TIP legislation. An NGO running the halfway houses attempts to reunite victims with their families if possible and reintegrate them into mainstream society.

Embassy efforts also focused on enhancing the capability of Philippine law enforcement officials in the fight against trafficking — an area in need of improvement. In 2004, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) provided training to individuals from the PNP, the National Bureau of Investigation, and various airport and airline security teams to help them detect trafficking activities and patterns. The United States, through DHS, is developing an identification system at Manila's airport that will help Philippine officials track and identify criminals, including traffickers.

Solomon Islands

Over the past two years, the situation in the Solomon Islands has improved dramatically. After almost five years of armed conflict between Malaitan and Guadalcanalese militants and a parallel deterioration in the human rights situation, law and order have now been largely restored throughout the country. The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens. However, during the year, there were a few violent incidents linked to ethnic conflict, and violence and discrimination against women continued to be a problem.

During the conflict, the Embassy supported and encouraged the Government to rally its energies and resources to turn the situation around. The United States worked with and supported efforts by nations in the region and the UN to develop a plan to restore law and order and respect for human rights. In 2003, the Regional Assistance Mission for Solomon Islands (RAMSI), a multinational police-centered force organized by Australia, arrived in the Solomon Islands at the invitation of the Government and began to help restore law and order and rebuild the country's institutions. The United States, working with RAMSI and local police have successfully apprehended and charged many persons allegedly responsible for human rights abuses and other criminal acts committed during the 1998 to mid-2003 period of conflict.

Prior to RAMSI's arrival, the country's constitutionally independent judiciary was hampered by police ineffectiveness, lack of resources and threats against judges and prosecutors. Numerous abuses were committed by the two militant groups, criminals, rogue police and special constables. The crimes included murder, rape, unlawful detention and interrogation, assault, destruction and theft of property and extortion. However, RAMSI's arrival saw crime and violence reduced to a very low rate as effective policing was restored, starting in the capital and proceeding outward. Following this program, the U.S. Government sponsored a successful weapon collection program, which saw a much greater number of weapons collected and

destroyed than were thought to be in circulation (more than 3,700).

The United States Embassy in the Solomon Islands was closed a decade ago, and only a consular agent is maintained there now. Nevertheless, the United States has voiced its full support for the assistance mission to the Solomon Islands Government. In 2004, the United States provided training that emphasized respect for human rights to members of the police force through the International Military Education and Training program. The United States is also currently funding a program that aims to complement the successes of RAMSI by promoting conflict resolution and national unity. The program, conducted by a local non-governmental organization, fosters reconciliation between communities through traditional cultural channels, and parallels the modern judicial approach pursued by RAMSI of trying individuals in the courts.

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.

The United States effort to promote and improve human rights in Thailand focused on the increased violence in three Muslim-majority provinces in southernmost Thailand, extrajudicial killings, trafficking in persons, the condition of Burmese refugees and the rights of other ethnic minority groups residing within Thailand's border. The security forces' response to separatist violence in the extreme southern region of the country resulted in the deaths of more than 200 persons. Heightened tensions due to the violence and increased security measures led to occasional clashes with the police and to growing resentment among the local populace in the affected region of the country. In contrast to the previous year, there were few reported extrajudicial killings associated with the Government's anti-narcotic efforts.

However, no progress was reported in the investigations into the extrajudicial killings of approximately 1,300 suspected drug traffickers during the Government's 3-month "war on drugs" campaign from February through April 2003. The Government states that most of the 2003 killings were conducted by drug dealers against each other and denies allegations that a number of these killings were extrajudicial. However, the Government did not systematically investigate or prosecute these crimes. Trafficking in women and children and coerced prostitution and labor were serious problems.

United States officials at the highest levels expressed concern for the extensive loss of life in Southern Thailand and encouraged the Royal Thai Government (RTG) to follow up official investigations into unwarranted security force actions at the Krue Se Mosque in April and at Tak Bai in October with appropriate legal action to punish responsible officials. Deputy Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Marie T. Huhtala expressed concern over the Tak Bai incident to the Thai Ambassador to the United States, and the U.S. Ambassador in Thailand raised similar concerns with senior Thai officials. The United States continued to press for a credible investigation into reported extrajudicial killings as a result of the 2003 "war on drugs." Although the Office of Narcotics Control Board chaired two committees investigating the killings, no officers have been prosecuted in connection with any of these killings.

The Embassy sent eleven Thais, eight of whom were Muslim, to the United States through the International Visitors Programs (IVP) to study the strengthening of democratic institutions, rule of law and human rights. One Thai was sent on a Voluntary Visitor program on the "Role of Community Radio." Twenty five IVP alumni, most of whom were Muslim, participated in an Embassy-sponsored conference on "Civil Liberties, Rights and Responsibilities" at Prince of Songkhla University (PSU) in Pattani Province in Southern Thailand. Imam Rahmat Phyome Phyakul, a Thai-American Muslim religious leader, spoke at the conference and also conducted outreach activities on this theme with 250 Muslim students at the

Yala Rajabhat University, 200 Muslim students at the Saiburi School in Narathiwat and 100 students (both Muslim and Buddhists) at PSU Hat Yai. A veteran of the U.S. civil rights movement, Mr. Elmer Ransom, also attended the IVP alumni conference to discuss non-violent means for creating change. The Embassy, under its Small Grants program, funded a "Youth Camp for Democracy." The project, coordinated by a local foundation, worked to enhance awareness of issues challenging Thai youth living in rural areas. Topics included human rights, civic responsibility, implementation of democratic practices and helping youth to develop a more nuanced understanding of civic responsibilities and social/political reform policies.

The United States helped to enhance legal, professional and technical capabilities of RTG institutions that investigate, prosecute or seek to prevent transnational organized crime. A Resident Legal Advisor from the U.S. Department of Justice traveled to Thailand to support implementation of assistance to the criminal justice sector. Numerous study tours, seminars and other training opportunities were organized for law enforcement, judicial, prosecutorial and other RTG officials. For example, the Embassy sent over a dozen officials from the Thai Central Institute of Forensic Science for two weeks of training in the United States designed to help them establish a missing persons center to deal with victims of violence. The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor funded the visit of U.S. Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy in January 2005 to hold seminars designed to promote judicial ethics. Several million dollars were allocated to assist the RTG with drug control, prevention and treatment activities. The Embassy continued to support drug prevention and demand reduction activities organized by a wide range of civil society and government organizations. Funding was provided to increase methamphetamine abuse treatment programs and to establish an addiction technology transfer center. The United States funded small grants aimed at drug prevention that were provided to a wide variety of schools, religious groups and other civil society-based organizations.

In a unique example of bilateral partnership, the United States and Thailand co-manage the Bangkok-based International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA), a U.S.-funded regional training center for police, military, immigration, customs and other law enforcement officials. The Thai Government provides the training facility. In fiscal year 2004, the United States provided significant funds as well as most of the instructors. Since ILEA's inception in 1999, more than 3,600 law enforcement officials from Thailand and some other Association of Southeast Asian Nations member countries have been trained. All ILEA curricula include elements that address support for democratic institutions, the imperative of impartiality and integrity in criminal law enforcement, strict respect for the law and protection of individual rights and liberties of suspects and all other citizens. More than 100 Thai law enforcement officials received advanced training at U.S.-based institutions, most of which included sessions about U.S. and international standards for human rights as related to law enforcement.

As part of the 2004 Cobra Gold joint military exercises, the United States offered some human rights courses for Thai military personnel, including a seminar on the law of armed conflict and rules of engagement. In order to improve this training, the U.S. Government plans to provide more extensive human rights courses in the United States for Thai military officers, using International Military Education and Training funds. These officers will also participate in seminars on how to train Thai enlisted personnel upon returning to Thailand.

The United States will provide a Thai legal society with a grant from the Human Rights and Democracy Fund to support their work in obtaining legal Thai citizenship for hill tribe villagers in Northern Thailand. The Human Rights and Democracy Fund project will assist this group in setting up a database of villagers to help track their cases with local authorities and provide outreach materials for native hill tribe peoples to enhance knowledge of citizenship rights. Under current Thai law more than 60,000 hill tribe individuals are estimated to be eligible for, but go without, Thai citizenship. In real terms this means these individuals have limited access to primary

and secondary education, no access to higher education, no health care, no work permits and no freedom of travel. The United States also funded programs for Burmese in Thailand that included basic education for children, capacity training for teachers, principals and administrators, and training for journalists, women's and pro-democracy groups. These programs help Burmese citizens to gain and retain the skills necessary for a functioning democratic civil society, to be used when the refugees feel safe enough to return to Burma. Through The Asia Foundation, the United States assists Thai women in the poorer Northeast region of the country by providing training on women's legal rights when pursuing work or marriage opportunities abroad, and legal resources to exploited female migrant workers.

The United States, in conjunction with the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and other international organizations, maintained close contacts with individual Burmese refugees, political activists and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) within Thailand. Embassy officials also work closely with Thai officials to monitor the conditions of Burmese refugees within Thailand's borders. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees and Migration Kelly Ryan visited Thailand to discuss refugee issues in April and December 2004. In fiscal year 2004, the United States contributed funds to NGOs to provide food, shelter and primary health care to more than 140,000 Burmese living in refugee camps, and healthcare assistance to other Burmese in Thailand. The United States also provided funding for UNHCR operations in East Asia that include the provision of assistance to Burmese individuals in Thailand recognized as refugees. In 2004 the United States also began a program to resettle Burmese refugees residing in Thai urban areas. By the end of 2004 almost 1,200 persons from this group were leading new lives in the United States.

United States officials intervened with Thai Government officials on numerous occasions in support of Burmese migrant workers' rights. United States officials traveled to the Thai-Burma border area to meet with government officials, NGOs and affected workers. The Embassy assist-

ed several Congressional delegations in similar visits. United States Deputy Undersecretary of Labor for International Labor Affairs Arnold Levine traveled to Thailand in June 2004 to stress the importance of Thailand's adhering to international core labor standards and conditions of work, and of effectively enforcing its labor laws in the context of the bilateral Free Trade Agreement negotiations.

The Embassy in Bangkok promoted anti-trafficking measures and preventive mechanisms through meetings with government officials and oversight of program funding to local NGOs and law enforcement officials. The United States funded extensive programs to combat trafficking in persons and provide assistance to victims both in Thailand and regionally. These programs included assistance for the improvement of law enforcement and prosecution, legal assistance centers for victims as well as prevention initiatives, protection for victims and reintegration assistance for victims of trafficking willing to return to their country of origin. United States-funded programs also included training of the Thai Police, Attorney General and NGO and government social workers on laws, procedures and investigations to combat trafficking in persons. These programs established legal assistance centers to help victims prosecute traffickers in five Thai provinces. Embassy officers participated in Bangkok's multi-embassy Immigration Compliance and Enforcement team to provide fraud detection and interdiction assistance to airport officials. Each month the team interdicts more than 100 persons, including traffickers and potential victims.

Vietnam

Vietnam is a single-party state, ruled and controlled by the Communist Party of Vietnam. The Government's human rights record remained poor, and it continued to commit serious abuses. However, the release of five prominent political and religious dissidents prior to the 2005 Tet (New Year) holiday was a welcomed development. The Government of Vietnam significantly restricted freedom of religion, speech, the press, assembly and association through a number of means dur-

ing 2004. The Government's intolerance of political dissent, including on the Internet, resulted in the arrests and sentencing of several democracy activists who criticized the Government. The Government 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. Restrictions on assembly for religious practice were particularly acute for ethnic-minority Protestant groups in the Central and Northwest Highlands, and violations of religious freedom in these regions included reports of forced renunciations of faith and the detention and beating of religious leaders.

The United States has maintained close ties with political activists and religious groups in Vietnam in order to identify and highlight abuses and to encourage efforts for reform. United States officials have pushed for progress on human rights and political and legal reform during bilateral meetings at all levels in Vietnam and the United States. Through democracy and rule of law programs, the United States seeks to heighten awareness of democratic principles at the grassroots level and develop a transparent and responsive legal system in Vietnam. United States diplomatic efforts have influenced the Government to release political and religious dissidents, to permit opening of new churches in the Central Highlands and to allow greater tolerance for the operation of "unauthorized" churches in several areas. United States programmatic efforts have helped protect trafficked women, supported efforts against child labor, improved employment access for the disabled and improved worker/management relations.

The United States engaged the Vietnamese Government diplomatically on human rights issues at all levels over the course of the year. United States officials traveled widely through the country to investigate allegations of abuse, and virtually every Mission officer and most senior U.S. visitors to Vietnam raised human rights in their meetings with Vietnamese officials at local, provincial and national levels. In November, then-

Deputy Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Elizabeth Dugan met with senior officials in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. She urged the Vietnamese Government to improve overall respect for its citizens' human rights and raised a number of specific concerns. Through the Embassy in Hanoi and Consulate General in Ho Chi Minh City, U.S. officials explained international concerns and human rights standards to Vietnamese officials from the local level to the highest ranks of the Government and the Party. In Washington, State Department officials repeatedly stressed human rights concerns in meetings with visiting Vietnamese officials. This constant diplomatic pressure has increased the Vietnamese Government's attention to human rights and religious freedom violations.

In September, Secretary of State Powell designated Vietnam a "Country of Particular Concern" for severe violations of religious freedom. Due to inadequate overall progress on human rights, the United States again declined to hold a formal session of its bilateral human rights dialogue with Vietnam in 2004. United States officials continued to make clear to the Government of Vietnam that the United States is seeking a substantive, results-based dialogue.

The United States supported increased legal transparency in Vietnam by funding 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 2004 activities of this program were 33 training and policy workshops, with 3,422 participants, and four study tours for senior legislative and judicial officials, as well as significant participation in the development of key pieces of legislation that move Vietnam closer to a private sector, market economy.

The United States sought to advance awareness of human rights and democracy issues in the media by funding four Vietnamese journalists to participate in an International Visitors Program entitled "U.S. Elections 2004," as well as another journalist and a judge on an International Visitors Program entitled "Law Enforcement and Community Development."

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. For example, after 17 ethnic Hmong house church pastors were detained during a Bible study session in Ho Chi Minh City, Consulate General officers immediately contacted city officials and urged their release. The 17 pastors were released the next day, but were required to return to their home provinces in the Northwest Highlands. Mission diplomats continued to monitor their situation after their return. The Mission put a particular focus on urging provincial authorities in Vietnam's Central Highlands to offer more opportunities for legal worship by the region's burgeoning Protestant population. The number of officially recognized Protestant churches in the Central Highlands increased by over 50 percent in 2004, although overall numbers remained disappointingly low following the forced closure of hundreds of house churches in 2001 and 2002. In late 2004, government pressure on non-recognized house churches in some regions appeared to ease somewhat. In June, the Government promulgated a new Ordinance on Religion about which some religious leaders are cautiously optimistic, although implementing regulations had not yet been released as of the end of the reporting period.

The United States has continued to encourage the Vietnamese Government to ratify additional International Labor Organization conventions addressing worker rights and recognizing core worker rights. The Government is working toward ratification of Conventions 29 and 105 on forced labor. The United States also continues to stress the need to discuss issues surrounding freedom of association and collective bargaining. In August 2004, U.S. Deputy Undersecretary of Labor Arnold Levine and Vice Minister Nguyen Luong Trao of the Vietnamese Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA) held a labor dialogue in Washington, D.C. The discussion was the third since the signing of a memorandum of understanding in November 2000 and covered Vietnam's wide-ranging efforts to improve labor conditions.

The United States funded several programs that address the protection of worker rights. With funds from the U.S. Labor Department, the United States has implemented, in cooperation with MOLISA, a number of multi-year programs to advance labor rights in Vietnam. These include a program to improve employment opportunities for people with disabilities, a project to build the capacity of the Government to combat the problem of child labor and a program on dispute prevention and resolution in 70 enterprises located in seven provinces. Another U.S.-funded program has worked with the Government of Vietnam to draft a new law on social insurance, which the Government anticipates will be approved by the National Assembly in 2005. Finally, the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief has 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 trafficking in persons, the United States sponsored international non-governmental organizations which operated a shelter for victims of trafficking repatriated from Cambodian brothels, as well as a number of programs to assist returned victims of trafficking and protect women and children in high-risk areas by providing awareness training, vocational training and economic opportunity through micro-credit programs. United States officials at all levels continued to raise trafficking in persons issues with their Vietnamese counterparts. Mission officers played an important role in coordinating and focusing the international community's response to the trafficking problem in Vietnam.

Europe and Eurasia





“This is a victory of the Ukrainian people, the Ukrainian nation. We were independent for 14 years, today we become free. Today, in Ukraine, a new political year has begun. This is the beginning of a new epoch, the beginning of a new great democracy.”

Viktor Yushchenko

Kiev, Ukraine

A 23-foot high balloon resembling a giant orange, Ukrainian opposition presidential candidate Viktor Yushchenko’s campaign color, is tethered to the ground against the background of a huge crowd waving orange flags.

AP Photo/Efrem Lukatsky

Through diplomacy and targeted assistance, the United States showed its commitment to promoting democratic reform and respect for human rights in Europe and Eurasia in 2004. The United States encouraged dialogue between governments, independent and opposition political parties, and civil society and provided non-partisan capacity-building support to create an environment conducive to the development of democratic institutions. In keeping with the President's policy of helping others attain their own freedom, the U.S. strategy in the region was based on identifying and supporting local reform initiatives.

United States programs to foster elections that meet international standards relied on local initiatives to educate voters, increase voter participation and monitor the electoral process. These programs laid the groundwork for transparent and credible elections by providing non-partisan technical assistance in support of electoral processes. The United States also promoted the development of election laws and accountability for electoral fraud. Strengthening democratic institutions, including legislatures, courts and municipal governments, was central to the U.S. strategy. The United States advocated for government transparency and supported efforts to combat corruption. When the presidential election in Ukraine was marred by widespread fraud and abuse, hundreds of thousands of peaceful demonstrators took to the streets. While Ukraine's "Orange Revolution" was a positive development, several governments in the region continued to ignore their obligations to comply with international democracy and human rights norms.

Civil society development in some countries made great strides, though governments in Central Asia and Belarus increasingly restricted the activities of international and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The United States urged the repeal of onerous laws and regulations restricting the freedom of NGOs, repeatedly raising concerns about the treatment of NGOs with host governments. The U.S. Congress' passage of the Belarus Democracy Act, which calls for an immediate end to the Government of Belarus' persistent assault on democracy and human rights and continued U.S. support for local defenders of liberty, demonstrated the depth of U.S. concern for freedom in Belarus. Throughout the region, U.S. support to local organizations encouraged civic leadership and citizens' participation. By focusing special attention on working with youth, U.S. programs provided the next generation of leaders with important tools to promote democracy and human rights at home.

Fostering independent media and free access to information were priorities for U.S. policy across the region. The United States advocated for repeal of flawed laws or restrictive regulations that hinder independent media. The United States engaged representatives of the independent media, supported journalists willing to report the truth, and exposed promising professionals to modern best practices. Focusing on training, production assistance, equipment grants and media management, U.S. assistance helped improve the quality and objectivity of reporting and media business practices. Facilitating access to the Internet and nonofficial sources of information in several societies where most media is state-controlled was also a priority.

In countries where the human rights records remained poor, U.S. policy emphasized the importance of bringing legislation and practice into line with international standards and ensuring respect for rule of law and human rights. Combating torture remained a top concern. The United States worked with victims' families, local human rights workers and defense attorney, and international NGOs to investigate allegations of torture and raise them with senior host government officials. Uzbekistan took some notable steps to combat torture, and U.S. support for efforts to investigate suspicious deaths in custody bolstered the principle of accountability. The United States urged Russia to ensure accountability for human rights abuses in Chechnya. In cooperation with the EU, the United States imposed travel restrictions on Belarusian officials responsible for human rights abuses.

In this religiously diverse region, the United States monitored and advocated on behalf of religious freedom and emphasized the importance of tolerance as essential to security and stability. United States programs supported interfaith dialogues and the development of curricula to foster religious tolerance. International Visitors Programs exposed local leaders to the diversity of religious practice in the United States.

Support for legislation and public education was an essential component of the U.S. strategy to combat trafficking in persons in the region. The United States supported training for law enforcement, immigration and consular officials and prosecutors to prevent trafficking and strengthen the capacity to prosecute traffickers. Regional projects were also important in addressing trafficking. The United States supported training and trans-border activities for Moldovan law enforcement agencies. In Ukraine, U.S. funding assisted trafficking victims and supported information hotlines.

Ukrainian Election Observers

In late 2004, the Ukrainian people's courage and determination spearheaded the peaceful "Orange Revolution" that significantly advanced liberty in Ukraine and buoyed pro-democracy supporters worldwide. In order to promote a free and fair presidential election scheduled for the fall of 2004, the United States funded an unprecedented number of international observers through the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the European Network of Election Monitoring Organizations (ENEMO) - an association of election monitoring non-governmental organizations from Europe and Eurasia - and domestic observers, including the Committee of Voters of Ukraine (CVU), who were deployed in all regions of Ukraine for each electoral round. In total, the OSCE deployed some 2,500 monitors, ENEMO approximately 2,000, and CVU about 30,000 for the three rounds of the presidential election. Their actions, reports and statements helped inspire thousands of Ukrainians to stand up for democracy despite substantial government intimidation and severe winter weather.

The first round of balloting on October 31 was plagued by numerous problems and irregularities and was considered a step backwards, as detailed in the reports by the OSCE, ENEMO and CVU. The second round on November 21, a run-off between Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich and opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko, featured even greater and more widespread fraud, intimidation and abuse of administrative resources. International and domestic observer teams immediately publicized thorough, credible reports indicating the extent to which the election was manipulated. The Ukrainian people and the international community drew from these reports to form their opinions of the election. For example, presidential envoy Senator Richard Lugar's statement on the election noted that there was "a concerted and forceful program of election day fraud and abuse...with either the leadership or cooperation of the governmental authorities." Similarly, ENEMO's statement observed that there was "a coordinated, systematic pattern of major violations leading to an outcome that does not reflect the will of the Ukrainian people."

These reports contrasted sharply with the November 22 announcement of the preliminary results by the Ukrainian Central Election Commission (CEC), which claimed Yanukovich was in the lead. Fueled by credible domestic and international observers' reports of abuse and fraud, Yushchenko supporters began pouring into the streets of Kiev and other cities wearing orange ribbons and scarves, the campaign color of the opposition, to peacefully protest the fraud. These reports also prompted the United States and other members of the international community to refuse to accept the results of the November 21 vote as legitimate. This further buoyed demonstrators in the streets, particularly in Kiev where they eventually numbered in the hundreds of thousands, despite sub-zero wind chill temperatures and heavy snowfall. A number of municipal and regional councils in western Ukraine declared Yushchenko the rightful president. Many government officials from various institutions declared their allegiance to the opposition. The documented reports of election fraud and abuse prompted the Ukrainian Supreme Court to invalidate the results of the November 21 vote and order a repeat run-off to be held on December 26. Tens of thousands of demonstrators remained in Kiev.

Despite some irregularities, the December 26 re-vote of the second round was a great improvement. According to the OSCE, the election "brought Ukraine substantially closer to meeting OSCE election commitments and Council of Europe and other European standards." Ukraine's reformed CEC recognized the elections as valid, as did ENEMO. The final results showed Yushchenko winning with approximately 52 percent of the vote to Yanukovich's 44 percent and gave the Ukrainian people a president selected by their own free will.

Albania

Albania is a republic with a multiparty parliament that elected Prime Minister Fatos Nano and President Alfred Moisiu. International observers judged the October 2003 local elections to be an improvement over previous elections, despite isolated irregularities, violence and problems with voter lists. Political interference in the media occurred less frequently than in previous years. The Constitution provides for an independent judiciary; however, corruption and political pressure limited the judiciary's ability to function efficiently. Albania's progress on promoting the rule of law and respect for human rights was hindered to varying degrees by corruption, weak institutional capacity and the lack of a democratic tradition.

The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, there were serious problems. There were a number of documented cases in which police beat and abused suspects, detainees and prisoners. Prison conditions remained poor. The police occasionally arbitrarily arrested and detained persons. Prolonged pretrial detention and official impunity were problems. The Government occasionally infringed on citizens' privacy rights. Police reportedly used excessive force against protestors. Individual vigilante action, mostly related to traditional blood feuds, resulted in some killings and an atmosphere of fear in some regions. Societal discrimination against Roma, the Egyptian community and homosexuals persisted; violence and discrimination against women and children were serious problems. Child labor was a problem. Trafficking in persons (TIP) remained a problem, which the Government took some steps to address.

The U.S. strategy for promoting democracy and human rights focused on encouraging Albania to implement the necessary reforms to join Euro-Atlantic institutions and supporting Albania's contribution to fighting terrorism worldwide. In particular, the United States focused on improving election administration and transparency, expanding citizen involvement in public affairs, strengthening legislative and civil institutions, including

independent media, and improving the Government's capacity to fight crime (especially organized crime), corruption and TIP. The United States sent various government officials and non-governmental representatives on International Visitors Programs in 2004 to learn more about combating trafficking, grassroots democracy, religious tolerance/mutual understanding, financial crime and money laundering, court administration, the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), election administration and monitoring, and state and local government. The United States funded local organizations' initiatives on anti-trafficking, anti-corruption, independent media, civic education and participation in governance processes.

Some key successes included passage of landmark laws - all with strong U.S. support - addressing organized crime, terrorism financing, witness protection, investigative techniques and technical assistance to new government offices aimed at implementing 2003 laws requiring the disclosure of assets by public officials and establishing a modern anti-money-laundering system. The Albanian Government also had some success in convicting officials and police on charges of abuse of office and in holding traffickers accountable. Citizens' advocacy groups supported by the United States played a greater role in speaking out against government corruption and mismanagement.

The United States actively engaged in promoting democratic elections in Albania. The United States consistently urged the Albanian Government to create the conditions for democratic parliamentary elections in 2005. The United States also provided technical assistance to the Ministry of Local Government and Decentralization, the Central Election Commission and municipal governments in many aspects of election processes, such as voter registration, preparation of accurate voter lists, spatial mapping of polling districts and updating civil registries. Officials from the U.S. Government coordinated election assistance with other donors, including the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe, and many bilateral and multilateral donor organizations. The United States established framework agree-

ments for the deployment of a large-scale, domestic election monitoring effort for the 2005 parliamentary elections. Officials from the U.S. Government encouraged political party leaders and members of parliament to endorse the agreements and implement fully the country's new election law.

Peace Corps volunteers from the United States worked with municipal governments and local communities throughout Albania to make government more transparent and accountable. Peace Corps efforts contributed to increased civic participation and enhanced government capacity. The Peace Corps also encouraged local governments, NGOs and businesses to work together to improve their communities.

The United States opened two American Corners to make information available to Albanians about human rights, democracy and other topics. In public and private, the United States consistently stressed to Albanian officials the importance of media freedom. The United States funded local and U.S.-based training and exchange programs to help increase professionalism in the media and enhance its watchdog role. Programs also sought to help media increase financial independence and transparency. Albanian media expanded coverage of "Hapur," an exposé-style investigative news show produced with U.S. support.

Corruption and weak rule of law remained among the greatest obstacles to promoting human rights and democracy in Albania. Officials from the U.S. Government used every opportunity to emphasize to the Albanian authorities and people the need to strengthen the rule of law. The United States funded anti-corruption initiatives, including the Albanian Coalition Against Corruption, an umbrella organization representing 210 NGOs and individuals involved in the fight against corruption. The United States also supported the Citizens' Advocacy Office, an NGO offering legal assistance to private citizens who were victims of corruption. The result was an unprecedented level of cooperation between the Government and civil society on corruption resulting in improved transparency and accountability for central and local government activities.

The United States supported the creation and training of the Organized Crime Task Force (OCTF), launched in March 2004, which brings together an elite group of police and prosecutors to fight organized crime and corruption. The OCTF is an important component of the Court of Serious Crimes Prosecution Office. As a result of U.S. training programs for judges and prosecutors, the climate for successful prosecutions of previously "untouchable" criminals improved. Four judges, as well as over 200 judicial and penal system officials, were dismissed for abuse of office or failure to perform their duties. Anti-crime and corruption efforts were bolstered by the ongoing implementation of a large and comprehensive Total Information Management System, a sophisticated tool to better control border activity, manage and investigate criminal cases, and utilize police information more effectively and efficiently.

In the area of law enforcement, the U.S. International Criminal Investigative Training and Assistance Program (ICITAP) continued development, training and equipment support for the Office of Internal Control (OIC) in the Ministry of Public Order. The OIC investigates internal corruption and aims to build a more professional police force. In 2004, ICITAP also provided support to the Albania State Police to develop merit-based human resource management, improved administrative regulations and training initiatives to enhance staff capabilities and professionalism.

The United States is a member of the steering committee of the International Consortium (IC), an informal coordinating mechanism for the many international donors who are supporting legal reform efforts in Albania. The United States funds the IC secretariat. Advisors from ICITAP and the U.S. Department of Justice's resident legal advisor chaired several of the IC's working groups which focus on legal and justice reform, law enforcement training and information technology. The United States also participated in working groups that addressed community policing, crime prevention, integrated border management and organized crime.

Through the Expanded International Military Education and Training (E-IMET) program and

Counter Terrorism Fellowship Programs, the United States sent 52 regular and non-commissioned officers and 13 students to the United States to receive military as well as human rights, democracy and civics training. Through the U.S.-funded E-IMET program, the U.S. Defense Institute for International Legal Studies conducted in-country seminars to help prepare the Albanian Government to combat terrorism and promote legal policies and standards that uphold democratic values in governmental and civic institutions. Both seminars had strong human rights and democracy building in public agencies components. The seminars trained 90 Albanian civilian and military professionals from a broad range of agencies. In total, U.S security assistance programs trained 142 Albanians in democracy, civilian control over the military and human rights in 2004. All training and exchange program participants were vetted, consistent with Leahy Amendment requirements, to ensure that they were not responsible for human rights violations.

As part of the U.S. effort to promote religious freedom in Albania, U.S. officials urged the Government to resolve outstanding religious property claims and return church property to the denominations that lost them under communist rule. Officials from the United States, including the Chief of Mission, met frequently with the heads of the major religious communities in the country. A U.S.-supported civic and faith-based education project was launched to develop ways to introduce civics into religious school curricula. The United States provided grants to local organizations to promote interfaith tolerance and understanding and to support the teaching of civic affairs and religious tolerance in secondary schools, including schools operated by faith-based organizations. During 2004, faith-based organizations received U.S.-funded community development training, and small grants were designed to facilitate the design and implementation of development projects that benefit the entire community, regardless of faith orientation.

The United States also supported a series of roundtable discussions on religious tolerance in local communities. A follow-on U.S. grant entitled "Tolerance Days in Religious Schools" helped secu-

lar and religious community leaders, government officials and others explore how to strengthen mutual understanding among faiths.

In May 2004, the United States launched a two and a half year project on fostering religious tolerance entitled "Fostering Religious Harmony in Albania." Through training workshops, religious leaders became equipped with the tools and skills they need to manage conflict among their own members and interact more constructively with other religious groups. Public forums and innovative techniques, such as community drama, helped citizens articulate the problems they are facing and work towards common solutions. Journalists, academics, and other voices in society played a critical role in this project.

Officials from the United States continued to engage actively with the Albanian Government to fight TIP bilaterally as well as regionally, via the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative Center and the Stability Pact. The United States helped Albanian authorities in the implementation of their National Strategy Against Trafficking and in meeting the standards stipulated in the Trafficking Victims' Protection Act. The United States funded the Albanian Citizens' Advocacy Office, which provided legal services to victims of trafficking as well as legal education to citizens and local governments. Programs supported by the U.S. Government promoted the strengthening of women's legal rights as they relate to trafficking, domestic violence and the new Albanian family code.

The United States funded programs designed to prevent trafficking by providing legitimate employment and economic opportunities to trafficking victims and women and girls at risk. These projects trained 330 women from rural and economically disadvantaged areas in job skills and business development. The United States funded the launch and implementation of a program to strengthen the capacity of civil society to provide services to trafficking victims with a focus on prevention, reintegration, coordination and NGO capacity building. A U.S.-funded program, the Transnational Action Against Child Trafficking (TACT) strengthened its partnerships with Greek

and Italian anti-trafficking NGOs and more than doubled its nationwide efforts to decrease the trafficking of children along five axes of intervention: prevention, protection, assisted voluntary return, reintegration and coordination. Responding to the threat of increased trafficking of children due to the large tourist market expected to attend the Athens 2004 Olympic Games, the United States provided additional resources to help TACT monitor and take preventive action to reduce the trafficking of children prior to, during and immediately following the Games. The U.S. Government's efforts to improve security and control at ports of entry in turn helped combat trafficking in persons. Complementary efforts included U.S. assistance to Albania's organized crime directorate and the specialized OCTF to fight organized crime, which is responsible for the majority of trafficking enterprises.

Armenia

The Government's human rights record remained poor; although there were some improvements in a few areas, serious problems remained. The president, who is directly elected, has extensive powers that are not checked by the legislature or judiciary. Recent elections – including the controversial 2003 presidential election – have not met international standards. There were some limits on freedom of assembly, the media and religious freedom. However, in a positive step toward religious freedom, the Government registered the Jehovah's Witnesses. Judges remained subject to pressure from the executive branch and corruption was a problem. Some members of the security forces committed a number of human rights abuses. Security forces beat pretrial detainees, and impunity remained a problem. There were instances of arbitrary arrests and detentions. In April, police used excessive force to disperse an opposition rally, detained opposition politicians and raided opposition party offices. The Government's assistance with the creation of a civilian prison monitoring board and decision to permit independent monitoring of prison conditions were positive developments. While the Government took steps to limit trafficking in persons, violence against women and trafficking of

women and children remained problems. 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-trafficking measures. United States officials regularly met with Armenian government officials, parliamentary opposition leaders, religious minorities and human rights activists regarding these issues. In 2004, the United States sent two high-level State Department officials to Armenia who engaged leaders on a variety of human rights issues. United States officials raised human rights concerns during all high-level encounters with Armenian officials, including during the meetings of the U.S.-Armenia Task Force in May and October. The Embassy hosted numerous representational events and roundtables during the year to raise awareness and encourage dialogue in support of these objectives.

To promote democratic institutions and processes, the United States supported programs designed to strengthen the separation of powers. Toward that end, the United States funded programs in Armenia to augment the national legislative abilities to respond to citizen concerns. The Armenian National Assembly provided its members with information they previously lacked, such as drafts of past legislation and non-governmental organization (NGO) literature. The United States helped the National Assembly's Control Chamber to improve legislative oversight of the national budget and helped the Government improve the published budget. The United States helped Armenian citizens access information on pending legislation. With U.S. support and encouragement, the National Assembly improved its transparency by holding committee hearings, publishing draft laws in newspaper inserts and developing a tracking system for citizen inquiries and communications. The program also provided citizens with information about the National Assembly through the creation of a website and publication and dissemination of draft legislation.

The United States targeted its assistance to expand civic participation, strengthen institutions of governance, and empower citizens to hold govern-

ment accountable by encouraging laws and policies needed to create a democratic governance framework in Armenia. United States-funded programs helped local governments improve internal management systems, implement transition reforms, strengthen oversight and fiscal responsibilities and increase public accessibility and accountability.

With U.S. help, more than 13,000 people participated in 240 town hall meetings to discuss citizen concerns with community leaders. In more than 660 dialogue groups held around the country, citizens discussed the law on the legal status of property, community schools, privatization, community development and apartment building administration, among other issues. The impact of these programs was reflected in the concrete actions taken by initiative groups that formed as a result of the dialogues. Successful efforts included renovation of a local state college and establishment of a library fund for the college, legalization of supplementary constructions by building residents and improvements in the sanitary situation in communities. Through these programs, citizens created tangible improvements in their communities by engaging in democratic processes at the local level.

To promote the development of a vibrant civil society, the United States gave grants and technical assistance to advocacy NGOs and continued to foster citizen participation at the grassroots level. The United States supported public awareness campaigns, including campaigns to address the societal costs of corruption and the shared responsibility for combating it. The United States also launched a program to strengthen Armenian NGOs through 82 grants in various sectors. This program has demonstrated success as citizen advocacy programs deepen and broaden, and according to USAID's NGO Sustainability Index, NGOs in Armenia have significantly increased their self-sustainable capacity.

The United States also provided 38 small grants in 2004 to NGOs and independent media outlets that work to strengthen democratic institutions and promote civil society in Armenia. These embassy-based "Democracy Commission Small Grants" addressed issues such as citizens' use of the newly

passed Law on Freedom of Information, patients' rights, environmental education, the promotion of volunteerism, media literacy and the integration of disabled youth into society.

Following the Government's excessive reaction to peaceful opposition protests, the Department of State issued a Statement in April which observed that "Physical assaults, raids on political party offices and widespread arrests and detentions of opposition activists by the police do not contribute to creating an atmosphere conducive to political dialogue." The United States also sponsored international visitors to observe political parties in action during the U.S. elections.

To promote freedom of the media, the United States provided equipment and technical assistance to increase journalists' level of professionalism and objectivity. A U.S.-funded International Visitors Program on media ethics introduced Armenian journalists to democratic media practices in the United States.

To promote the rule of law, the United States continued to engage with the Armenian Ministry of Justice and legal institutions. With the assistance of a U.S.-funded NGO, the Government enacted legislation creating a bar association for defense lawyers. Human rights advocates believe that the new association will increase the legal defense of human rights by improving the training and organization of defense lawyers.

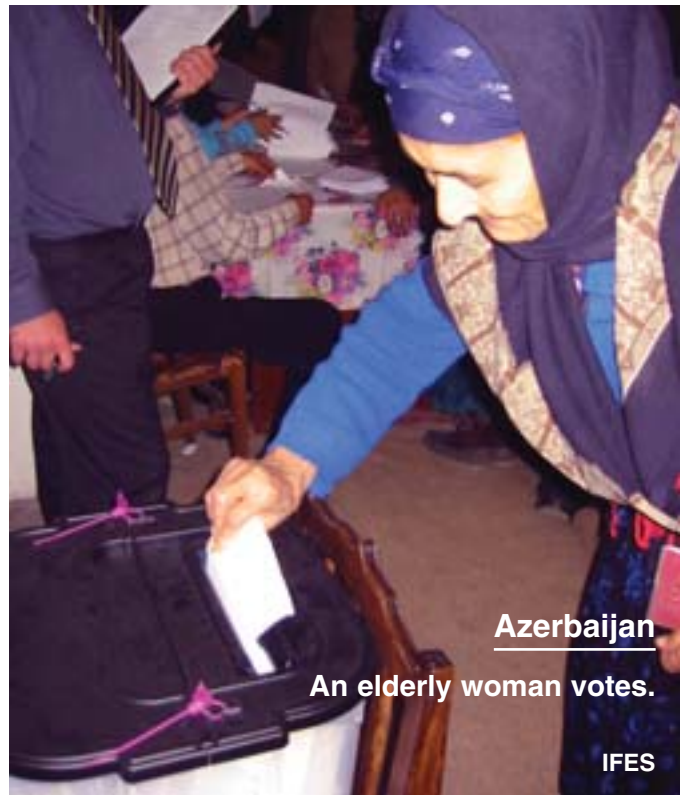
Senior U.S. officials consistently engaged government officials on the rights of women, children, minorities and the disabled. In 2004, the United States began a Children's Tolerance Education Program in elementary schools and closely monitored and engaged the Government on issues of intolerance.

United States officials urged greater respect for religious freedom. As a direct result of international engagement, the Government of Armenia legally registered Armenia's Jehovah's Witnesses and enacted new laws to allow conscientious objectors an alternative to mandatory military service.

The United States increased its assistance to anti-trafficking efforts in Armenia, aiding the Government, local NGOs and international organizations in their efforts. With U.S. assistance, the Government began training consular officers to recognize and assist potential victims of trafficking, and the United States invested in informational and child-protective prevention efforts. The United States established programs to research trends in trafficking and assisted in the creation of anti-trafficking legislation. The United States continued to engage the Government diplomatically on trafficking issues. The United States also significantly assisted NGOs in creating, maintaining and publicizing victim assistance programs nationwide.

Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan's human rights record remained poor. Recent elections, including the controversial October 2003 presidential election, have been marred by numerous serious irregularities and therefore have not met international standards. Many of the trials of those in the opposition convicted of post-presidential election violence did not meet international standards. 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. Members of the security forces continued to commit serious abuses, including beating and torturing persons in custody. The president pardoned many but not all individuals considered to be political prisoners. The Government restricted freedom of assembly by denying permission for any opposition political party demonstrations during the year, at times detaining those who protested without permission. Freedom of speech and of the press were also at times subject to attack, as journalists faced disproportionately high libel judgments for slander committed against government officials. However, this did not silence loud and critical attacks on the Government and its policies. The Government restricted some religious freedom rights of Muslims and Christians, citing its right to protect society from radical Islam and social instability. The Government initiated a national action plan to combat trafficking in persons (TIP), but has only begun implementation.



The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Azerbaijan addressed a wide range of critical issues, including respect for democratic processes, civil society, fundamental freedoms, the rule of law, human rights and anti-trafficking efforts.

In support of the U.S. strategy, U.S. officials regularly met with a range of human rights and democracy activists, representatives of pro-reform political parties and religious minorities, as well as with government officials. Then-Deputy Secretary Richard Armitage, Assistant Secretary Elizabeth Jones, Deputy Assistant Secretary Laura Kennedy, and Members of Congress and Congressional staff traveled to Azerbaijan in 2004 to reinforce support for U.S. objectives.

The United States sustained efforts to address electoral processes that do not meet international standards through high-level government intervention and training programs. For the December municipal elections, U.S. efforts focused on the need to correct the irregularities of the past, in preparation for the November 2005 parliamentary elections. In the wake of the controversial 2003 presidential election, U.S. officials emphasized the need for the Government to demonstrate that the people could

trust the electoral system. The Ambassador engaged high-level officials on the need to conduct credible and transparent elections. He also stressed the need for practical steps, such as proper training for election officials and accurate voter lists. In October, the Ambassador and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) resident Ambassadors met with the Chairman of the Central Election Commission (CEC) to stress the need for a transparent election process. The United States funded a visit by an expert on election systems and political parties, both to generate debate on the U.S. election process and to engage in dialogue with activists and political leaders on ways forward. Local officials appointed by the executive branch played a crucial role in the conduct of elections in Azerbaijan. In the past, some of these officials have been obstacles to a fair election process. Recognizing the central role they played, a U.S.-funded program trained local officials and chairs of Constituency Election Commissions on how to conduct elections in accordance with international democratic standards. More than 200 government representatives and election officials throughout the country participated in the training.

With U.S. funding, non-partisan international observers were trained and deployed for the October parliamentary by-elections and the December municipal elections. In preparation for the election, the Embassy reconstituted an Election Strategy Team, a coordination body originally deployed in advance of the 2003 presidential election. The team included Embassy and non-governmental organization (NGO) representatives who coordinated efforts to promote an election that would meet OSCE standards. This team also ensured that the United States sent a unified, and therefore more powerful, message to the Government on its expectations.

The Embassy fielded ten observer teams to monitor parliamentary by-elections in October and 25 observer teams to monitor the December municipal elections. When serious irregularities marred the conduct of both elections, the Embassy immediately informed the CEC of its observations and concerns. The United States also raised its concerns with senior government officials. With the

urging of U.S. officials, the CEC invalidated results and fired election officials in some of the polling stations where observers witnessed serious fraud. Before and after the elections, the United States urged the CEC to forward complaints of election code violations to the Prosecutor General's office for investigation. In January, for the first time in history, the CEC forwarded 95 cases to the Prosecutor's office. The United States used the media to encourage citizens' participation in the democratic process. As part of an effort to encourage political dialogue and issue-based elections, the United States supported the organization and broadcast of debates between candidates for the municipal elections in eight regions of Azerbaijan. The United States funded public service announcements instructing voters on their rights. In addition, the United States funded print and broadcast advertisements encouraging citizens to vote. The objective of this information campaign was increased citizen activism, by encouraging those who were frustrated with the lack of basic infrastructure to vote for their municipal council officials, and then to hold the councils accountable for their actions. Finally, the United States funded a pilot exit poll project during the municipal elections.

The United States continued to support the development of civil society in Azerbaijan by using technical assistance, grants and exchanges to support activities of specific NGOs, encourage dialogue between the Government and civil society and educate the Government about democratic practices in the United States. Embassy officers traveled throughout Azerbaijan to support NGO activities. Grants from the U.S. Government supported a variety of projects, including helping NGO centers establish regional networks and facilitating dialogue between NGOs and government officials. These projects were critical to addressing the mistrust between the Government and NGOs, and the lack of national linkages for most NGOs. Officials from the U.S. Government also engaged with the Government of Azerbaijan to help improve cooperation between the Government and NGOs. The United States sent six Azerbaijanis representing different parts of society to the United States to strengthen their skills and understanding of grassroots democracy. In

November, the United States funded an educational training exchange for senior-level officials from the parliament and key ministries to learn more about the democratic process in the United States. While in the United States, policymakers were able to assess in depth the role the U.S. executive and legislative branches play as separate powers and as effective checks on each other's actions. The group also examined the need for transparent governance and civil society's role in promoting positive change. This program helped to strengthen the foundation for future U.S.-funded assistance programs and for cooperation between the Government and NGOs.

After a rough start, intense U.S. advocacy with the Government paved the way for a U.S.-funded, innovative series of town hall meetings held across Azerbaijan during the summer. These meetings successfully brought together representatives of various government bodies, local authorities and local party members to discuss the role of elected municipal councils.

In support of freedom of assembly, U.S. officials repeatedly encouraged Azerbaijani officials to authorize peaceful demonstrations by opposition

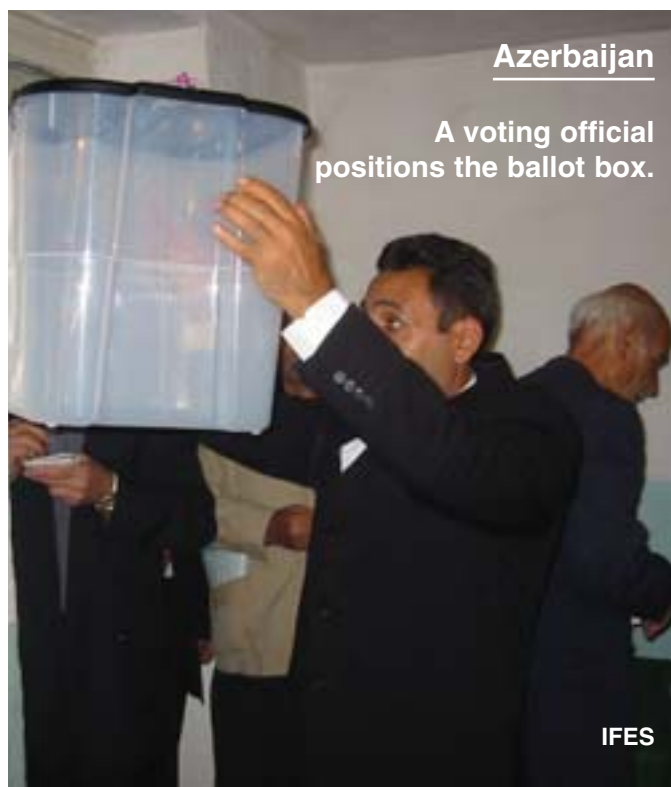
parties. The United States voiced its concerns to all levels of the Government about the basic right of political parties to organize and demonstrate against government policies.

Another focus of U.S. efforts was the development of a free and responsible media. Officials repeatedly urged the Government to respect media freedom and to enact legislation to establish an independent public television station. Funding from the U.S. Government supported the professional development of journalists and advocacy for media rights. Programs supported by the U.S. Government provided extensive ongoing technical and programming support to several independent television stations and newspapers.

Embassy officers closely monitored the trials of those accused of participating in and organizing the post-election violence in October 2003, including the high-profile trial of seven opposition leaders accused of organizing the violence. Then-Deputy Secretary, Deputy Assistant Secretary Kennedy and the Ambassador raised concerns about these trials with senior government officials. Both privately and publicly, the United States urged the Government to conduct the trials in accordance with international standards and urged both the Government and opposition parties to pursue national reconciliation.

To promote the rule of law, 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 also continued work with law schools on curriculum development and new teaching methodologies.

For the first time, the United States provided funds to establish a Legal Database Project, which will provide easy access and use of legal framework documents for the legal profession as well as the general populace. This database will provide an innovative resource for the general population and the legal community, and it 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 the new anti-corruption legislation. A U.S. program implementer and the Resident Legal Advisor continued to work with the Government and private lawyers to implement the Law on Advocates and to develop an independent bar association. Programs funded by the United States also worked with prosecutors to develop evidence-based investigations, which could help to decrease forced confessions.

In compliance with the Leahy Amendment, the Embassy coordinated interagency human rights vetting of military units proposed for U.S. training and/or support, and human rights training was integrated into all U.S.-supported military exercises and operational training conducted in the country. The United States helped design a program to integrate human rights training for security forces guarding the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline.

Azerbaijan has a long history of religious tolerance, especially towards its Jewish population. Despite Azerbaijan's history of tolerance, some groups, such as Protestants, have faced difficulties working with the state religious structures. The United States worked actively to encourage respect for religious freedom, including the right of such groups to operate without unnecessary interference. Officials from the United States frequently met with government officials to stress the importance of respecting religious freedom. The Embassy and officials in Washington maintained close connections with local religious communities and made contact with some communities outside Baku. Officials sustained a high-level dialogue with the Government when the independent Juma Mosque Community was first threatened with eviction and later evicted from an historic mosque in the Baku city center. Officials from the U.S. Government observed Friday afternoon prayer services at the mosque during the dispute and after the closure of the mosque. The Embassy actively spread the message about religious tolerance and Islam in America throughout the year, for example with two Iftaar dinners hosted by the Ambassador in November.

While the Government began to combat TIP, it remained a problem. The United States promoted anti-trafficking measures and effective preventive mechanisms in meetings with government officials and through programs that included an anti-trafficking awareness campaign conducted by NGOs. The United States funded two experts to help government officials develop the policies and procedures for a police anti-trafficking unit. Further, the United States coordinated a review of draft anti-TIP legislation among international organizations to ensure the legislation met international standards.

Belarus

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 all elements of democracy and human rights. Through a series of flawed referenda, manipulated and fraudulent elections, and repressive laws and regulations, he has amended the Constitution, concentrated all power in the executive, extended presidential tenure and eliminated presidential term limits. The October 2004 parliamentary elections and referendum both failed to meet international democratic standards and were characterized by widespread fraud. The judiciary is not independent.

The Government's human rights record remained very poor and worsened in some areas. The Government continued to commit numerous serious abuses and to deny citizens the right to change their government. The Government manipulated and abused the legal system to prevent several hundred independent and opposition candidates from registering in the October 2004 elections. State-controlled media, representing 85 percent of all media, denied access to independent and opposition candidates. By the end of the year, the Government was preventing the opposition from legally holding meetings. Security forces continued to harass and detain political opponents, journalists, human rights activists and independent trade unionists. Police severely beat several opposition leaders, peaceful protesters and journalists. The authorities continued to refuse to

Minsk, Belarus

Belarusian student holding a ballot exits the voting booth at the Belarusian Agricultural University after participating in early voting.

AP Photo

undertake serious efforts to account for the disappearances of well-known opposition political figures and a journalist in previous years or to address credible reports regarding the regime's role in these disappearances. The appointment of Viktor Sheyman, linked by credible evidence to the disappearances, as head of the Presidential Administration was yet another factor perpetuating a climate of abuse and impunity. Others suspected of involvement in the disappearances include the Minister of Interior and the Minister of Sports and Tourism. Police abuse and occasional torture of prisoners and detainees continued to be a problem. Prison overcrowding remained a problem. Security forces arbitrarily arrested and detained citizens for political reasons. In addition, individuals were sentenced to jail terms for such political crimes as defamation of state officials.

The Government continued to restrict freedom of speech, press, assembly and association. The Government continued an apparently calculated campaign to intimidate, harass and close virtually all independent media outlets and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Journalists critical of the Government were administratively punished (usually fined) on libel charges. Twenty-five independent newspapers and 38 NGOs were closed or had their operations suspended during

the year. The Government imposed restrictions on religious freedom. The Government intensified its already severe restrictions on workers' rights, prompting an International Labor Organization (ILO) Commission of Inquiry (CoI). The CoI found that the Government committed serious violations of workers' rights and interfered significantly in the trade union movement. Government intimidation of opposition parties and civil society groups severely hindered the development of a thriving civil society and democratic political process. Trafficking in persons (TIP) remained a problem, 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 engagement with Belarusian officials (U.S. officials above the assistant secretary level do not meet with Belarusian authorities), monitoring and reporting on abuses, and supporting democracy and human rights programs. The United States funded programs to bolster independent media, political parties, civil society and trade unions; promote free and fair elections and the rule of law; protect human rights; and combat TIP. The United States provides little bilateral assistance to

the Government except humanitarian assistance and exchange programs with educational institutions. The United States closely cooperated with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and EU missions in Belarus to promote democracy and human rights. In concert with the EU, the United States instituted visa restrictions on senior Belarusian officials responsible for electoral fraud and human rights abuses including the disappearance and presumed murder of opposition figures and a journalist. Officials from the United States actively monitored the deteriorating human rights situation in Belarus and regularly met with local and international organizations active in promoting human rights and democracy.

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 organized a digital video press conference with Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky and Belarusian media to demonstrate U.S. concern over persistent democracy and human rights violations in Belarus, show U.S. support for the Belarusian people and discuss passage of the Belarus Democracy Act. The Embassy also maintained and updated its website on democracy and human rights issues, and the United States issued frequent press releases and other statements on human rights and democracy violations.

The United States consistently urged the Government to hold free and fair elections and to invite the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights to Belarus to conduct an election-monitoring mission. Throughout the year, U.S. officials met with Belarusian election and other government officials to encourage adherence to democratic principles. Funding from the U.S. Government supported political process training, technical assistance and cross-border exchanges for pro-democracy groups and parties, focusing on internal governance, non-partisan election observation, voter education, independent exit polling, strategic planning, membership recruitment and retention, message formulation and outreach.

The United States closely monitored the Government's persistent, calculated attacks on civil society and opposition political parties, and issued a number of press statements, including at the OSCE Permanent Council condemning and calling for an immediate end to these actions and urging the Government of Belarus to uphold its OSCE commitments to democracy and human rights. To reinforce this message, a joint delegation of U.S. and EU officials met with the Foreign Minister of Belarus in March 2004 to demand an immediate end to government efforts to control civil society and to urge the Government to take the necessary steps to ensure a free and fair electoral process for the October parliamentary elections. The delegation also reaffirmed its willingness to initiate serious discussions with the Government on how to improve bilateral relations. In addition, the joint delegation met with a number of representatives of independent political parties, media and NGOs.

Embassy staff regularly observed the trials of NGOs, media outlets and political parties throughout Belarus that were targeted by the Government for closure on politically motivated pretexts. Embassy staff also attended trials for opposition figures, such as Mikhail Marinich, targeted for their political activities. The United States supported the OSCE's efforts to assist Belarus in meeting its OSCE commitments.

The United States took a highly visible step to call attention to the Government's repressive actions when Congress passed and the President signed the Belarus Democracy Act in October 2004. The Act criticizes the Government's human rights record, authorizes support for democracy programs and expresses the sense of Congress that certain sanctions be applied to the Government of Belarus. The passage of this Act demonstrated bipartisan support for the U.S. Government's policy of emphasizing democracy and human rights in U.S. relations with Belarus.

Bolstering civil society and independent media and promoting the rule of law remained key U.S. goals. The United States awarded grants to NGOs as well as human rights, women's and youth groups to strengthen independent mass media and

civil society. The United States also supported journalism and management training, legal defense and business consultations to strengthen independent print and broadcast media outlets and increase their capacity to provide objective, fact-based information. This program was constrained, however, after the Government denied re-registration to the International Research and Exchanges board. Public clubs supported by U.S. funding offered local forums to share information and resolve local issues. In 2004, the number of clubs rose to 18 throughout the country, and they were active in 29 communities. These clubs worked with local governments to initiate over 100 projects, including improving playgrounds, providing clean water, improving kindergarten nutrition and fighting HIV/AIDS, TIP and substance abuse. Perhaps because of its success in grassroots mobilization, Counterpart International, the U.S. NGO providing assistance to these public clubs, was denied legal registration in August and forced to cease its activities. To promote the rule of law, the United States provided legal and advocacy training for lawyers, activists and NGOs and supported a network of 19 Legal Advice Centers.

The United States continued to press the Belarusian Government to conduct an independent and impartial investigation into the disappearances of several opposition activists and a journalist. Officials from the U.S. Government, including then-Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, National Security Council officials, Assistant Secretary and Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor and Members of Congress met with family members of the disappeared who actively seek justice for their family members. The United States and the EU jointly sponsored a resolution passed at the 2004 UN Commission on Human Rights calling for an independent, credible investigation into the disappearances and for the perpetrators to be held accountable. The resolution also mandated a Special Rapporteur to report on the human rights situation in Belarus. Officials from the U.S. Government met with the UN Rapporteur and supported his efforts. The Government of Belarus refused to cooperate with or grant an entry visa to the UN Special Rapporteur. The United States and the EU also jointly sponsored an ultimately unsuccessful

resolution condemning Belarus' poor and deteriorating human rights record at the 2004 UN General Assembly.

Training, exchange and educational reform programs continued to be an important component of the U.S. democracy and human rights promotion strategy in Belarus. In 2004, more than 170 Belarusian citizens participated in U.S.-sponsored professional and academic training programs. Traveling to the United States, Belarusian participants received short-term training in business, public health, recreation and tourism and secondary school administration programs. Other Belarusians took part in International Visitors Programs (IVP) focusing on a range of topics including intellectual property rights, producing news features and documentaries, the role of think tanks in policy-making, regional and community theater in the United States, on line journalism, the role of women in small enterprise development, TIP, infectious diseases and HIV/AIDS. Fifty Belarusian students also participated in the Future Leaders Exchange program, attending U.S. high schools and living with American families for one academic year.

The United States monitored and denounced the Government's hostile actions against those promoting academic freedom. Officials from the U.S. Government facilitated contact between Belarusian diaspora groups in the United States and the rector of a Belarusian language lyceum that was closed by the Government; other U.S. officials and European Governments sought support for the school. In early 2004, the Ambassador joined an 11-country diplomatic protest over the Minister of Education's efforts to close the European Humanities University (EHU). The United States later protested bilaterally and multilaterally the Government's closure of EHU and supported scholarships to help former EHU students study in the United States, Europe and at other universities in Belarus. The United States also protested in several forums the Government's closure of two academic think tanks and pressure against independent public opinion and polling organizations.

As the Government implemented a new restrictive law on religion, the United States monitored violations of international norms and urged government officials to respect religious freedom. Officials from the U.S. Government 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. The United States arranged for representatives of several traditional and non-traditional faiths to participate in an IVP to the United States in March 2004.

The Embassy closely monitored incidents of anti-Semitism that occurred throughout Belarus. Officials from the U.S. Government, including the Ambassador, regularly raised with the Government of Belarus the concerns of international Jewish groups over the expansion of a sports stadium built on a Jewish cemetery in Grodno. Embassy officers, again including the Ambassador, visited the cemetery several times throughout the year. These actions helped lead to an agreement between the Government and the local Jewish community on the appropriate treatment of unearthened remains.

In response to workers' rights violations, the United States ended Belarus' trade benefits in 2000 under the Generalized System of Preferences, supported the ILO CoI in 2003 and continued to press the Government to heed the CoI's recommendations. Officials from the U.S. Government maintained close contact with local independent labor leaders and the ILO. The United States continued to support ILO efforts to promote workers' rights and independent trade unions in Belarus, despite the Government's refusal to register a U.S.-funded ILO project in 2003. Officials from the U.S. Government continued to meet with and support Belarus' independent trade unions.

The United States worked closely with the International Office for Migration's Minsk office and local organizations to monitor the Government's anti-trafficking efforts. The Chairperson of the Young Women's Christian Association, a prominent anti-trafficking advocate, participated in an IVP in the United States. The United States funded two projects to raise public

awareness and protect trafficking victims, including a women's economic empowerment project to combat trafficking in persons.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

The 1995 General Framework Agreement for Peace, the Dayton Accords, created the independent state of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Agreement also created two multi-ethnic constituent entities within the state: The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (the Federation) and the Republika Srpska, 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 some improvements in a few areas, serious problems remained. Police continued to abuse and physically mistreat detainees and other citizens; however, police accountability for individual abuses improved. Overcrowding and antiquated facilities continued to be a problem in prisons. Infringement of privacy rights occurred, with minority returnees targeted in particular. The judiciary in both entities remained subject to influence by dominant political parties and the executive branch. Enforcement of judicial decisions by local authorities improved during the year, although obstacles remained. Pressure and harassment of media by authorities and dominant political parties continued. Both entity Governments and private groups continued to restrict religious practice by minorities; religious discrimination remained a problem.

The rate of returns of refugees and displaced persons declined during the year. The security situation in sensitive return areas and police responsiveness to incidents targeting minority returnees did not improve. The Republika Srpska continued its de facto refusal to take action against any Serbs indicted by the U.N. International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY); the Federation generally cooperated with the ICTY, although it did not facilitate any new transfers. Non-compliance with ICTY obligations continued

to undermine the rule of law in the country. Isolated instances of political, ethnic, or religious violence continued. Discrimination against ethnic minorities continued. The political leadership at all levels continued to obstruct minority returns in certain localities. Trafficking in persons (TIP) was a serious problem, which the Government took considerable steps to address.

The U.S. strategy for promoting democracy and human rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina focused on building democratic institutions, 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 discrimination against vulnerable groups in Bosnian society, including minority returnees.

At the municipal level, U.S. programs were aimed at making local governments more efficient and accountable. A joint civil society-Embassy lobbying effort led to a constitutional amendment allowing direct election of mayors. Through direct municipal elections in October 2004, citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina were able to better express their preferences and priorities by voting for individuals rather than party lists. The United States funded the creation of five new municipal “one-stop shops” in northern Bosnia, which enabled citizens and businesses to receive municipal permits up to 70 percent faster, while simultaneously reducing corruption and discrimination against ethnic minorities. The joint U.S.-Swedish Governance Accountability Project (GAP) began operations in 2004. GAP aims to substantially improve the service and financial management profiles of 40 municipalities and to create an environment in which these municipalities have the resources and autonomy to respond effectively to citizens’ needs.

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 four target municipalities to amend their statutes and rules of procedure, allowing for increased public participation in decision-making.

Development of civil society and increased cooperation between non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the Government, especially local governments, remained a U.S. priority in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Democracy Network, a U.S.-funded civil society program, improved the institutional capacity of more than 150 local NGOs, implemented 46 advocacy campaigns and increased the number of consultations between government officials and civil society on local problems and policy issues. 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 between NGOs, the media, the Government and the private sector. United States-funded advocacy training was also critical for assisting NGOs in presenting their concerns to local government for the first time.

The United States also promoted civil society through diverse educational initiatives. The U.S.-funded Civitas civic education project developed a democracy and human rights course that is now taught in every secondary school in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The United States developed a pilot program to teach democracy and human rights in Islamic faculties and madrassas (Muslim secondary schools). The Parent-School Partnership program established a network of local associations that brings together parents, teachers and school administrators to address issues of common concern. The U.S.-funded Parliamentary Internship Program gave talented young Bosnians the opportunity to serve as interns in Bosnia and Herzegovina’s state and entity-level parliaments, gaining valuable leadership skills and work experience.

The United States continued to promote the development of an independent and professional media. Through two separate media projects, the United States provided training and technical assistance in newsroom management, business development, independent domestic production, and legal, regulatory and policy issues. These projects funded the creation of a permanent local organization dedicated to promoting high-quality investigative journalism in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The United States funded a U.S. media advi-

sor to help strengthen the fledgling Communications Regulatory Agency. The Embassy also sponsored a series of media events designed to promote public awareness of the Government's new Law on Freedom of Access to Information and a new law on defamation.

To promote judicial reform and the rule of law, the United States supported programs by the U.S. Justice Department's Office of Overseas Prosecution Development and Training (OPDAT), in close collaboration with the International Criminal Investigative Training and Assistance Program (ICITAP). These organizations implemented programs on legislative court system and police reform, procedures for reappointing and vetting judges and prosecutors, and criminal justice system personnel training. These programs invigorated the investigation and prosecution of serious crimes, helped reduce human rights abuses by security forces and ensured respect for individual constitutional rights within the criminal justice system. United States-funded OPDAT provided training for more than 1,500 judges and prosecutors on the new Criminal Procedure Code, which was adopted in 2003. In addition, ICITAP conducted similar training for police, while OPDAT began training Bosnian prosecutors, judges and defense attorneys who will be respon-

sible for trying war crimes cases in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Officials for ICITAP worked extensively to improve the police Professional Standards Units, whose investigations of allegations of police misconduct and abuse increase police accountability for human rights violations.

In order to better target financial crime, ICITAP and OPDAT trained prosecutors, judges, investigators, and police, and advised the relevant authorities on establishing the Financial Intelligence Unit of the State Investigation and Protection Agency and on creating asset seizure and management units within the State Prosecutor's Office, the State Court Police and the state-level Ministry of Justice. The United States also supported the establishment of the Special Department for Organized Crime within the State Court and State Prosecutor's Office.

The United States committed funds for the creation of the Special Chamber for War Crimes and War Crimes Registry within the country's State Court and State Prosecutor's Office. This Chamber, which will operate until 2010, will help Bosnia develop the domestic capacity to try war crimes cases, including those transferred from the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. After 2010, any remaining cases will

Bosnia

Young boy stands beside modern farm equipment donated by UMCOR to support civil society.



UMCOR Photo

be tried by the country's State Court. The United States continued to work closely with Bosnian and international authorities to ensure that the War Crimes Chamber is capable of fulfilling its mandate.

The U.S.-funded Justice Sector Development Program (JSDP) began operations in 2004 to improve the efficiency, transparency, and fairness of Bosnia and Herzegovina's justice system by providing expert assistance to the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council, which is charged with managing Bosnia's judicial system. The JSDP also improved Bosnia and Herzegovina's 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 rule of law training programs for lawyers on alternative dispute resolution in accordance with the recently adopted Mediation Law. Proper use of mediation as an alternative to litigation should significantly ease the backlog within the country's court system.

In addition, under the U.S.-funded Expanded International Military Education and Training program, a mobile training team held a seminar for government officials at the Ministry of Defense. The seminar covered civilian control of the military and human rights considerations for personnel systems. Bosnian military and civilian officials also traveled to the United States to attend training courses on civilian control and oversight of the military. These programs underscored the military's democratic role in Western societies and are guiding defense reforms in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The United States remained resolute in supporting efforts leading to truth, reconciliation and social justice in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP), financed in part by the United States, generated 2,588 DNA matches during 2004, which may lead to the identification of 1,754 individuals who were reported missing during the 1992-1995

conflict. ICMP also conducted a drive to collect blood samples from surviving relatives of missing persons in order to assist with future identification efforts. The ICMP assisted Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities in performing 454 exhumations leading to the recovery of the remains of 997 individuals and partial remains of 767 individuals in 2004. 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 1,304 of the estimated 7,800 victims of the Srebrenica massacre have been interred.

Other U.S.-backed projects have aided minorities, women, children, and persons with disabilities. The United States donated approximately 350,000 tons of agricultural commodities to local implementing partners, who used the proceeds from the sale of these commodities to finance civil society development initiatives that promoted respect for the rights of women, children, ethnic minorities and persons with disabilities. Minority returnees availed themselves of U.S.-funded income generation grants, micro-credit loans and agriculture development technical assistance. The United States provided additional funds to residents of collective centers to help facilitate their permanent return to their prewar communities. In 2004, the United States also completed 18 infrastructure reconstruction projects that benefited 1,380 returnee families and 500 public school students.

In 2004, U.S. officials raised human rights issues during their trips to Bosnia and Herzegovina. In August 2004, Secretary of State Powell visited Bosnia and reiterated that Bosnia's integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions and further development as an independent, democratic state hinges on Bosnia and Herzegovina's efforts to promote human rights and democracy. Other high-level U.S. visitors included Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs Lincoln Bloomfield, who emphasized the need for respect for human rights in the defense reform process. The Ambassador traveled extensively within Bosnia and Herzegovina and continued to raise key human rights issues such as trafficking and minor-

ity returns with senior Bosnian officials. Presidency member Sulejman Tihic, Council of Ministers Chairman Adnan Terzic, Minister of Defense Nikola Radovanovic and Republika Srpska Prime Minister Dragan Mikerevic also visited Washington D.C., where senior U.S. officials stressed the importance of human rights and democracy.

Other U.S. initiatives focused on assisting the Bosnia and Herzegovina Government in reducing discrimination based on gender, race/ethnicity, disability, and religion. For example, three local NGOs received grants to promote awareness about the rights of people with disabilities and to campaign for increased access to public buildings and the elimination of discrimination against the disabled in the provision of health care and other social benefits, including access to public education. Another program focused on empowering women in rural areas, with a particular focus on income generation, small business ownership and assistance to single mothers. The United States also supported the work of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Inter-Religious Council to promote inter-religious dialogue and tolerance and to encourage religious communities to play a constructive role in the development of Bosnian civil society.

With U.S. assistance, government authorities took important steps against trafficking in persons (TIP). U.S.-funded programs addressed victim protection, prosecution, and prevention through public awareness. The United States supported the provision of shelter and accommodation, psychological counseling and health care to foreign victims of trafficking in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and also funded a nationwide anti-trafficking awareness campaign. This campaign was the first to target Bosnian men as part of its audience, addressing the negative consequences of contributing to the exploitation of trafficking victims. OPDAT and ICITAP continued to work with the state-level Anti-Trafficking Strike Force, which includes prosecutors, police investigators, border service agents, tax administration officials and finance police from around the country. The Strike Force effectively built complex cases against high-level organized crime figures involved in traffick-

ing and other criminal enterprises, and prosecutors were able to secure convictions and lengthy sentences. The United States continued to work closely with the Government's National Anti-Trafficking Coordinator and the NGO community to develop and update Bosnia and Herzegovina's National Action Plan and anti-TIP strategy for 2005 through 2007.

Georgia

The Georgian Government's human rights record remained poor despite improvements following the November 2003 Rose Revolution. Democratic institutions and processes are evolving but not yet established. Recent elections have made significant progress toward meeting international standards although there were several irregularities. There were concerns about the substance of the new Constitution and the process by which it was amended in February 2004. There were some restrictions on freedom of assembly through September 2004. While many commentators have lauded the Government's anti-corruption campaign, others have worried that at times the Government has pushed the borders of the rule of law. Specifically, during the arrest and detention of former government officials and businessman who were believed to have prospered under the previous regime, the Government has repeatedly used pretrial detention as a form of pressure and a bargaining tactic to induce suspects to settle outside of court. There were lengthy delays in trials and prolonged pretrial detention remained a problem. The judicial system continued to lack true independence and the executive branch and prosecutors' offices continued to exert undue influence on judges.

Furthermore, while reform of the traffic police was welcomed, abuses by other law enforcement agencies continued. Although the Government has taken some action against the abuse of detainees and the planting of evidence by law enforcement officers, these problems continued to be widespread, especially in regions outside Tbilisi. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) blamed some deaths in custody on physical abuse, torture, or poor prison conditions. Violence against religious minorities

significantly diminished in 2004. The Georgian Government, however, does little to promote religious tolerance. The press generally was free, however, journalists practiced increased self-censorship, particularly in reporting on issues unfavorable to the Government. Trafficking in persons (TIP) remains a problem.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy focuses on the promotion of democratic institutions and processes, the development of a vibrant civil society, fundamental freedoms, the rule of law, human rights, and anti-TIP measures.

United States officials regularly highlighted publicly and privately the need for improvements in human rights conditions. The Ambassador and other embassy officers worked privately with Georgian officials, NGOs and other domestic and international organizations to identify and highlight areas of particular concern and encourage reform. The Ambassador was especially active in encouraging the Government to curtail police abuse of Gia Jokhtaberidze, former President Shevardnadze's son-in-law, who was held in pre-trial detention for tax evasion, and of former General Gia Vashakidze, who was held on charges of kidnapping and during his arrest was severely beaten and tortured. Secretary of State Powell, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs A. Elizabeth Jones, Members of Congress and Congressional staff reinforced these and other efforts to achieve U.S. objectives in Georgia in 2004 by their visits and public and private statements.

To promote democratic institutions and processes, the United States provided assistance for the March parliamentary elections, including training for election commission members, a get-out-the-vote campaign, exit polling and voter marking. This assistance helped to produce elections that the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) considered to be closer to meeting international standards than any other elections held in Georgia in the last 15 years, although irregularities were noted. The United States provided the Government with assistance to promote better governance practices and leadership skills for the Georgian Parliament. The United States also pro-

vided direct assistance to the executive branch offices of the president and prime minister. To strengthen political pluralism, the United States funded programs to promote regional and national political party development. To strengthen local governance, the United States provided assistance to advance fiscal decentralization.

To encourage a vibrant civil society, the United States funded programs to promote the financial sustainability of Georgia's non-governmental organization (NGO) community. The United States also provided assistance to women leaders throughout the country to encourage and prepare them to run for elected office and positions within their political parties, as well as provide them with general leadership skills to maximize their current leadership roles in their communities.

United States civic education programs in Georgia supported the development of innovative extra-curricular teaching in civic values and responsibilities for Georgia's youth. Students in ethnic-Armenian areas in the Samtskhe-Javakheti region were encouraged to actively participate in their communities through volunteer actions and joint initiatives with other schools. A new youth program was launched to reach out to areas populated primarily by ethnic Armenians and Azeris, providing quality academic and social activities for at-risk youth, improving their understanding of other ethnic groups and seeking to improve school attendance and overall academic accomplishment.

United States assistance was crucial in the adoption of the Law on Freedom of Expression. The United States funded several media development programs in Georgia aimed at raising the professional level of independent media. The United States sponsored a U.S. media development professional to train local independent media company managers and reporters. The United States also dedicated several International Visitors Programs (IVP) to journalism. United States Embassy Democracy Commission Grants were awarded to 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. Training courses and working tours fund-

ed by the United States helped journalists learn the values and principles of freedom of the press as well as standards of western journalism.

The United States supported a rule of law program that increased public awareness of legal rights and assisted in the reform of the legal system. United States Department of Justice advisors were closely involved in the ongoing rewriting of Georgia's Criminal Procedural Code to meet international human rights standards. Other U.S.-sponsored activities focused on court structure reform, judicial self-advocacy and judicial independence. The rule of law program also 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 new Georgian Government's willingness to tackle corruption and human rights issues within the framework of law enforcement, in 2004 the United States began several new programs with the Ministry of Interior and established a permanent representative of the State Department's International Narcotics and Law Enforcement office at the U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi to administer these programs. One program funded the development of police training curriculum for entry- and advanced-level officers to meet international standards, including in areas of human rights. Another program sought to establish a national central forensic lab to improve Georgian law enforcement officers' poor forensic capabilities, one known cause of police torture of detainees.

To encourage respect for minorities and women, the U.S. Embassy Democracy Commission Grant program awarded money for the establishment of an ethnic minority NGO center in southern Georgia. This Center organized Georgian language and computer courses and civic education workshops for more than 100 young Azeri activists. The center raised civic awareness of local Azeris, especially women and youth, and encouraged them to tap into the social and political life of the region. The Embassy also organized an individual IVP on adoption issues for a representative of the Ministry of Education. This U.S.-based program focused on systems and approach-

es to promote child welfare and adoption service programs and demonstrated how children's rights are protected through health and welfare laws at local and national levels.

The United States has historically been in the forefront of efforts on religious freedom issues to bring perpetrators of religiously motivated violence in Georgia to justice. Embassy officials attended the trial of defrocked Orthodox Priest Father Basili Mkalavishvili. Although there has been a significant decline in religious violence following the arrest of Mkalavishvili, restrictions on religious freedom persist, prompting continued U.S. engagement on the issue. United States officials attended several governmental and non-governmental conferences on religious freedom and legislation concerning religion. Embassy officers continued to push for legislation allowing for the registration of religious groups.

To promote labor rights, the United States sponsored training by a labor specialist for union leaders. As a result of this training, a youth branch was established in Georgia's Trade Unions Association (GTUA), whose leader became the deputy chairperson of the GTUA.

The United States helped the Government develop a national strategy to combat TIP. The project assisted the Government: to revise and implement its National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons; to respond more effectively to institutional weaknesses and corruption, which hindered the previous Government's anti-TIP efforts; to adopt anti-TIP legislation; and, to implement measures to inform and educate the public, including potential victims. An IVP introduced three Georgian participants to U.S. strategies to combat TIP. The program examined the patterns and types of TIP and explored the social, political and economic factors that contribute to TIP. The visitors also learned about cooperation between governmental and non-governmental organizations in combating TIP. The United States also sponsored anti-TIP workshops for journalists from Georgia and Azerbaijan. The workshops aimed at improving the media coverage of TIP. The program brought together 24 journalists in each country for several workshops. Participants learned how to best

leverage their reporting to combat TIP and were provided an opportunity to develop contacts with local and international specialists.

The U.S. Embassy provided a training and consultation program for the General Procurator. One of the goals of this program was to assist in the development of better prosecutorial measures for combating TIP. As a result of these efforts, law enforcement officers have recently detained several suspects and trials have commenced. The Ministry of Security also used mass media to broadcast appeals to victims of TIP with a guarantee that they would be protected from prosecution if they exposed the organizers of TIP.

Kazakhstan

The Government's human rights record remained poor, and the Government continued to commit numerous abuses. The Constitution of Kazakhstan concentrates power in the presidency, permitting the president to control the legislature and judiciary, as well as regional and local governments. President Nursultan Nazarbayev was elected to a 7-year term in a 1999 election that fell far short of international standards. Parliamentary elections in September were in some respects an improvement over the previous elections; however, they continued to fall short of international standards. The Government severely limited citizens' right to change their government and democratic institutions remained weak. The Government continued to restrict freedom of the press, and there were instances of Government harassment of independent media. The Government continued to use arbitrary arrest and detention and selectively prosecute political opponents. Prolonged detention was a problem.

Throughout 2004, the U.S. human rights and democracy strategy sought to build on the positive steps made in 2003 with special emphasis on preparations for the September parliamentary elections. The United States efforts were focused on building a legal environment and supporting civil society development, which would help create an environment for elections that meet international standards.

A key diplomatic component of the U.S. strategy emphasized that bilateral cooperation on economic and security issues is a complement, not a substitute, for meaningful progress on human rights and democracy. The United States also continued to encourage the Government of Kazakhstan to live up to its Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) commitments to support human rights and promote democracy, a necessary condition for the United States to support Kazakhstan's bid for the 2009 OSCE Chair-in-Office position. The United States remains committed to non-partisan promotion of political pluralism and governance that reflects the political will of its citizens, and engaged with the Government of Kazakhstan at every level to reiterate that commitment.

Improving electoral processes was a main focus of U.S. democracy promotion efforts this year. The United States vigorously urged the Government of Kazakhstan to draft an election law that would meet international standards. Prior to the elections, Kazakhstan adopted and passed an elections law that, while not fully meeting international standards, was an improvement over existing legislation. While the OSCE ultimately determined that the elections fell short of international standards, U.S. diplomatic efforts and assistance contributed to a more open pre-election environment.

Then-Deputy Secretary Armitage, the Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs, the Ambassador, and other U.S. Mission members strongly advocated for the registration of opposition political party Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan (DCK), which was ultimately registered in time to participate in the elections. However, at year's end, DCK faced a legal action to "dissolve" the party based on a statement adopted at its December party congress that rejected the Government's legitimacy and called for civil disobedience. The Ambassador raised the case with a range of senior Kazakhstani officials and encouraged an approach that would permit the party to continue to function. The Deputy Assistant Secretary for Europe and Eurasia also raised the DCK issue with Kazakhstan's Ambassador in December.

In tandem with diplomatic engagement, the United States funded a range of activities in support of human rights and democratic reform. During the run up to the September parliamentary elections, the U.S. Government provided non-partisan, capacity-building support to improve political party, civil society, and independent media participation in the electoral process. United States officials, including more than half of the Embassy's officers, volunteered for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) election observation mission. Two U.S. implementing partners, the International Republican Institute (IRI) and the National Democratic Institute (NDI), conducted more than 58 training sessions across Kazakhstan, covering all registered political parties. A U.S.-funded grant enabled a local non-governmental organization (NGO) to conduct a nationwide voter exit poll. Assisted by another U.S.-funded grant, a local NGO prepared a parallel vote tabulation report comparing local precincts' election night protocols to the Central Election Commission's (CEC) final vote count. The report highlighted serious irregularities in the CEC's vote tabulation, providing quantitative evidence to support qualitative concerns expressed in the OSCE/ODIHR field mission's final elections report.

In addition to supporting political party development and transparency in the electoral process, the United States promoted democratic progress by providing funding to NGOs engaged in non-partisan voter outreach and education. United States assistance funded a project focusing on youth voters run by a Kazakhstani NGO; other U.S. assistance funds underwrote a "Youth in Elections" national debate tournament. The United States managed a small grants fund in which 31 grants were awarded to 25 NGOs and six media outlets, with most grants focusing on voter information campaigns and voters' rights. United States grant programs also enabled six independent stations to produce election-focused talk shows and debate programs. Through USAID, the United States funded a contest eliciting voter education Public Service Announcements (PSAs) resulting in rebroadcast of six PSAs and seven radio spots by 16 television and 17 radio stations.

Freedom of media was also a serious concern for the United States in its effort to promote democracy in Kazakhstan. For example, the United States strongly advocated for the rejection of a flawed media law that would have impeded freedom of speech, in particular campaign reporting, and regularly raised concern over a series of legal actions aimed at independent media. After much public debate and criticism of the media law, President Nazarbayev vetoed the legislation. The American Bar Association's Central European and Eurasia Law Initiative (ABA/CEELI), a U.S. implementing partner, began a new media defense project that provided an analysis of the law's shortcomings. The project also provided training to lawyers defending journalists and media outlets in court. United States advocacy efforts were complemented by several U.S.-funded programs to expand freedom of the media. The United States funded the NGO Internews to conduct programs to strengthen independent media through training and technical assistance. A new program was started to create an on-line news agency to enable media outlets to share news across the country. With funding from the United States, the Institute for War and Peace Reporting conducted training on human rights reporting and published articles on-line.

Support for the rule of law remained a fundamental goal of U.S.-funded training programs for NGOs and Kazakhstani officials. Lawyers provided 387 consultations to civil society organizations during the year through a variety of U.S.-funded programs. Strengthening the skills of the next generation of Kazakhstani attorneys, a U.S.-funded pro-bono tax clinic at Turan University trained 20 students in practical skills and provided aid to 240 indigent clients. This year's Jessup International Moot Court Competition, which provides an opportunity for law students to practice and develop their written and oral advocacy skills and to learn about trial tactics and substantive areas of international law, drew a record-breaking 126 participants. The United States, through a grant to ABA/CEELI, also completed the first Judicial Reform Index. This index gives a comprehensive overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the current legal system, providing a roadmap for future advocacy and capacity building.

Assistance and training for NGOs to promote rule of law was complemented by U.S.-funded professional skills training for Kazakhstani law enforcement. The Embassy organized professional development seminars for the press-relations officers of local prosecutors' offices to encourage effective publicity of anti-trafficking in persons (TIP) efforts and better relations with media outlets. The Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement conducted educational seminars for policemen and local government authorities that touched on several human rights issues, most notably combating TIP, promotion of the rule of law through introduction of a jury system, and training that focused on evidence-based, versus "confession-based," crime investigation techniques. Moving away from "confession-based" criminal investigations will serve the dual purpose of sharpening law enforcement investigative accuracy while reducing reliance on a system that promotes abuse of detainees.

As part of the U.S. strategy to promote human rights, the country's premier human rights NGO, Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law (KIBHR), was awarded one of ten grants given by the Department of State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor for a project to support human rights and foster civil society. The KIBHR program trained 20 human rights defenders in international legal standards, enforcement mechanisms, networking, advocacy, and prison monitoring. Another U.S.-funded program enabled KIBHR to expand its network to six more regional centers, giving the NGO coverage throughout Kazakhstan.

The United States continued to encourage the Government of Kazakhstan to find a just resolution in the case of DCK leader Galymzham Zhakiyanov, convicted in 2002 on what appeared to be politically motivated charges. Zhakiyanov was ultimately moved from a "strict regime" prison to a minimum security settlement colony with greater freedom of movement and interaction. The United States also advocated for due process for independent journalist Sergey Duvanov, who was convicted on what observers considered politically-motivated charges at a trial

marked by serious procedural irregularities. On August 17, he was conditionally released from custody under parole status.

To promote civic development, numerous grants were awarded to NGO programs focused on youth, women, the elderly, and the disabled. A local NGO began a new program with U.S. funding to develop a nation-wide network of women leaders to increase participation of women in grassroots governance. A new civic advocacy component was added to USAID's civil society program, enabling more resources to be devoted to advocacy campaigns, skills, and membership-based NGOs. The Embassy's Democracy Commission supported several projects, including projects focused on professional development for NGO associations and for local government officials; improving cooperation between NGOs and the Government; and, providing education to officials and legal support to prisoners to discourage and reduce incidents of prisoner abuse. International Visitors Programs sent small groups of Kazakhstani citizens to the United States to meet with subject matter experts. Topics of 2004 programs included TIP, independent media, and religious diversity.

The Government's record on freedom of religion is exemplary, but experts fear that the proposed Law on Extremism may undercut that positive development. The Ambassador and Embassy officers remained heavily engaged in dialogue with the Government to encourage that this legislation be drafted through a transparent legislative drafting process and that it reflect Kazakhstan's international commitments to respect individuals' rights to peaceful expression of religion. A representative of the U.S. Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom's office visited the country and met with Government officials to express concern over the draft Law on Extremism. During a visit to Astana in October 2004, the then-Deputy Secretary and the Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs raised concerns about the Law on Extremism at the highest levels of the Government.

Kyrgyz Republic

During 2004, the Kyrgyz Government's human rights record remained poor, although there were improvements in some areas. Although the 1993 Constitution defines the Kyrgyz Republic as a democratic republic, President Askar Akayev continued to dominate the Government. The Government limited citizens' right to change their government. While irregularities marred balloting in some districts during nationwide local elections in October, they took place generally without government interference and opposition candidates and parties were allowed to participate freely in the political process. Members of the security forces at times beat and otherwise mistreated persons. Prison conditions remained very poor, but improved slightly during the year. Abuse by police remained a problem, and numerous law enforcement authorities were dismissed or prosecuted for abuses or misconduct. There were cases of arbitrary arrest or detention. Executive branch domination of the judiciary as well as corruption limited citizens' right to due process. The Government occasionally restricted freedom of speech and of the press, and individuals and companies close to the Government used financial means to control numerous media outlets. The Government used bureaucratic means to harass and pressure some independent media as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The government-appointed Ombudsmans Office actively worked to advocate individual rights.

With parliamentary and presidential elections scheduled for 2005, the U.S. strategy to promote democracy and human rights, including religious freedom, was increasingly focused on creating a conducive environment for transparent, free and fair elections by strengthening democratic institutions, increasing observance of human rights, supporting civil society organizations and promoting the development of independent media. In 2004, U.S. democracy assistance programs in the Kyrgyz Republic provided technical assistance and grants in the areas of civil society, rule of law and media to strengthen democratic practices among citizens and institutions.

To promote democracy, the United States maintained close contact with independent journalists, human rights activists and opposition politicians while encouraging dialogue between the Government, the opposition and civil society. The Ambassador and visiting senior U.S. officials met frequently with reform-minded parliamentarians and human rights activists to solicit their views. During a July 2004 visit to Bishkek, then-Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Beth Jones and the Ambassador held discussions with local NGOs and civil society representatives. They met with Kyrgyz President Askar Akayev and other senior officials to discuss concerns about human rights issues and the 2005 elections. In May and November of 2004, high-level U.S. officials discussed with Foreign Minister Askar Aitmatov and President Akayev the need for continued progress in democratization in order to broaden U.S.-Kyrgyz bilateral relations.

After consulting closely with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and NGOs, President Akayev in January signed into law a new election code. While some of the changes in the new law mark significant progress, the OSCE determined it did not meet international standards due to provisions that could be used to limit civil and political rights. However, local elections held in October 2004, the first test of the new code, were widely regarded as the most open and transparent in the history of Kyrgyzstan. The elections also revealed a real need for more training for election officials and observers. Throughout 2004, U.S. officials met extensively with legislators as well as senior government officials, including President Akayev, urging them to adhere to international standards in the coming parliamentary and presidential elections. President Akayev has given his pledge to step down from the presidency and to ensure a peaceful transition.

Throughout 2004, the United States continued to work closely with other members of the international community to promote democratic reform. In September the United States agreed to fund the entire cost of an OSCE proposal to promote free and fair elections in Kyrgyzstan in 2005. Embassy officials met frequently with representatives of

other governments and international organizations to coordinate election-related efforts and share information.

United States-funded NGOs were very active in election-related programs. The International Republican Institute (IRI) used U.S. funding to offer development assistance to all political parties in order to increase citizen participation in the political process. IRI also collaborated with IFES and the Central Election Commission (CEC) to conduct intensive polling station worker training for 400 CEC members in 50 Bishkek electoral districts. For this, IRI and IFES wrote a CEC manual based on a chronological approach, starting with procedures before election day, on election day, and post election day. These were the only CEC trainings for the local elections countrywide. The National Democratic Institute (NDI) used U.S. funding to support a local NGO to conduct a parallel vote tabulation for October's local elections. The National Democratic Institute also provided political party training and technical development assistance. During 2004, the United States also provided small grants to local NGOs in support of non-partisan election-related programs. Both the parliament and President approved in October amendments to the election code allowing for the use of indelible ink in future elections, an important tool in preventing election fraud. For 2005 parliamentary and presidential elections, the United States will pay for the cost of procuring the ink and training election officials in its use.

Freedom of media also remains a serious concern. The U.S.-funded independent printing press implemented by Freedom House, the first of its kind in the Kyrgyz Republic, continued to operate successfully and attract customers from around Kyrgyzstan as well as neighboring countries. By the end of 2004, the press was printing more than 70 independent and government-owned newspapers. Internews, a U.S. implementing partner, continued a program to support independent print and broadcast media by conducting training seminars, providing technical and legal assistance, and producing innovative news programs for exchange between independent outlets around the country and region. The Institute for War and Peace Reporting continued its program of training

journalists on expanded human rights reporting and facilitating dialogue between civil society and media outlets to address human rights and democracy issues. With U.S. funding, the International Research and Exchanges Board launched the Jalalabad Media Resource Center to provide services to the independent media sector, including legal assistance, group training, individualized consulting, and advocacy support. The Center also conducts regular community events, such as roundtables with regional journalism students, local officers, and NGO and mass media representatives.

The United States was highly engaged on rule of law issues, such as arbitrary arrest and excessive use of force. United States officials continued to raise with senior Kyrgyz officials the need for due process in the case of imprisoned opposition leader Felix Kulov. In addition, the Ambassador met with senior Kyrgyz officials and urged them to vigorously investigate the disappearance of well-known opposition figure Tursunbek Akunov in November.

To improve rule of law, the United States funded a "Judicial Watchdog Project", implemented by a local NGO. The goal of the project is to promote greater transparency and fairness throughout the judicial system by placing monitors in courtrooms. The program has already shown results; for example, complaints made about a particular judge's corruption and incompetence led to a government investigation of that judge, who was later dismissed. The United States also signed a memorandum of understanding with the Supreme Court of Kyrgyzstan to facilitate training of judges and improve access to judicial opinions, to be implemented by U.S. grantee ARD-Checchi. The United States also continued its work with the OSCE on an OSCE-sponsored community policing project aimed at improving community-police relations and providing training to Kyrgyz law enforcement agencies on proper crowd control tactics.

A U.S.-funded program implemented by Freedom House to support human rights defenders worked closely with grassroots activists and youth leaders on training in human rights monitoring and advocacy. United States implementing partners also

trained citizens on techniques for organizing advocacy campaigns to achieve sustainable solutions to local and national problems. Local NGOs supported by U.S. programs successfully lobbied for changes to the law on public meetings, which was widely regarded as vague and too restrictive. In October of 2004, the Constitutional Court overturned three articles of the law that were not in compliance with the Constitution.

The number of high schools using a civics textbook developed by U.S. implementing partner IFES increased to 669 from 324 the year before, reaching almost 40,000 students across the country. United States implementing partners worked with reform-minded parliamentarians and promoted public hearings as a way to elicit citizens' views on new legislation. A growing network of U.S.-funded Information Centers for Democracy implemented by NDI provided citizens with access to independent media and infrastructure to host "town-hall" meetings to discuss current political issues and distributed daily "news digests". In November, the Ambassador and a senior aide to President Akayev visited one of the Information Centers, where they met with Center staff and representatives of NGOs. The Information Centers for Democracy continue to provide citizens with the knowledge and skills to design and implement responses to challenging local and national policy issues.

The United States also used public diplomacy funds to sponsor International Visitors Programs (IVP) focused on the issues of political party operations, religious tolerance, student ethics, law enforcement and security, and promoting independent media. The programs brought together individuals representing the Government, NGOs, religious communities and academia to foster cooperation between these groups.

The U.S.-sponsored Democracy Commission funded 53 grants to local NGOs in support of independent media outlets, information dissemination, combating trafficking in persons (TIP), journalism training, academic integrity, human rights, democracy, and civic and legal education. For example, one Democracy Commission grantee organized courses on multicultural tolerance, comparative

religious studies and prevention of radical Islam at the Islamic University of the Kyrgyz Republic. Other programs included a leadership summer camp for high school students from across the country. Also, 14 student groups and four teacher groups at 14 Kyrgyz universities received grants to combat corruption within the education system.

The United States maintained regular contacts with representatives of various religious communities, and several Kyrgyz religious leaders visited the United States on an IVP. The Ambassador hosted an annual Iftaar dinner for Muslim leaders and addressed a crowd of worshipers in the Bishkek main square on the occasion of Kurman Ait, marking the end of Ramadan. Religious leaders in the cities of Osh, Jalalabad, and Karakol visited numerous U.S.-funded projects as part of a new USAID outreach effort.

On numerous occasions, U.S. officials urged the Kyrgyz Republic to employ resources more effectively to combat TIP. In partial response to U.S. requests, the Kyrgyz Republic began funding for staff members of the Secretariat of the National Council to Combat Trafficking and provided space in Bishkek free of charge for the country's first shelter for trafficking victims. These efforts also contributed to an increase in the number of prosecutions for trafficking and associated crimes in 2004. Among U.S.-funded projects to combat TIP, the United States started a new two-year program to strengthen the capacity of local NGOs to conduct public information campaigns and provide assistance to victims.

Macedonia

Macedonia is a multiparty parliamentary democracy. The current multi-ethnic coalition Government, led by Prime Minister Vlado Buckovski of the ethnic Macedonian Social Democratic Union of Macedonia, came to power in September 2002 in elections deemed free and fair by international observers. After former President Boris Trajkovski died in an airplane crash in February 2004, then-Prime Minister Branko Crvenkovski was elected president in April in an election generally considered free and

fair. A divisive national referendum challenging new municipal-redistricting laws failed due to low voter turnout in November, and local elections on the basis of newly formed, ethnically diverse municipalities are scheduled for March 2005.

The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, there were problems in some areas. Law enforcement officers occasionally beat suspects, particularly during initial arrest and detention. In contrast with previous years, arbitrary arrest and prolonged pretrial detention occurred infrequently. The Government showed progress on investigating allegations of human rights abuses. The judiciary, on some occasions, did not effectively investigate or prosecute state agents and civilians for alleged human rights abuses. Implementation of an amnesty law for former 2001 combatants not accused of war crimes was completed by year's end. The Government continued to cooperate with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in investigating alleged war crimes cases. Violence and discrimination against women (particularly in the Roma and Albanian communities) remained problems, as did societal discrimination against minorities, including Roma, ethnic Albanians and ethnic Turks. Trafficking in persons (TIP) was a problem that the Government continued to combat aggressively. The Constitution provides for an independent judiciary; however corruption, coercion and political influence at times limited its ability to function efficiently.

United States support for democracy and human rights in Macedonia has played a crucial role in helping the country transition from an unstable, ethnically divided society in the aftermath of the 2001 conflict to an aspiring EU NATO candidate today.

The 2004-2005 U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Macedonia focused on encouraging the Government to pass the remaining legislation mandated by the Framework Agreement (FWA), the agreement that ended the 2001 conflict, ensure its efficient implementation, and address critical judicial and rule of law shortcomings.

The United States provided significant financial support in fiscal year 2004 to support FWA-mandated decentralization efforts in Macedonia, and led donor coordination efforts. The U.S.-funded Make Decentralization Work program assisted municipalities in developing the capacity to decentralize and increase citizen participation in public decision-making successfully.

The United States actively continued to monitor and encourage all levels of government to implement the FWA. Macedonia's ethnic minorities enjoyed the FWA's positive impact in 2004, when they applied for the first time for dual-language passports, studied at the state-supported, Albanian-language Tetovo University and saw mixed-ethnic police patrols ensuring the safety of Macedonia's streets and borders. Unequivocal U.S. support for the FWA process helped encourage Macedonia's multiethnic coalition Government to overcome a contentious intra-coalition debate and agree on new municipal boundaries in August. United States recognition of Macedonia's constitutional name and statements by the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Defense Secretary, and the U.S. Ambassador underscoring U.S. commitment to the FWA helped reduce support for a national referendum on decentralization that could have reversed progress under the FWA.

The United States supported the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) international observer missions for the unexpected presidential election in April and for the November 7 referendum. United States Embassy staff participated as observers at polling stations throughout the country. In both cases, the presence and actions of the OSCE-led missions helped to ensure free and fair electoral processes and thereby strengthen democracy in Macedonia.

The United States funded a project to assist the Government and political parties in improving communication, strengthening and democratizing internal practices, and encouraging meaningful dialogue between party leadership and constituents. Another U.S.-funded project helped parliament and political parties become more effective and responsive to citizens by recruiting politically- and ethnically-diverse students to serve as

research assistants for members of parliament, caucuses and committees. Both projects also focused on increasing political involvement among women, youth and minority groups, including Roma.

With U.S. support, local communities fostered democratic decision-making, inter-ethnic cooperation and management skills as they planned and executed projects addressing urgent needs, including school repairs, water supply system, and other community projects. In the town of Debar, one school that benefited from the program waived fees for 32 Roma students who otherwise could not afford to attend as a show of the community's democratic commitment and project appreciation. The United States provided grants, technical assistance and training to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) focused on conflict management, community development, youth, gender and minority rights, and expanding citizen participation in decision-making at the national and local levels.

The United States frequently and directly engaged in human rights advocacy, often in coordination with other representatives of the international community. The United States and its partners from the international community continued to stress to the Government that Macedonia's NATO and EU aspirations hinge on its ability to respect international human rights and democracy standards and the rule of law, including the obligation to bring human rights abusers to justice. The United States and other members of the international community, through joint letters and in person, collectively pressed the Ministry of the Interior (MOI) to render justice for past human rights abuses.

In direct response to U.S. demarches, the Government re-opened and investigated stalled human rights abuse cases. The MOI reviewed the shortcomings of previous investigations and has launched additional, supervised investigations to bring the cases to closure. The MOI agreed to consider several murder cases from 2001 and 2002 in which police and officials of the former Government were implicated. By the end of 2004, two of these cases were satisfactorily closed, while

a third was under investigation.

On numerous occasions, the United States pressed the Government to hold accountable the perpetrators of the 2002 Rastanski Lozja incident, in which police in the former Government murdered seven South Asian itinerant workers and then portrayed them as terrorists. Constant pressure by the United States and other members of the international community stiffened the Government's resolve to bring the perpetrators to justice. In September, former Minister of Interior Boskovski, the suspected mastermind of the crime, was arrested in Croatia based on evidence submitted by the Macedonian authorities. He remains there awaiting trial. Another six former MOI officials were arrested in April in connection with the case. Trials for four of these suspects began in November and the remaining two suspects agreed to testify against their former MOI co-workers allegedly involved in the case.

In July, the U.S. Ambassador raised concerns with senior government officials about delays in serving ICTY summonses and stressed the need for the Government to ensure cooperation with the tribunal. Within a few weeks, bureaucratic bottlenecks had been removed and all summonses had been successfully delivered.

At the insistence of the U.S. Ambassador, the Minister of Defense changed the Border Brigade's Rules of Engagement to highly circumscribe the use of deadly force. Since then, no one has been killed while illegally crossing the Macedonian border.

During 2004, the United States hosted, co-organized, or participated in events to help Macedonia's judiciary attain EU standards. Significant achievements in 2004-2005 included amendments to the criminal code, an improved juvenile justice system, longer sentences for crimes against children, and an improved witness-protection law.

The U.S.-sponsored International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICI-TAP) projects promoted a community policing model, encouraging better protection of human rights and enhanced problem-solving cooperation between police and community leaders. As a

result of ICITAP's activities, the Government has incorporated internationally-accepted community policing principles into the Code of Police Ethics of the Macedonian National Police. The success of a 2003 Community Policing pilot project in the city of Kavadarci prompted the MOI to request and the United States to launch a similar ICITAP project in the capital Skopje in 2004. The MOI has mandated that ICITAP's Community Policing Curriculum, which focuses on respect for human rights, be implemented nationwide and incorporated into police academy training.

In 2004, ICITAP also continued to provide guidance to the MOI's Professional Standards Unit (PSU), which enforces rules of conduct and conducts internal investigations. With ICITAP's assistance, the PSU continued to develop the capacity to carry out independent investigations and ensure consistent adherence to human rights principles. Based on ICITAP's recommendation, a new "criminal section" was established within the PSU to investigate cases of criminal misbehavior of law enforcement officials separately from cases of administrative/disciplinary misbehavior. Provisions for increased PSU transparency and enhanced cooperation with judicial authorities and the Ombudsman's office were also put in place.

Working together with the Macedonian police, ICITAP established the Citizens' Police Academy (CPA), the first institution of its kind in the Balkans. The Citizens' Police Academy educates citizens about the nature of police work, police practices and the new community policing model being adopted in Macedonia. By facilitating communication between police and citizens, the ICITAP-supported CPA builds trust, promotes transparency and improves government protection of human rights through increased respect for the rule of law. Collectively, U.S.-funded programs helped the Macedonian police to improve their respect for human rights significantly during 2004.

Putting previous U.S.-sponsored anti-organized crime training to use, government officials in 2004 began two trans-national TIP and money-laundering investigations involving current and former Government officials. The United States is providing expert assistance in the money-laundering

investigation at the Government's request. The Southeast European Cooperation Initiative provided with U.S. funds technical assistance in support of customs and border control reform to help Macedonia fight corruption and customs crimes.

The United States awarded numerous small grants to local NGOs in support of projects promoting human rights. The U.S.-funded American Corner in Bitola, Macedonia's second largest city, regularly hosted programs to increase public awareness of human and civil rights. A second American Corner opened in Skopje in January 2005, creating further opportunities for human rights and democracy-related outreach. The United States disseminated a wide variety of materials on human rights to key representatives of Macedonian media, NGOs, and others.

The United States promotes respect for the rights of women and minorities in several ways. The U.S. Embassy hosted its annual women's event and recognized 13 women for their contributions to Macedonian society through outstanding performance in their chosen professions. Throughout the year, U.S. officials participated in roundtable discussions organized by the Project on Ethnic Relations. This dialogue between the Government, political party leaders, international community representatives, NGOs and Roma leaders, resulted in the development of a government strategy to better address the needs of Macedonia's Roma community.

To promote religious freedom, U.S. officials regularly met with Macedonian religious groups and monitored religious freedom issues. The United States consistently encouraged the Government to protect religious freedom and to find an acceptable solution to the ongoing religious dispute between the Macedonian and Serbian Orthodox Churches and their respective clergy. In October 2004, the Ambassador hosted an Iftaar dinner for leaders of Macedonia's Islamic Community (MIC). He stressed the U.S. commitment to religious freedom and tolerance and encouraged the MIC to continue playing a constructive role in the run-up to the contentious and ethnically charged referendum. Shortly afterward, the MIC issued a statement reaffirming its support for the FWA and inter-ethnic

cooperation. In November, the U.S. Ambassador pressed government officials to ensure fair treatment of a controversial Serbian Orthodox Church Bishop involved in a dispute with the Macedonian Orthodox Church. In December 2004, U.S. officials met with members of the Jewish Community of Macedonia to discuss their concerns regarding the stalled restitution of properties granted to the Jewish Holocaust Fund in Macedonia, and then highlighted these concerns in subsequent meetings with government officials. As of January 2005, sufficient property had been transferred to the Fund to enable construction of a Holocaust Memorial Center in the former Jewish quarter of Skopje.

In support of worker's rights, the United States funded a project to assist the 250,000-member Federation of Trade Unions of Macedonia to improve membership services and provisions for ethnic minority members. The teachers' union - once on the verge of splitting along ethnic lines - has added over 8,000 new members as a direct result of this support and developed into a group that advocates shared professional concerns that cross ethnic lines.

The United States aggressively promoted training, education and awareness initiatives to help combat Macedonia's TIP problem. The United States also hosted an ongoing series of training programs that enhanced collaboration among prosecutors, police and investigative judges, improved anti-trafficking prosecutorial and police techniques, and worked to ensure that trafficking victims' human rights were respected during police investigations. ICITAP facilitated a U.S. donation of vehicles and office equipment to the Anti-Trafficking Unit of the Macedonian National Police.

The United States conducted exchange and training programs to demonstrate how the United States handles the issue of trafficking. The American Corners in Skopje and Bitola have special sections devoted to human trafficking for public awareness and use. The United States also disbursed small grants to NGOs to raise public awareness about TIP. A U.S.-funded interim witness facilitation program began operating in 2004.

Another U.S. grant helped a local NGO that specializes in anti-trafficking activities to begin developing a national anti-trafficking database.

Moldova

The Moldovan Constitution provides for a multi-party representative government with power divided among a president, cabinet, parliament and judiciary. In 1992, a separatist regime, supported by Russian military forces, declared a "Transnistria Moldovan Republic" in the region between the Dniester River and Ukraine. The Government of Moldova does not control this region. Unless otherwise stated, all references that follow are to the rest of the country.

Generally free and fair parliamentary elections in 2001 resulted in an overwhelming parliamentary majority for the Communist Party. Authorities in the separatist Transnistria region interfered with the ability of residents there to vote in this and other national elections. During the past four years, progress on democratic reforms has slowly deteriorated. In 2004, the Government continued to use its resources to influence the media to present pro-government views and to discredit and deny access to the political opposition. Some progress was made when the Government transformed the state broadcasting company, Teleradio Moldova (TRM), into a public institution. Journalists and opposition political parties protested this process because it was not conducted transparently. United States officials met repeatedly with authorities to urge that these problems be addressed constructively. The Ambassador and the EU issued a public statement calling on the Government to meet Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and Council of Europe standards for freedom of the media.

The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, there were problems in some areas. Some law enforcement personnel reportedly tortured and beat some persons, particularly persons in police custody and Roma. Security forces were widely believed to monitor political figures, use unauthorized wiretaps, and at times conduct illegal searches. Widespread cor-

ruption persisted, and judges were reportedly subject to outside influence and corruption. There were some limits on workers' rights, and a few religious groups continued to encounter difficulties in obtaining official registration. Trafficking in persons (TIP) remained a very serious problem.

The democratization and human rights record of the separatist-controlled Transnistria region remained very poor. The Transnistrian authorities reportedly continued to use torture and arbitrary arrest and detention. Two members of the so-called "Ilascu group," convicted of killing two Transnistrian officials during the 1991-92 civil war, remained in prison despite a 2004 European Court of Human Rights ruling calling for their release. In June, an alleged witness to the mistreatment of the "Ilascu group" during their imprisonment disappeared under unclear circumstances. Transnistrian authorities harassed and intimidated opposition figures and the independent media, and restricted freedom of association and of religion. Transnistrian discrimination against Romanian-speakers culminated in a crisis in the summer and fall of 2004 when Transnistrian authorities closed several Latin-script schools. The Government responded by restricting Transnistrian trade. The situation was defused in September, when the OSCE negotiated a formula to allow the schools to register and re-open for one year; however, tensions remain high.

The United States worked through the OSCE and directly with the parties to push for a resolution to the conflict in Transnistria that is just, equitable and respects the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova. These efforts included Embassy discussions with government officials in Chisinau, a visit by the U.S. Special Negotiator for Eurasian Conflicts to Chisinau and Tiraspol in October, and extensive efforts by the U.S. Mission to the OSCE to focus European attention on the unacceptable behavior of the Transnistrian regime. In addition, the United States, in concert with the EU, extended the existing visa ban on senior Transnistrian officials to individuals involved in closing the Latin-script schools.

The U.S. strategy for promoting human rights and democracy in Moldova focuses on strengthening the rule of law, good governance, independent media and civil society, promoting free and fair elections and combating TIP. The United States consistently stressed in meetings and demarches that the Government needs to take concrete steps to promote democracy and human rights if it is to enjoy deeper bilateral relations and improve membership prospects in Euro-Atlantic institutions.

In 2004, the United States placed a special emphasis on promoting free and fair 2005 parliamentary elections. The Ambassador and other U.S. representatives frequently engaged high-level government officials and the Central Election Commission (CEC), emphasizing the importance of ensuring free and fair elections and pressing for electoral reforms that would minimize the shortcomings that marred the 2003 local elections. The United States supported the formation and activities of an association of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), "Coalition for Free and Fair Elections," to implement electoral monitoring and voter education programs. The United States funded training for lawyers, judges and advocates on election law and procedures for adjudication of election disputes. The United States supported seminars for political parties and representatives of both independent and state-controlled media organizations to discuss election-related issues and the role of the news media in free and fair elections. Along these lines, the United States provided support for a program to monitor the objectivity and content of news from all major Moldovan TV, radio stations and newspapers during the campaign period.

The International Visitors Program (IVP) sponsored two elections-related study trips to the U.S.: one for members of the CEC to study the electoral process, and another for members of the media and NGOs to study the role of civil society in elections. The United States also provided grants to NGOs for projects focused on promoting open and balanced public discussion and debate and for local Get-Out-the-Vote activities.

Several initiatives were undertaken to strengthen civil society. United States-sponsored programs helped to train Moldovan political parties to organize effective party structures, build successful coalitions, recruit and mobilize new members at the local party level and reach out to citizens. The United States supported programs to increase citizens' knowledge of transparent government processes and to promote constructive dialogue between citizens and their local government. These efforts fostered participation and leadership skills at the grassroots level.

The IVP arranged a trip to the United States for representatives of government information and public relations offices to enhance their understanding of freedom of information and transparency in government. To improve local governance, another IVP was arranged for mayors to study how local public administration functions in the United States and how to better collaborate with different levels of government, state institutions and NGOs in the area of public administration. The United States continued a local government reform program in 2004, working with more than 50 communities to improve fiscal management, increase transparency and citizen participation in community decision-making, and improve strategic planning.

Working with EU representatives, the United States promoted freedom of assembly when they successfully urged the Government to end efforts to lift the parliamentary immunity of opposition lawmakers in connection with their organization of peaceful protests. Government influence on the media was of particular concern, and the United States promoted media freedom in several ways. In 2004, the United States supported a media-monitoring project implemented by a respected consortium of independent NGOs to systematically assess the content of news reports of Moldova's sole nationwide public TV and radio broadcaster TRM. The United States consistently raised the issue of media freedom with high-level Moldovan officials and used the monitoring results to press them to take immediate steps to improve the objectivity, quality, and opposition's access to public media. United States officials also met with Moldovan authorities to raise concerns about licensing procedures hindering independent

media and the non-transparent transformation of TRM into a public institution. The United States provided many media outlets and media-related NGOs with financial support to implement projects that promote freedom of speech and access to a full range of opinions. The United States supported the publishing of an independent newspaper in Gagauzia, the expansion of Vocea Basarabiei radio station's signal to Edinet, Soroca and Balti, and the implementation of locally-sponsored trainings for journalists covering social issues. The United States assisted two radio stations in buying the necessary equipment to broadcast in the separatist region of Transnistria, where independent media is restricted. These two stations now cover the entire Transnistrian region.

The United States brought media experts to Moldova to participate in conferences and seminars designed to improve the skills of Moldovan media professionals and students. The United States also continued to support a three-year partnership between Moldova State University's Department of Communications, the Independent Journalism Center and Missouri School of Journalism to improve journalism education in Moldova.

The United States supported several efforts to promote the rule of law and combat corruption in Moldova. The United States engaged the Government, including the Moldovan President, on the need to address the problem of corruption seriously and to halt politically motivated corruption investigations of opposition political figures. The Resident Legal Advisor (RLA) worked with the Government to combat corruption and to increase the effectiveness of law enforcement assistance programs. The RLA's anti-corruption initiatives included a series of training seminars and roundtables designed to improve criminal procedure and prosecutor-investigator teamwork, and collaboration with the Government and Council of Europe experts in drafting the new National Anti-Corruption Strategy and Plan. The RLA also provided technical assistance to the Center for Combating Economic Crime and Corruption to help design internal reforms that would reduce inefficiency and minimize opportunities for corruption.

The RLA successfully pushed for amendments to the law on operative investigations that permit investigators to work undercover and expands their investigative authority in other ways. Similarly, the RLA sponsored a legislative round-table that resulted in a high-level working group to re-examine the country's weak plea-bargaining law in order to give prosecutors new tools to combat corruption.

Other rule of law programs assisted Moldovan legal institutions, judges, bar associations, students and lawyers to strengthen the quality and awareness of legal education and legal reforms. The U.S.-funded Criminal Law program conducted training for judges on human rights and for the defense bar on advocacy skills.

The United States funded an Expanded International Military Education and Training program for the Moldovan military designed to improve respect for human rights and civilian control over the armed forces. This included the hosting of two seminars on "Planning for Peacekeeping Operations" at the ministerial and inter-ministerial levels and a number of Moldovan officers at various training courses in the United States, entitled "Military and Peacekeeping Operations in Accordance with Rule of Law," "Judge Advocate General," "Defense Restructuring" and "Civil-Military Relations." The United States also supported the participation of 17 mid-to-senior level military, civilian and law enforcement officials in Marshall Center courses focusing on democracy, civil-military relations, and national and trans-national security issues.

In July, during a visit to Moldova, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld stressed to President Voronin the importance of continued military education and training as well as participation in Partnership for Peace activities in enhancing respect for human rights, peace and security throughout the region. The United States uses a vetting procedure in accordance with the Leahy Amendment to ensure that it does not train individuals who committed or were responsible for human rights violations.

In an effort to highlight U.S. concern for religious freedom, U.S. Embassy officials met with the local leaders of several religious groups in 2004. The United States raised concerns and delivered the Government a diplomatic note about some religious groups' persistent registration difficulties with the State Service on Religions. The U.S. Embassy also raised concerns about some religious groups being impeded from constructing houses of worship.

The Ambassador and other U.S. officials repeatedly emphasized the importance of combating TIP. At the U.S.-Moldova Joint Economic Task Force meeting in June, the RLA made a presentation to several Moldovan Government ministers and high-level officials on trafficking efforts, in which she pressed for continued cooperation and increased efforts by the Government to combat trafficking. The RLA provided technical assistance for judges, prosecutors and investigators to address TIP, including training that emphasized education, sensitivity and skills development, and provided legislative drafting assistance. The RLA instituted and maintained an ongoing monitoring plan of all aspects of criminal investigation and prosecution in order to pinpoint areas where assistance could best be provided and to assess Moldova's record in obtaining convictions and appropriate sentences.

In 2004, the United States began a number of programs through President Bush's \$50 million Anti-Trafficking Initiative to deal comprehensively with all aspects of trafficking. The United States assisted Moldovan law enforcement with training and facilitated trans-border anti-trafficking cooperation with neighboring countries. It began implementing programs to address the economic roots of trafficking by improving access for young women and girls to legitimate employment opportunities. These programs offered career counseling, skills training and job placement as well as other forms of assistance to potential and actual victims of trafficking. The United States continued to support the work of the Center for the Prevention of Trafficking in Women in providing legal assistance and counseling, legal representation, and help in replacing identity papers and other lost documents for victims. The United States supported

the International Labor Organization's International Program for the Elimination of Child Labor to prevent the trafficking of children for sexual and labor exploitation. The United States also provided funding for a nationwide trafficking information campaign implemented by the International Organization for Migration and targeted at potential trafficking victims. One key product was the film "*Lilya 4-ever*," which documented the recruitment and abuse of victims and was shown in cinemas and schools throughout the country free of charge.

Russia

Although the Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens in 2004 in some areas, it was poor in some areas and worsened in others. A move from election to nomination by the President of regional governors further strengthened the power of the executive branch. This, coupled with media restrictions, a compliant State Duma, shortcomings in recent national elections, law enforcement corruption, and political pressure on the judiciary raised concerns about the erosion of government leaders' accountability to the people. Government pressure further weakened freedom of expression and undermined the effectiveness of independent non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The Government's record remained poor in Chechnya, where there were credible reports of serious violations, including numerous reports of unlawful killings and abuses of civilians by both federal security forces and Chechen government security forces. Rebel fighters also committed acts of terrorism and human rights abuses in the North Caucasus region. Law enforcement personnel reportedly engaged in torture, violence, and other brutal or humiliating behavior, often with impunity. A series of cases involving alleged espionage caused continued concerns regarding due process and the influence of the Federal Security Service in the judicial system. Authorities imposed restrictions on some minority religious groups. Minorities experienced widespread discrimination, and, increasingly, racially-motivated attacks. Limits on workers' rights increased, as did reports of forced and child labor. Trafficking in persons (TIP) remained a serious problem despite steps to combat trafficking.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy in Russia promotes democratic institutions and processes, a vibrant civil society, fundamental freedoms, rule of law, human rights and anti-trafficking measures.

Senior U.S. officials including the President, the Secretary of State and Ambassador raised human rights and democracy concerns with their Russian counterparts. For example, in his February 2005 and November 2004 meetings with President Putin in Bratislava, Slovakia and Santiago, Chile, President Bush raised a broad range of bilateral issues including democracy and human rights concerns.

Senior U.S. officials made human rights and democracy a major public diplomacy theme. Secretary of State Powell wrote in a January op-ed in the newspaper *Izvestiya* that Russia had not yet found the "essential balance among the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government" and that political power was not yet "fully tethered to law." His op-ed was quoted in Russian, U.S. and European media for months afterward. Secretary Powell published an op-ed in May in the newspaper *Kommersant* under the headline, "Colin Powell: Those Guilty of Violations in Iraq Will Not Escape Punishment." The Ambassador and other Embassy staff also communicated U.S. concerns privately to Russian national and regional officials and worked with NGOs to support a more favorable climate.

To celebrate International Human Rights Day, Ambassador Vershbow addressed and took questions from 150 Moscow State University students on the subject of human rights and democracy. The Embassy sponsored a year-long course on American Diplomacy and Foreign Policy, given by U.S. diplomats, at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations, perhaps Russia's most prominent university for diplomats, where human rights and democracy were pervasive themes.

Ambassador Vershbow's June interview with the newspaper *Novaya Gazeta*, published under the headline "We Have Concerns that Russia Is Moving Towards a New Self-Isolation," voiced concern about President Putin's criticism of

Western NGOs working in Russia, rule of law problems in the Yukos case and human rights abuses in Chechnya. The Ambassador conveyed U.S. concerns about the erosion of democratic institutions and the rule of law in several other interviews with Russian newspapers and websites, and in speeches and seminars.

Numerous Embassy-sponsored speakers from the United States addressed Russian audiences on topics ranging from U.S. state government interaction with media and NGOs to the 2004 U.S. presidential election and the future of U.S.-Russian relations. The Embassy distributed 29 sets of over 100 books on democracy, freedom of expression, tolerance, and human rights.

Despite U.S. efforts during 2004, negative developments raised serious questions over the strength and depth of Russian commitment to human rights, democratic reform and the rule of law. As a result of these adverse developments, the Secretary of State was unable for the first time to certify the Russian Government's commitment to observe internationally recognized human rights under the Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) Act. In order to allow the United States to continue to work with the Russian Government on essential weapons reduction and nonproliferation projects, the president waived the requirement to certify Russia for CTR assistance.

Like the December 2003 Duma elections, the March presidential election did not meet international standards in a number of areas, although the outcome was generally understood to have represented the will of the people. The United States promoted democratic institutions and processes diplomatically and programmatically. Diplomatically, U.S. officials raised concerns with Russian officials before and after the national presidential, and Chechen presidential elections.

Programmatically, the United States supported the monitoring of the March presidential election by a Russian election watchdog organization and the training of mass media representatives in political and election reporting. With U.S. funding, NGO partners trained independent observers to monitor the work of deputies in regional legislatures. The

United States supported training and development activities for Russian political parties. In April, the United States began a program to expand citizen monitoring of regional legislators' actions, encouraging interaction and accountability between constituents and their elected officials. The United States contributes to the promotion of elections that meet international standards through development of regional-level media expertise, facilitation of advocacy and public dialogue about the role of free media and promotion of more professional media in the regions.

Russian government efforts "to manage" civil society, including increased scrutiny of many foreign-funded – as well as domestic – NGOs, continued. To promote a vibrant civil society, U.S. programs support NGOs, resource centers, advocacy and watchdog groups, policy think tanks, business associations and labor unions. Using U.S. funding, NGO partners promoted volunteerism and community service, and advocated for citizens' rights and against corruption. United States assistance supported more than 1,000 environmental protection, public advocacy, and other events throughout Russia, with participation of at least 120,000 activists.

As further backsliding occurred in media freedom, the United States worked to strengthen regional broadcast media activities and improve access to sources of non-state information. Over 200 smaller TV stations sent more than 1,600 professionals to seminars at Regional Training Centers. This represented the first professional training for a number of them. By 2004, a total of 502 regional TV outlets took part in at least one public awareness campaign. The United States also organized International Visitors Programs (IVPs) on television station management and the functions of press secretaries.

To promote the rule of law, the United States supports exchange and technical assistance programs aimed at bolstering judicial independence, ethical conduct, transparency and professionalism. The court system enjoyed a larger budget than ever before, and further professionalized its operations with increasing use of computerization, professional court administrators, justices of the peace,

judicial assistants (law clerks) and court press officers. Programs supported by the United States inspired many of these improvements. Innovations adopted in U.S.-funded pilot courts have improved customer service, efficiency and transparency of operations. Russian officials are considering expanding them throughout the court system. The judiciary adopted a new Code of Judicial Ethics, to which U.S. experts contributed. Russia's practicing lawyers took first steps toward a continuing legal education program, funded in part by the United States. Other U.S. programs continue to support legal clinics, work on gender-related issues (such as domestic violence and trafficking), labor and migrant rights, and NGO advocacy skills. The Open World program expanded ties between Russian legal professionals and U.S. counterparts.

The United States has supported the successful use of the legal system by NGOs, which have won the majority of over 1,600 cases taken to court since 2002. Most cases were on behalf of refugees and labor union activists. Hits on a U.S.-supported human rights website jumped from 1,400 in 2003 to 67,000 in 2004. United States-supported law school legal clinics have spread to approximately 80 law schools, many of which provide representation to indigent persons, with some now beginning to specialize in subjects such as the rights of women, children and prisoners.

The gravest threat to human rights in Russia continued to be the conflict in Chechnya and its expansion to other areas of the North Caucasus. Senior U.S. officials, including Secretary Powell and the Ambassador, regularly expressed concern to Russian political and military leaders about the conduct of the Russian military and Chechen allies in Chechnya. United States officials used Congressional testimony, meetings with Russian officials, media interviews and public speeches to highlight shortcomings. They stressed that the United States supports a political, not military, solution, that Russian forces in Chechnya should end their abuses and that the Russian Government should prosecute those found responsible when violations occurred. The United States also called on Chechen fighters to end terrorist acts and violence against civilians, repudiate terrorism, and

cut all ties to Chechen and international terrorists. The United States recognizes the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation.

The United States voted for the EU's resolution on Chechnya before the 2004 UN Commission on Human Rights and used Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) fora to convey its concerns about Chechnya. United States funding supported efforts to promote accountability for abuses in Chechnya. United States officials repeatedly stressed to Russian officials that all returns of internally displaced persons (IDPs) to Chechnya should be purely voluntary and that alternative shelter be provided to those IDPs who wish to remain in Ingushetiya. The United States supported legal assistance to indigent people, including through an NGO that assisted 6,373 IDPs in the North Caucasus in FY 2004. The United States funded international humanitarian assistance programs addressing a wide range of IDP needs in the North Caucasus. The United States also provided humanitarian assistance in response to the terrorist attack on the school in Beslan, North Ossetia.

To ensure that the United States trains individuals who have not violated human rights, it uses a vetting procedure in accordance with the Leahy Amendment.

Gender issues remained a central element of U.S. human rights strategy. An Embassy working group coordinated Embassy efforts on women's issues. A U.S. program trained 22 legal specialists and 100 social advocates in 2003 and 2004 to handle domestic violence cases and other gender-related issues. The program also worked to change how law enforcement bodies respond to domestic violence complaints. In his extensive travels to Russia's regions, the Ambassador hosted roundtable discussions and meetings with civil society activists including those working on such women's issues as the role of women in the private sector.

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 disabled and inclusive education. 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 development of a university course on disability law. While traveling in Russia's regions, the Ambassador hosted a number of roundtable discussions for civil society activists that included advocates for the rights of the disabled and children. The Ambassador's wife spoke at a conference on the rights of orphans.

Senior U.S. officials, including the Ambassador, maintained an active dialogue on freedom of religion and religious, racial and ethnic tolerance with government officials, religious denominations and NGOs. The Ambassador led a roundtable discussion on human rights and religious freedom in Bryansk, which has been the scene of anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim incidents.

The United States continued to monitor crucial court cases and visa issues affecting religious workers. The United States helped two of the country's major police academies institute tolerance courses as part of their curriculum. The Embassy continued the Tolerance Grants Initiative under the Democracy Commission and provided grants to 14 NGOs working to improve inter-ethnic and inter-religious tolerance. Building on previous projects, the United States supported the creation of tolerance councils in two additional regions – for a total of five – that brought together the general public, law enforcement officials, local NGOs and local governments to combat intolerant attitudes toward ethnic and religious groups.

International Visitors Leadership and speaker programs focused on Islam in America and on Tolerance and Diversity for Russian Muslim leaders. In several regions, the United States supported the introduction of tolerance-related training curriculum for future Ministry of Internal Affairs officials and for public schools. An Embassy Democracy Commission grant helped an organization conduct interviews with victims of hate crimes and political prosecutions.

Support from the United States to the Russian labor movement – for years provided through a U.S. implementer – in 2004 for the first time went directly to a Russian partner organization. This grant supports a nation-wide association of lawyers and other labor advocates who operate centers in seven cities. The organization provides individual trade unions and their members with expert legal advice on a wide range of labor contract issues. In 2004 alone, the organization represented in court the interests of its clients in a total of 272 hearings. Those hearings resulted in 87 decisions (56 positive and 31 negative for their clients). It appealed one of these cases to the European Court of Human Rights, which is expected to hear the case in 2005.

To promote anti-trafficking efforts, the United States worked successfully with supportive Russian authorities on the creation of legislation that establishes and funds a Russian witness protection program. This program will protect human trafficking victims as witnesses, and their families. The United States supported the efforts of the Russian Government in implementing last year's new trafficking legislation specifically criminalizing TIP. Additionally, Embassy legal experts testified before the Russian Duma in support of strengthening a draft law on trafficking that would cover the broader issues of prevention and protection. The United States conducted a "train-the-trainer" seminar on trafficking for representatives from all 23 Interior Ministry training institutes. The Embassy coordinated with anti-trafficking organizations engaged in public outreach, service provision and promotion of legislation. Its support of NGO partners throughout Russia raised awareness about trafficking, increased Russia's capacity for research on trafficking issues and enabled scholars to play a greater role in advising Russian policymakers on trafficking-related laws, policies and enforcement mechanisms. The United States continued to support efforts of a Russian coalition of organizations to address issues of domestic violence and TIP. With the support of U.S. funding, NGOs in three regions conducted informational seminars for 1,865 students to raise awareness about trafficking issues, and a crisis center network of 13 centers continued to provide legal and psychological counseling to more than 2,000 women.

Serbia and Montenegro

The state union of Serbia and Montenegro is a constitutional republic 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 essentially limited to the Foreign Ministry, the military, human and minority rights, and foreign and domestic economic and commercial relations.

The U.S. strategy to promote democracy and human rights in Serbia and Montenegro focuses on fostering a system of democratic, multi-ethnic governance that respects human rights. To this end, the United States supported the development of more effective, responsive and accountable democratic institutions in Serbia and Montenegro and funded programs designed to cultivate informed, tolerant and politically active citizens.

Serbia

The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, there were problems in some areas. Police at times beat detainees and harassed citizens. Police effectively investigated high-level killings committed during and after the Milosevic era, although impunity for human rights abuses and corruption were problems. Prolonged pretrial detention was a problem. Courts remained backlogged and administratively paralyzed, and lengthy trials persisted. The war crimes court, a department of the Belgrade District Court established in 2003, began hearing war crimes cases during the year. The media was generally independent. Some journalists practiced self-censorship because of their vulnerability to private libel suits and indirect political manipulation. There were incidents of arbitrary arrest and detention. The judiciary continued to be susceptible to political influence, and poor cooperation between the judiciary and other government branches slowed the implementation of legislative reforms.

Two persons in Serbia indicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) surrendered to the Tribunal.

The Government transferred many documents to the ICTY and gave waivers for witnesses to testify. Nonetheless, the ICTY remained dissatisfied with the overall cooperation of Serbia and Montenegro, in particular because it believed that key indictee General Ratko Mladic was at large in Serbia. In March, there were a number of incidents of societal violence and discrimination against religious minorities following widespread anti-Serb violence in Kosovo. Violence and discrimination against women and ethnic minorities were problems. Trafficking in persons (TIP) remained a problem that the Government took steps to address.

During 2004, the United States supported programs that trained political party leaders in capacity building, reform implementation, issue-based political dialogue and fair and transparent election campaigns. The United States also provided grants and technical assistance to non-partisan get-out-the-vote, election monitoring and election



Serbia

A little girl helps her father vote.

USAID/K. Michener

administration reform projects. The United States continued to support efforts to strengthen local government and promote decentralization through technical assistance and training.

Through U.S. funding, a number of organizations implemented programs to promote good governance and strengthen democracy. The International Republican Institute (IRI) promoted government reform, fostered civic organizations and strengthened political parties. Much of IRI's work with both municipalities and the Serbian Government focused on improving communication between the Government and constituents and accessibility of government services. In addition, IRI provided technical training to political parties on specific issues including building voter databases, targeting voters, establishing direct voter contact, and crafting issue-oriented campaigns that addressed citizens' concerns.

The National Democratic Institute (NDI) assisted democratic political parties with organizational, electoral and strategic planning. NDI advised members of Serbia's parliament and municipal councilors on citizen outreach. The project also assisted a non-governmental organization (NGO) with nonpartisan election monitoring and voter mobilization.

With a U.S. grant, Freedom House Serbia worked to strengthen Serbia's civil society, cultivate civic and government leaders, and support Serbia's regional integration. Freedom House Serbia awarded grants to NGOs for institutional development, reform and policy projects, and cross-border activities. It also provided core support to two of Serbia's most important human rights NGOs.

The United States provided training, technical assistance, and grants to organizations seeking to increase media professionalism. The United States funded media training on such topics as NATO, the role of media in a democracy, election reporting, media management and journalists' rights. In 2004, the Independent Research and Exchanges Board (IREX), through a U.S. grant, helped Serbian media provide citizens with balanced and unbiased news and other information. In addition to improving professional journalism, IREX also promoted the efficient production and distribution of

news and information, helped to improve the legal and regulatory framework for media, and fostered sound business management. Additionally, IREX supported the delivery of media coverage of proceedings at the ICTY. The United States supported the production of documentaries and reports on topics ranging from war crimes to environmental issues. The United States funds three American Corners in Serbia, one of which was opened during 2004. These Corners are small American-style libraries that provide information about the United States, democracy, human rights, and other topics; they are co-located and co-funded with local municipal libraries or cultural institutions.

In 2004, the United States supported Serbia's efforts to promote accountability and the rule of law. Prosecuting war criminals was integral to this goal. The United States consistently made Serbia and Montenegro's cooperation with the ICTY a condition for full Euro-Atlantic integration. Although two persons indicted by the ICTY surrendered to authorities and were transferred to The Hague, the highest-level indictees remained at large. Largely because of U.S. support for Serbia's domestic capacity to adjudicate war crimes cases, the ICTY transferred two cases to Serbia during 2004. However, the United States halted some assistance to Serbia in March 2004 and announced the withholding of additional assistance in January 2005 because of Serbia's lack of cooperation with the ICTY.

United States grants facilitated the donation of equipment and supported training programs for police, prosecutors and judges in charge of rendering justice for war crimes. These programs helped establish a victim/witness protection unit and assisted the Serbian Government in drafting a witness protection law. The United States also lent assistance to the Serbian Ministry of Justice to reform the Criminal Procedure Code and other codes relevant for war crimes cases. A U.S.-organized trial monitoring program for war crimes cases will help to identify and resolve legal and technical issues that arise during such trials in Serbia. Additionally, the United States facilitated regional cooperation in the investigation and prosecution of war crimes cases. The United States helped to fund an NGO whose work includes locating and assisting victims and witnesses of domestic war

crimes. With U.S. assistance, this NGO is creating a center that documents the war crimes of the former Yugoslavia during the 1990s.

The United States supported the Government in its efforts to develop sound judicial institutions. With this support, the Government began the first systematic analysis of backlogs in Serbian courts and offered training and technical assistance to magistrates, judges, prosecutors, law schools, and associations of young lawyers. United States funds also supported programs that fostered the development of associations for prosecutors, judges and magistrates. Additionally, through the International Visitors Program, government and judicial officials received training on judicial reform and the U.S. judicial system.

The United States remained actively involved in encouraging systematic military reform to ensure civilian control over the military and respect for human rights by both civilian and military personnel in Serbia and Montenegro. Although the United States continued some military cooperation with Serbia and Montenegro, including education programs for reform-oriented mid-level officers in accordance with the Leahy Amendment, the U.S. Government conditioned full military engagement on Serbia's cooperation with the ICTY.

Supporting the rights of women, children, and minorities remained a priority for the United States. To heighten awareness of these issues, the United States funded media campaigns that promoted the rights of children with special needs and others with disabilities, and called for higher education to be available to disabled youth. The United States supported a public opinion survey on domestic violence and a project to involve young women attending institutions of higher education in student organizations.

The United States pressed Serbia to increase ethnic tolerance and accountability for attacks on ethnic minorities. In reaction to violence in Kosovo in mid-March, largely propagated by ethnic Albanians against the Serb minority, Serbs in Serbia launched protests and violence against Muslim religious sites. Anti-minority incidents in Vojvodina generated international concern. In

2004, the United States issued public statements condemning ethnic violence and urging tolerance and held meetings with representatives of ethnic minorities in Serbia. To facilitate political participation by minorities and encourage tolerance, the United States supported a university campaign to increase exchange visits and dialogue.

Although Serbia generally respected freedom of religion, propaganda against minority religions continued. In Serbia, religion and ethnicity are intimately tied, and it is often difficult to distinguish whether attacks against minorities are primarily ethnic or religious in origin. United States support of efforts to safeguard and promote the rights of ethnic minorities also promoted the rights of religious minorities. The United States helped persuade the Government to withdraw a draft religion law that favored certain religions. The United States also interceded with local authorities to prevent razing of an evangelical tent church that had been singled out for destruction.

In 2004, the United States trained and equipped police, prosecutors, and judges, and helped to establish a government agency to coordinate assistance to victims of TIP. Furthermore, the United States funded a TIP victims' shelter through the International Organization for Migration and assisted with the funding of a TIP documentary, NGO website, and workshops. Additionally, the United States promoted local government efforts to expand their anti-TIP activities to focus on child victims.

Kosovo

Since the termination of the 1999 NATO bombing campaign that brought an end to Serbia's brutal treatment of Kosovo's majority Albanian population, the international community - led by the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) - has sought to foster autonomy and democracy within Kosovo in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 1244. In addition to the presence of an international civil administration in Kosovo, whose principal deputy is American, approximately 17,000 international troops remained in the UN protectorate as part of the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR). The United

States continues to contribute approximately 1,800 troops to KFOR and maintains control over one of the four multinational sectors.

In order to help Kosovo build sustainable democratic institutions and integrate into Euro-Atlantic structures, in 2003, the international community outlined the “Standards for Kosovo,” which calls for the creation of a society “...where all – regardless of ethnic background, race or religion – are free to live, work and travel without fear, hostility or danger and where there is tolerance, justice and peace for everyone.” If Kosovo makes sufficient progress in fulfilling these standards by mid-2005, the international community has agreed to begin a political process that will determine Kosovo’s future status.

Following two days of widespread violence in March 2004, the Contact Group (U.S., UK, Italy, France, Germany and Russia) intensified its engagement in Kosovo and began meeting regularly in Pristina to monitor progress on post-March reconstruction and “Standards” implementation. The October 2004 Assembly elections, which generally met international democratic standards, resulted in a new provisional Government, which began an intensive campaign to move the Standards process forward. While Kosovo has made notable progress in building democratic institutions, much remains to be done, particularly in solidifying a multi-ethnic society that provides protection and freedom of movement for everyone. As Kosovo approaches a scheduled 2005 comprehensive review of Standards implementation, the United States will continue to provide financial, technical and diplomatic support to help Kosovo meet these Standards.

Officers for KFOR and UNMIK police were responsible for killing several protesters during riots in March after the protestors failed to heed prior warnings and threatened international security officials or those they were protecting. Several killings resulted from attacks that appeared to be ethnically motivated, and some perpetrators of the killings were arrested during the year. One death and several injuries resulted from landmines and unexploded ordnance. Lengthy pretrial detention was a problem, and the judiciary did not always

provide due process. UNMIK occasionally limited freedom of assembly and forcibly dispersed some demonstrations. Religious tensions persisted. Freedom of movement for ethnic minorities, particularly Kosovo Serbs, continued to be a serious problem. Violence and discrimination against women and TIP, particularly women for sexual exploitation, was a serious problem. Severe societal violence, abuse, and discrimination against minority communities to include those with mental and physical disabilities were serious problems, particularly during the March riots. Child labor was a growing problem.

The U.S. strategy to promote democracy and human rights in Kosovo consisted of working with the Contact Group and UNMIK and using a variety of tools including diplomacy, international visits, and assistance and training programs to help Kosovo protect human rights and foster democracy before the mid-2005 “Standards” review. The Chief of Mission and all United States Office Pristina (USOP) officers regularly followed and participated in “Standards” and Decentralization working groups, met with municipal officials and NGOs to encourage and observe local action on “Standards”, and raised democracy and human rights issues with governmental agencies and NGOs. United States assistance programs focused on improving the capacity and transparency of government institutions, the Assembly, political parties, NGOs, the police, judiciary, independent media, educational and cultural institutions, combating TIP, and protecting minority rights.

The United States provided a grant to the Council for Defense of Human Rights and Freedom (CDHRF) for election monitoring. CDHRF used these funds to train 60 polling station coordinators who in turn recruited and trained more than 2,000 volunteers to monitor the October 2004 elections. Many U.S. Mission officers participated in the monitoring efforts. The United States also funded a two-week workshop that trained journalists to cover the Kosovo elections objectively. These efforts improved the electoral environment described by international observers to be generally free and fair.

The United States supported efforts to strengthen civil society and NGO advocacy through training, technical assistance and grants. Before the October 2004 elections, NGO advocacy increased markedly on issues such as electoral reforms, get-out-the-vote campaigns and gender representation in political processes. Advocacy efforts by U.S. Mission personnel and U.S.-funded NGOs resulted in the adoption of the Freedom of Information Act in Kosovo, procedures for public participation in two municipalities, disabled access provisions in construction law, and several local regulations that protect consumers' rights.

The United States worked to strengthen local government through the Local Government Initiative (LGI). In 2004, LGI provided technical assistance to a local government working group established by UNMIK to help improve the legislative framework for local governance. LGI contributed two working papers addressing municipal finance, properties and facilities. LGI also assisted municipal governments by placing relevant U.S. and U.S.-trained professionals in selected pilot municipalities. The United States supported three Ron Brown Fellows at Lehigh, Duke, and Columbia Universities, who were selected particularly for their interest in public administration, and ten Kosovar municipal mayors to participate in a three-part workshop - including a month in the United States - on good governance and accountability, community access and service, and public management.

The United States continued to support the Kosovo Independent Media Program (KIMP). KIMP focuses on four areas: increased professionalism of journalists; increased capacity of media associations and the Kosovo Terrestrial Transmission Network (KTTN); an improved legal and regulatory framework that supports free speech and access to public information; and, improved business viability of targeted media outlets. A U.S.-funded workshop trained more than 40 provisional government spokespeople on the necessity of public information and mechanisms to access it.

United States efforts to strengthen the judiciary and the rule of law included assistance programs to improve the functioning and management of the courts and the oversight of judges and prosecutors, and to increase public awareness of Kosovo's evolving justice system. In 2004, the United States provided direct assistance to the UNMIK Department of Justice (UNDOJ) to develop a broad, judicial reform strategy. This plan included drafting concept papers on the ongoing transfer of responsibility from UNMIK to local institutions, the establishment of a UNDOJ Audit Section Unit, the compiling of internal audit manuals, and an operational plan to improve court operations, organization, records and case management, the professional training of judges and lawyers, and the strengthening of professional associations' institutional capacity.

In February 2005, the Kosovo Judicial and Prosecutorial Council, with significant assistance from the Regional Legal Advisor (RLA) and U.S. Overseas Prosecutorial Development Assistance and Training program (OPDAT), held the first judicial reform conference to present the expert-developed Judicial Assessment and Restructuring plan (JART). Approximately 200 judges, prosecutors, lawyers, members of parliament, legal scholars, government officials, diplomats, and other interested parties attended. At the end, Kosovo's President, Prime Minister, and the Principal Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary General publicly pledged to support the JART.

Through the OPDAT, the RLA took steps to establish the University of Pristina Law School's legal clinic. As a result, the university now has a functioning pilot program that trains promising lawyers. A fully functioning legal clinic is expected to be in place by the end of 2005.

The United States funds the U.S. Civilian Police (CivPol) program, which provides the local Kosovo Police Service (KPS) with assistance in monitoring, training, transition activities, and capacity building. With U.S. technical and personnel support, Kosovar television crews filmed documentaries explaining community policing.

The United States continued to provide humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees from conflicts in Kosovo, providing support for those who chose to return to their homes in Kosovo. In addition to contributions to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) programs that aid the displaced, the United States provided assistance to specific NGO projects and initiatives that supported the return of refugees and IDPs. The United States provided the majority of support for UNMIK's Housing and Property Directorate (HPD), which has resolved more than 23,000 real property disputes. By the end of June 2005, HPD is working to conclude all 29,000 war-derived residential claims that it had received, thereby restoring property rights and allowing for IDPs to return to their homes. The United States also funds the Municipal Infrastructure and Support Initiative (MISI) in an effort to facilitate minority return and re-integration. The MISI program links local communities with municipal government structures in nine of Kosovo's 30 municipalities. In the process of seeking a small MISI infrastructure grant, municipal leadership and local community leaders worked together to gather matching funds, develop a work plan, and conduct a transparent tendering process.

United States personnel worked closely with UNMIK, the ICRC, the International Committee for Missing Persons (ICMP), counterparts at the U.S. Embassy in Belgrade, and victims' family associations to encourage increased cooperation on the issue of missing persons and swift identification and return of exhumed remains. The United States provided carefully targeted technical assistance to the ICMP to provide cutting-edge scientific support to forensic efforts to identify hundreds of exhumed remains. ICMP efforts are helping to bring closure to families still grieving the emotionally charged aftermath of the years of ethnic cleansing in Kosovo.

The United States has supported UNMIK, the Kosovo Government, and NGOs, in the development of the Kosovo anti-trafficking Action Plan, as well as standard operating procedures for victim assistance. The United States funds efforts by the

NGO Hope and Homes for Children to implement the Action Plan's goal of providing accommodation and support services to child trafficking victims. Through U.S. funding, six Kosovars participated in two anti-TIP programs in the United States, meeting law enforcement and border security officials, learning about programs to reintegrate victims into society, and talking to federal policy makers about U.S. anti-TIP programs overseas. United States representatives keep in direct contact with local authorities on the nature and extent of trafficking in Kosovo.

The United States promoted human rights in Kosovo in 2004 through grants for NGOs working with women to combat domestic abuse, and with minorities to foster the development of a multi-ethnic society and the participation of minorities in U.S.-funded public diplomacy programs. Two U.S. experts on conflict resolution and ethnic reconciliation spent a week in Kosovo helping youth and NGOs develop the skills to resolve conflicts and address pressing issues. An International Visitors Program aimed at combating violence against women brought several Kosovar professionals to the United States to meet their counterparts in five cities and learn about the most successful U.S. anti-violence and protection programs. The United States provided thirteen grants to NGOs focused on promoting women's issues, combating female illiteracy, promoting gender equality, providing counseling about trafficking, prostitution, and strengthening women's and minorities' civil rights. Four English Language Fellows are working to incorporate civic education courses through the English language curriculum in two secondary schools and the University of Pristina.

Montenegro

The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, there were problems in some areas. Police, at times, beat and abused civilians. Impunity for human rights abuses was a problem. Media independence was a problem. Pressure from politicians sometimes resulted in distorted coverage of events by state and some private media. Domestic violence and discrimination against women continued to be problems.

Trafficking in women and children for sexual exploitation continued to be a problem. Some ethnic discrimination persisted, particularly with regard to Roma.

In 2004, the United States facilitated a survey of the causes and circumstances behind police abuse in Montenegro to facilitate development of tactics to combat the problem. The United States pushed for the adoption of Montenegro's new Criminal Code in April 2004, which helped minimize opportunities for police abuse of prisoners by changing pre-arraignment detainment procedures. The United States also gave significant and visible support to the establishment of Montenegro's Administrative Court, with the provision of material, structural, and training support. The new Court will speed the delivery of justice and, in the words of the Court President, help protect the civil and human rights of Montenegrin citizens.

In 2004, the United States trained and equipped police, prosecutors, and judges in how to detect, investigate, prosecute and try trafficking cases. The United States also helped to fund a TIP victims' shelter through the International Organization for Migration. The United States took the lead in urging the Government to reestablish the police's special Anti-Trafficking team and provided it with badly needed equipment. The United States also pushed hard for the appointment of a full-time national Anti-Trafficking Coordinator, and strongly supported the initiative by the State Prosecutor's office to speed up trials of accused traffickers.

In an effort to promote minority rights, the United States helped broker an agreement among ethnic Albanian parties, the University of Montenegro and the Government that led to the opening of a new university-level teacher-training program taught in the Albanian language.

Tajikistan

The Government of Tajikistan's human rights record remained poor; although there were some improvements in a few areas, serious problems remained. President Emomali Rahmonov and an inner circle of loyal supporters continued to dominate the Government. The Constitution provides for an independent judiciary; however, it was subjected to political pressure from the executive branch, and corruption was a problem. Citizens' right to change their government remained restricted. The Government continued to deny the registration of two opposition political parties amid allegations that authorities made politically motivated arrests.

While the Government is authoritarian, it is in the uneven process of transitioning to a more democratically-based system. Following the civil war that devastated Tajikistan in the mid-1990s, concerns over stability often trump sweeping reforms, but do not completely prevent forward progress, albeit at a sometimes glacial pace. As parliamentary and presidential elections approach, the Government has regressed by taking measures to limit civil rights by passing a restrictive election law to limit free political expression, going so far as to shut down one of the most outspoken opposition papers, and by keeping some U.S.-funded democracy non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in registration limbo. In contrast to the treatment of free political expression and registration of democracy NGOs, the Government has taken steps forward in promoting the rule of law and in combating trafficking in persons (TIP). The Government can be an effective partner in these areas, provided the message is appropriately calibrated. The primary concerns with Tajikistan's human rights record include freedom of the press, TIP, protection of women's rights, corruption, and rule of law.

Taking these factors into account, the U.S. human rights and democracy strategy focused on reinforcing positive developments and explaining to the Government, the international community and the Tajik public that further movement towards democracy and human rights is necessary to

ensure Tajikistan's continued stability. The U.S. Mission sought to identify reliable partners in the NGO, governmental and private sectors who are reform-minded and who can help to express the message about human rights and democracy in Tajikistan. The U.S. Embassy maintained regular, close contact with like-minded embassies and international organizations involved in monitoring the human rights and democracy situation in Tajikistan in order to multiply the efforts of each thinly staffed organization.

With the Government increasingly targeting international NGOs, such as the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) and Freedom House, U.S. officials regularly met with representatives of this community to ensure that the Government treated them fairly. United States officials remained on-call for international NGOs when they faced problems with the Government. United States officials encouraged all implementing partners and grantees to remain very open and transparent, in order to keep the Government from finding any pretense for closing the NGOs or for harassing them.

The primary focus of U.S. democracy promotion efforts were upcoming parliamentary elections in February 2005. Embassy officers met regularly with all registered and unregistered political parties and governmental structures to monitor their activities and the activities of the Government as parliamentary elections approach. Embassy officials regularly met with representatives of all political parties to gauge the political climate in the run-up to the elections. To ensure effective use of resources on elections issues, U.S. Embassy staff participated in regular elections coordination meetings, headed by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the UN. These meetings were an opportunity to exchange information and to coordinate programming across different diplomatic missions in Tajikistan. The Embassy sent six parliamentarians to the United States as part of an International Visitors Program (IVP) to learn about the U.S. legislative process as well as two political party members on a program to learn about political party strategy development. These programs have sown the seeds to deepen democratic practices in Tajikistan.

The United States also funded several programs to promote democracy. As part of one program to improve the election process, U.S. implementing partner IFES will train 300 District Election Commission members prior to elections in proper administration of elections, with a focus on the ethical and moral responsibility that all election officials have to ensure a fair and open election process for all citizens of Tajikistan. Personnel for IFES developed a training manual as well as an administrative manual for District Election Commission and Precinct Election Commission members to address issues specific to poll-worker administration. United States-funded IFES also provided training to all six registered political parties in organization, campaigning skills and platform writing. The U. S. funded NDI to strengthen registered political parties. Based on previous assessments of each party's strengths and weaknesses, NDI created intensive single-party trainings for Tajikistan's six registered parties. The programs focused on the development of election organizing plans for the February 2005 parliamentary elections. As part of its political party development program, NDI also worked with women from political parties, NGOs, the Government and the media to advise them on methods of increasing women's participation in Tajikistan's political processes. This program is currently operating at reduced levels because of the Government's refusal to issue a visa for the expatriate director.

Tajikistan's most significant incidents regarding freedom of media were the repeated closures of independent newspapers and printing houses, ostensibly for tax violations. Most informed observers, however, charge that the Government took such actions because the papers wrote articles that were too critical of the Government. Each time that this happened, the U.S. Embassy made forceful public and private statements against these actions to the Tajik Government. United States officials in Dushanbe and Washington, D.C. consistently raised the issue in high-level meetings, including meetings held by Deputy Assistant Secretaries and higher with the President and Foreign Minister. Additionally, the U.S. Embassy held regular meetings with independent media representatives to show our support for a free press. The Ambassador gave a very public, candid

press conference in late August that was widely hailed as beneficial to the media situation in Tajikistan. To address the issue for the long-term, the U.S. Embassy is ensuring that international NGOs working on freedom of the press consult closely with the Tajik Government to gain their acceptance and understanding of their programs.

United States government-funded programs to support freedom of media include a program implemented by Internews, which is designed to provide training and technical assistance to independent media outlets. Internews is also working to establish an independent radio station network. United States implementing partner the Institute for War and Peace Reporting continued its program of training journalists on expanded human rights reporting. With U.S. funding, IREX established the Pamir Mass Media Center (PMMC) in Khorog. The Center provides badly needed infrastructural support as well as training to journalists and media outlets. The PMMC has launched a radio journalism training program and has outfitted the Center with the region's first full television production studio.

In order to further improve the media situation, the U.S. Embassy provided a number of Democracy Commission grants to help strengthen and professionalize the media. These grants included supporting the only remaining Tajik-language national paper, expanding a news agency's correspondent network to cover the entire country, and funding television stations to run non-partisan, informational segments about all of Tajikistan's political parties. These grants allow the media outlets to expand their reach and their professionalism in covering news stories of national, rather than local, interest, which helps to overcome the regional divisions that marked the civil war.

Focusing on the U.S. goal to promote transparency and rule of law, the United States supported many initiatives to improve the legal environment by providing training to judges, and funding a project to publish an annotated copy of the Tajik civil code, which will standardize application of the law. Funding also went to programs that work with law schools to develop courses, to establish

courtroom monitoring programs and to form student bar associations with a goal of cultivating a culture of transparency in the next generations of Tajik lawyers. Four Tajik lawyers participated in an IVP to the United States to learn about the American legal system, focusing on the defense side of trials.

The United States remains concerned about ongoing human rights abuses. As a result, U.S. implementing partner Freedom House began a program to support and strengthen the work of human rights defenders in protecting and promoting human rights, including press freedom, and to encourage cooperation between human rights organizations on both local and regional levels. Because the expatriate staff member has not been able to secure a visa from the Government of Tajikistan, the program continues to operate at reduced levels, but has been able to introduce Tajik human rights defenders to various international mechanisms of human rights defense.

Other civil society development programs include a U.S.-funded program implemented by the American Bar Association Central European and Eurasian Law Initiative that focuses on facilitating cross-border cooperation in the Fergana Valley. Project activities include cross-border and issue-specific training sessions focused on public relations, coalition building, human rights monitoring and evaluation, advocacy and institution building. The Institute for Democracy in Eastern Europe is using U.S. funding for a program that promotes civic leadership, citizen participation, community involvement, civic education, and cross-regional networking in the five countries of Central Asia.

There were some restrictions on the practice of religion. The Embassy engaged with Tajik government officials on behalf of religious groups or individuals as warranted on a case-by-case basis, but few difficulties arose.

Due to a complicated economic situation and low employment opportunities, especially for women, Tajiks remain vulnerable to human traffickers. Tajikistan is one of the major source countries of forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation for Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan,

the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and other countries. Working with the United States, the Tajik Government has taken some important steps to combat this threat.

In August 2004 the Tajik Law on Combating Trafficking in Persons was signed by the president and entered into force. The law was developed with U.S.-sponsored International Organization on Migration (IOM) support and introduces modern definitions and methods of working against exploitation and human trafficking. The comprehensive law includes both punishment for perpetrators (who heretofore were charged under other crimes), but also includes preventive and protective measures. The law shows a greater understanding of the issue and helps provide law-enforcement structures with the tools they need to better combat trafficking.

In May, U.S. funding through IOM helped create the Special Division for Combating Kidnapping, Trafficking in Persons and Racketeering under the Combating Organized Crime Department of the Ministry of Interior. The Division has dedicated five officers solely to the investigation of TIP cases. Since the establishment of this division, fourteen cases of human trafficking have been investigated and criminal proceeding instituted, as compared with none in previous years (when trafficking was prosecuted under different crimes). This funding is also linked to the successful prosecution in September of Tajikistan's first TIP trial, involving a woman who adopted a girl solely for the purpose of trafficking her to the UAE and Turkey for the purpose of sexual exploitation. The girl escaped, and the woman was charged with exploitation for prostitution, trafficking in under-aged people, organization of rape, pandering, and document fraud and sentenced to 14 years of imprisonment and property confiscation.

As the result of an investigative journalism exchange program sponsored by the U.S. Government, the head of a trafficking ring, who was previously arrested and released from custody without investigation, was re-arrested when one of the program participants began to investigate the case and started to uncover some of the problems with the trafficker's release.

Turkey

Turkey is a constitutional republic with a multi-party 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 significant 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. In order to meet the Copenhagen Criteria for EU accession, the Government adopted extensive human rights-related legal reforms designed to crack down on torture and "honor killings" (the killing by family members of women suspected of behavior that brings "shame" to them in the community) and to expand freedom of religion and association. However, it is too early to assess what impact these reforms will have on actual government practices. 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 (TIP) and the right of return for internally displaced persons. United States officials routinely meet with representatives of various political, religious, social, cultural and ethnic groups to discuss human rights conditions and relations between these groups and the Turkish State. United States officials also meet regularly with members of the bureaucracy, legislature, executive branch and judiciary to encourage broad reforms, including

reforms needed to meet EU accession criteria. In February 2004, Secretary Powell sent a letter to Foreign Minister Gul discussing the Turkish Government's anti-torture efforts and other human rights-related reforms. The U.S. Ambassador discussed human rights issues in meetings with Minister Gul and the Ministers of Interior, Justice and Education.

The U.S. Embassy used the U.S. presidential election as an opportunity to engage many different audiences on the U.S. electoral system. Election programming began in early October with an address to university students, academics, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and local government officials by an American speaker with expertise in the electoral system, polling in election campaigns and political parties. The U.S. Embassy organized an Election Watch program that took place over 15 hours in two venues. The program at the Turkish-American Association was open to the public and included a panel discussion, screening of videotapes of the presidential debates, live election coverage and a press conference held by the Ambassador. The U.S. Embassy also held an Election Watch at the Ambassador's residence, which attracted approximately 300 government officials, politicians, editors and other high-level contacts. The program highlighted the U.S. presidential election process, with special emphasis on the role of campaign polling and political parties. On a municipal level, a U.S. government grant to the National Democratic Institute will help train municipal officials in recent decentralization legislation.

The International Visitors Program continues to provide opportunities for professionals in all fields to be introduced to their American counterparts and to the United States in general. Participants in the 2004 program joined a number of projects related to democracy and human rights: four women parliamentarians participated in a project on "Women in Politics;" an official of the Ankara municipality participated in a Civic Education multi-regional project; and mayors, journalists, parliamentarians and business leaders joined projects related to local government, investigative journalism and the U.S. presidential election.

The United States has emphasized the importance of prosecuting, convicting and sentencing to appropriate jail terms police who commit torture. In separate decisions in March and September, an Ankara court convicted five police officers in the Birtan Altinbas death-in-detention case dating from 1991 and sentenced them each to four years and five months in prison. The court acquitted five co-defendants. In November, the High Court of Appeals overturned the verdict on the grounds that the sentences were too lenient, sending the case back to the lower court. With the help of a U.S. grant, the Minneapolis-based Center for Victims of Torture, along with its Turkish NGO partners, held its New Tactics in Human Rights International Symposium in Ankara in late September.

An Embassy official who is a former defense attorney spoke on several occasions to members of the Turkish National Police. The official discussed concepts such as "due process of law" and "chain of custody" under the U.S. Constitution. The Institute for the Study and Development of Legal Systems (ISDLS) was awarded a continuation grant to address specific measures to improve the handling of freedom of expression, police conduct and trial alternatives in the criminal justice process. An ISDLS-U.S. delegation traveled to Turkey in September, and a Turkish delegation examining alternatives to criminal trial will travel to the U.S. in March 2005. Working with the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance and Training, the United States will collaborate with the Turkish Ministry of Justice to organize workshops in two cities in March 2005 on prosecution of police misconduct cases.

In compliance with the Leahy Amendment, the United States worked closely with the Turkish Ministry of Defense to vet military personnel for U.S. training. Under a United States-Government of Turkey memorandum of intent for anti-terrorist training for law enforcement officials, the United States provides training while the Turkish Government screens training candidates for human rights violations. To date, the United States continues to provide assistance for course offerings for Turkish law enforcement authorities.

The United States enhanced its collaboration with the NGO community through a grant to Kent State University and its NGO partner in Turkey on “Women’s Leadership,” a program that features a series of leadership conferences involving participants from women’s associations in Turkey’s conservative southeastern region. Another grant includes exchanges of American and Turkish high school students and is focused on development of student government and high school newspapers, which help instill democratic principles among young people. Such projects support U.S. goals to promote respect for human rights and to encourage democratic practices, especially among youth and non-elite communities.

The United States has also stressed the need to allow free religious expression for all faiths, including all Protestants, Jehovah’s Witnesses and Baha’i, who have no legal standing in Turkey. The United States at the highest levels continues to urge the Turkish Government to reach agreement with the Ecumenical Patriarchate on the re-opening of the Halki seminary on the island of Heybeli, acknowledge the ecumenical nature of the Patriarchate and ensure the right of non-citizens to serve as clergy. On a regular basis, U.S. officials continue to engage Turkish Government officials in a dialogue on religious freedom. In December, the United States supported the visit to Turkey of the Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, a U.S.-based group of Greek Orthodox laymen. The Ambassador accompanied Archon representatives to a meeting with the Turkish Foreign Minister to discuss Halki and other issues relating to the Ecumenical Patriarchate. President Bush met with Muslim and minority religious community leaders in Istanbul during the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Summit in June. President Bush also met with President Sezer and discussed the importance of religious diversity and maintaining a tradition of religious freedom.

In June, Secretary Powell and Foreign Minister Gul presided over a signing ceremony that launched the first shelter for victims of TIP in the country. The Municipality of Istanbul and a local NGO located a temporary rental facility, which is currently being renovated, until more permanent facilities can be secured. Under terms of the

agreement, the Istanbul Municipality committed to renting the property and turning it over, cost-free. The United States has also given a grant to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to implement a TIP program. Its main objective is to assist Turkish authorities in setting up a comprehensive protection mechanism for TIP victims and enhance the country’s capacity to combat TIP. Elements of the program include disseminating anti-TIP materials, conducting an information campaign, training law enforcement and judicial officers and establishing a screening and referral process for victims of trafficking.

Turkmenistan

The Government of Turkmenistan’s human rights record remained extremely poor, and it continued to commit serious abuses. Turkmenistan is a one-party state dominated by President Saparmurat Niyazov, who retains his authoritarian monopoly on political power and on the Democratic Party, which remained the sole legally-recognized political party in the country. Niyazov has been president since independence in 1991 and may legally remain in office until 2010. In August 2003, Niyazov was elected to a life term as Chairman of the People’s Council, giving him a substantial say in the selection of any presidential successor. Government efforts continued to focus on fostering centralized state control and the glorification of the President. The unicameral parliament has no genuinely independent authority; in August 2003, the Peoples’ Council replaced it as the supreme legislative body. Parliamentary elections took place December 19. Foreign observers were not invited to monitor elections and all candidates were pro-government Democracy Party members cleared by authorities. President Niyazov controlled the judicial system. The Government severely restricts freedom of speech and does not permit freedom of the press. There were no domestic human rights groups. Throughout 2004, the Government remained repressive in its response to any perceived threats to the regime. While serious violations of religious freedom continued in Turkmenistan, the Government did make progress from a legislative perspective and with a noticeable reduction in harassment of minority religious congregations.

The United States maintained a three-pronged approach to promoting democracy and human rights. First, the United States urged the Government to respect human rights and advance democracy by raising these issues in high-level bilateral meetings and multilateral institutions, and by iterating its concerns in public statements. Second, the United States regularly advocated on behalf of individual cases of abuse, coordinating closely with other diplomatic missions and international organizations. Third, the United States funded programs designed to strengthen civil society and respect for human rights.

The United States recognized that the primary means of promoting democracy and human rights in Turkmenistan was to address the continued deterioration in the human rights situation after an armed attack on President Niyazov's motorcade on November 25, 2002. There were widespread, credible reports of human rights abuses committed by officials in the course of investigating the attack, including credible reports of torture and detention of suspects' relatives. During the past year, the United States, through diplomatic efforts at the highest levels, continued to support efforts by the International Committee of the Red Cross to gain access to prisoners detained following that attack. In 2003, the United States and nine other Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) members invoked the "Moscow Mechanism" (for only the second time in the organization's history) which called for a Special Rapporteur on Turkmenistan's human rights abuses after the November 2002 attack. Throughout 2004, the United States consistently and publicly called for follow-through action on the OSCE Rapporteur's report. In April, the United States and the EU jointly sponsored a resolution at the UN Commission on Human Rights which condemned the Government for human rights abuses and called on the Government to adopt measures called for by the OSCE Rapporteur. In November 2004, the United States and the EU jointly introduced a successful UN General Assembly resolution condemning the Government's human rights abuses and calling for fact-finding missions by international envoys to investigate reports of torture and abuse. The Government continued to refuse to facilitate such visits. While none of these

efforts have so far resulted in accountability for the human rights violations that have occurred, this diplomatic strategy succeeded in keeping very serious human rights issues in the public eye.

In January 2004, the Government formally lifted the exit visa regime imposed in early 2003. The Government took this action in response to notification from the United States in late 2003 that Turkmenistan was risking sanctions for not meeting the freedom of emigration requirements under the Jackson-Vanik Amendment to the Trade Act of 1994. Although the Government maintained a black list of select individuals not permitted to travel, freedom of movement improved. Throughout 2004 the United States continued to monitor the situation to ensure Turkmenistan's compliance with its international obligations on freedom of movement.

In November 2003, the Government enacted draconian laws on public organizations and religious groups that severely curtailed freedom of association and religion by imposing criminal penalties for unregistered activities. These human rights violations were also a focal point for U.S. diplomatic efforts in 2004. In Ashgabat, the U.S. Ambassador, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Commander of the U.S. Central Command and visiting OSCE delegations informed President Niyazov that the improvement of the human rights situation was of the highest priority, and high-level U.S. officials raised their concerns in Washington D.C. After sustained U.S. and international pressure, Turkmenistan removed the legal requirement that minority religions must have a certain number of members in order to obtain registration and dropped criminal penalties against unregistered religious groups and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Four minority religious groups were permitted to register, as were several independent NGOs. Though registered, the religious groups continued to face difficulties in achieving all their rights under the law, and the United States continues to monitor the situation closely. The Government granted amnesty and released six conscientious objectors from prison in 2004. Government officials closed or destroyed at least six mosques.

To implement the second prong of its strategy, the United States raised concerns regarding individual cases of human rights abuse to the Government of Turkmenistan. In 2004, the Embassy coordinated with other diplomatic missions to protest the harassment and detention of a noted author. Upon his return to Turkmenistan, he was detained, his travel documents were seized and his relatives were arrested and accused of committing high crimes against the state. Intervention by the United States contributed to his release, and the cases against his relatives were reviewed. The Embassy consistently monitored and actively advocated on behalf of a reporter for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty who was frequently harassed. In one case, U.S. intervention helped secure his quick release after he was abducted, blindfolded, injected with an unknown substance and threatened with 15 years in prison. The Embassy subsequently persuaded the Government to allow the journalist to depart the country in 2004.

In response to continued harassment of religious minority groups, the U.S. Embassy raised issues of freedom of worship with the Council of Religious Affairs and other responsible bodies within the Government of Turkmenistan. One principle concern was that the Government was hindering some registered religious groups from establishing places of worship. The Government cooperated on hosting a visit to Turkmenistan by a representative of the U.S. Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom, who encouraged the Government to register additional religious groups and cease harassment.

The U.S. Embassy continued to advocate better treatment of relatives of those implicated in the November 2002 attack, urging the Government of Turkmenistan to cease systematically harassing them. In 2003, the Ambassador sent a letter to the Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan in advance of the annual presidential amnesty, urging the Government to release political prisoner Mukhammet Aimuradov and individuals imprisoned for refusing to perform compulsory military service due to their religious beliefs. The Embassy was a principal point of contact and advocacy for individual cases of abuse.

The third prong of the strategy was to fund programs that strengthen civil society. The Government of Turkmenistan was a hesitant partner in civil society programs and educational exchanges; it often used bureaucratic mechanisms to delay or hinder implementation of exchange programs or registration and operations of truly independent NGOs. Nonetheless, in FY 2004, the Embassy awarded 30 Democracy Commission grants focusing on civic education, Internet access, the free flow of information, community self-help and women's and human rights issues. A U.S.-funded civil society development program focused on grassroots community development and advocacy. In FY 2004, 53 capacity-building training events were conducted for more than 1,032 participants under this program.

In 2004, the United States gave more than 125 future leaders the opportunity to study and receive training in the United States through exchange programs. One new American Corner (four in total) and two new Internet Access Training Program sites (four in total) were opened in 2004, providing a critical link to the outside world by offering access to nonofficial sources of information. The Embassy also awarded three and four-year scholarships to 17 Turkmen college students to attend the American University of Central Asia in the Kyrgyz Republic.

In order to support rule of law, the U.S.-funded program implemented by the American Bar Association's Central European and Eurasian Law Initiative (ABA/CEELI) provided support to the Legal Resource Center (LRC) at Turkmen State University (TSU). ABA/CEELI 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. By the end of May, a total of 198 people had participated in the seminars. Between January 1 and the end of May, 4,053 people visited the LRC's facilities.

ABA/CEELI continued to sponsor student participation in moot court competitions. Working with the administration of TSU, ABA/CEELI conducted a modified moot court competition on the national level. In April, 12 students gave oral arguments on a hypothetical case focusing on the International Criminal Court and submitted written briefs. The event provided a much-needed opportunity for Turkmenistan's law students to sharpen their practical legal skills.

ABA/CEELI's Street Law program in Turkmenistan developed over the past year 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 Turkmen 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. Trainings during the past year covered topics such as children's rights under Turkmen law, the law on delinquency, administrative violations, the right to individuality, the right to marry and the legal status of women. The program was effective at promoting practical skills and legal knowledge among law student participants and providing desperately needed legal information to the population at large.

A civil law clinic in which TSU law students provide legal consultations under the supervision of qualified practicing attorneys began operating in Ashgabat in May 2004. This was the first clinical program in Turkmenistan, and it offers a unique opportunity for students to serve their community and gain practical legal experience. ABA/CEELI staff will provide ongoing training to clinic staff attorneys on managing a student-run clinical program and addressing practical and pedagogical issues surrounding clinical legal education.

The U.S. government-funded civil society development program 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 associations. The

United States provided training and resources to strengthen the financial and institutional sustainability of these centers, and also created opportunities to develop new centers. The program included funding to provide institutional grants for leading NGOs in specific sectors and community development grants with a focus on social partnerships to help NGOs engage with their communities and advocate for their needs at the local level. 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.

In 2004, U.S. funding to combat trafficking in persons (TIP) supported the International Organization for Migration'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 supports an anti-trafficking public education campaign and training for the Border Service to combat TIP.

Ukraine

Ukraine is a mixed parliamentary and presidential republic governed by a directly elected president, a prime minister who heads a cabinet of ministers and a unicameral parliament (Rada). Citizens' right to peacefully change their government was restricted during most of the year by authorities, who engaged in many forms of manipulation in parliamentary by-elections and local elections, especially the mayoral election in Mukacheve. This was particularly true of the October 31 presidential race and its November 21 run-off vote. However, the December 26 repeat run-off, which followed the Supreme Court's invalidation of previous results, was judged by reputable international observers, including the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), to have brought Ukraine substantially closer to meeting international standards for democratic elections. The Government's human rights record remained poor and worsened in a number of areas; however, there were also improvements in some areas, particularly toward the end of the



Ukraine

**Pro-democracy supporters
brave sub-zero temperatures
to call for free and fair elections**

Photo: U. S. Department of State

year. Members of the security forces committed human rights abuses including torture and custodial deaths with impunity. Arbitrary searches, seizures, arrests and detention, sometimes apparently politically motivated, remained a problem.

For most of the year, authorities interfered with news coverage either directly or indirectly through pro-government media oligarchs. Tactics included harassment and intimidation of journalists, censorship of material, pressuring journalists to apply self-censorship, and blocking or closing down independent broadcasts. Toward the end of the year, after the fraudulent second round vote in the presidential election, many reporters refused to report the stories ordered by the Government or by pro-government media oligarchs, and the media coverage became more balanced. The Government failed to render justice for murdered journalists Heorhiy Gongadze and Ihor Aleksandrov. In the lead up to the two rounds of the presidential election, the Government intensified its repression of civil society, especially members of the opposition and independent media, curtailing civil and political liberties, and violating human rights. The Constitution provides for an independent judiciary; however, courts were subject to political interference and corruption and trial delays were common. Trafficking in persons (TIP) remained a serious problem.

In 2004, the U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Ukraine focused largely on creating the conditions for a free and fair presidential election. This included strengthening the rule of law, independent media and respect for civil liberties, and improving the monitoring and advocacy capacity of human rights organizations. Combating TIP was also a key goal. To achieve these goals, the United States engaged in diplomatic efforts and supported a variety of assistance programs. United States officials extensively monitored and reported on democracy and human rights issues and regularly coordinated assistance strategies with donors and members of the international community.

The Ambassador, Embassy officers and senior U.S. officials frequently met with senior officials in Kiev, including former President Leonid Kuchma, and in the regions to stress that membership in Euro-Atlantic institutions such as the NATO hinges on respect for democracy and human rights. That message was regularly reinforced in Washington by Secretary of State Colin Powell, then-Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, USAID Administrator Andrew Natsios, Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky, and Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Elizabeth Jones in meetings and telephone calls with high-level Ukrainian officials.



Ukraine

President Viktor Yushchenko releases a dove during his inauguration.

AP Photo

Moreover, a series of distinguished current and former American officials visited Kiev during the year, stressing to senior government and opposition leaders the importance of open and transparent presidential elections. These visitors included former President Bush, former Secretaries of State Henry Kissinger and Madeleine Albright, former National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski, Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Senator Richard Lugar, Senator John McCain and former Supreme Allied Commander Europe, retired U.S. Army General Wesley Clark. Sharp criticism of the fraudulent second round of voting in the presidential election by presidential envoy Senator Lugar and Secretary Powell were important factors in the series of events leading to the decision by the Ukrainian Supreme Court that the election was invalid.

United States officials also continued to work with members of the international community through multilateral institutions such as the OSCE and the UN to press the Government to uphold its international human rights commitments.

To help eliminate human rights abuses committed by security forces, the Embassy continued to work with the Ukrainian military, primarily focusing efforts on the rules of land warfare, rules of engagement formulation, and the legal basis for conflict. The Defense Institute for International

Legal Studies sent two mobile training teams to provide instruction on human rights issues. This and other U.S.-funded international military education training courses provided the Ukrainian military with an important understanding of the legal aspects of peace support operations. Leahy Amendment procedures were used to ensure that the United States did not train individuals credibly alleged to have committed human rights abuses.

Although all credit rightly goes to the Ukrainian people, U.S. efforts to promote free and fair elections, strengthen the rule of law, civil society, and independent media no doubt were positive factors in the presidential election and popular resistance to government attempts to subvert the people's will. The resulting massive, weeks-long, non-violent protest movement known as the "Orange Revolution" radically transformed the political landscape and media environment in Ukraine.

While the United States Government supported numerous valuable projects, several election-related examples stand out. Several projects provided substantial assistance to the Ukrainian legislature in drafting election legislation that was recognized by the OSCE's Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights as "a significant improvement over its predecessors...providing an adequate framework for the conduct of democratic elections." To improve implementation, U.S.-supported projects trained over 100,000 election commis-

sioners, as well as thousands of lawyers and judges, concerning their respective rights and responsibilities under the new law.

The United States Government contributed observers and other support to the OSCE election observation mission, and funded the participation of more than 2,500 other non-partisan international observers and 10,000 domestic monitors for the presidential election. The reports from these observers formed the basis upon which the results of the November 21 vote were judged invalid, both internationally and by the majority of the Ukrainian people. Conversely, the presence of international observers helped validate the results of the December 26 vote as reflecting the will of the people. The conclusions and recommendations in the observation mission reports will assist the Ukrainian legislature in its continuing efforts to bring election laws into conformity with international standards.

The United States Government supported a respected media watchdog organization that worked during the presidential election campaign to galvanize Ukrainian journalists dissatisfied with being forced to report the "government line." This NGO helped draft a now-famous petition, signed by more than 300 reporters, anchors and editors, which touched off the so-called "Journalists' Rebellion" that began shortly before the presidential election and gained significant momentum during the "Orange Revolution." Many media analysts and watchdog organizations now say that the press is more free and diverse than at any point in modern Ukrainian history.

The United States Government, working in coordination with 12 other embassies and international organizations, provided support to an NGO to conduct an independent exit poll during each round of the election. This NGO played a particularly important role during the November 21 runoff round of the election, when its polling results differed substantially from government-announced election results. This NGO was repeatedly vilified by the Yanukovich campaign, pressured by the Government, and nearly broken apart by attempts to compromise the professional integrity of two of the organization's partners. The United States provided assistance to Ukraine's

top elections monitoring NGO. During the months leading up to the presidential campaign, this NGO became increasingly active, issuing reports on government transparency and parliamentary activity, generating significant national and international attention. This organization and its thousands of domestic election monitors also played a critical role in publicly highlighting problems with voter lists during the first and second rounds of the election. The United States also provided funding to a Ukrainian NGO to help alert the public and the Government to problems with the lists and how to rectify them.

The United States Government supported nationwide voter education campaigns apprising people of their civic rights and publicizing candidate platforms. Through newspaper inserts, public service announcements, leaflets, radio programs and community educational events, citizens were advised of the procedures to follow to ensure they were properly registered to vote. People who believed their rights were infringed upon were referred to other U.S.-funded projects providing pro bono legal assistance.

A U.S. grant to a Ukrainian media NGO funded the preparation of election-related inserts that were distributed by more than 50 newspapers throughout Ukraine. In a number of eastern and southern oblasts - where access to information was highly restricted - these professional, non-partisan inserts broke an "information blockade" and played a critical role in providing unbiased updates to voters on the political situation in the country during the presidential election period.

The Embassy also worked to encourage respect for the rights of women, children, minorities and people with disabilities. A U.S. Government grant supported the work of an NGO that successfully involved individuals with disabilities in the political process and helped ensure that they were able to cast votes at polling stations on election day.

A program funded through the U.S.-supported Ukraine Citizen Action Network (UCAN) project significantly reduced the number of newborn infants who were abandoned in Crimea. Using a UCAN grant, a Crimean NGO launched an innovative program to counsel disadvantaged women

and conducted a large-scale public information campaign in Crimea that encouraged adoption. The information campaign was covered by at least 100 local media outlets in Crimea and stressed, among other things, that adoption was not as legally complicated as people thought. As a direct result of these efforts, adoption rates increased seven-fold overall in Crimea during the year - and four-fold for children with disabilities.

Through another UCAN grant, an Odesa-based NGO created an innovative alternative registration system for homeless adults and children that provides them with access to medical and psychiatric care. During the year, this NGO trained 12 social service organizations nationwide in how to use the alternative registration system. In addition, the city of Luhansk sent a representative to Odesa to train with this group. As a result, Luhansk is working effectively with community organizations in addressing the problem of homelessness in that major eastern city.

Religious freedom continued to improve, but some registration difficulties and property restitution issues remained. The United States actively worked with the Government to protect religious sites neglected or mistreated during the Soviet era. The United States encouraged the Government to return religious properties and edifices to their rightful owners and requested that the Government register religious groups, including minority and non-native faiths, to practice freely.

The United States Government 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. With U.S. funds, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) supported the Solidarity Center's program of trade union development in Ukraine. The NGO administered seminars, maintained ongoing contact with union representatives, and regularly reported on workers' rights issues. The United States also funded a number of technical assistance programs in Ukraine to promote basic rights of workers.

Eliminating TIP and assisting victims were also priorities during the year, and the United States

actively engaged the Government on this subject. The United States funded a number of well-respected organizations that assisted trafficking victims and worked to prevent trafficking through educational programs for police officers, judges, students, and the general public, and supported information hotlines. Through the U.S. International Visitors Program, a group of Ukrainian anti-trafficking specialists visited the United States for training.

Partly due to U.S. efforts, the Government continued to increase its cooperation with other governments and anti-trafficking NGOs and participated in international task forces to investigate trafficking cases. With support from U.S.-funded organizations, the parliament established a working group on the ratification of the UN Convention on Combating Organized Crime and its anti-Trafficking Protocol; the parliament ratified the Convention during the year.

Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan is an authoritarian country with a very poor human rights record. While the Government took important steps during the course of 2004 to address torture and to establish police accountability, it made no progress on democratic reform and placed further restrictions on the activities of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the press. Despite some progress, physical mistreatment in pretrial detention was widespread, prison conditions remained extremely harsh, and independent journalists, opposition politicians and human rights activists continued to be subject to harassment. Even after a series of large-scale amnesties in 2002-2004, an estimated 5,000 to 5,500 political prisoners remained in prison, the vast majority of whom were suspected members of Islamic extremist groups such as the Party of Islamic Liberation (Hizb ut-Tahrir).

Uzbekistan President Islam Karimov was elected to a second term of office in 2000 in an election that was widely considered to be neither free nor fair. His term was extended from five to seven years following a January 2002 referendum, which multilateral organizations and foreign embassies refused to observe. Elections for the lower cham-

ber of parliament, held on December 26, fell significantly short of international standards, according to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). No opposition parties were allowed to participate and none of the nominally-independent candidates permitted to run represented views critical of the president or his policies. In July, Secretary of State Powell determined that Uzbekistan had not made sufficient progress in meeting its commitments under the 2002 Strategic Partnership and Cooperation Framework Agreement, a decision that affected \$18 million of assistance to the central Government. In December, Secretary Powell also declined to certify Uzbekistan for Cooperative Threat Reduction assistance in 2004 based on human rights criteria.

In promoting human rights, the United States has sought to engage with Uzbekistan on two levels. On the first level, the United States maintains a vigorous bilateral dialogue with the Uzbek Government on a host of issues, from democratization to religious tolerance, and from legal and penitentiary reform to advocacy on behalf of specific prisoners of conscience. Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) Michael Kozak visited Uzbekistan in November, meeting with officials in Tashkent, Namangan and Andijon to highlight ongoing U.S. concerns about human rights and democracy. Human rights and democracy also featured prominently in the July visit of Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs (EUR) Beth Jones and the November visit of Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for EUR Laura Kennedy. The Ambassador and his staff treated the promotion of human rights and democracy as a major U.S. priority in Uzbekistan and incorporated these goals in discussions with officials at all levels of government. In Washington, then-Assistant Secretary for DRL Lorne Craner and Assistant Secretary for EUR Beth Jones twice provided Congressional testimony on U.S. efforts to engage the Government of Uzbekistan on U.S. concerns about human rights and democracy.

The second level of the U.S. strategy focuses on the development of civil society. Working with NGOs and individual Uzbeks, the United States

seeks to expand the ability of local organizations to affect positive change in society, to develop the foundations of a free press, and to create space for human rights activism and independent political expression. The United States places particular value on exchanges and training, in order to provide the next generation of Uzbek citizens with the tools necessary to move their country's politics and society out of the shadow of its Soviet past. All programs operated by the Open Society Institute (OSI) were forced to close when the Uzbek Ministry of Justice (MOJ) refused to reregister OSI, effectively shutting it down. In February, the Government issued a decree making it more difficult for foreign entities to fund the activities of their local NGO partners. The United States has devoted considerable attention to this issue and is working to ensure that local organizations are able to continue their work.

Under the Strategic Partnership and Cooperation Framework Agreement signed in 2003, the Government of Uzbekistan committed itself to moving toward a multiparty democracy. Despite consistent calls from the United States for political reform, there has not been the type of progress the Agreement envisions. No opposition party was registered to participate in the December elections, and none of the independent candidates on the ballot represented views critical of the Government. Opposition politicians from the Birlik, Erk, and Free Farmers parties were subject to harassment. The U.S. message on political reform has been clearly articulated to the highest levels of the Government by the Ambassador and embassy staff, as well as by a host of visiting officials. Both DRL Acting Assistant Secretary Kozak and EUR Deputy Assistant Secretary Kennedy, who traveled to Tashkent a month before the elections, made this a centerpiece of their visits.

Despite continuing pressure from the Government, the U.S.-funded National Democratic Institute (NDI) and International Republican Institute (IRI) worked actively with Uzbekistan's opposition parties, providing guidance on grassroots organizing, press relations and the drafting of party platforms. In May, the MOJ publicly criticized NDI and IRI for their work with unregistered political parties, prompting an immediate

public response from the Embassy. NDI and IRI also sought to work with Uzbekistan's five registered, pro-government parties, but these parties were for the most part unreceptive. While the Government refused to register independent political parties or the candidates they supported, NDI and IRI's training seminars over the past two years have offered an invaluable education in how party politics works at the local level. Although none of the independent parties were registered, they were able to organize at the grass roots, hold national and regional conferences, and launch signature drives – a level of political activism not seen in the past. U.S. efforts have resulted in more citizens being willing to engage in political expression than has been seen in years, as seen in the number of citizens willing to sign petitions to register independent candidates for December's elections.

Combating torture remained at the top of the U.S. human rights agenda, and here there was notable progress. Unlike previous years, there were no credible reports of persons dying in custody as a result of torture. At the urging of Embassy and State Department officials, the General Prosecutor and Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) for the first time invited international and local human rights observers and diplomatic personnel to oversee investigations into three separate cases in which torture had been alleged. Although the independent observers concluded that the inmates had not died as a result of torture, in one case MVD investigators, working with local human rights activists, determined that police had committed serious procedural violations. These findings resulted in disciplinary action, including the firing of the local police chief. Freedom House took an active role in organizing each of these investigations, using resources from its U.S.-funded Torture Prevention Project. With U.S. Embassy support, Freedom House also sponsored a series of roundtables, seminars and trainings bringing together representatives of local human rights NGOs and officials from the MVD, General Prosecutor's Office and National Security Service to discuss torture prevention. In these, as well as many less high-profile cases, the United States works with victims' family members, local human rights workers and

defense attorneys, and international NGOs such as Human Rights Watch to investigate allegations of torture and raise them with appropriate government officials.

In its efforts to combat torture, the United States has devoted considerable attention to conditions in pretrial detention, where much of the most serious abuse occurs. Using U.S. funding, the American Bar Association Central European and Eurasian Law Initiative (ABA/CEELI) operates Public Defender Centers in Tashkent, Nukus, Fergana and Andijon. These Centers, which provide high-quality pro-bono legal advice to indigent clients, are a key component of the U.S. strategy to fight torture in pretrial detention. ABA/CEELI, together with Freedom House and the OSCE, has been an active partner in programs designed by the Embassy's Resident Legal Advisor (RLA) to promote respect for detainees' rights. Central themes have included access to defense counsel and habeas corpus. The RLA also organized training for Uzbek forensic pathologists to investigate custodial deaths. The United States also funded an OSCE initiative to instruct prison officials on international standards of human rights practice. The OSCE also provided training to local NGOs on the basics of prison monitoring. All of these programs have been initiated as a means of assisting the Government of Uzbekistan to implement the 2003 recommendations of the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, Theo Van Boven.

Exchange and visitor programs have played a role in the U.S. effort to end torture in Uzbekistan. In October, for example, the RLA, working with Freedom House, took a contingent of senior officials from law enforcement, the security services and the prosecutor's office to Slovenia, where they heard first-hand how Slovenia's law enforcement bodies handled their country's transition to democratic governance. In November, the U.S. Embassy paired human rights workers from outlying regions of Uzbekistan with reform-minded law enforcement officials from the same locations for an International Visitors Program study tour. In the course of their three-week trip, participants attended court proceedings, examined procedures

for investigating police misconduct, and spoke with civilian review boards and human rights monitoring groups. As mandated by the Leahy Amendment, all Uzbek participants in U.S. security training programs are subject to strict human rights vetting. The United States also sponsored the participation of Uzbek human rights defenders in an international conference on sharing new tactics in promoting human rights, including on addressing torture.

The United States has also invested considerable attention and resources to increasing awareness of human rights issues in Uzbek society and to expanding the capacity of the local human rights and democracy community. The United States has continued a three-year program, which aims to develop civil society in Uzbekistan by supporting a national network of seven NGO resource centers. A related civic advocacy support program assists NGOs in becoming more involved in public policy issues. In an effort to cultivate new groups, the Embassy's Democracy Commission in 2004 awarded grants directly to 39 independent NGOs that are in the vanguard of developing civil society in Uzbekistan. It is largely through these micro-grants that a number of human rights activists have been able to do valuable reporting and advocacy work in the regions. A U.S.-funded program implemented by ABA/CEELI focuses on facilitating cross-border cooperation in the Fergana Valley. Project activities include cross-border and issue-specific training sessions focused on public relations, coalition building, human rights monitoring and evaluation, advocacy and institution building. The Institute for Democracy in Eastern Europe is using U.S. funding for a program that promotes civic leadership, citizen participation, community involvement, civic education and cross-regional networking in the five countries of Central Asia.

Freedom House and ABA/CEELI are key components of U.S. efforts to promote respect for human rights. Continuing a U.S.-funded program, in November Freedom House opened a Human Rights Resource Center in Samarkand, in addition to the existing Centers in Tashkent and Namangan. The Centers offer a secure environment for human rights activists to network and to organize, and they provide essential access to

information and Internet technology. Freedom House's extremely popular training programs are giving a new generation of human rights defenders the tools they need to be effective, while its small grants and legal defense programs provide important support. Under ABA/CEELI's supervision, the United States has continued to fund a very successful human rights law clinic at the Tashkent State Law Institute (TSLI), designed to train young lawyers in human rights law as well as give them practical experience providing pro bono consultations to citizens. In November, Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Kozak participated in the opening ceremonies of a second U.S.-funded Human Rights Clinic at the Andijon State University Faculty of Law. In February, the Ambassador spoke at the opening of a Tashkent law firm specializing in human rights, founded by graduates of the TSLI Clinic, with U.S. funds and ABA/CEELI guidance. In addition to providing human rights legal defense, the law firm also provides public education in Uzbekistan's international human rights commitments.

Fundamental to democratic governance is the rule of law. United States grantees ABA/CEELI and (IRIS) have worked with the RLA on projects designed to strengthen the independence of the judiciary and to promote judicial ethics. Trainings also focused on raising the stature and professionalism of the defense bar. In an effort to expand legal literacy in the population at large, ABA/CEELI's Legal Resource Centers in Fergana and Samarkand conducted a series of education and training programs throughout the year. Other ABA/CEELI programs, such as street law summer courses and moot court competitions, emphasize legal education among high school and university students.

Freedom of media continues to be a serious concern for the United States. Although official censorship of the press ended in 2002, self-censorship remains the rule, and very few journalists were willing to publish investigative or critical stories. Although no journalists were arrested this year, one prominent reporter and one editor were fired, reportedly as punishment for stories that cast officials in a bad light. In July, a Namangan court

found Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty guilty of libel in connection with a story it broadcast questioning the accuracy of a report published in a state-run newspaper. In September, the Tashkent City Administrative Court, acting on a complaint from the MOJ, suspended the operations of Internews Network Uzbekistan, a local NGO working to enhance the capacity of independent media with U.S. funding. Later in August, the MOJ froze the bank account of the NGO's parent organization, Internews.

In this climate, a U.S. priority has been to broaden access to objective information and to support the efforts of those journalists willing to test the limits. United States-funded training programs have exposed promising print and broadcast journalists to modern, independent journalistic practices. Although the Government continues to deny it registration, the U.S.-funded Institute for War and Peace Reporting continues to provide opportunities for on-the-job training to courageous independent reporters, with an emphasis on expanded human rights reporting. With U.S. funding, the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX) established a Media Resource Center in Namangan, which provides infrastructural support as well as training to journalists and media outlets. The United States also supports several independent television stations nationwide through training, production assistance and equipment grants. While government-dominated television continues to be devoid of serious news, a U.S.-funded grant program has been instrumental in increasing the number of talk shows on political, social and economic issues that are broadcast by these stations. U.S. programs support an independent radio station in Tashkent that produces quality news and information. The U.S. Internet Access Training Program (IATP) operates 18 sites throughout Uzbekistan. Internet access provides many Uzbeks their first exposure to uncensored news and information, and in many areas outside of Tashkent, IATP represents practically the only publicly available Internet source.

The United States continues to monitor and advocate on behalf of religious freedom, in the face of the Government's largely unchanged policies on religion. A continuing campaign against groups

the Government suspects are involved in extremist Islamic activity has tended to constrain religious practice of some observant Muslims, particularly young men, who hesitate to display outward signs of piety for fear of being identified as extremist. Unwieldy registration requirements made it difficult for many evangelical churches to function. Religious activity in non-registered mosques or churches is a criminal offense. Proselytizing is illegal, as is private religious instruction. The United States is engaged actively in monitoring religious freedom issues, and maintains contact with imams, educators and independent religious leaders. The Ambassador and his staff regularly raise issues of religious freedom with their counterparts in the Uzbek Government, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the MOJ, the Muslim Board, and the Committee on Religious Affairs (CRA).

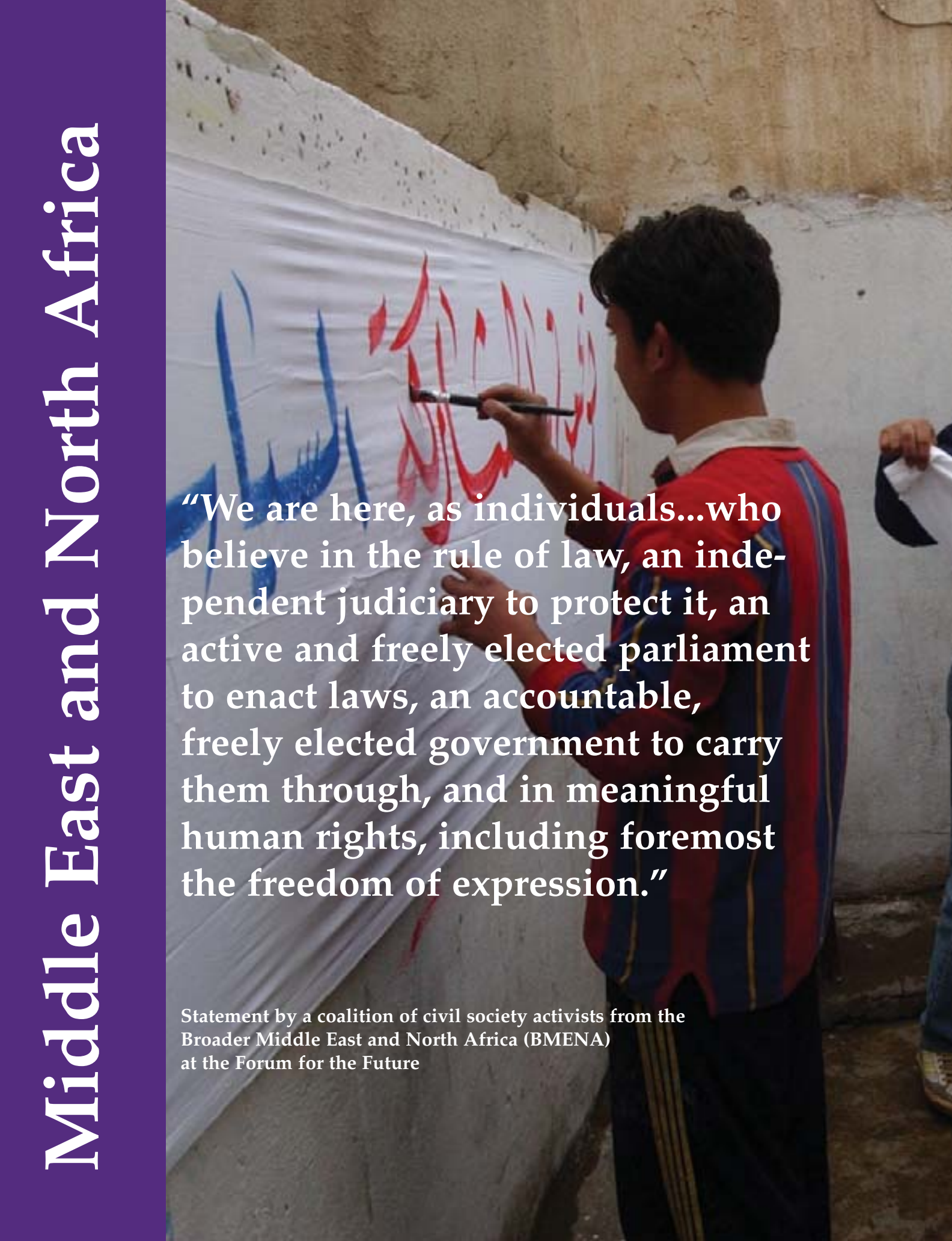
A number of U.S. exchange and educational programs are specifically designed to promote religious tolerance and to expand religious freedom; the Chair of the CRA, for example, recently visited the United States. Two U.S.-funded projects, both implemented by IREX, have brought local Islamic leaders to the United States, exposing them to the diversity of religious practice in the United States. A three-year University Partnership Program, funded by the Embassy and managed by the University of Washington, provides for exchanges of experts and professors from five local universities. One of the major goals of the project is the development of school curricula that foster religious tolerance. In all of these programs, the central premise is that religious tolerance and political security do not conflict, but rather are complementary goals.

Another top human-rights priority for the United States in Uzbekistan has been trafficking in persons (TIP). Trafficking of Uzbek citizens to other countries for sexual exploitation and forced labor remained a problem, but with U.S. assistance, the Government continued to take steps to combat it. Working together, the United States, local NGOs and the Uzbek Government came up with a number of innovative campaigns designed to educate the public, to prevent trafficking and to help ensure that traffickers are prosecuted. The key NGO in this effort was funded by a U.S.

Democracy Commission grant. The NGO recently completed the first comprehensive study of human trafficking in Uzbekistan and will release its findings in late February. Throughout the year, the United States supported trainings designed to teach Uzbek consular officials how to identify and assist trafficking victims. Additional trainings focused on enhancing the ability of law enforcement and the Office of the General Prosecutor to combat trafficking rings. The Embassy also hosted regular meetings with Uzbek officials to discuss trafficking and encouraged the Government to form an Interagency Working Group to coordinate its efforts to combat trafficking. This group, which operates with U.S. assistance, held its inaugural meeting in December. In September, the United States sponsored an OSCE event in which key Uzbek officials from the General Prosecutor's office, MVD and National Security Service met their Ukrainian counterparts and TIP-focused NGO representatives in Kiev to discuss methods for combating trafficking.

As a result of these joint efforts, regular stories designed to raise awareness of and prevent trafficking continued to appear in Uzbek newspapers, radio and television. After a "train the trainer" seminar sponsored by the OSCE with U.S. funds, the MVD trained an additional 1,500 MVD officers throughout Uzbekistan on trafficking-related investigation techniques. Legislation to combat TIP, including a new Victims Rights Act and a draft law on repatriation, has stalled, due in part to delays related to the formation of a new bicameral legislature; however, this has not deterred law enforcement officials from actively prosecuting suspected traffickers under existing TIP-related legislation.

Middle East and North Africa



“We are here, as individuals...who believe in the rule of law, an independent judiciary to protect it, an active and freely elected parliament to enact laws, an accountable, freely elected government to carry them through, and in meaningful human rights, including foremost the freedom of expression.”


Statement by a coalition of civil society activists from the Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA) at the Forum for the Future



Baghdad, Iraq

Professional banner writers work on election campaign banners.

AP Photo



Events in the Middle East in 2004 vividly demonstrated U.S. commitment to promoting democracy and respect for human rights. In Iraq, people braved intimidation and threats of death for the opportunity to participate in elections to shape their own future. Throughout the region, the United States supported local reform efforts through partnership with regional leaders, reform-minded government officials, civil society activists and representatives of independent media.

Through diplomatic engagement and practical programming, the United States promoted good governance and encouraged broad political participation. United States efforts focused on improving transparency, efficiency and responsiveness in public institutions through enhanced administrative and financial capabilities, the expansion of social services and increased accountability. Collaborating with other diplomatic missions, U.S. officials at all levels pressed government representatives to take proactive approaches to democratization. The United States worked within regional frameworks like the Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative (BMENA) and with multinational and international organizations, including the EU and the UN, to promote democratic reform. The United States and Morocco co-hosted the first Forum for the Future that brought together government ministers, business leaders and civil society representatives from the G-8 and BMENA to discuss democratic, economic and social reform in the region.

Efforts to engage civil society moved forward, but obstacles remained. The United States raised awareness among government officials of the important role for civil society in democracies. Through programs and outreach, including exchanges and scholarships, the United States encouraged grassroots organization and participation in local administration. The United States pushed for repeal of onerous laws and regulations restricting the registration and activities of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In the Occupied Territories, U.S. programs focused on civil society strengthening with a particular emphasis on women and youth. The United States worked with NGOs in Iraq to implement an extensive civil society program, launching over 30,000 activities to foster civil society involvement in the political process. Despite repeated U.S. requests, the Government of Algeria refused to register Freedom House and other foreign NGOs, and it restricted their activities.

Promoting freedom of expression and press liberties were priorities for the United States. United States programs trained reporters on the role and responsibility of the media in a democracy and helped legislators and government officials understand the value of a free media. Through public diplomacy, the United States increased access to information. While in some cases opportunities for freedom of expression and civic activism improved, criticism of the Government or ruling elites often prompted swift and repressive government action. The use of defamation laws to arrest and detain members of the media and harassment of the media in some countries increased. For example, the Government of Syria arrested political activist Aktham Naisse for allegedly spreading false information and undermining the Government.

The United States supported rule of law and judicial reform efforts across the region, emphasizing greater independence and transparency and supporting development of judicial codes of conduct. Ensuring respect for due process and improving pretrial and trial procedures remained U.S. priorities. Torture, arbitrary arrest, prolonged incommunicado detention, excessive use of force and reliance on restrictive emergency laws remained problems in many countries. The United States supported improved training for security forces with specific human rights components, as well as greater accountability and drafting of new penal codes. The Governments of Algeria and Morocco showed willingness to address abuses of previous regimes, but resisted full investigations and accountability. Protecting women's rights and combating gender-based violence were central themes of U.S. policy.

United States officials met regularly with religious leaders and promoted interfaith dialogue and freedom of religion. The United States facilitated meetings to address the concerns of minority faiths and raised with government officials the concerns of religious communities, including non-Muslims and Muslim minorities in Saudi Arabia and Christians, Jews and Baha'is in Egypt.

To combat trafficking in persons, including the worst forms of child labor, the United States pressed governments to acknowledge the seriousness of the problem and take immediate steps to combat it. The United States encouraged governments to cooperate with local and international NGOs and develop national plans of action. In the first project of its kind in the region, Lebanon's immigration service partnered with NGOs to protect trafficking victims.

Iraq Get Out the Vote Project

In the run-up to the historic January 2005 elections in Iraq, the United States partnered with local and international non-governmental organizations to support national Get Out the Vote (GOTV) efforts, carried out in conjunction with U.S. Public Diplomacy programs. With support from the U.S. Government, the National Endowment for Democracy, National Democratic Institute and International Republican Institute worked closely with local grassroots organizations to launch a multi-pronged campaign to increase awareness of the electoral process and encourage public participation in elections in a society where civil society and political activity had long been oppressed. United States Embassy officers met constantly with Iraqi political figures and government officials to encourage the widest possible participation in the elections and the most transparent electoral process possible.

Television, radio and print campaigns described the voting process and stressed the importance of voting. The Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq disseminated information on voter registration, voting procedures and other aspects of the process. The United States funded surveys to better understand voters' knowledge of and interest in the political process to help local organizations tailor their efforts. Local outreach helped civic leaders and political parties engage potential constituents, and millions of posters and leaflets were distributed to neighborhoods all over the country. A new Media Center provided a place to tape GOTV commercials, and al-Sharikiyah TV Station encouraged public participation through daily TV spots.

While many of these efforts targeted the general voting population, some reached out to special groups, particularly women and youth. After decades marginalized under Saddam Hussein's regime, Iraqi women demonstrated a clear commitment to democracy and political activism. The Rafedene Women's Coalition implemented a campaign to promote voter registration and educate and mobilize women voters. The Iraqi Women's Network organized conferences and printed posters, banners and flyers to promote women's participation. The Student for Student Coalition launched a media campaign to energize youth participation in elections and representation in politics. Students Against War held a series of workshops to promote youth voter education and GOTV initiatives. The Basrah Theater Troup staged an innovative production to promote student participation in the southern and mid-Euphrates area.

Through a series of town hall meetings and seminars, the United States supported efforts to reach out to tribal elders and provided critical information on the electoral system, voter registration and the importance of elections. Televised debates between candidates for the Transitional National Assembly brought political issues into the homes of Iraqi voters. The National Union Confederation of Iraqi Tribes organized a national conference for tribal leaders from predominately Sunni areas. The Iraqi Organization for Free Elections promoted voter registration. The Civic Coalition for Free Elections (CCFE), a non-partisan movement of 76 civic organizations from across Iraq, held conferences emphasizing the importance of the political process and denouncing violence that more than 300 religious, tribal and political leaders attended. The CCFE produced and aired 15 television messages, some featuring Sunni and Shi'a clerics. The Arab Gulf Center launched a special campaign to reach rural voters through workshops and political discussion groups.

Algeria

Algeria has emerged from more than a decade of civil strife between proponents and opponents of an Islamic state. Daily violence has declined and the situation in the country has improved since the 1990s when persons regularly disappeared and were brutally killed. The Government's human rights record remained poor overall and worsened in the area of press freedom; however, there were significant improvements in some areas. Arbitrary arrests, prolonged incommunicado detentions, excessive use of force, official impunity and a continuation of the State of Emergency remained problems. The Government continued to restrict freedoms of speech, press, assembly, association and movement during the year. The use of defamation laws and government harassment of the press significantly increased. The Family Code continued to limit women's civil rights, although liberalizing amendments were adopted by the Council of Government and are awaiting adoption by the Council of Ministers and National Assembly.

Over the last year, Algeria made significant improvements in some areas. In April, the President was reelected in a contested election of unprecedented transparency for the country, although the election and the electoral system were not without flaws. The military remained neutral as election reforms passed that, among other things, ended security forces' voting in the barracks, which was rightly thought to have been a major source of election irregularities in the past. There were no reports of extrajudicial killings. Reports of torture declined and the Government passed new legislation prohibiting all forms of torture. Improved police training, including human rights training, significantly increased disciplinary actions and reduced abuses and complaints. A new penal code was adopted and the International Red Cross has given Algeria good marks for improved prison conditions. A new law enacted in Algeria criminalizes sexual harassment.

Algeria did not make much progress on the issue of the "Disappeared." The ad hoc mechanism the



Algiers, Algeria

Volunteers count presidential election ballots at polling station in Algiers.

AP Photo

Government established to investigate the issue and make recommendations does not have sufficient investigatory authority and is not as effective as it could be. However, the Government issued a statement accepting responsibility but not guilt for the actions of government security officials, whether authorized or not. The Council of Ministers also approved, and President Bouteflika strongly and publicly endorsed, significant liberalizing steps to the Family Code, which will be submitted to the Council of Ministers and then to the National Assembly for approval. The Government's treatment of minorities improved greatly with a breakthrough political accord with the Berber Arouch political movement. This accord addresses many long-standing Berber grievances and human rights concerns.

Supporting human rights and democracy was a key objective for the Embassy. Throughout 2004, the Embassy encouraged the Government of Algeria and civil society organizations to make more progress in human rights and democracy issues. The Embassy continued to work with the Government on increasing legislative reforms. Middle East Partnership Initiative funds were awarded to democracy building projects, which began legislative training and electoral capacity building. In addition, IFES completed a week-long visit to Algeria to aid in the electoral process. The Embassy was very outspoken about the need for the Government to decriminalize defamation. The Ambassador repeatedly, both publicly and privately, underscored the importance of freedom of the press in discussions with high government officials and non-governmental leaders. He cautioned that limits on press freedom harm Algeria in terms of its image abroad, its democratic development and its ability to modernize the administration and the functioning of state institutions.

With U.S. funding, the National Democratic Institute sponsored several programs including political party and civil society strengthening. These programs included organized roundtables, workshops and study missions to encourage groups from different sectors to work together on issues of mutual concern and facilitate greater cooperation between political parties and civil society. Other training included staff training and

technical assistance for legislatures in francophone Arab countries and strategy for election support.

The United States continued to encourage improved human rights practices and enforcement throughout Algerian society and governing institutions. Embassy officials increased contacts with Algerian civil society non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and increased funding for human rights projects. The United States funded a grant to an Algerian NGO that will enable leading secular and moderate Muslim activists to have the opportunity to develop strategies for advancing political reform in Algeria.

In an effort to encourage press freedom, the Embassy sponsored training for journalists designed to promote responsible journalism, including conferences on human rights and the media. The United States also sponsored training for ministry spokespeople to promote greater government transparency and press responsibility. The Ambassador raised the issue of press freedom and responsibility with the Algerian Minister of Communication.

The United States aided the Government of Algeria in integrating human rights training into the security forces. One positive outcome of that training is the Code of Conduct recently delivered to security forces, which outlines the punishments for torture and extra-judicial killing. Embassy officials continued to meet with the president of the Ad Hoc Commission on the "Disappeared" to encourage the Commission to work closely with human rights organizations to open a civic discourse on human rights issues. The United States was in regular contact with the Commission to urge public release of the definitive report on the disappeared and the progress toward a general amnesty, a key element of President Bouteflika's policy of national reconciliation. The United States supported the creation of an independent coalition to monitor the ad hoc mechanism and to fund training to build the capacity of human rights groups to investigate, document and advocate on behalf of the missing.

Because many of the human rights abuses of the past occurred within the justice system, the United

States continued to focus its efforts to promote progress in that sector. Embassy officials used the Department of Commerce's Commercial Law Development Program as a means to encourage judicial reform against corruption and to strengthen adherence to the rule of law. In efforts to promote the independence of the judiciary, the American Bar Association (ABA) held a fact-finding mission in 2004. As part of ABA's North Africa program, the United States undertook capacity building for Algerian judges and the Bar Association and supported the expansion of existing training for magistrates at the National Institute for Magistrates. The United States laid the groundwork for future U.S.-Algerian exchanges by sending three high ranking Algerian police officials to U.S. law enforcement offices. Embassy officials worked with security forces to encourage reforms by providing training videos and books and giving police academy lectures.

Over 48 military officers received training in the rule of law and human rights while participating in International Military Education and Training in the United States. As the interaction between U.S. and Algerian militaries increased, so did the Algerian military's awareness of international norms of military conduct, including internationally recognized human rights practices. The Embassy reviewed all training candidates for compliance with the Leahy Amendment to ensure that none were implicated in human rights violations.

A broadly representative national commission appointed by the Government also prepared liberalizing amendments to the Family Code, which the Council of Government adopted for subsequent submission to the Council of Ministers and the National Assembly. The United States continued to urge the Council of Ministers and the National Assembly to adopt these reforms, included in which is removing the classification of women as minors. The United States also funded the NGO Global Rights to Run a Maghreb Regional Project, including Algeria, on human rights advocacy for women. The project includes capacity building and networking for rural women.

Additionally the Embassy was very active in student exchange programs and the International Visitors Program. In 2004, two English Language Fellows went to Algeria and 30 Algerians traveled to the United States on the International Visitors Program.

The United States, including a U.S. Senator, established a dialogue on religious freedom with the High Islamic Council. The Ambassador used programming to underscore the need for religious tolerance by giving several speeches and funding two cultural restoration projects with religious significance for both Christians and Muslims.

United States officials raised concerns about trafficking in persons with the Government of Algeria. In 2004, U.S. officials visited Algeria to assess the trafficking situation in the country and explore possible ways for future cooperation. The United States provided training to the Algerian Coast Guard on the use of internationally recognized rules for human rights when boarding ships for inspection in order to help prevent trafficking in persons.



Bahrain

In 2002, Bahrain became a monarchy, adopting a Constitution which reinstated a bicameral legislature with an upper house of parliament (Shura Council) appointed by the King and an elected lower house (Council of Representatives). Parliament has the authority to present 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 21 have the right to vote, and the 2002 legislative elections, the first in nearly three decades, were perceived as generally free and fair despite a boycott by several political groups. Both Shi'a and Sunnis are well represented in the Government, although the minority Sunni population plays a dominant role in both politics and the economy. Women ran unsuccessfully for office in 2002; however, 16 percent of the appointed Shura Council members, as well as two of the 20 Government Ministers, are women.

The Government took initial steps to improve the judiciary process, increase human rights training for police and fight corruption. Problems, however, remained in the Government's respect for human rights. The Government dissolved the country's leading human rights organization; impunity of government officials continued; the judiciary lacked full independence; and discrimination continued against the Shi'a population, women and third-country nationals. The Government also infringed on citizens' privacy rights and in some cases restricted freedom of speech, the press, assembly and association.

Advancing human rights and democracy in Bahrain is a priority of the United States. United States policy supported the rule of law, political participation, freedom of the press, judicial reform, civil society development, labor rights and the protection of foreign workers. President Bush met with King Hamad in November 2004 and reiterated U.S. support for Bahrain's political and economic reforms. This policy was advanced through diplomatic engagement and practical programming. United States officials regularly met with the Government, advocating respect for human rights and a proactive approach to democratization, and frequently engaged civil society activists and encouraged their participation in the political process.

One of the Embassy's main priorities was to strengthen Bahrain's democratic movement and increase civil society's confidence in the system with the approach of the 2006 municipal and parliamentary elections. Working through the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), the United States sponsored efforts to help Bahrain's political societies (in the absence of political parties) strengthen their institutional capacity and transparency and better respond to citizens' needs. This program frequently hosted workshops to increase the participation of youth and women in the political process and facilitated discussions between civil society and Members of Parliament on legislation and other matters of national interest.

The Embassy focused on civic education as a key to the democratic process in Bahrain. In 2004, the

MEPI Civic Education Program provided several opportunities for Ministry of Education officials and teachers to participate in teacher training and curriculum development programs. A project to translate American children's books into Arabic for the purpose of promoting critical thinking skills was also approved by the Ministry of Education during the year, for 2005 implementation. The Microscholarships Program enabled 50 Bahraini high school students to attend classes to improve their English language abilities; this program emphasized skills that students need in a democracy, such as critical thinking, and encouraged targeted discussions about American Studies topics such as the U.S. Constitution. During 2004, the Embassy also sent two senior specialists from the Ministry of Education on International Visitors Programs (IVP) on civic education and curriculum reform.

Freedom of expression and press liberties were priorities for the United States. Using MEPI-sponsored programs, the United States trained dozens of Bahraini journalists during the year and helped launch the University of Bahrain's first student-run radio station. During the past two years, the Embassy sent several journalists on IVPs on the role of the media in a democracy and responsibilities of an investigative journalist.

Judicial reform, another priority for the United States, was supported through an American Bar Association project to assist reform efforts within the Bahraini Ministry of Justice. The project facilitated training for judges and prosecutors; the establishment of an alternative dispute resolution system; improved case management to speed up the court process through software installation and training; and more transparent recruitment and selection of new judges. In a welcome development, the Minister of Justice dismissed five Shari'a court judges in March, suspending a sixth for corruption and disreputable behavior. In addition to the improvements to the judiciary process noted above, the Government also provided increased human rights training to law enforcement officers.

Also supported by U.S. funding, the Commercial Law Development Program worked with the Bahraini Government to develop sound commer-

cial law practices. The Embassy facilitated the visit of a delegation of parliamentarians, government officials and business leaders to a rule of law forum organized by the Southern Methodist University.

There was both progress and new concern in human rights. The King publicly called for the creation of a personal status law to ensure greater protection of women's legal rights, and the Government approved the registration of several new human rights groups and an organization to protect foreign workers in crisis. An active member of Bahrain's civil society went to the United States on an IVP to study human rights advocacy and awareness. The Government dissolved a leading human rights organization in September and arrested a member who had publicly criticized the royal family and government policies. The State Department expressed concern that these actions could represent a step backwards, both publicly and in meetings with the Government. On November 21, the detained activist was sentenced to one year in prison, but the King ordered his release the same day.

The U.S. Government monitored religious freedom, regularly met with representatives of different religious groups and facilitated meetings to address the concerns of members of minority faiths.

More than half of Bahrain's work force is foreign, and there were cases of expatriate workers being subject to trafficking and abuse. The State Department's 2004 Trafficking in Persons Report states that the Government of Bahrain does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; however, it made significant efforts to do so. It developed a national plan of action to combat trafficking and shut down several employment agencies that exploited workers. Foreign workers were not protected under Bahrain's domestic labor laws, and no anti-trafficking legislation was introduced. United States officials consistently underscored the importance of combating worker exploitation and trafficking in persons during meetings with the Government. A U.S.-sponsored non-governmental organization trained government officials in responding to the

needs of abuse victims. The United States also funded an International Organization for Migration project to mitigate Bahrain's trafficking problem, scheduled to begin implementation in 2005.

Egypt

In 1999, President Hosni Mubarak was reelected to a fourth six-year term in a national referendum. Mubarak ran unopposed. The National Democratic Party, which has governed since its establishment in 1978, continues to dominate national politics and has maintained an overriding majority in the popularly elected People's Assembly and the partially elected Shura (Consultative) Council. Without significant constitutional and legislative amendments prior to the next round of elections scheduled for late 2005, this political dynamic is not likely to change substantially in the short term despite demands from opposition parties.

While the Government introduced some potentially significant reforms in 2003 and 2004, including the development of a National Council for Human Rights, the overall human rights record was poor, and in many areas serious problems remained. The principal human rights problems were the continuation of the 1981 Emergency Law, trials of non-security cases in emergency and military courts, persistent reports of torture by police and state security forces, arbitrary arrests, the use of administrative detention for indefinite periods, significant restrictions on assembly and association and restrictions on religious freedom.

The United States persistently raised with the Government of Egypt and non-governmental contacts U.S. support for political and economic reform in Egypt. The Ambassador and other U.S. officials met with various opposition figures, including Ayman Nour prior to his arrest.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy addressed these problems and supported efforts to build a more robust civil society, promote the rule of law and encourage the growth of democratic institutions, including an independent press. As a result of a comprehensive assessment of bilateral

assistance to Egypt, U.S. democracy and governance programs in 2004 focused particularly on justice sector reform, citizen participation with a special emphasis on gender equality, media independence and professionalism, and responsive local governance.

In his 2005 State of the Union address, President Bush recognized how important it is for democratic reform to take hold in Egypt when he said, "The great and proud nation of Egypt, which showed the way toward peace in the Middle East, can now show the way toward democracy in the Middle East." Throughout 2004, senior U.S. officials urged Egypt to democratize and to strengthen respect for human rights.

In March 2004, President Mubarak asserted a general commitment to political reform at a conference at the Bibliotheca Alexandria, but has yet to follow up with concrete actions. At its annual conference in September, the ruling National Democratic Party stated its commitment to a platform of reform, including constitutional and electoral reform. Also during the year, the National Council for Human Rights demonstrated a growing willingness to speak out on human rights issues, including publicly supporting the abolition of the Emergency Law. In January 2005, the Government of Egypt arrested Ayman Nour, one of Egypt's most prominent opposition leaders on allegations of forging signatures on party application documents. The United States raised concerns publicly and at the highest levels with Egyptian officials in Cairo and Washington about Nour's arrest and reports of mistreatment. The United States raised concerns that Nour's arrest was politically motivated and that it portended poorly for democracy in Egypt, coming at the beginning of an election year and on the eve of a long-planned dialogue between opposition parties and the ruling party. On February 26, with Nour still in jail, President Mubarak proposed a constitutional amendment that would establish a direct public vote and allow multiple candidates to participate in Egypt's presidential elections. The People's National Assembly and Shura Council began initial discussion on this amendment, which will require passage by a two-thirds majority in the People's Assembly and will be subject to a national referendum.

Senior U.S. officials raised concerns about civil society development, political participation and basic political rights in official meetings. United States officials met with Egyptian civil society leaders and activists to solicit their views on how the United States might use the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) and other initiatives to support the reform process. The United States continued to implement an experimental program to promote responsive local government by fostering new relationships between the Government and citizen groups in four target communities.

A seven-year grant aimed at strengthening the institutional capacity of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) through assistance in the areas of internal governance, financial management, advocacy for citizens' interests and participation in civic action continued. This grant focused on helping women, particularly in rural areas, obtain the basic civil records necessary to access government services, protect their legal rights and register to vote. The United States helped establish the Egyptian NGO Support Center, an institution working to strengthen civil society organizations in Egypt, which is committed to providing assistance to civil society in advocacy, improved internal governance and effective management.

Several efforts promoted greater independence and professionalism in the media. A project with international partners and Egyptian journalists placed 15 young Egyptian journalists in internships and training programs in the United States. Another program provided training to hundreds of journalists on international professional standards for news reporting and assistance in publishing fact-based, dispassionate news stories. Through MEPI, the United States supported the travel of 15 Egyptian journalists to the United States to cover the U.S. elections in November. United States officials raised issues of media freedom and responsibility with the Government of Egypt.

Senior U.S. officials lobbied their Egyptian counterparts to lift the Emergency Law. At the same time, U.S. officials sought to limit its application only to extraordinary cases involving dangerous individuals and violent, extremist organizations. In addition to specific discussions with the

Government regarding the annual Human Rights Report, which detailed concerns about torture, mass detentions and political prisoners, Embassy officials also raised human rights concerns with the Government on a case-by-case basis.

The Ambassador and other U.S. officials urged the Government to grant due process of law to all citizens. An eight-year Administration of Justice Support program, which focused on promoting increased transparency and public confidence in the courts by strengthening efficiency, ended in June. The program used two pilot commercial courts to introduce automated, streamlined administrative processes and training for judges and court staff. A follow-on, five-year project began in August 2004 and will assist the Ministry of Justice in replicating the reformed and modernized court systems nationwide. Beyond its operating efficiency, the judiciary's lack of independence remained a problem.

A five-year criminal justice project with the Egyptian prosecutor general's office continued. Under this same program, Egyptian participants visited the United States and interacted with U.S. federal judges. Using a U.S. grant, the American University in Cairo expanded the impact of its formal degree program in international human rights law by developing professional and community outreach programs.

The Embassy continually monitored the human rights situation to ensure that Egyptian military personnel selected for International Military Education and Training programs were in compliance with the Leahy Amendment.

In other efforts to strengthen civil society, the United States provided a series of small grants to Egyptian organizations working on human rights, religious tolerance and women's and children's issues. Other initiatives included a model U.S. Congress at Cairo University and civic education summer camps. The Embassy administered this program using an interagency mechanism that awarded numerous small grants to support local, grassroots initiatives, as well as human rights awareness. These included training for youth activists, support for model parliamentary work-

shops, legal systems training for lawyers and judges and programs focused on women's and children's rights. The 2004 International Visitors Program included exchanges on subjects relating to human rights, civil society, good governance and women's issues.

The Embassy supported MEPI programming in Egypt and hosted a follow-up conference in January 2004 for the MEPI Young Ambassadors Program. Using MEPI the United States supported a local NGO during the year to expand the Arab Women's Forum, established in 2003, through a series of regional meetings and the establishment of a website over the course of the year. Also, in 2004 some Egyptian women participated in the Young Arab Businesswomen's Internship program. With USAID support, a local NGO assisted over 5,000 women in Qena to obtain identity documents, the first step necessary for them to gain formal and legal government recognition and access to rights and opportunities that are otherwise not accessible to them. They also obtained voting cards necessary for their participation in local and national elections. At a widely attended conference in Qena, women petitioned local party officials to nominate more women for positions on local councils and national assemblies. They formed a committee to promote women's awareness of their legal rights and services available to them from government agencies and the National Council for Women. A petition submitted by citizens, especially women, was a remarkable development, particularly in a governorate in conservative Upper Egypt where women's social and political participation has been historically limited.

The Ambassador and other U.S. officials raised specific concerns about the Government requiring notation of religious affiliation on national identity cards, a practice that adversely affected citizens who wished to convert away from Islam as well as members of religions that are not recognized or whose organizations have been banned by the Government. United States officials also raised concerns about the status of Egypt's Christians and other religious minorities, and the Embassy maintained excellent relations with representatives of Egypt's various religious communities.

Egypt was included for the first time in the Trafficking in Persons Report in 2004. United States officials exchanged views with government officials, NGOs and international organizations on ways to strengthen Egypt's ability to combat trafficking.

Iran

The Islamic Republic of Iran is a theocratic, constitutional republic dominated by Shi'a religious leaders. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei dominates the legislative, executive and judicial branches, directly controls the armed forces and indirectly controls internal security forces. President Mohammed Khatami, who won a second four-year term in multiparty elections in 2001, heads the executive branch. Presidential elections are scheduled for June 17, 2005. In parliamentary elections on February 20, 2004, the conservative cleric-dominated Guardian Council excluded virtually all reformist candidates, including 85 incumbent members of parliament. In recent years, the conservative backlash against reformist trends and parties has increased in momentum.



In 2004, the Government's poor human rights record worsened, and it continued to commit numerous, serious abuses. Summary executions, disappearances, extremist vigilantism, widespread use of torture and other degrading treatment remained problems. Despite the Government's reassertion that torture was illegal, there was no evidence that authorities had discontinued the practice. The investigation into the death of a dual national Canadian/Iranian photographer, who suffered a brain hemorrhage after sustaining injuries while in prison, stagnated. Authorities gradually suppressed almost all independent domestic media outlets, arresting or effectively silencing their journalists. The last forum for free debate, weblogs, started to come under pressure when the Government began arresting their creators and forcing them to sign false confessions. The Government continued to discriminate against and harass the Baha'i community and other religious and ethnic minority groups, including Jews, Christians and Sunni and Sufi Muslims. Authorities bulldozed two sacred Baha'i sites. The Government continued to severely restrict worker rights, including freedom of association and the right to organize and bargain collectively. On May Day 2004, authorities arrested and detained for several weeks several workers who attempted to commemorate the holiday. Reports of death sentences by stoning of women in rural Iran were persistent but could not be confirmed.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Iran centers on urging friends and allies to condition improvements in their bilateral and trade relations with Iran on positive changes in Iran's human rights policies and other areas of concern. The United States also supports the continuing efforts of the Iranian people to institute greater freedoms and increase political participation in Iran; pushes for resolutions criticizing Iran's human rights policies at the UN and in other international fora; and publicly highlights the Iranian Government's abuse of its citizens' human rights.

Although the United States does not maintain diplomatic relations with Iran, the United States continues its multi-faceted effort to support the Iranian people's aspirations to live in a democratic country where human rights are respected.

In fall 2004, for a second year in a row, the United States co-sponsored and actively supported a Canadian resolution at the UN General Assembly condemning the human rights situation in Iran. The Iran human rights resolution passed in the UN General Assembly's 59th Plenary, sending an important signal to the Iranian people that the international community recognized their suffering and to the Iranian Government that dialogue on human rights was no substitute for concrete action to improve its record, and that the serious concern about Iran's overall international behavior would not blunt the international community's focus on the internal human rights situation.

The United States regularly raised concerns about Iran's poor human rights record during consultations with allies and followed existing formal human rights dialogues between U.S. allies and the Government of Iran.

Calling for Iran to start respecting its citizens' human rights was central to the United States overall policy approach and was reflected in all public statements. President Bush and senior-level U.S. officials repeatedly expressed their support for the Iranian people in their quest for freedom, democracy and a more transparent and accountable government. United States representatives regularly met with members of various groups suffering human rights abuses in Iran. Their complaints were documented for dissemination to other governments and for inclusion in the State Department's annual Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Iran and the Report on International Religious Freedom. In September 2004, Secretary of State Powell again 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 United States Government. However, in 2004 the Department of State awarded a grant to document abuses inside Iran, taking advantage of limited special authority recently granted by Congress to provide grants to educational institutions, humanitarian groups, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and individuals inside Iran to support the advancement of democracy and human rights. The project seeks to raise

public awareness of accountability and rule of law as an important aspect of the democratization process in Iran. The United States actively explored possibilities for further grants and prepared to solicit proposals in 2005 to support democracy and human rights inside Iran. In addition, with U.S. funds, the National Endowment for Democracy supported the advancement of democracy and human rights standards inside Iran. The United States also supported Voice of America broadcasts into Iran, a website in Persian to speak directly to the Iranian people about U.S. policy and Persian-language Radio Farda, which operates 24 hours a day. In response to the December 26, 2003 earthquake in Bam, in which more than 40,000 were killed, the United States quickly assembled and deployed a response team to the scene through the USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance. The United States issued licenses authorizing donations from U.S. citizens and permitting several U.S. NGOs to provide humanitarian assistance for a period of a year.

Iraq

Following the U.S.-led Coalition's removal of the Ba'athist regime in April 2003, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) and the Iraqi Governing Council administered the country pursuant to UN Security Council Resolutions 1483, 1500 and 1511 until the Iraqi Interim Government (IIG) was appointed. The Law for the Administration of the State of Iraq for the Transitional Period (TAL) was adopted on March 8, 2004, and accords fundamental rights to all Iraqis, regardless of gender, sect, political opinion or ethnicity. The TAL also guarantees freedom of thought, conscience and religious belief and practice for the people of Iraq. The IIG assumed full governmental authority on June 28, 2004. Elections for the Transitional National Assembly, the first transparent and democratic elections in generations and the first step in the formation of the Iraqi Transitional Government, took place on January 30, 2005. Government in this text refers to the Governing Council, which administered the country with CPA prior to sovereignty, and to the IIG, which assumed sovereignty on June 28, 2004.



The Interim Government, reversing a long legacy of serious human rights abuses under the previous regime, generally respected human rights, but serious problems remained. The Government's human rights performance was handicapped by a serious insurgency in which a terrorist campaign of violence affected every aspect of life. With the ongoing insurgency limiting access to information, a number of alleged abuses have been difficult to verify, including reports of arbitrary deprivation of life, torture, impunity, poor prison conditions, and arbitrary arrest and detention. In addition, the judicial system was largely dysfunctional, and corruption remained a key problem. However, unlike in the previous regime, none of these abuses were systemic or government-directed, and the Government took important steps to address human rights concerns. While human rights violations remained a serious issue for the Iraqi Government to resolve, there continued to be greater focus on bringing former regime elements to justice than on addressing abuses by the current Government.

The United States worked in collaboration with Iraqis, foreign governments and international organizations to support Iraq's evolution into a unified nation that is federal in nature and has strong democratic institutions, respects human

rights and enjoys the rule of law, a vibrant civil society, an independent media and legitimate and transparent national elections. The U.S. democracy and human rights strategy has promoted Iraqi initiatives and institutions aimed at achieving a successful transition to full democracy, accounting for past atrocities and preventing future human rights abuses.

Senior U.S. officials, including the President, Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, Deputy Secretary of State, Congressional delegations, the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, and Embassy officers, routinely met with Iraqi Government officials, political parties, religious minorities and human rights activists regarding Iraq's historic transition to democracy and the furthering of human rights norms.

In response to the new opportunities for all Iraqis to participate in building their new nation, the United States expanded its democracy and governance programs in 2004 to include support for Iraq's national government and political processes. The United States also provided technical assistance, logistical support and capacity building to the IIG and Iraq's governing bodies.

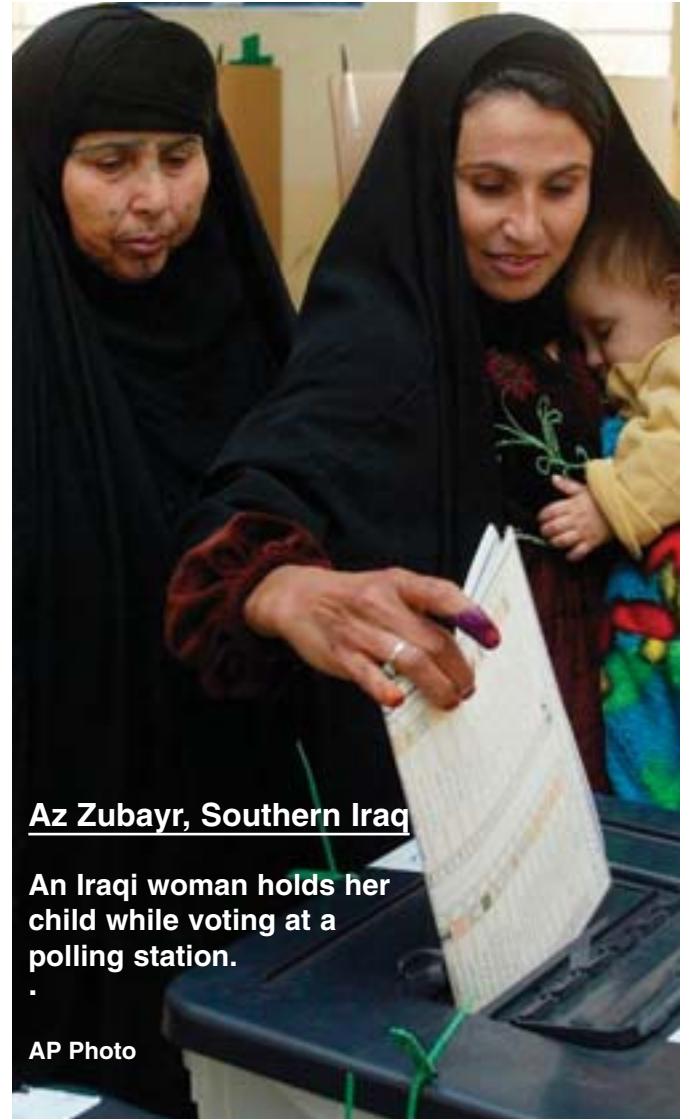
The U.S. Government implemented an expansive civic dialogue program that sponsored 30,000 democracy dialogue activities, which attracted a total of 750,000 participants. The program played an important role in laying the foundation for democracy by fostering confidence and initiating community dialogues among its hundreds of thousands of participants.

Through a grant to the National Endowment for Democracy, and in partnership with the International Republican Institute and National Democratic Institute, the United States supported political party training and development in preparation for the 2005 elections. Such assistance was dedicated to providing facilities and technical assistance on organizational management, platform development, electoral campaigns, media training and resource centers, election monitoring, polling, citizen outreach and governance.

Through IFES, the United States also provided technical and material support to the Independent Election Commission of Iraq (IECI) - at its request and in coordination with the UN - as it prepared for Iraq's first democratic and transparent nationwide elections. U.S. support helped the UN increase the staff, skills and capacity of the recently-established IECI, create a nationwide structure, administer voter registration efforts, develop a regulatory and administrative framework, train staff and conduct balloting. The United States continued its support for civil society involvement in the political process; for example, it successfully marshaled the resources of tens of thousands of Iraqi civil society participants to train and deploy approximately 12,000 accredited domestic observers throughout all governorates before and during the January 2005 elections. The United States also funded an Iraqi-led comprehensive, country-wide voter education and get-out-the vote campaign to facilitate voters' awareness of their right to participate in the election process. This campaign included special programming for under-represented areas and provided training for one half of the 30,000 party agent observers mobilized on election day.

The United States also fostered the development of democracy and human rights through its

investment in the reconstruction of Iraq after decades of deliberate neglect and brutalization. Infrastructure development projects that encouraged the recovery of the Iraqi economy contributed to human rights by promoting stability, and by promoting equity in hiring and awarding of competitively-procured contracts. Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Funds supported key activities in the democracy, governance, justice, human rights, civil society, education, refugees and public safety sectors. In addition, U.S. support for the re-establishment of security and law enforcement indisputably became part of the enabling environment, not only for Iraq's ability to expand its economy, but also for the elections and the promotion of human rights.



Az Zubayr, Southern Iraq

An Iraqi woman holds her child while voting at a polling station.

AP Photo



Sadr City, Iraq

An elderly woman enters a polling place in Baghdad's Shiite enclave

AP Photo/ Hadi Mizban

The United States played a leading role in supporting Iraqi efforts to institute justice and the rule of law. The U.S. Department of Justice trained 216 judges on judicial independence, rule of law, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, current European law on human rights and anti-corruption initiatives. The United States provided guidance and support to Iraq's Ministry of Justice and is assisting in the establishment of an independent judiciary system. United States rule of law support includes assistance in the development of an integrated criminal justice system that builds the capacity of the police, correction processes and the judiciary; promotes a culture of lawfulness; and trains legal professionals.

The United States promoted participatory, representative and accountable government at the local level, as well as the development of Iraq's nascent civil society. United States programs worked at

the grassroots level in rural and urban communities nationwide to promote democracy and prevent and mitigate conflict across gender, ethnic and religious lines. The United States also supported local government capacity-building projects in Iraq's major cities and all 18 governorates. United States programs facilitated the establishment and refreshment of 15 provincial councils, the Kurdish Regional Council for the three northern governorates, 90 district councils, 194 district and sub-district councils and 445 neighborhood councils.

Civic education programs also promoted democratization and civil society development. Activities facilitated citizen participation in public dialogues addressing political and social issues of national importance; promoted interaction between citizens and public officials aimed at encouraging responsive and accountable local government; and provided start-up resources and training to strengthen the institutional capacity of local organizations. The United States also awarded more than 1,060 rapid response grants to increase Iraqi participation in local government decision-making.

The United States supported Iraqi media development, training journalists to fulfill the functions of information, education and oversight that characterize a professional, independent press. Activities included regular events at the Embassy-run International Press Center, as well as training programs for Iraqi print journalists in Dubai in July and Iraqi broadcasters in December. The United States also supported the development of fair media outlets, by supporting both unbiased media coverage of the election and the development of the Iraqi Media Network, a Public-Broadcasting-System-like entity comprised of Al-Iraqiya television and radio and Al Sabah newspaper.

The U.S. Government is committed to assisting the Iraqi people as they determine the best ways to address the crimes of the Saddam regime, protect vulnerable populations from retribution and create a climate for the promotion of fundamental human rights and dignity in Iraq. The United States supports the efforts of the Iraqi Human Rights Ministry to establish a center for missing and disappeared persons, including the exuma-

tion of mass graves. United States' grants to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) enabled treatment for reintegration of victims of torture, the collection and documentation of human rights abuses committed by the former regime, awareness of human rights standards among a broad segment of Iraqi society and the development of human rights organizations in Iraq. The United States provided expertise and other assistance to the Iraq Property Claims Commission, as it worked on the very difficult issue of compensation for those affected by Saddam's ethnic cleansing policies. In addition, the United States supported the establishment of the Iraqi Special Tribunal, which will investigate and prosecute senior regime officials and document crimes against humanity.

The United States placed high priority on promoting equality for women in Iraq and supported this goal through policy and programming initiatives. The U.S. Government helped send delegations of Iraqi women to the 48th and 49th sessions of the UN Commission on the Status of Women in New York. In March 2004, Secretary of State Powell announced two new initiatives to support women in Iraq; the Iraqi Women's Democracy Initiative provides women with training and education in

the skills and practices of democratic public life, and the U.S.-Iraqi Women's Network, a public-private partnership, links Iraqi NGO representatives and business leaders with American counterparts to empower them to participate in the political and economic life of their country.

United States officials regularly engaged with Iraqi religious leaders and government officials to ensure that legal protections for minority rights and freedom of religion are respected. At the request of leading Shi'a and Sunni clerics, the U.S. Institute of Peace funded the establishment of an interfaith dialogue center to help unite religious groups against violence and foster an environment of tolerance, particularly between the Sunnis and Shi'a, as well as towards Christians and others.

United States agencies acted to prevent human trafficking in Iraq, distributing information and working with government officials to increase awareness of trafficking issues. A component on trafficking in persons has been developed for inclusion in basic police training, and, in consultation with U.S. experts, Iraqi officials are reviewing options for extending the training period to include this and a more extensive human rights component.



Jordan

Although the Government of Jordan respected human rights in some areas many problems remained. A human rights commission established by King Abdullah in 2003 continued to expand its activities and retained an active role in public discussions. The King charged the new Government appointed in October 2004 to focus on administrative reforms in order to provide a bureaucratic environment better equipped to advance human rights. While the Government continued to publicly promote social and political reform, there was still a lack of progress in some areas. Official restrictions on the rights of women and social discrimination against women remained problems. Members of the security forces continued to act with impunity, and there were still restrictions on freedom of speech, press, assembly and association. While citizens participated in the political process through their elected

representatives to parliament, they did not have the right to change their government.

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. The United States did this through direct dialogue with the Jordanian Government at all levels, as well as programs, training and the publication of reports on human rights, labor and religious freedom.

The United States advanced its strategy by building on Jordanian Government initiatives to strengthen human rights. The U.S. Government continued to work with the quasi-independent National Center for Human Rights as well as the Human Rights Directorate at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A grant from the State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor provided training on international human rights law and practice to Directorate officials as well as to members of the Ministries of Education, Justice and Interior. Members of the police, military and the National Center for Human Rights were also included. The United States also included a human rights component in most of the professional military education provided to Jordanian personnel.

In addition to supporting political reform in Jordan, the United States sought to promote media independence and professionalism through a conference on press freedom held in April. The objective of the conference was to inform Members of Parliament and government officials about the concerns of journalists regarding their rights and responsibilities. In June the Embassy held a conference on women in the media that promoted public awareness of women's rights.

The United States also funded a Freedom House campaign against family violence through the Middle East Partnership Initiative. The campaign included awareness-raising workshops held in universities and local communities throughout Jordan. In December, the U.S. Government commemorated the anniversary of the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by hosting a panel discussion of women activists on the issue of gender violence in Jordan.

The United States promoted broader participation in rule of law and legal reforms, particularly among women. In July, 11 Members of Parliament and two parliamentary staffers visited the United States on a program focusing on the role of legislators in the democratic process. Exchange programs for judges and judicial personnel focused on helping Jordan reform its trial and pretrial procedures for a more prompt and fair delivery of justice. The exchange programs included bringing Jordanian judges to the United States, where they observed U.S. courts and were provided with training. Additionally, the United States funded a regional conference of women lawyers and judges to promote women's rights through more effective representation in the judiciary.

The U.S. Government continued to support public sector reform efforts in Jordan. In the area of rule of law, two new programs were launched in 2004 to assist the Ministry of Justice to implement its reform strategy, which was developed with U.S. support. Programming included the development of a judicial code of conduct, complete with implementation mechanisms; support for alternative dispute resolution, in order to reduce the courts' workload; automation of the country's case management system, which has greatly improved efficiency and transparency; human resources and capacity building at the Ministry and courts; and a comprehensive program to establish the Judicial Institute of Jordan as a regional leader in judicial education. The overall goal of the programs was to assist Jordan to achieve its stated desire for greater social and political reform through increased citizen participation.

The United States tracked and reported on religious freedom cases, and U.S. officials discussed individual cases with Jordanian counterparts at the highest levels. The United States hosted four members of the Jordanian Interfaith Coexistence Research Center to participate in an International Visitors Program on religious tolerance.

The United States maintained a dialogue with key actors in the labor sector, including union leaders, International Labor Organization officials, industrial park managers, factory owners and government representatives. On several occasions U.S.

officials discussed with the Government implementation of Jordan's international commitments to fight child labor and trafficking.

All assistance under the USAID's diverse program portfolio integrated the crosscutting themes of gender equality, youth, anti-corruption and support for the protection of disenfranchised segments of the population.

Kuwait

Kuwait is a constitutional, hereditary emirate. The Constitution provides for an elected National Assembly, but permits the Amir to suspend its provisions by decree. Elections are generally considered free and fair despite some credible reports of government and opposition vote buying. Although the Government's respect for human rights improved during the last decade, significant problems remained.

Citizens did not have the right to change their government. The Government placed some limits on freedoms of speech, assembly, association, religion and movement. Violence and discrimination against women, especially non-citizens, persisted. Women, who comprised slightly more than half the citizen population, did not have the right to vote or seek election to the National Assembly. In May 2004, however, the Government reintroduced legislation that would extend voting rights to women, although it is still under consideration. Judicial authorities remained subject to government influence and discriminated against non-citizens, especially foreign laborers. Some police and members of the security forces reportedly abused detainees during interrogation.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Kuwait targets a wide range of critical issues. These include strengthening Kuwait's democratic and civil society institutions through the formation of full-fledged political parties, supporting women's efforts to secure the right to vote and hold public office, and combating trafficking in persons while improving the working conditions of domestic servants and foreign laborers. The United States worked through a variety of public diplomacy tools and through the Middle East

Partnership Initiative (MEPI) to strengthen democracy and respect for human rights in Kuwait. These efforts resulted in some positive changes to Kuwait's overall human rights situation during the year.

The United States actively engaged government officials, parliamentarians, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other civil society groups at all levels to advance a robust dialogue and debate on key human rights concerns, particularly female suffrage and equal protection under law. A high number of congressional and cabinet-level delegations transiting Kuwait en route to Iraq also contributed to and strengthened this dialogue. In addition to ongoing discussions with government officials, Embassy officials participated in influential evening meetings (diwanias) held in the homes of private Kuwaitis to discuss current events. This enabled Embassy officials to promote a better awareness and understanding of U.S. values on human rights and democracy.

Parliamentary institutional capacity building was a key component of the Embassy's strategy to strengthen democracy and promote the rule of law in Kuwait. The Ambassador reinforced the importance of democratic values during an election day speech in November 2004 that received wide media coverage and highlighted how greater electoral inclusion has strengthened democracy in the United States. The Embassy worked with the National Assembly to encourage broader understanding of international standards for human rights and democratic values.

The United States continued longstanding efforts to strengthen Kuwait's media and promote more responsible journalism. The International Visitors Program (IVP) sponsored a television journalist's participation in the March 2004 "Role of the Media" conference in the United States, a program designed to bolster understanding of media responsibilities in covering politics. United States officials also worked with Kuwait University to establish a permanent American Corner in January 2005. This will serve as the university's American Studies unit and provide Kuwaiti students with greater access to books, the Internet and journals on the United States.

The Embassy actively encouraged positive debate on the role and status of women in Kuwaiti society and the negative impact of women's disenfranchisement of their basic rights and protections. The Embassy also assisted women's rights activists in developing effective advocacy and political action strategies. In July 2004, as a part of these efforts, the Embassy hosted former Lieutenant Governor of South Dakota Carole Hillard who spoke to a group of female journalists and activists on the role of women in Kuwait and their political and social rights. A Kuwaiti judge participated in the "Administration of Courts" seminar in the United States in September 2004, which provided a practical in-depth look at how the U.S. judicial system works.

Women's rights activists reported that apathy and disinterest among many Kuwaiti women may inhibit a more vibrant suffrage movement. They hope to galvanize broader societal support for political reform by highlighting ways in which women are economically and legally disadvantaged because of their disenfranchisement. The United States supported these grassroots civil society efforts through various programs and exchanges during the year. Among other programs, the United States approved a MEPI small

grant to the Kuwait Economic Society, led by a female Kuwaiti intellectual, for a study on gender budgeting that will examine patterns of government spending aimed at female-led businesses or earmarked for hiring female employees. Another MEPI-funded program supports the National Democratic Institute's work with politically active Kuwaiti women, teaching them how to campaign within the political system once they have gained the right to pursue elected office.

The United States raised religious freedom issues with the Government as part of its overall policy of promoting human rights, actively encouraging the Government to address concerns of Muslim minority and non-Muslim religious leaders, including lack of worship space, access to religious materials and inequities in staff funding. United States officials met regularly with recognized Sunni, Shi'a and Christian groups and with representatives of faiths that are not officially recognized to hear their concerns and monitor progress on religious freedom issues.

The United States also focused on labor rights and working conditions for foreign workers in Kuwait, encouraging the Government to reform its labor code to conform more closely to internationally



Lebanon



recognized labor standards. United States officials met regularly with government officials at all levels to promote awareness of labor problems and to urge improvements in the status and treatment of foreign workers, especially domestic servants. Embassy officials maintained a close working relationship with NGOs and with domestic and international labor groups such as the International Labor Organization, working to monitor labor conditions and investigate reported incidents of abuse.

In January 2004, Embassy officials attended the first public seminar ever held in Kuwait to address the treatment of foreign workers including domestics. Hosted by a local NGO, this seminar brought members of the Government, National Assembly, labor unions and NGOs together for the first time on this issue. During the same month, the Embassy organized a roundtable discussion on domestic workers' rights with embassy labor officials from major source countries, encouraging regular meetings to share information and coordinate a labor-related dialogue with the Government.

The Embassy and senior State Department officials regularly urged the Government to strengthen legal and regulatory measures to combat human trafficking. As part of this effort, the United States sponsored three Kuwaiti officials on IVPs related to combating international crimes, including human trafficking, in May and June 2004 and January 2005. To combat sex-related trafficking, the Government barred the employment of non-citizen women in billiard clubs. The Government also established regulations to increase protections for foreign domestic workers, requiring employment through official recruitment agencies rather than direct private sponsorship. Despite these efforts, trafficking in children for exploitation as camel jockeys and trafficking for labor exploitation remained significant problems.

The Government of Lebanon's overall human rights record remained poor. The problems facing democracy and human rights in Lebanon came into sharp relief in 2004 when Syria successfully pressured Lebanese parliamentarians to extend the term of President Emile Lahoud, but a number of obstacles impeded the advancement of human rights. For instance, the Government continued to harass and intimidate anti-Syrian activists and to compel journalists to practice self-censorship. The Government was also responsible for closing a media outlet. The security services exercised undue influence over political decision-making, and the judiciary lacked independence. Corruption and a lack of transparency were obstacles to effective government and economic reform. Trafficking in persons also remained a concern.

Underpinning the U.S. Government's human rights strategy in Lebanon was recognition that Syrian interference has been a corrupting, controlling and self-serving influence. In order to combat Syrian influence in Lebanon, the United States passed the "Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act" in December 2003, and co-sponsored UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1559 in September 2004. UNSCR 1559 called for all remaining foreign forces to withdraw and for the strict respect of the sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon. The United States also called for the 2005 parliamentary elections to be free from Syrian influence or interference. Furthermore, U.S. diplomatic initiatives and assistance focused on abuses by the security services, lack of independence of the judiciary and restrictions on freedom of the press. The U.S. Government initiated programs to empower women and to deal with educational issues that have led in the past to child labor. The U.S. Embassy worked with source-country representatives and Lebanese Government and private agencies to address trafficking in persons.

Lebanese sovereignty was the central issue in the U.S. Government's efforts to promote democracy, rule of law and civil society in 2004. Since the passing of UNSCR 1559 in September, the

United States pressed the Government of Lebanon to implement the resolution and made numerous public statements supporting the goals outlined in UNSCR 1559. The U.S. Embassy also worked to garner the support of other diplomatic missions for the goals of UNSCR 1559.

In 2004, the United States and Lebanon addressed human rights issues by promoting a transparent, efficient and responsive public sector through good governance and improvement of civic institutions. Programs focused on enhancing administrative and financial capabilities, expanding social services, encouraging public participation and increasing accountability, transparency and effectiveness of local municipalities. As a result, the United States assisted an additional 237 municipalities in 2004, bringing the total number of assisted municipalities to over 800.

The United States also worked with local advocacy groups to promote transparent and democratic practices at the grassroots, civil society and public sector levels. The Transparency and Accountability Grant Project empowered local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civic associations to play a constructive role in advocating for change and enhancing transparency, accountability and good governance in Lebanon. Lebanon is one of four countries participating in a Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) program training local and regional government officials in public administration.

In addition to promoting democratic practices at the grassroots, the United States conducted programs to promote women's political participation in advance of municipal elections in 2004 and parliamentary elections in 2005. The United States also funded a counseling program to combat violence against women in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. Lebanese women and youth participated in the Arab Businesswomen Internship Program and the Young Student Leaders Program. Through the MEPI small grants, the United States also supported programs that improved women's literacy and computer skills.

The United States continued its support for a regional program to strengthen the management



and commercial base of independent media throughout the region. As part of a MEPI regional grant, a U.S. NGO, Internews, trained Lebanese journalists and opened an office in Beirut to support the training of journalists.

The United States supported programs to protect the rights of people with disabilities by providing a grant to a Lebanese NGO working with the disabled. The U.S. Government also provided funding to help establish a project to benefit 800 landmine survivors and their families who participate in small-scale economic activities in the district of Jezzine. These activities aimed to help landmine survivors reclaim their sense of being productive members of society.

The United States advocated on behalf of the rights of refugees in Lebanon. The Ambassador's Fund supported a refugee skills training center in the Sabra-Chatila refugee camp and a library and youth center in the Bourj el Barajneh refugee camp.

To underscore U.S. support for religious freedom, U.S. officials met regularly with religious leaders and members of the Council on Religious Understanding. The Embassy's International Visitors Leadership Program in 2004 included an interfaith dialogue theme.

Trafficking in persons remained a problem in Lebanon, and the U.S. Government protested the inaction of the Lebanese Government in connection with the deaths of several foreign migrant workers. The United States pressed the Government at all levels to acknowledge that trafficking in persons was a serious issue and to take immediate steps to stop it. By year's end, Lebanon's immigration service signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with an international and a local NGO to cooperate on protection of victims of trafficking, a first for the region. The MOU allowed a U.S.-funded safe house to operate with the protection of the Lebanese Government. At the U.S. Government's urging, the Lebanese Government published two booklets outlining the rights and obligations of foreign migrant workers in Lebanon. By keeping foreign workers better informed of their rights, these booklets helped

combat trafficking in persons. The United States approved a grant to provide training for student judges and continuing education for sitting judges at the Judicial Institute on identification and successful prosecution of traffickers in persons.

Libya

Libya has a history of summary executions, disappearances, arbitrary arrest and detention, widespread use of torture, impunity and restricted freedoms of speech, assembly, press and expression. The Government controlled the judiciary, citizens did not have the right to a fair public trial or to be represented by legal counsel, and the establishment of independent human rights organizations was prohibited. Women and religious and ethnic minorities also continued to face violence and discrimination. Libya remained among the world's worst violators of human rights and continued to ignore calls by other governments and international non-governmental organizations for reform. Libya's human rights record remained poor, and the Government continued to commit numerous serious abuses.

Following Libya's historic announcement that it would eliminate its weapons of mass destruction, the United States lifted most sanctions against Libya in 2004, except those stemming from Libya'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. Despite recent statements by high-level Libyan officials, including Moammar Qadhafi, that indicated Libya realizes it needs to improve its respect for human rights, in reality there has been little change.

Promoting improved respect for human rights and the implementation of political reforms was integral to the process of normalizing relations between the United States and Libya. Currently, the U.S. ability to consider expanding potential programming is limited, since full diplomatic relations have not been established. However, the United States explored options for initiating professional and student exchanges between the two countries that would expose many Libyans to a

free and democratic society. Additionally, the United States prepared to offer democracy, educational, cultural and professional programs in Libya itself.

The United States regularly raised human rights issues at senior levels with Libyan officials, urged its adherence to international human rights conventions and protocols and publicly condemned Libya's human rights abuses. United States diplomats in Tripoli worked with EU counterparts on behalf of five Bulgarian medics and a Palestinian doctor, sentenced to death by a Libyan regional court in 2004 for allegedly infecting over 400 Libyan children with HIV-tainted blood in a Benghazi hospital. United States officials repeatedly raised the case of Fathi al-Jahmi, whom the Libyan Government released and then re-detained in 2004 after he continued to call for democratic reform. Al-Jahmi's whereabouts remained unknown, and the United States continued to raise this issue at every possible opportunity with the Libyan Government.

United States officials also advocated for the abolition of the so-called People's Courts. The General People's Congress adopted a measure in January 2005 to abolish them.

Morocco

Although there was important progress in some areas, Morocco's human rights record remained poor. Morocco's Equity and Reconciliation Commission made progress in airing the history of disappearances and arbitrary arrests during the period lasting from the early 1970s until the mid 1990s. The Government began implementing landmark reforms to the family code, aimed at strengthening the legal rights of women and children. Morocco has ratified a Free Trade Agreement with the United States, which is establishing an open market and bolstering adherence to labor codes. In 2004, Morocco qualified for the U.S. Millennium Challenge Account development program based on its progress in governing justly, investing in its citizens and ensuring economic freedom, as measured against criteria established and monitored by independent organizations. It

was the only country in the broader Middle East and North Africa to become eligible.

Nevertheless, problems such as arbitrary arrest and detention and abuse of detainees continued. Security agencies detained several thousand people in 2003-04 for possible involvement with terrorist groups and convicted and sentenced more than 400. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch documented abuse and torture of those detained by the Government and persons sentenced to prison. While journalists tested boundaries, two journalists were jailed for defamation and two newspapers were ordered temporarily closed.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Morocco and Western Sahara addressed a wide range of critical issues, including support for the rule of law and women's issues and preparation for the 2007 municipal elections. Outreach efforts continued to target workers' rights, and child trafficking.

In December 2004 in Rabat, the Governments of Morocco and the United States co-hosted the first Forum for the Future. This brought together Foreign and Finance Ministers representing nations of the Broader Middle East and North Africa and their G-8 partners to discuss democratic, economic and social reforms in the region. Representatives of civil society and international human rights groups also participated in the Forum.

President Bush and Secretary Powell discussed political reforms with King Mohammed VI in 2004. Senior U.S. Government officials and Members of Congress continued to meet with Moroccan parliamentarians and other government officials to encourage further political reform.

Under the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), the United States provided funding to a consortium of American non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working with Moroccan political parties to strengthen party structures, and parliamentary systems (primarily through the National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute). The United States, through

MEPI, also provided funds to the National Conference of State Legislatures to provide training for Moroccan and other parliamentarians in the region and their staffs. The United States funded IFES to assist the Government of Morocco, political parties and other states in the region to prepare for upcoming legislative elections in 2007. The United States began a four-year democracy program in Morocco to support parliamentary processes and promote more effective and transparent local governance and women's literacy.

United States officials regularly met with a range of human rights activists, NGOs, members of civil society and Jewish and Berber community leaders to gauge the human rights environment in general, including the level of religious tolerance. The United States also funded a project with Catholic Relief Services to promote civil society capacity building for local development associations to address municipal infrastructure problems.

United States officials raised the issue of Morocco's detention of journalists in meetings with government officials. United States-funded MEPI continued its support for several regional reform programs, including a regional program to strengthen the management and commercial base of independent media. Internews, an NGO funded by the U.S. Government, began a MEPI program for training journalists in Morocco and four other countries in the region.

Embassy officials raised civil liberties issues in discussions with Moroccan officials about Morocco's candidacy for the Millennium Challenge Account. The United States funded a regional judicial project with the American Bar Association (ABA) to strengthen the independence of the judiciary and to work with the judiciary to implement important reforms to the personal status code. The United States also funded ABA to establish legal education clinics in Morocco.

The International Visitors Program (IVP) brought to the United States several members of Moroccan NGOs, as well as government officials and activists in the fields of children's rights and child trafficking, labor rights, prison reform and women's rights. Sixteen Moroccans, including six

women, representing media, parliament and civil society, participated in IVP designed to introduce U.S. democratic institutions and values including federalism, labor unions and religious tolerance.

Over 90 Moroccan military officers received training in the rule of law and human rights while participating in International Military and Education Training (IMET) in the United States. The Embassy reviewed all candidates for compliance with the Leahy Amendment to ensure that none were implicated in human rights violations.

Four female political activists participated in the MEPI-funded Women's Regional Campaign School in Tunis. The United States funded three Moroccan NGOs working on women's and job skills training, youth education and reforms to the family code. The United States also funded the international NGO Global Rights to promote women's legal literacy and to help implement reforms to the family status code (Moudawana) as well as providing assistance to Human Rights Education Associates to help implement Moudawana reforms.

Senior U.S. officials maintained a dialogue with Moroccan officials on religious tolerance. Embassy officers facilitated meetings between visiting Christian and Jewish leaders and the Ministry of Habous and Islamic Affairs.

For a second year, the U.S. Department of Labor provided funding to a consortium of Moroccan NGOs to end child labor, including developing appropriate laws against child labor and, in the interim, providing alternative educational programs for working children. In 2004, the United States also funded the International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor of the International Labor Organization (ILO) to combat rural child labor in Morocco and to promote children's rights. The U.S. Government provided funding to the ILO to be the implementing agency for a second program to promote workers' rights through collective bargaining, conflict resolution and arbitration and to improve the ability of Moroccan labor inspectors to enforce the new Labor Code.

The Embassy and Consulate General also promoted awareness of the issues of child labor and trafficking in persons through regular meetings with NGOs and government officials. In December 2004, the United States approved new funds to support Morocco's new Department of Border Control and Surveillance and its efforts to combat trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is a monarchy without elected representative institutions or political parties. In preparation for winter 2005 municipal elections, however, the Government began voter and candidate registration in November. The Government's human rights record remained poor; although there were improvements in a few areas, serious problems remained. Security forces continued to abuse detainees and prisoners, arbitrarily arrest and detain persons, and detain them incommunicado. Mutawwa'in (religious police) continued to intimidate, abuse and detain citizens and foreigners with impunity. Most trials were closed, and defendants usually had no legal counsel.

Increased press freedom continued, with open discussion of previously taboo subjects such as women's rights, political and economic reform, Mutawwa'in abuses, government corruption and some religious issues. The Government continued to hold meetings of the National Dialogue to address issues of political reform, religious tolerance and the role of women and youth in the country. Despite these developments, the Government routinely infringed upon privacy rights and continued to place some restrictions on freedom of speech and press. The Government restricted freedom of assembly, association, religion and movement. Violence against women and children, discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities and strict limitations on workers rights continued.

A newly registered human rights non-governmental organization (NGO) began to address human rights violations, such as prison conditions. Numerous foreign journalists were issued visas and permitted to travel and report freely within

the country. Journalists, however, were limited in their ability to criticize the religious police and question certain religious dogma. In October, the Government issued a law permitting long-term residents to apply for citizenship; as many as one million persons may be eligible for this program.

The United States continued to address democracy and human rights concerns in Saudi Arabia by urging the Government to increase political participation, transparency and accountability in government, rights for women, religious freedom and workers rights.

The United States continued to raise concerns about human rights at all levels of government, including in the Ambassador's meetings with senior government officials. United States officials highlight the need to improve human rights conditions, urging the Government to promote greater religious tolerance and support ongoing reform efforts. The Embassy raised these concerns directly with the Government whenever human rights violations occurred and met with representatives from the National Human Rights Association.

The United States encouraged and promoted press freedom in a number of ways. During 2004, two Saudi reporters were invited to the United States on Foreign Press Center programs on elections and on Arab-American and other minority communities. The Embassy facilitated contacts with American officials for several other Saudi reporters traveling privately, including a respected social affairs columnist who comments regularly on human rights issues.

Due to security concerns in Saudi Arabia, the Embassy was unable to conduct any formal training in journalism and again had to suspend or postpone a number of other planned programs. Through the International Visitors Program (IVP) and related programs, however, the United States sponsored individuals to go to U.S. seminars on key topics including multi-culturalism in a democratic society; women as leaders in the private and public sectors; the role of youth effecting social, political and economic change; and student leaders and civic responsibility. In Riyadh and Jeddah, a series of roundtable discussions, film showings

and telephone press conferences about the 2004 general election in the United States provided opportunities to discuss political freedoms with Saudi community leaders as well as journalists. In the third year of an important Saudi-specific initiative, ten educators participated in a special program on religious education in the United States, designed, among other things, to illustrate America's religious tolerance and diversity. American recipients of Fulbright scholarships were unable to come to Saudi Arabia because of security concerns, but Fulbright and IVP scholars from Saudi Arabia continued programs in the United States.

Representatives from the Government and private sector in Saudi Arabia participated in several Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) regional programs, including a workshop on media policy held in Abu Dhabi in October. A half-dozen young Saudi students attended MEPI-funded American studies programs that featured discussions of human rights. The United States provided International Military Education and Training Assistance for the Saudi military, which increased awareness of international norms of human rights and fostered greater respect for the principle of civilian control of the military and the rule of law. In compliance with the Leahy amendment, the Defense Attaché's Office worked closely with the Minister of Defense to vet military units for U.S. training and checked candidates with other embassy officers.

The Secretary of State added Saudi Arabia to its list of Countries of Particular Concern for severe violations of religious freedom. The United States encouraged Saudi officials to honor the 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 Muslims who do not adhere to the official Salafist tradition of Islam. United States officials also continued to press the connection between religious intolerance and terrorism, with the Ambassador and Embassy officials continuing their call for increased respect for freedom of religion and tolerance of people of all faiths. The Ambassador protested raids on private homes and

the detention of Christian worshippers, calling on the Government to respect its publicly stated guarantee to protect non-Muslims' right to practice their faith in private. In addition, the United States sponsored the participation of Saudi Islamic educators and scholars in U.S. programs on religious life in America.

As noted in the 2004 Trafficking in Persons Report, the Government does not have an anti-trafficking law per se despite criminalization of most forms of trafficking under existing statutes. Domestic laborers were not protected under the country's labor law. The majority of cases involving trafficking were settled out of court by mediation and settlements.

To address U.S. concerns about such abuses, the Saudi Government began informational outreach to foreign workers this year, providing guidance on basic rights and legal resources against abuse both when the employee receives a visa to travel to Saudi Arabia and upon his/her arrival. The United States also urged the Government to promote public awareness regarding the treatment of domestic servants and continues to take steps to do so. The United States also encouraged NGO and private involvement and increasing public affairs efforts by the Government to highlight the dangers and vulnerabilities of trafficking in persons. Finally, the United States discussed long-term improvements in the status and legal rights of foreign laborers under Saudi labor law. Through engagement with Saudi officials, the Embassy has advocated better protection for foreign workers under the law and encouraged the investigation and prosecution of traffickers.

During the year, the Government acknowledged trafficking problems related to abuse of domestic servants, especially female expatriate workers. The press carried a number of stories on the abuse of maids and other domestic workers, including the prosecution and punishment of citizen employers who abused domestic employees.

The Government operated shelters in the three largest cities for abused female workers, including some trafficking victims, and in Dammam established a Social Welfare office to take complaints

from foreign workers. Trafficking victims, however, faced disincentives to seek the prosecution of their employer for trafficking and were required first to file a police report before going to a government shelter if they were party to a criminal complaint. The Government worked with several Islamic charities to provide long term care for abandoned children, including those who were trafficked and forced into begging. During the year, the authorities disrupted a cross-border (Yemen-Saudi Arabia) child smuggling ring; and the Governments of Saudi Arabia and Yemen have formed a joint committee to address the problem. Authorities also arrested a man on charges of smuggling maids into Jeddah to work for a brothel, the first documented case of trafficking for sexual exploitation in the country.

Syria

Syria's human rights record remained poor. The Government used its vast unchecked powers to prevent any organized political opposition, severely limiting civil society activities and anti-government manifestations. Hopes for a more open political life were stymied by the Government's continued repression of civil society groups, including the suppression of the stateless Kurdish minority and the arrest and detention for several months of human rights activist Aktham Naissa.

As a state sponsor of terrorism, Syria was ineligible for any economic assistance from the United States. The United States, 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.

In an ongoing dialogue with Syria's Ministry of Foreign Affairs on civil society and human rights issues, U.S. officials emphasized the importance of respecting human rights, including the freedoms of assembly, association, speech and press. United States officials also participated actively in an inter-embassy monitoring group that exchanged information on the human rights situation in Syria and coordinated responses and related programs.

The United States managed the majority of its democracy and human rights activities through public diplomacy channels, with programs including the distribution of paper and electronic copies of human rights reports in both English and Arabic. Annual reports posted on the Internet included the Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, the International Religious Freedom Report, the Trafficking in Persons Report and the Supporting Human Rights and Democracy Report (the last only in English).

In March 2004, Najat Khalil, head of an American non-governmental organization (NGO), was invited to Syria to run a women's leadership training seminar. The United States gave 80 underprivileged secondary-school students in Aleppo and Damascus the opportunity to learn English and gain exposure to American social and political values through micro-scholarships provided by the U.S.-based NGO, America-Mideast Educational and Training Services. In addition, the Embassy regularly hosted lectures and seminars about human rights and democracy, including a February 2004 seminar on e-government and Internet resources attended by over 20 civil society activists.

The United States also maintained an active exchange program designed to expose Syrians to alternative viewpoints and encourage broader participation in civic society. Through the International Visitors Program, young Syrian journalists, academics, civil society leaders and others traveled to the United States to gain exposure to American colleagues and hone the skills needed to implement new ideas and reform in Syria. One of the 2004 program's highlights was a Damascus University professor's month-long investigation into the American political process, learning from the experiences and governance challenges of the cities of New Orleans, Charlotte, Washington D.C., San Diego, Kansas City and Rapid City, South Dakota. Additional exchange programs in 2004 ranged from teaching student leaders about civic responsibility to teaching them about the American political process.

The United States also explored ways, within the framework of existing restrictions on U.S. assistance and in light of the Syrian Accountability Act, to further Middle East Partnership Initiative program goals of encouraging political participation and the development of a dynamic and flourishing civil society in the country.

Tunisia

Tunisia's human rights record remained poor, and the Government continued to commit serious abuses; however, the Government continued to respect human rights in certain other areas. Paradoxically, Tunisia stood ahead of its regional neighbors on basic issues such as universal education, health care and the rights of women. However, its impressive gains in these fields were undercut by an authoritarian system of government, which 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 criticism by human rights and opposition activists. Security forces arbitrarily arrested and detained individuals and tortured prisoners and detainees.

The U.S. Government's goal was to work with the Tunisian Government and civil society to increase the pace and substance of political, economic and human rights reforms. Toward this end, the Embassy maintained a regular and specific dialogue on human rights with all levels of the Government, monitored and reported factually on important events, stayed in contact with all elements of Tunisian civil society and media, and developed and tailored elements from the four pillars of the U.S. primary assistance program to Tunisia, the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) which has its regional office for North Africa in Tunis. In addition, the United States produces annual reports on human rights and international religious freedom that describe both the overall situation in the country and notable events from the previous year.

United States diplomatic initiatives in support of democracy and human rights had mixed results in 2004. Tunisia took the lead in passing the "Tunis Declaration," a resolution that called for regional reform at the Arab League Summit it hosted in May, and the Tunisian Government stopped blocking several international websites, including Amnesty International, Al Jazeera and Hotmail. However, the Tunisian Government invoked a variety of laws and regulations to selectively obstruct U.S. initiatives within the country. For example, it used a law on non-governmental organization (NGO) financing (originally aimed at preventing foreign Islamist groups from funding Tunisian NGOs) to block several programs that the U.S. Government funded indirectly, including an attempt by a U.S. NGO to train Tunisian election monitors prior to the Tunisian election. However, some U.S. NGOs conducted other programs successfully. Several MEPI programs were significantly delayed because of restrictions that the Tunisian Government imposed.

The United States pressed the Tunisian Government to match its notable social and economic progress with similarly bold steps toward human rights and political process reform. These initiatives built on a record of activities throughout the year that conveyed U.S. concerns regarding human rights, including demarches, opinion pieces in the local press, inquiries regarding specific cases and a bilateral human rights dialogue that the Embassy initiated with Tunisian officials. The Embassy continued to conduct a dialogue on human rights issues with representatives of several ministries of the Tunisian Government.

The Embassy took advantage of the proximity of the U.S. election to the October 24 Tunisian national elections to conduct a number of programs, including roundtables, films, speakers and an 800-person event on the U.S. election night, all of which enabled more than one thousand Tunisians to expand their perspectives on democracy. The United States also supported a July 2004 regional campaign school in Tunisia to train North African women to run for office.

The U.S. strategy included projects to strengthen civil society and its ability to influence and communicate with the Government. United States officials urged the Tunisian Government to liberalize registration and funding mechanisms for NGOs. The MEPI regional office in Tunis organized a conference on Leadership and Civic engagement for 42 Arab student leaders that included students from 11 countries, including six Tunisians.

The United States made use of exchange, cultural and professional programs. Under the International Visitors Program, 35 Tunisian rising stars in government, human rights, judicial reform, education and media visited the United States to meet their counterparts and gain exposure to U.S. perspectives. The Embassy brought high profile speakers to Tunisia to discuss issues related to human rights and democracy with Tunisian think tanks and university classes.

The United States sought to promote media independence and professionalism through weekly programs for Tunisian journalists and regular interaction with media professionals. The Embassy reserved its Information Resource Center (IRC) one morning per week for the exclusive use of journalists, granting them free access to a variety of research tools, including the Internet. One IRC official conducted outreach to journalists full-time, vastly increasing the numbers of journalists with direct access to International Information Programs and other U.S. sources of information. Embassy officials held regular meetings with their counterparts in the Tunisian Government, as well as representatives of the full range of Tunisian media. Nineteen Tunisian journalists attended programs to the United States, all of whom returned with greater insight into American culture and renewed appreciation of the value of a free press and freedom of expression.

As part of a regional grant, Internews a U.S. NGO agreed to provide three training sessions for Tunisian journalists during 2004. Internews succeeded in holding one such session in July 2004, at which it provided training on basic reporting skills for 16 young Tunisian journalists. Due to resistance on the part of the Tunisian Government and

difficulty in finding local partners willing to work with an American organization, Internews had to postpone the last two of the sessions until 2005.

To promote the rule of law and human rights awareness, the Embassy continued to provide support for the Common Law program at a Tunisian law school by identifying and sponsoring American professors to teach there as part of the curriculum. The United States continued to raise rule of law with Tunisian officials.

The United States obtained frequent placement of Embassy press releases, letters to the editor and op-eds written by the Ambassador and other State Department officials, many of which were related to the issues of human rights and reform.

In 2004, 87 Tunisian military personnel took part in U.S. International Military Education and Training (IMET), which included course components encouraging respect for human rights and rule of law. The Embassy vetted Tunisian military participants in U.S. training programs to ensure that known human rights violators did not benefit from U.S. training.

Consistent with MEPI's mission to increase opportunities for women excluded by social, cultural and legal practices, MEPI's U.S. Business Internship Program provided 42 talented young Arab women (including two Tunisians) unique opportunities to learn management and business skills while working in the U.S. business environment beginning in August 2004. Another program called Project FAARE (Femmes du monde Arabe et d'Amérique Réunies pour Entreprendre) also brought together Tunisian and other Maghreb businesswomen with their American counterparts in 2004. The United States ensured active participation of Tunisian women in all MEPI programs, including the "Women and the Law" regional network.

Embassy officials maintained close contact with Muslim, Christian and Jewish religious groups and promoted exchanges designed to include exposure to U.S. traditions of religious tolerance and pluralism and helped organize a conference on religious tolerance.

Although trafficking in persons is not a significant problem in Tunisia, the Embassy's Office of Defense Cooperation maintained links with and provided training and equipment to Tunisian border security forces to increase their ability to protect the country's borders. United States officials raised the issue with the Tunisian Government, local NGOs and international organizations working on the issue.

West Bank and Gaza

The violence and terrorism sparked by the Al-Aqsa Intifada, the Palestinian uprising that began in September 2000, continued to claim the lives of hundreds of Palestinians and Israelis residing in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Israel during 2004. Palestinian terrorist attacks within Israel continued, including bombings that claimed scores of Israeli civilians. Israeli security forces killed at least 800 Palestinians, including armed militants engaged in violence as well as some unarmed civilians. Israel launched several large-scale military operations into the Gaza Strip during 2004 in response to terrorist activities including the firing of rockets and mortars against settlements in Gaza and towns in Israel. These operations resulted in the deaths of unarmed civilians and the destruction of hundreds of housing units that left several thousand Palestinians homeless. Members of the Israeli security forces committed numerous, serious abuses.

The overall human rights record of the Palestinian Authority (PA) remained poor, and it continued to commit numerous, serious abuses. Many members of the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, associated with the Fatah faction of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), conducted violent attacks against Israeli civilians, soldiers and foreign nationals. Palestinian militants targeted Israeli settlers in drive-by shootings and ambushes, suicide and other bombings, mortar and rocket attacks and armed attacks on settlements and military bases. The Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) continued to fire rockets and mortars at Israelis living in the Gaza Strip and in Israel, resulting in numerous casualties. Palestinians killed at least 47 Israelis (Israeli Defense Forces soldiers and civilian settlers) and three foreign workers in the



Jericho, West Bank

An elderly Palestinian woman looks for her name on a voter list during municipal elections.

occupied territories during the year. Palestinian militants also killed 67 Israelis (61 civilians and six soldiers) and one foreign national within Israel. Palestinians acting individually or in association with militant groups killed at least 18 Palestinians accused of collaborating with Israel.

Despite ongoing violence, significant political developments during the final quarter of 2004 increased the prospects for de-escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in 2005. On November 11, PA Chairman Yasser Arafat died in a Paris hospital following a brief illness. His death was followed by an orderly transition with the Palestinian presidential election on January 9. Mahmud Abbas, who had briefly served as prime minister in 2003, won election to the presidency in an election that domestic and international observers said

was generally free and fair. Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) elections are scheduled for July 17, marking the first elections for the Palestinian legislature since 1996. The PA also conducted municipal elections in 26 West Bank localities on December 23, marking the first time since 1976 that local elections have taken place in the occupied territories. Additional municipal elections took place on January 27 in 10 localities in the Gaza Strip, and future rounds of municipal elections are scheduled in spring and summer 2005.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for the West Bank and Gaza centers on the realization of President Bush's vision of two states living in peace and security. This strategy rests on ending the violence, fighting terrorism, restarting a political process between the two sides to resolve the conflict, and establishing an independent, democratic Palestinian state. United States democracy and governance programs operated under difficult security conditions, including frequent closures

and curfews throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

In August and September, in response to an urgent request from the Palestinian Central Elections Commission (CEC), the United States supported the deployment of a National Democratic Institute (NDI) voter registration observation mission. A team of approximately 15 seasoned election observers monitored logistical preparations and the registration process in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which helped build public and international confidence in electoral preparations. After the first round of registration in October, the team's interim report praised the CEC technical preparations and handling of the voter registration process.

United States technical support also contributed to an important draft election law, which will lay the foundation for democratic parliamentary elections in July 2005. The United States provided technical assistance to the PLC Legal Committee in its draft-



Jenin, West Bank

Palestinians wait to vote in municipal elections.

AP Photo

ing of a modern election law that will support the development of high quality legislation for parliamentary and presidential elections. A U.S.-sponsored workshop held outside the West Bank and Gaza Strip for legislation drafters, expert advisers and political actors produced a draft elections law for consideration by the PLC. The United States provided additional technical and commodity assistance to the CEC including support from expert international advisors on voter education and public relations and assistance to the CEC's Media Center prior to, and on, election day. A number of rapid response grants supported domestic observer training and voter education efforts.

The United States also provided critical support for the January 9, 2005 presidential election, funding an international election observation effort implemented by NDI in conjunction with the Carter Center. Led by former President Jimmy Carter, the delegation included approximately 80 American and international observers. With U.S. support, the International Republican Institute conducted exit polling on January 9 in coordination with the Development Studies Program at Birzeit University. United States material and technical assistance to the CEC, paired with election-related civil society programming and international observation efforts, contributed significantly to the successful Palestinian Authority presidential election.

Bolstered by U.S. technical assistance, the PLC played a key role in advancing and encouraging Palestinian institutional reform efforts during the year. After a PLC review of the 2004 PA budget, the Council commissioned a public investigation into costly Gaza electricity outlays and streamlined its own budgetary review and analysis process. Advanced training supported by the United States enhanced the analytical skills of Council budget staff, and U.S.-funded upgrades to the Council's information technology infrastructure allowed improvements to a video-conferencing system connecting PLC branches in Ramallah and Gaza city. A U.S.-funded Digital Congress Network/Hansard system captured PLC debate and deliberation for public access and review. Video-conferencing, supported by the United



Silwad near the West Bank of Ramallah

A Palestinian woman waits for her turn to vote in municipal elections. Behind her are voting instruction posters.

AP Photo

States, represented the primary means through which the PLC conducted business between the West Bank and Gaza.

Legislative and other institutional development programs worked to consolidate gains made since 1996, strengthening core Palestinian democratic institutions. Visible, although modest, results were achieved in strengthening the Palestinian judiciary, in sustaining PLC operations and oversight of the Executive Branch, and in technical support to developing key pieces of draft legislation.

The United States supported key reform-related activities in the rule of law arena through the final year of its current program. The U.S.-funded initiative completed its rehabilitation, automation and modernization efforts in a total of 13



Ramallah, West Bank

Palestinians prepare voting materials at Palestinian Election Commission.

Palestinian courts and seven offices of the PA Attorney General in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. These courts and offices are now able to process cases more swiftly and efficiently, compile and store records more safely, and administer justice more effectively. United States support to the Palestinian Judicial Education Committee laid a foundation for the Judicial Training Institute, the central judicial training and education institution of the PA. The two Alternative Dispute Resolution centers established by the project forged exclusive agreements with six major Palestinian companies and professional associations to handle all arbitration and mediation business. The United States also mobilized two new programs in 2004. The first assisted legal professionals, strengthened law schools, and built public and professional support for judicial reform; the second program provided continuing judicial and prosecutorial education.

United States work with Palestinian civil society achieved demonstrable results during the year, engaging NGOs in the democratic process and supporting their efforts to represent and integrate marginalized groups such as women, children and the disabled. The Consulate General and Embassy hosted speakers and video conferences on political participation by women and youth, sponsored Palestinian participation in international conferences addressing rule of law and democratization, and provided books and other publications on human rights and democracy in Arabic and English to local schools, libraries, government officials and other contacts. Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are regular participants in the Salzburg Seminar, International Visitors Program and Fulbright Summer Institute, which focus on democracy and human rights topics. In December, the Embassy's Gaza Program Office opened a digital video conference site in Gaza City that will reach a broader audience on elections and democratic reform.

A five-year United States Civil Society and Democracy Strengthening project known as Tamkeen — “empowerment” in Arabic — supports 98 civil society organizations (CSOs) promoting human rights and the rule of law. Despite a politically-charged working environment, Tamkeen succeeded in identifying new, alternative

CSO partners, supporting key Palestinian "think tanks" that undertook important public opinion surveys, promoted policy and legislative changes, and organized grassroots forums designed to determine the needs and priorities of Palestinian citizens. In partnership with the US-based Advocacy Institute, Tamkeen also delivered high-quality advanced advocacy training for a core group of Palestinian CSO leaders, helping them form a network of advocacy practitioners from a broad cross-section of medium-sized CSOs in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The Civil Society Empowerment initiative supported a series of workshops that strengthened the analytical, communications, planning and management skills of approximately 70 mid-career Palestinian professionals. A second project component, "Promoting Good Governance," attracted approximately 200 participants, of whom one-third were women.

The Moderate Voices initiative, extended for an additional 18 months during 2004, promoted non-violent conflict resolution through a combination of sub-grants and technical assistance to select Palestinian NGOs. These NGOs promoted a Palestinian-Israeli policy 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.

Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) small grants for the West Bank included a project in Ramallah designed to increase voter-education activities among village women and conduct candidate training. A second MEPI small grant trained Palestinian NGO leaders to analyze the national and local budgeting process to advocate for increased promotion of rights.

The United States also supported special projects to promote human rights, tolerance and conflict resolution skills among Palestinian refugee children. Through a multi-year grant to the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), which holds responsibility for primary education for approximately 250,000 registered Palestinian refugee youths in Gaza and the West Bank, the United States is introducing supplementary educational materials and peer mediation

training. During the year, all UNRWA schools in the West Bank and Gaza started using U.S.-funded illustrated storybooks that introduced human rights and tolerance concepts in grades five-nine, as well as related worksheets that link human rights and tolerance concepts to various parts of the Palestinian curriculum.

United States officials continued to raise with the Government of Israel concerns about the effect of the security barrier on religious liberty, especially for Muslims and Christians, and urged the Government of Israel to take religious freedom into account in deciding the route of the security barrier. Of particular concern is the negative impact of the barrier on access to Muslim and Christian places of worship, holy sites and religious institutions that provide educational opportunities, health care, social services and humanitarian relief. The confiscation of religious property due to barrier construction and surrounding security zones remains a significant problem.

Yemen

Yemen is a republic with an active bicameral legislature. An elected President, Ali Abdullah Saleh, an elected 301-seat House of Representatives and an appointed 111-member Shura Council share constitutional power.

During 2004, there was a marked increase in restrictions on freedom of speech and of the press. Security forces continued to arbitrarily arrest, detain and torture persons, and in many cases the Government failed to hold members of the security forces accountable for abuses. The number of security officials tried for abuses, however, increased for a second consecutive year. Prison conditions remained poor, although the Government took some steps to alleviate the situation and is negotiating terms for prison access by the International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent. Despite constitutional prohibitions, political security officers routinely monitored citizens' activities, searched their homes, detained citizens for questioning and mistreated detainees. Prolonged pretrial detention, judicial corruption and executive interference also undermined due

process. The Government at times limited freedom of assembly, imposed some restrictions on freedom of religion and placed some limits on freedom of movement. Violence and discrimination against women remained problems, and female genital mutilation was practiced on a limited scale. There was some discrimination against persons with disabilities and against religious, racial and ethnic minorities. The Government imposed restrictions on labor unions, and child labor was a problem.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy addressed the need for the Government of Yemen to improve both its human rights record and the administration of justice, and to enact social reforms that strengthen civil society, give women a greater voice in their own government, and further the country's democratic development. The United States continued to support several long-term projects targeting these issues by strengthening Yemen's political parties, improving elections administration, increasing voter participation, strengthening civil society and improving the Government's respect for the human rights of its citizens. The United States supported Yemen's efforts, as one of the three organizing countries in the regional Democracy Assistance Dialogue fostered by the Broader Middle East and North Africa initiative, to mobilize regional governments and civil society to implement core democratic principles and reforms.

In 2003, USAID re-opened its offices in Yemen, with a focus on strengthening democratic institutions. In 2004, the United States increased its support to projects to strengthen democratic institutions, decentralize authority and resource management in government, and expand opportunities for civil society in decision-making. The Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), which works to support a forward strategy for freedom throughout the Middle East, provided a variety of programs in Yemen for legislative strengthening, elections assistance and civic education, including a program to reduce the current 67 percent illiteracy rate among women and girls. In addition, both governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from Yemen have participated in numerous MEPI regional programs.

In 2004, MEPI and USAID began two key programs to support democracy and human rights in Yemen. The Strengthening Parliamentary Institutions program worked to strengthen core skills of parliamentarians, including constituent outreach and executive oversight functions, as well as establish a new parliamentary resource center to provide information needed for more responsive legislation. The United States also supported the UN Development Program to Support Decentralization and Local Development in Yemen, providing funding over a two-year period to improve the capacity of local councils and promote decentralization and efficiency in government. In February 2004, nine Yemeni women participated in the MEPI Regional Women's Campaign Initiative to encourage women's political party participation. As part of a MEPI "Democratic Strengthening" grant, National Democratic Institute Yemen is also working with women to encourage appropriate legal reforms and ensure women's full participation in government. The United States continued its support to several long-term projects aimed at strengthening Yemen's political parties, improving election administration, increasing voter participation, fostering civil society and improving the Government's human rights performance.

In Yemen, the judicial system coexists with traditional means of dispute resolution, such as tribal mediation. Significant problems with the formal court system remained, including corruption and tampering by the executive branch, inefficiency in administration, a lack of access for women, and a failure by authorities to enforce court rulings. The Government took some preliminary steps to improve the situation, announcing in December 2004 an overhaul of the judiciary designed to counter judicial corruption in conjunction with a ten-year reform project promoting a more efficient judiciary.

The United States increased its engagement with NGOs and religious groups in 2004, encouraging civil society organizations in Yemen to take a leading role in reform of their country's political and social institutions. One 2004 NGO project taught children about participation in government, and has proven very successful in raising democratic

awareness. Another project, with a focus on basic economic development, aimed to strengthen the capacity of local NGOs and community groups in a rural, underdeveloped governorate. Several projects worked to improve rights for Yemeni women, who remained politically and socially marginalized, with limited local and national political representation despite high rates of voter participation. Of particular concern was the restricted access of women to healthcare and education, as well as widespread reports of domestic abuse and some incidents of female genital mutilation. As part of an initiative between USAID and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the United States established a project to build and furnish new primary schools for girls in isolated, rural areas to broaden female access to modern education and to facilitate their inclusion within society. Concentrating on underserved women and girls, literacy and school renovation programs helped alleviate poverty and promote equality and democracy. Embassy officers, including the Ambassador, also met periodically with representatives of minority religious communities.

The United States urged the Government to enact social reforms, encourage respect for human rights and foster democratic development at the highest levels. For example, in February 2004, National Security Council officials raised democracy and human rights concerns directly with the Foreign Minister. The Ambassador and other senior-level officials engaged frequently with the Ministry of Human Rights to improve the Government's ability and willingness to redress specific human rights abuses. United States officials raised the issue of corruption at the highest levels, noting the importance of transparency and good governance in relation to Millennium Challenge Account eligibility.

United States International Military Education and Training assistance for the Yemeni military, with 25 participants in 2004, addressed awareness of international norms of human rights and fostered greater respect for the principle of civilian control of the military and the rule of law. In compliance with the Leahy Amendment, U.S. officials worked closely with the Ministries of Defense and Interior to vet units for U.S. training. The Defense

Department Counter-Terrorism Fellowship funded a training program for Yemeni military officers on the importance of respecting human rights. The ongoing project, which offers training to Ministry of Interior and Defense civilians and security forces alike, has been highly successful.

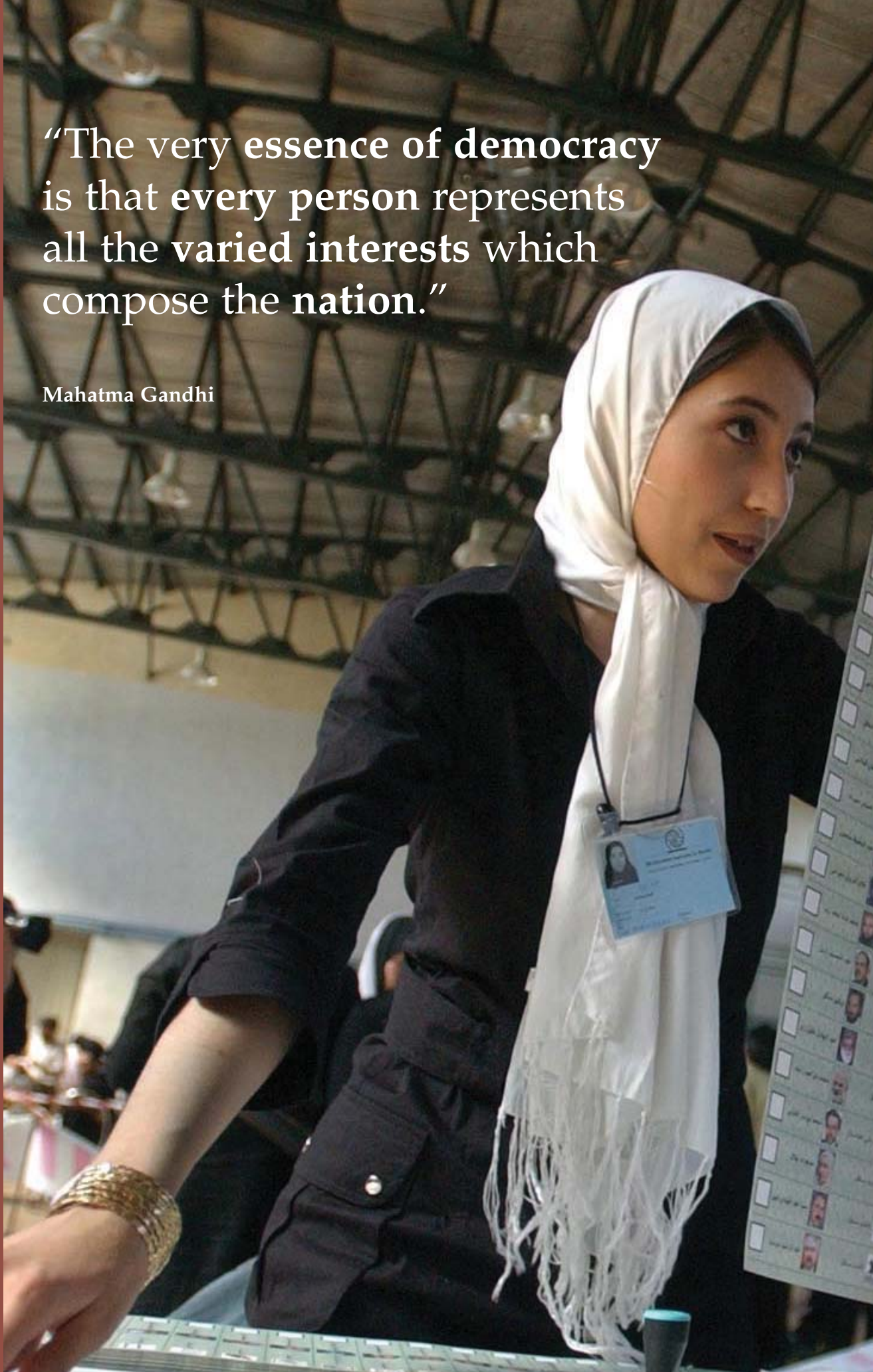
Reports of children trafficked within Yemen for child labor and to Saudi Arabia for begging continued. Reports also indicated that an increasing number of Iraqi women and girls were trafficked into Yemen for prostitution. Because trafficking was relatively new in Yemen, no surveys or reports were available on the scope and magnitude of the problem. The Ministry of Human Rights issued a public statement and dedicated resources to fight trafficking, and the Governments of Yemen and Saudi Arabia formed a joint committee to combat the practice.

In 2004, International Visitors Programs brought 22 NGO activists, government officials and other leaders to the United States to gain skills and knowledge in such areas as NGO management, youth leadership, women's leadership in the political process, rule of law, judicial reform and accountability in government.

South Asia

“The very essence of democracy is that every person represents all the varied interests which compose the nation.”

Mahatma Gandhi

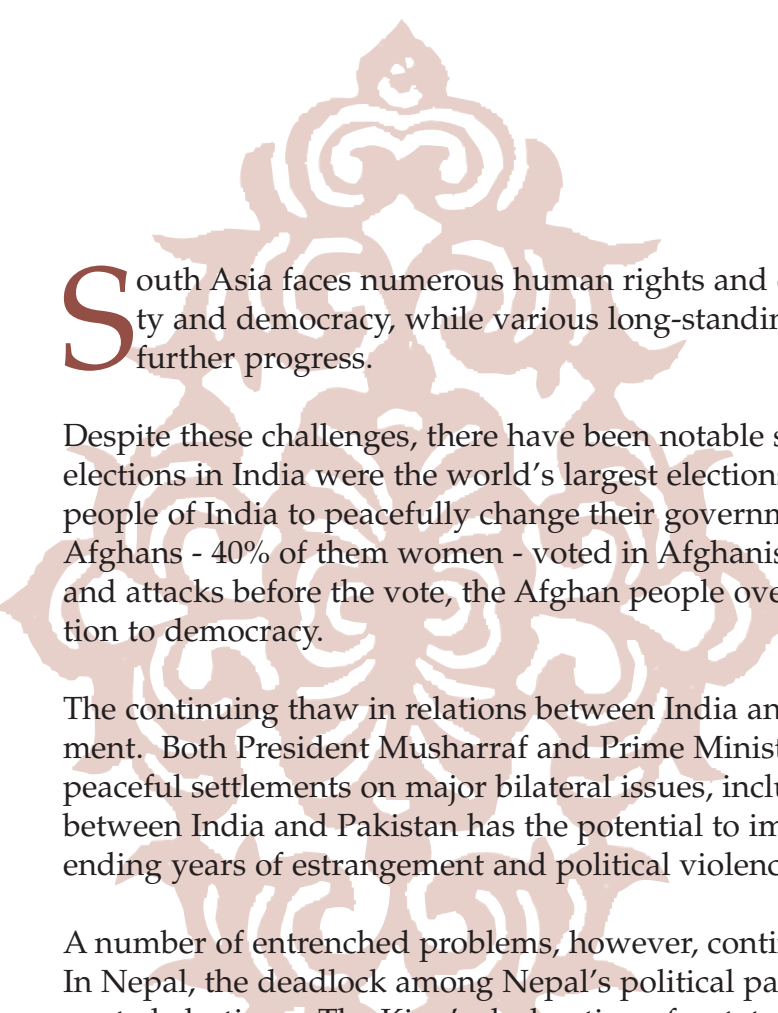




Tehran, Iran

A female election official teaches an Afghan refugee the voting procedures for their presidential election.

AP Photo



South Asia faces numerous human rights and development challenges that threaten stability and democracy, while various long-standing ethnic conflicts and insurgencies hamper further progress.

Despite these challenges, there have been notable successes. The April-May parliamentary elections in India were the world's largest elections. The results confirmed the ability of the people of India to peacefully change their government. In October, more than eight million Afghans - 40% of them women - voted in Afghanistan's first election. Despite security threats and attacks before the vote, the Afghan people overwhelmingly supported the country's transition to democracy.

The continuing thaw in relations between India and Pakistan was another positive development. Both President Musharraf and Prime Minister Singh showed a willingness to reach peaceful settlements on major bilateral issues, including Kashmir. Continued engagement between India and Pakistan has the potential to improve the lives of the Kashmiri people by ending years of estrangement and political violence.

A number of entrenched problems, however, continued to undermine progress in the region. In Nepal, the deadlock among Nepal's political parties persisted and a Maoist insurgency prevented elections. The King's declaration of a state of emergency and suspension of basic human rights further deepened the country's political crisis. The ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka remained unresolved. According to international observers, both the Government and the terrorist organization Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam violated the 2002 ceasefire. An increase in politically-motivated attacks in Bangladesh seriously undermined further political progress.

Throughout the region, torture and illegal detention by security forces remained widespread, eroding public trust in government authorities. Sectarian tensions exploited by homegrown and foreign terrorist groups, extremism and ineffective legal systems threatened peace and stability. Rampant corruption in South Asia perpetuated inefficiency and often blocked the administration of justice, leading to further abuses against members of the most vulnerable communities, such as women and minority religious and ethnic groups. Trafficking in persons remained a significant problem in the region. Millions of people were recruited through force, fraud or coercion into servitude or the sex trade. While there were differing levels of commitments from the Governments of South Asia, many took encouraging steps to address these issues, particularly in trafficking in persons.

The United States remained focused on strengthening democratic institutions in South Asia and reinforcing respect for human rights and the rule of law. In countries with upcoming elections, U.S. strategy centered on the promotion of free and fair democratic processes through support of civil society and encouragement from high-level U.S. officials. Initiatives in the region included political party reform, civic education and strengthening local government bodies. The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy encouraged peaceful settlements of internal conflicts and prevention of abuses by security forces. To address key human rights concerns, the United States supported programs to enhance the professionalism of security forces, combat trafficking in persons and reduce violence against women. The United States also sought to strengthen the rights of vulnerable groups, such as religious minorities and lower caste groups, women and children, and workers' rights. The United States is working with governments and non-governmental organizations in the region to address these challenges.

Muslim Women Political Leadership Program

In most South Asian countries, women occupy only a small number of seats in their respective national and local legislatures. Many women who enter politics lack the basic political skills to run successful campaigns or effectively serve their constituents if elected.

To help resolve this imbalance, the United States, working with the National Democratic Institute (NDI), sponsored a regional Muslim women's political leadership program in Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan. This innovative project aimed to develop the skills women need to enter politics, and serve as elected officials. This project also provided a forum for regional women to discuss and develop solutions to common obstacles.

Using U.S. funds, NDI organized a regional conference in Pakistan promoting the candidacy and election of women party leaders to legislatures across South Asia. Conferees were trained to be Master Trainers for their respective parties, and develop training capacity within their organizations. Conferees from Afghanistan are currently conducting political party training programs for women candidates in advance of the parliamentary elections. Master Trainers in Bangladesh and Pakistan have launched training sessions to enhance the skills, leadership capacity and confidence of elected women representatives and political leaders.

As a result of the program, Master Trainers in Afghanistan and Pakistan have enhanced the professional skills of 132 women, including elected officials and aspiring parliamentarians. In Afghanistan, a number of program participants planned to run for parliament or work on behalf of their political parties. Trainers from three of the five leading parties in Pakistan held training sessions for political party activists, which covered government, public speaking, gender barriers in politics and lobbying within the party. Many of the participants are currently serving their communities as local councilors.

Afghanistan

Since the end of almost 23 years of war, Afghanistan has made significant progress towards reconstruction, stability, and protection of human rights. This progress includes the adoption in 2004 of a Constitution with strong human rights provisions, the codification of an election law and a political party law, and the successful election of the country's first democratically chosen president in October 2004. In spite of these advancements, the Government of Afghanistan's human rights record remained poor. Serious violations of human rights included arbitrary arrest and detention, extrajudicial killings, torture, and reports of inhumane living conditions at detention centers. Afghans continued to experience a climate of insecurity and violence characterized by rape and kidnapping as well as discrimination against women and religious and ethnic minorities. Trafficking in Persons (TIP) and child labor were problems. Government efforts to bring serious human rights offenders to justice were often ineffective, and impunity from the law remained a serious concern. Justice was administered on an ad hoc basis according to a mixture of codified law, Shari'a law, and local customs. Private prisons were a problem. There were credible reports that the country's intelligence agency ran at least two prisons, and there were unconfirmed reports of private detention facilities around Kabul and in northern regions of the country. The activity of the Taliban, al-Qa'ida, and other anti-government groups, particularly in the south and south-east, compounded security concerns and led UN agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to temporarily cancel or curtail their activities at various times during the year.

The United States supports Afghanistan's effort to develop as a nation that respects human rights and conducts free and fair par-

Kabul, Afghanistan

Afghan election officials pass presidential election ballot boxes to a warehouse on an Afghan military base in Kabul.



AP Photo/ David Guttenfelder

liamentary elections as outlined under its new Constitution. The U.S. Embassy in Kabul focused on strengthening the reach of the central Government to provide the basis for the rule of law through its Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration programs through training and capacity building of the national police, judiciary and numerous other ministries. The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy assists the Government of Afghanistan in reforming and rebuilding legitimate national institutions and infrastructure, including rebuilding judicial institutions and the rule of law and supporting the elections process, and civic participation.

To promote stability and support Afghanistan as it asserts political self-determination and transitions into a democracy, the United States contributed generously in the preparation and execution of the country's first democratic presidential elections. Over 10.5 million voters registered in country, with almost 42 percent of them women. Over one million Afghan refugees in Iran and Pakistan were also registered. In October 2004, Afghans voted for their first elected president. Eighteen candidates for the presidency contended for the vote. Despite security threats and inherent technical challenges, over 8 million Afghans voted, with a majority selecting President Hamid Karzai.

The United States, through USAID provided funding to the National Democratic Institute (NDI) for the establishment of eight political party centers nation-wide, which helped in the formation of a coalition of moderate political parties seeking democratic reform. They also supported a nation-wide network of domestic election monitors.

The United States provided funding for civic education programs, including the development and dissemination of oral education materials designed to teach the Afghan people

the basic tenets of democracy. To spread the message of democracy, the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) and USAID supported a U.S.-based NGO to develop a total of 27,000 solar-power devices akin to amplified MP3 players containing eight hours of civic education material. Topics included the country's new constitution, the importance of voting, and how to register for the elections.

During the year, the United States funded projects to support independent press and electronic media. Information dissemination improved with the opening of a radio station network and the country's first commercial television channel. The United States, through USAID provided assistance to 32 independent radio stations that develop and broadcast programs on nation building, national unity, civic education, and local, national and international news programming. The United States supported the development of "Salaam Watandaar," an independent, national radio program produced in Kabul, that is broadcast via satellite to radio stations, including a few state stations for four hours each day. The program emphasizes nation building and national unity. The stations also offered women's programs and covered topics on health, literacy, and agricultural training for women. The United States distributed 40,000 radios nationwide to women and other vulnerable groups. In September, the United States helped establish "Tolo TV Kabul" which broadcasted programs on a range of issues, including public interest programming, local, national, and international news, financial reporting, children's programming, investigative journalism and round table talk shows. The United States provided training to media professionals and journalists at six different Afghan universities on international standards of investigative journalism including interviewing skills and how to report during election periods. The United States also support-

ed the establishment of an independent news agency, a media distribution network, various print publications, documentaries, assisted in the development of Afghanistan's media broadcast law and the Election Media Code of Conduct, and provided support to the Office of the Presidential Spokesperson.

To foster and strengthen the rule of law, U.S. efforts focused on rebuilding justice system infrastructure; including equipping and training judges, attorneys, and administrators. The United States rehabilitated 14 judicial facilities, trained approximately 443 judicial experts, and offered training for 50 employees at the legislative drafting unit of the Ministry of Justice. To help disseminate basic information on the country's new laws and constitution, the United States printed 1,100 copies of ten basic laws and the Constitution for the Ministry of Justice. The United States recently awarded a grant to a U.S.-based university to institute a Doctorate of Law degree program specifically designed for Afghan legal educators to help improve the institutional capacity of this critical sector.

Narcotics production and drug trafficking is a significant rule of law problem, as it leads to lawlessness and strengthens internal elements that oppose the national Government. During the year, the United States provided funding for counter narcotics activities, including programs in eradication, alternative livelihoods, interdiction, demand reduction, regional cooperation and enhancing border security.

The United States and Afghanistan jointly agreed to establish and support a five-year program designed to provide training, technical assistance, alternative development, equipment and other forms of support for the police, judicial, and counter narcotics projects. The police training courses include classes on community-based policing and knowledge of and protection of human rights, with an

emphasis on women's and children's rights. Women were also included in the police force and were offered two types of training, a four-week Transitional Integration Program and an eight-week basic training program. A total of 67 women enrolled and graduated from the four-week Transitional Integration Program.

The United States provided technical assistance to the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) to help with its capacity building and carry out its mandate of monitoring and investigating human rights violations. Embassy 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 U.S. diplomats to resolve issues discovered in government-run prisons or other cases of human rights violations such as trafficking in persons.

To improve women's rights, the United States provided funding which enabled NGOs to hold workshops and educate women on the new Afghan Constitution, presidential elections, their legal rights and legal procedures, and the justice system. The United States sponsored teacher-training programs for middle and high school teachers on human and legal rights, including the rights of women and children.

To help promote religious freedom and tolerance, the United States promoted the inclusion of minority groups in the Government and military, and the fair distribution of assistance in the country's reconstruction and its legal and political processes. Additionally, U.S. Embassy representatives continue to meet with government officials and with religious and minority figures in an ongoing dialogue regarding the political, legal, religious, and human rights context of the country's recon-

struction. The United States has worked with civil society organizations to promote religious tolerance. Between March and July, the U.S. Government funded a visit to the United States of 25 religious leaders under a program on "Democracy and Civil Society." The U.S. Embassy also provided assistance from the Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation for the restoration of the Mullah Mahmood Mosque in Kabul. In at least one instance, U.S. officials met with and assisted an Afghan Christian allegedly being persecuted for his faith.

The United States incorporates women's issues in most of its assistance programs, including health clinics, schools, and market centers. In addition to support for the Ministry of Women's Affairs, the U.S.-Afghan Women's Council is forging bi-national, public-private partnerships to help and enable Afghan women to participate and take leadership roles in the political and economic life of their country. In 2004, USAID constructed and furnished 14 provincial women's centers, which provided literacy training, legal and income generation support activities, and political participation training for women.

The United States is supporting a U.S.-based NGO in an ongoing regional Muslim women's political development program that involves women from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. The program seeks to improve the capacity of women to campaign for elected office and serve the public as elected officials, and develop sustainable local capacity of a few "Master" trainers to train other women party members and elected officials.

The U.S. Embassy promoted interest in trafficking in persons issues amongst the Government and civil society members. The United States developed a national Anti-Trafficking Action Plan with the Government to combat trafficking both in the short and

long term. The United States funded the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to conduct research on trafficking in persons and published its findings in January 2004. In addition, the program works to increase coordination within international and national networks on combating trafficking, and strives to ensure that trafficking is mainstreamed into relevant ministry priorities. In September 2004, the Government approved the establishment of an inter-ministerial committee to combat child trafficking by consolidating a list of projects from all donors, developing a national action plan, tracking implementation, and coordinating efforts to maximize capacity. The committee is a focal point for articulating and implementing the Government's national TIP policy. The United States, through USAID granted IOM funding to implement a victim's assistance program which began in November 2004.

Throughout the year, IOM worked in conjunction with the UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) human rights unit to provide informational sessions on trafficking to members of the UN Protection Working Groups. These groups were established in eight provinces and met regularly to discuss reported human rights cases and determine the most appropriate intervention. During the year, there were 198 reported cases of trafficking in persons. From these cases, 20 arrests were made and seven resulted in convictions.

Bangladesh

The Government's poor human rights record worsened during the year, as it continued to commit numerous abuses, including a significant rise in extrajudicial killings, harassment of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and discrimination against religious minority groups. The Government also failed to conduct thorough investigations of politically-

motivated attacks. An entrenched climate of impunity, hampered by police corruption and torture occurred on a regular basis. Violence was a pervasive element in the country's political environment and continued to undermine democratic concepts and practices. The judicial system was hampered by lengthy pre-trial detention, corruption and a large judicial case backlog. The Government restricted freedom of speech, movement, assembly, political association and religious freedom. In June, the main opposition party, the Awami League, ended its boycott of Parliament, though it alleged that it is prevented from exercising parliamentary prerogatives. Violence against women and discrimination against indigenous people and religious minorities was ongoing. The Government succumbed to pressure by some politically-affiliated religious parties and banned the publications of members of the Ahmadiya sect, but by year's end, there was some improvement in government efforts to protect the Ahmadiyas. Child labor and abuse of child workers was widespread. The Government renewed its focus on trafficking in women and children for the purpose of prostitution and forced labor, and beginning in the summer, moved aggressively and successfully to arrest, prosecute and convict traffickers.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy in Bangladesh aims to strengthen democratic institutions, transparency and accountability to citizens, and respect for the rule of law and human rights. To do this, the United States seeks to reform political parties, increase informed citizen political participation, strengthen local government, improve police and military professionalism. The United States encourages better governance, a reduction in corruption, promotion of religious tolerance, and reduction in violence against women and trafficking, as well as improve women, children and worker rights.

United States officials publicly highlighted the need for an improvement in human rights conditions using the State Department's annual *Country Report on Human Rights Practices* as a key tool for moving the dialogue on human rights forward. The report is widely publicized in Bangladesh and closely scrutinized by the Government, opposition, press and NGOs both in Bangladesh and abroad.

The Ambassador and other U.S. officials work publicly and privately to engage the Government, the opposition, and diverse elements of civil society on the importance of democratic institutions. U.S. officials have condemned violence in the form of strikes and personal assaults as an instrument of political coercion. In 2004, officials such as Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, USAID Administrator

Bangladesh

Recipient of ILO Microcredit loan who purchased a sewing machine.



Photo: S. Ghorl

Natsios, Under Secretary of Labor Grizzard, and Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia Affairs Rocca, raised the importance of human rights and emphasized political dialogue as key issues in the country's development during visits to Dhaka. For example, after the attack on opposition leader Sheikh Hasina on August 21, the Embassy consistently pressed the Government for an effective and prompt investigation. Similarly, after the attacks on former President Badruddoza Chowdhury, the Ambassador stressed the importance of a transparent and thorough investigation of the attack and the importance of allowing political expression. After the January 2005 incident that killed four Awami League members, including former Finance Minister Shah Mohammad Kibria and injured more than 70 people, the State Department issued a statement urging the Government to undertake a thorough investigation. The Secretary also pressed for a complete investigation and end to Bangladesh's pattern of political violence. The Ambassador and other U.S. diplomats delivered seven major speeches that focused heavily on human rights, including keynote addresses on events marking Press Freedom Day and International Human Rights Day.

Since many of the human rights abuses centered on issues of governance and corruption, the Embassy focused its democracy promotion efforts on political reform and improving local governance. The United States, through USAID is funding a three-year initiative to strengthen parliamentary committees, reform political parties, and assist elected local governments in becoming more accountable to its citizens. Over the past year, the United States has continued to support the formation of the Municipal Association of Bangladesh (MAB) as well as the creation of the National Union Parishad Forum, a network of local government officials (equivalent to locally elected councils). Assistance to the MAB included membership recruitment, organizing a national convention to develop policy agenda on local governance issues, and establishing and collecting membership fees. A total of 43 policy workshops were held at the district level, along with two national policy workshops.

Despite the national stalemate between the two major political parties, training for mid-level party leaders has made significant progress. The United States, through USAID funds a program with the National



Bangladesh

Disadvantaged youth work on a local construction team.

Photo: S. Ghori

Democratic Institute (NDI) and the International Republican Institute (IRI) to implement these training programs. In the past year, NDI conducted training for a total of 160 mid-level political party leaders, including 32 women in six cities. The major focus of the training was on building internal democratic practices within the political parties. Using U.S. funds, IRI organized a regional conference for nearly 4,000 young party members on the roles and responsibilities of political parties.

During the year, the Embassy focused on the security and freedom of journalists, who faced pressure and violence from criminals, political leaders, and religious extremists. The Ambassador made five high profile visits to major newspaper offices to underscore our support for freedom of the press. The Embassy's press section placed an editorial by Ambassador Thomas on World Press Freedom Day in several newspapers. Using USAID's initiatives to combat the endemic problem of corruption and train Bangladeshi journalists on investigative journalism, journalist integrity and human rights related reporting continued to evolve.

Responding to the growing incidence of extrajudicial killings committed by paramilitary police units, the Ambassador and other Embassy officials both publicly and privately expressed strong concerns over government-sanctioned executions as a crime-fighting instrument. Additionally, the United States sponsored International Military Education and Training (IMET), Expanded International Military Education and Training (EIMET), and counter-terrorism training courses for Bangladeshi law enforcement and security personnel which emphasized respect for human rights. Human rights were included in the curriculum in U.S.-funded peacekeeping courses and in joint training involving

Bangladeshi peacekeepers, over 8,000 of who are now abroad serving in 12 countries.

Since the police perpetrated many of the human rights abuses, the Embassy has focused on enhancing police professional skills and their commitment to human rights and the rule of law. The United States, through USAID provided funding to a local NGO to monitor human rights abuses at select police stations. The United States also provided training and technical assistance to human rights NGOs, including assistance for anti-trafficking related projects. The Embassy is heavily involved in promoting human rights through the programs they sponsor on improving the professionalism of Bangladesh's security and military forces. A Department of Justice International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program began this year to improve police professionalism through an integrated training curriculum at the police academy and detective training school.

The United States also continues to support local human rights groups through its ongoing four-year program that provides critical services such as monitoring police stations and providing shelter to abused women, as well as training and technical assistance to human rights NGOs. The United States co-chaired a local donor working group on anti-corruption initiatives with the World Bank. The working group mainly focused on coordinating information on the types of anti-corruption initiatives in the country. Another major initiative has been to jointly push for the establishment of the Anti-Corruption Commission, including assistance in designing and implementing the commission.

During the past year, the Embassy has sponsored 22 Bangladeshis on the International Visitors Program to advance the goals of respect for rule of law, leadership development for women, student leaders and civic responsibility, freedom of the press, and the U.S. political process.

The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor funded a regional project supporting women political leaders in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Bangladesh through its Human Rights and Democracy Fund. Through regional workshops and in-country trainings, the project aimed to improve the capacity of women to campaign for elected office, enhance the capacity of women legislators to serve the public as elected officials, and develop local capacity of women political leaders to train other women members and elected officials.

The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of South Asian Affairs also supported a regional South Asian Muslim women's network and workshops, to bring together women from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka with Muslim women from Indonesia and Malaysia to explore solutions to common challenges facing Muslim women. They developed and discussed strategies on how to understand women's rights from within an Islamic framework and formulated ideas on how to construct these rights within their societies and legal frameworks.

In January, when the Bangladesh Government announced a ban on the publications of the Ahmadiya sect of Islam, the Ambassador met with high-level Bangladeshi officials to convey our deep concerns and to stress the importance of religious freedom. When the Government printed the Gazette Notification officially banning Ahmadiya publications, the United States sent a strong message to the

Government reminding them that such an action would violate the freedoms of religion and expression embodied in Bangladesh's Constitution. Six civil society groups and a member of the Ahmadiya Muslim community challenged the Government's ban, which was later supported by the High Court, which is a part of the Supreme Court. The Government had effectively stopped attacks on the Ahmadiya headquarters in central Dhaka at least twice.

Improving conditions for Bangladeshi workers is a consistent aspect of the overall U.S. human rights strategy. The American Center for International Labor Solidarity (ACILS) worked with the Government, the International Labor Organization's International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor (ILO/IPEC), and local labor and industry groups, on the elimination of child labor from the export-oriented garment industry. The U.S. Labor Department and USAID also fund programs to eliminate the worst forms of child labor, to support working women's education centers, empower rural women in the informal sector and provide opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Through IPEC, the ILO used activities including a three-year project to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The project targeted five industries - beedi production (the hand-rolled cigarette industry), match-making, tanneries, construction and child domestic workers. As of December 2004, 22,900 children had been removed from hazardous work, and more than 30,000 children have been placed in either non-formal or formal education or pre-vocational training. In 2004, parliament passed legislation permitting limited freedom of association in the export processing zones. The Embassy is closely monitoring implementation of the legislation, including provisions for worker representation elections. Supported by the United States, ACILS and

the Bangladesh Independent Garment Workers' Union Federation played an instrumental role in the drafting of this legislation. Personnel for ACILS began working to assist workers in EPZ factories to better organize themselves and to understand their new rights and responsibilities under this legislation.

After Bangladesh's designation during the year as a Tier III country in The Trafficking in Persons report, the United States worked closely with the Government to devise and implement an anti-trafficking action plan. Bangladesh was able to demonstrate sufficient progress, including intensified law enforcement activities such as victim rescue, arrests of traffickers and the establishment of a national police monitoring cell to justify a reassessment of its designation to Tier II (watch list) within the 90 day time-frame. The United States highlighted its concern through an aggressive public diplomacy campaign and continuous engagement with Bangladeshi Government officials.

The United States, led a working group on anti-trafficking with the Government, civil society and other donor representatives and worked closely with the Minister of Women and Children's Affairs to carry out road marches to raise awareness about trafficking. Television channels aired U.S.-sponsored anti-trafficking spots and messages free of charge. The successful imam outreach program which began in 2003, will be expanded to other critical areas of the country and will continue to provide orientation about U.S. programs in human rights, women's rights, health care, HIV/AIDS, agriculture, economic growth, democracy and governance, and anti-trafficking. Over the past year, ten major village gatherings totaling 4,000 people were organized by imams to raise awareness about trafficking. Many imams now address this issue periodically after Friday prayers and at other

community events. Several thousand people attended two anti-trafficking film festivals that the Embassy coordinated in outlying regions of the country. The Embassy also worked with local NGOs and other cultural groups on their efforts to educate rural Bangladeshis about the dangers of trafficking, using specialized folk songs.

Bhutan

Bhutan is in the process of a fundamental governance shift, from a hereditary monarchy to a constitutional monarchy. The King has stated that he intends to create a constitutional monarchy operating under a parliamentary system amalgamating ideas from many democratic systems. Until the Constitution takes effect, however, civil liberties remain limited. The Government restricts freedom of speech, press, assembly and association and prohibits the formation of human rights organizations and political parties. The Government also restricts freedom of religion. The ban on political parties allowed the Government a large degree of control over the expression of dissent. The Government has not confirmed whether the new Constitution will allow political parties, or the extent to which it will guarantee fundamental human rights.

As the Government's transformation progresses, King Jigme Singye Wangchuck will join a select group of leaders who have voluntarily relinquished absolute power and embraced a representative system of government. In preparation for the transformation, the King began devolving authority in recent years to a National Assembly and Council of Ministers. The Royal Government of Bhutan has stated that a new Constitution will go into effect after National Assembly approval, planned for 2005.

In 2004, the National Assembly passed legislation on a broad variety of topics, including a nationwide ban on the sale of tobacco products, improving the environment and changing the penal code. It also vigorously debated topics such as refugee return, expatriate workers, regulation of the media and a national land policy, while passing the national budget and electing new committee members.

A significant Bhutanese refugee problem persisted in Nepal. The Government refused to restart the Bhutan-Nepal Joint Verification Team process while the security situation in Nepal remained unsettled, but indicated a willingness to allow a pilot group of all Category 1 refugees in Khudunabari Camp to repatriate to Bhutan. The Government of Bhutan reaffirmed that offer in January, but did not reach a final agreement with the Government of Nepal.

The United States and Bhutan do not have formal diplomatic relations; the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi is responsible for following Bhutan issues and communicates frequently and effectively with the Government. The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Bhutan is still largely focused on finding durable solutions for the Bhutanese refugees of ethnic Nepali descent who were compelled to leave Bhutan for Nepal in the early 1990s.

The United States actively pursued a solution to this problem during the past year with a delegation visiting the Kingdom in January, the U.S. Ambassador's visit to India in March and the Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration Arthur E. Dewey's visit to the region in October. Embassy staff used these visits to highlight the plight of the approximately 100,000 refugees currently living in Nepal. The United States also discussed religious freedom issues during these visits.

Embassy officers also engaged the Government and other interested parties, including donor countries, UN agencies and non-governmental organizations, regarding the refugee situation. The Embassy used active discussions with Bhutanese government officials to highlight U.S. concerns related to internally displaced persons languishing in refugee camps and encouraged the Government of Bhutan to resolve this problem.

Senior State Department and Embassy officials also discussed the issue of democratic reform with King Wangchuck and other high-ranking members of the Government. During these discussions, the King was frank about the need for democratic reform and reiterated his commitment to the process. The King is the driving force behind democratic reforms, while government sources reported that much of the population is wary of change. There is a widespread concern that democracy in neighboring states has contributed to the destabilization of those Governments. The Government stated that it is taking the transformation process slowly to allay people's fears. However, the King's commitment has been firm; he has said that Bhutan's future cannot rest solely on one man and that power should not be transferred through bloodlines.

During the year, the Embassy sent six Bhutanese nationals to the United States on the International Visitors Leadership Program, focusing on areas such as local government, television broadcasting, human resources and transportation. A Bhutanese human rights activist resident in India traveled to the United States on an International Visitors Program, and one Fulbright Scholarship was awarded to a Bhutanese academic.

India

India is a vibrant democracy with strong constitutional human rights protections. However, poor enforcement of laws, especially at the local level, and the severely overburdened court system weaken the delivery of justice. The victory of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) over the incumbent Bharata Janata Party (BJP) in the April-May parliamentary elections verified the Indian people's ability to change their government peacefully. Over 380 million people (58 percent of the voting population) voted in the elections, making this the largest exercise of electoral democracy in history. With a Muslim President, Sikh Prime Minister, and Christian head of the governing parliamentary party, India's leadership is representative of its religious diversity.

Although the Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens, numerous problems remained. These include extra-judicial killings, custodial deaths, excessive use of force by security forces, torture, poor prison conditions, and extended pretrial detention. Combating insurgencies in Jammu and Kashmir led to arbitrary arrests and disappearances. Societal violence and discrimination against women, trafficking of women and children for forced prostitution and labor, female feticide and female infanticide remained concerns. Widespread corruption, 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.

Following its electoral victory in May, the Government began to address a number of human rights concerns that have arisen in recent years. For example, it moved quickly to rewrite school textbooks (which the previous Government had rewritten to promote the

BJP's Hindu nationalist propaganda) in order to stress the contributions of the Muslim, Sikh, Buddhist and Christian minority communities. However, the rewrite of the textbooks has not been completed, and the state of Gujarat has not recalled its old textbooks or announced plans for their replacement. The Government also began to address the aftermath of the 2002 Gujarat riots, during which Hindu extremists attacked Muslim communities, killing an estimated 2,000. Human rights activists alleged that the Gujarat Government, led by Chief Minister Narendra Modi (BJP), had been complicit for failing to prevent the violence and for allowing the riots to spiral out of control. In August, the Indian Supreme Court ordered state level courts to re-open over 2,000 cases connected with the 2002 riots, moving a number of them to new venues to ensure that they receive a fair trial. However, by the end of 2004, the report on the number of cases that should be re-opened had not been submitted to the Supreme Court, and only three cases related to the Gujarat rioting had completed trial in the lower level courts. While these actions displayed a determination to address past human rights abuses and to confront the causes of communal tension and violence, human rights organizations and religious groups remained concerned about allegations of witness intimidation by local leaders, the cases that have not been reopened and about increasing displacement and "ghettoization" in the Gujarati Muslim community.

During the year, the Government also repealed the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA), which had come under fire by human rights organizations for allowing detention without charge for six months, summary trials, and the use of testimony exacted under duress. At the same time, the Government amended the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act to incorporate a number of POTA's anti-terrorism provisions, leading some human rights activists to describe the process as



India

A volunteer carries an elderly man to his polling place.

AP Photo

“three steps forward and two steps back.” The amended law is a considerable improvement over POTA, however, POTA-like legislation such as the Armed Forces Special Powers Act remained in force in many states, leading to serious human rights violations.

United States human rights and democracy initiatives in India focused on the promotion of good governance and the rights of vulnerable groups. The United States, through USAID administered a program on gender and the law, establishing legal aid centers for low income women in Rajasthan and Karnataka. In addition, the USAID program “Reaching and Educating At Risk Children” is aimed at providing services to schoolchildren from vulnerable communities and assists Dalits and other underprivileged groups. The United States also focused on improving access to justice for women and children victims of sexual exploitation, domestic violence, trafficking and other gender-based crimes. United States engagement included diplomat-

ic interaction at the highest levels, sharing of information, public diplomacy and funding of projects to encourage respect for democracy and human rights.

During the year, the Embassy sponsored four Kashmiris and three non-Kashmiri Indian students to participate in an American Studies Summer Institute for South Asian Undergraduate Student Leaders. The program educated the students on American democracy and human rights in the United States. Additionally, more than 25 Indians working in human rights, democracy and journalism participated in three-week long International Visitors Programs. The “Seeds of Peace” program enabled 28 youth and two resource persons from Mumbai and Lahore, Pakistan to attend a three-week conflict resolution course in a neutral, supportive environment at a summer camp in the United States. In addition, Consulate General Calcutta sponsored the first-ever conflict resolution workshop in Nagaland, bringing together a number

of groups to find a peaceful solution to the disputes that have led to violence and human rights abuses in that region.

The Embassy co-hosted a human rights law conference and arranged for a prominent academic to speak on human rights curriculum development. The Embassy hosted three events in conjunction with the conference, including a screening of two documentaries on women and child rights, a discussion on gender equality and justice and a digital video conference on human rights curriculum development and teaching methodologies.

The United States funded numerous efforts to support expanded roles for women. During the year, USAID provided funding to strengthen the protection of women's legal rights, in the areas of domestic violence, dowry, divorce and inheritance. Eight of the 11 planned legal aid/counseling centers have opened for women on police station grounds in Rajasthan, with an additional nine centers targeting mainly, but not exclusively, Dalit women in Karnataka. The United States supported legal drafting and advocacy for a bill securing a married woman's right to her marital home in Rajasthan. The United States, through USAID also funded an intensive pilot effort to change attitudes toward violence against women in two states. The United States assembled a coalition of women's groups, Women Power Connect, to support the creation of a permanent entity to advocate on gender issues in parliament and with executive branch agencies and the national media. Using USAID's "Gender and the Law" initiative the United States addressed the needs of Muslim women, particularly in family matters. 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 non-governmental organization (NGO) representatives and is

now undertaking rights awareness campaigns at the grassroots level.

The United States supported a wide range of initiatives to encourage religious and communal tolerance and freedom. During Ramadan, Embassy officers hosted several Iftaar dinners to promote better relations with the Muslim community and continued to meet with religious leaders of the Hindu, Muslim, Christian and Buddhist communities. In addition, the Department of State's Bureau of South Asian Affairs hosted an Iftaar dinner bringing together diplomats from the Bangladesh, Pakistan and Indian Embassies. The Embassy expanded the Urdu and Hindi editions of SPAN magazine, exploring issues such as globalization, conflict resolution, human rights, academic freedom and inclusiveness toward women and minorities.

The Embassy continued to assist the U.S. Labor Department in running a joint U.S.-India "INDUS" child labor project implemented through the International Labor Organization. Each Government is providing 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.

During the year, the Embassy worked with Indian officials and international organizations to combat the growing problem of trafficking in persons (TIP). The Ambassador discussed trafficking on numerous occasions with senior government officials, including the Home Minister and Foreign Minister, to demonstrate the importance of this issue in U.S. foreign policy. The United States funded NGO projects to prevent trafficking, develop training modules for police and government officials to recognize, investigate and prosecute trafficking and establish shelters and programs to protect female victims of gender crimes. The United States, through USAID

and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime 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.

Using USAID's South Asia Regional Initiative on Equity for Women and Children (SARI Equity) the United States funded a three-year project which has convened trafficking prevention policy reform action groups throughout South Asia and during the year, made approximately 11 grants to South Asian anti-trafficking NGOs. These interventions by the SARI-Equity have produced policy reform progress in the area of trafficking. SARI-Equity also expanded its programs to address cross-border efforts and a Victim Witness Protection Program in Mumbai. The United States also funded the National Human Rights Commission's (NHRC) study on trafficking in persons. The Supreme Court ordered the study's report distributed to all states and encouraged states to use its recommendations as the baseline for their reporting on trafficking. The Government cooperated with a USAID partner to present 20-India-wide workshops on trafficking 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.

On the state level, 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 have 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 girls.

The Embassy sponsored a month-long series of training seminars with India's three police detective academies on investigating rape and child sexual abuse. These workshops were followed by two one-day workshops which trained a mixed audience of approximately 300 police, government officials, NGOs, attorneys, psychologists and physicians on investigating child sexual abuse.

The Consulate General in Calcutta organized a workshop to inform private corporations about anti-trafficking efforts and to introduce them to NGOs from eastern India working in the field. At the workshop, the Ambassador stressed the need for greater cooperation to end the scourge of trafficking, and expressed U.S. determination to eliminate this problem and to help like-minded governments do the same. The U.S. Department of Justice provided trainers from the International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program to conduct sex crimes courses in Calcutta in collaboration with the Central Detective Training Institute for regional police personnel.

Maldives

The Republic of Maldives has a parliamentary style of government with a strong executive, headed by President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, the longest-serving head of State in South Asia. Although President Gayoom began a process to strengthen democracy and introduce political reforms during the year, the Government's human rights record remained poor. The President's power to appoint members of the parliament and the absence of political parties constrained citizens' ability to change their government. Although the president issued orders designed to protect the rights of detainees, there were reports of the abuse of prisoners, especially in the wake of the August 2004 civil unrest where citizens demanded implementa-

tion of greater democratic freedoms. The Government continued to limit freedom of the press, the formation of political parties, freedom of assembly and association and freedom of religion. The Government also restricted internationally recognized worker rights.

The Government's crackdown on outspoken reformists, including members of the Special Majlis raised questions about President Gayoom's commitment to reform. During 2004 - the first year of his sixth term - the president declared a state of emergency, which suspended fundamental rights and permitted detention without charge and restricted access to an attorney, in the wake of the August unrest. Although the state of emergency was rescinded in October, the Government prepared charges of sedition against several parliamentarians, some of whom had been held in solitary confinement for over 60 days. The charges were dropped in late December.

President Gayoom announced his commitment to reform in a June 9 speech. In July, Secretary of State Powell visited Maldives and praised the Maldivian leader's efforts to reform the Maldives political system and expressed the U.S. Government's belief in the ability of the Maldivian Government to create a more open, democratic political process.

From August to December, U.S. diplomats engaged in discussions with the Maldivian Government to encourage the fair treatment of all detainees as well as to gauge the Government's commitment to reform. Press statements, both from the U.S. Embassy in Sri Lanka and the Department of State, publicly called on the Maldivian Government to treat detainees in accordance with international standards of human rights. During multiple visits to Maldives, U.S. officials, including the Ambassador and Deputy Chief of Mission, successfully persuaded the Government to allow U.S. officials access to some of the

detainees, including those who had been transferred to house arrest.

In May, Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs Christina Rocca met with President Gayoom and the Foreign Minister and stressed the importance of due process and political reform. Following the unrest in August, Acting Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Michael Kozak met with the Maldives Permanent Representative to the UN and reiterated the same message. In the aftermath of the December 26, 2004 tsunami, which affected one-third of the inhabited islands in Maldives, President Gayoom ordered all charges to be dropped against everyone detained after the August unrest, except for one person, who had been indicted in connection with the unrest.

The United States has pursued the promotion of human rights in the Maldives with a variety of other actions. Through U.S.-funded training, Maldivian police officers participated in police investigation and management training classes. The Maldivian Police Department, which separated from the National Security Service in September 2004, will be able to utilize this training as it focuses on implementing community policing.

Human rights training is a key component of all U.S.-Maldivian military-to-military programs. The United States has sent Maldivian military officers to professional military education courses in the United States and funded Maldivian attendees at senior service schools.

In December 2003, President Gayoom established the Maldivian Human Rights Commission (MHRC) by presidential decree. The Commission addressed human rights complaints throughout the year by investigating reported violations and took a leading role in monitoring the treatment of detainees

arrested following the August 2004 unrest. The Commission effectively functioned despite the Majlis' failure to pass implementing legislation for the human rights body. Under the presidential decree establishing the body, commissioners repeatedly visited detainees in prison, following up on reports of alleged human rights violations made by detainees' families and friends. Although one of the commissioners was also detained, the MHRC continued its work, publicizing its findings from prison visits. The Commission also called for an independent inquiry into the August civil unrest and detentions. Although the Maldivian Government eventually agreed to let the MHRC conduct an investigation, the Government stipulated that any inquiry must not be held publicly.

In response to the Commission's capacity-building efforts, the United States sent two commissioners to the United States in August 2004, to participate in the International Visitors Programs. To provide further expertise for the Commission, the U.S. Embassy received funding to bring several U.S.-based human rights experts to the Maldives to enhance the body's ability to address complaints as well as to educate the public on human rights.

At present, the Maldives does not have extensive labor laws, nor does the Government tolerate the formation of unions. The U.S. Embassy has been awarded funding to host a labor seminar to bring together Maldivian Government and civil society leaders with regional experts on labor issues in order to assist the Government in redrafting its labor laws.

Nepal

Nepal's nascent 12-year experience with multiparty democracy suffered a severe setback with the King's recent dismissal of the Prime

Minister and the cabinet, declaration of a state of emergency, and suspension of basic human rights. The United States regards the successful political resolution of the violent nine-year insurgency in Nepal as a fundamental precondition for major improvements in the area of human rights and democracy. All efforts to protect human rights and develop democratic institutions in Nepal are hampered by this insurgency. Amidst the ongoing Maoist insurgency, security forces have engaged in serious human rights abuses, including unaccounted-for detentions, abuse and disappearance of detainees, torture, and employing arbitrary and unwarranted lethal force. Pervasive corruption and social, economic, gender, caste and ethnic inequalities, make many Nepalese susceptible to Maoist influence and propaganda. Institutional weaknesses hamper the Government's ability to respond appropriately and effectively to human rights violations. Violence against women, trafficking in women and children, child labor, the rights of women and refugees and the impact of insurgency-related violence on children remain serious human rights concerns.

The leaders of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoists) have made clear their goal of establishing an authoritarian single-party state. Pursuing their goals, the Maoists have systematically employed violence and terror and have committed serious human rights abuses, including torture, killings, bombings, extortion, forcible conscription of child soldiers, and the forced closure of schools and businesses.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy is grounded in the conviction that human rights and democracy in Nepal are best protected by a negotiated settlement of the Maoist insurgency. To these ends, the United States engages the Government, its security forces, the international community, and civil society to facilitate a common vision for a peaceful,

prosperous and democratic Nepal. Simultaneously, the United States works to mitigate the deleterious effects of the insurgency and address Nepal's legacy of inequalities by encouraging these same actors to build institutional capacity to translate principles of democracy and human rights into practice. Areas of engagement include electoral and political reform, civic education, good governance and rule of law. Other areas include support for judicial reform, conflict management and mitigation, international humanitarian law and civil military relations, rehabilitation of torture victims, women's political participation, support for refugee communities, and combating child labor and trafficking in persons.

The United States interacts regularly with political leaders, the Government, security forces, the National Human Rights

Commission (NHRC), human rights non-governmental organizations (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. Additionally, the Embassy encourages balanced public statements on human rights, including criticism of Maoist violence, by the international community, international organizations and international NGOs. Statements by these groups during the year have forced the Maoists to declare their policies on human rights matters publicly, and thereby exposed the widening gap between their stated policies and their actions.

The Embassy and senior U.S. officials, including USAID Administrator Andrew Natsios, the Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs Christina Rocca, and the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs Don Camp, urged the

Katmandu, Nepal

Pro-democracy students carry torches and call for restoration of the democratic system.



AP Photo

Government, both publicly and privately, to focus its efforts on reducing abuses and on increasing transparency in military and police investigations when abuses are alleged. The Ambassador repeatedly emphasized the importance of protecting human rights and restoring democratic practices, including through a well-received speech at the Kathmandu School of Law entitled, "Support of U.S. Government in Protection of Human Rights and Conflict Transformation." The Embassy widely distributed the text of this speech, as well as human rights-related reports of the State Department in both English and Nepali.

During the year, Nepal's Chief of Army Staff made public visits to the NHRC and to the Supreme Court to discuss human rights and ways to improve the relationship between the military and the two institutions. During the year, the Government opened a detention facility to house detained suspected Maoists while they were being interrogated. Family members, lawyers and human rights groups were given access to the facility, but in some cases, access was limited or denied. During 2004, the Government formed a five-member committee to investigate disappearance claims and had identified the location of 382 missing individuals. The Foreign Military Financing section of the U.S. 2005 Foreign Operations Act requires the Government to improve human rights practices or face a loss of military assistance, and the Embassy has repeatedly emphasized the importance of meeting the Act's requirements in discussions with Government officials, the judiciary and the NHRC.

To assist the military to improve its human rights record through engagement, the United States sponsored a seminar on Operational Law for Internal Conflicts for senior members of the security forces, the Royal Nepal Army (RNA)'s Judge Advocate General's office, as

well as members of the national media. The United States also sponsored several RNA soldiers to attend International Military Education and Training program courses, many of which contained instruction on rules of engagement and the respect for human rights. Through the Joint Combined Exchange Training program, the United States provided training for the RNA and focused heavily on rules of engagement and civil-military affairs.

The United States is providing funding to rehabilitate victims of torture and offer comprehensive medical and psychological care to torture survivors and their families. Since mid-2002, the program has trained 179 medical professionals in forensic medicine to enable them to better document torture cases, and provided more than 3,104 torture victims and their families with comprehensive medical and psychological care as well as legal counseling. Ten newly-established district Psychosocial Support Units provide care and support to trauma and torture victims. More than 219 female torture victims have received comprehensive rehabilitation services. Mobile treatment clinics have served 945 clients and conducted awareness programs on legal rights.

To strengthen independent non-partisan human rights groups, the United States provided funding to the NHRC to employ a software tool to securely record and store human rights investigations. The United States also supported a local NGO to work with the NHRC in conducting a legal review of Nepali law that is inconsistent with international standards of human rights and norms of fair trial and studied the impact of security-related laws on the local population in five sample districts.

The United States recognizes that the rule of law and a healthy judiciary are critical to the protection of human rights. In July, the

United States initiated a program with the Nepali judiciary and civil society to modernize the justice sector and strengthen the national capacity to combat corruption. This initiative will strengthen the legal framework to protect human rights of women and the disenfranchised, and ultimately help address the problem of disappeared persons. In 2004, the United States also signed an agreement with the Government to provide assistance for curriculum development and training support for Nepal's new Judicial Academy.

In Nepal, the poor cannot afford the legal costs involved in dealing with the corruption-prone formal justice system. Nepal's 1999 Local Self Governance Act offered a chance to begin building Nepal's alternative dispute resolution capacity to promote peaceful resolution of disputes outside of the formal system. By the end of 2004, the U.S.-sponsored community-based alternative dispute resolution program has trained more than 60 master trainers and 1,330 community level mediators. More funding will be used to expand these activities, leading to a nationwide alternative dispute resolution program.

United States assistance to Nepal's Commission on Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) has helped it to increase its investigation and prosecution capacity. In a 2004 national survey, Nepalese identified corruption among their top three concerns (along with unemployment and Maoist violence), and identified the CIAA as the most well regarded of the national institutions surveyed. In 2004, the court that hears corruption cases convicted a former minister and political leader of the ruling party, indicted three former Inspector Generals of Police and prosecuted over 98 cases of corruption.

The United States continues to provide assistance for electoral processes and political party development and reform. In early 2005

the United States began a two-year program that includes support for internal political party reform, developing dialogue among political party and civil society leaders and assistance to expand the Government's election planning capacity.

The United States also provides support and training for Nepal's political parties to help them develop healthy and transparent internal processes, to represent their constituencies effectively and to expand internal opportunities for women and traditionally disenfranchised groups. In 2004, the United States completed a three-year program on women's political participation that trained over 12,000 women in political campaigning and leadership skills, and invested funding in civic education programs, including activities such as voter education, curriculum development and book translations.

To promote women's development initiatives and expand their political roles, the United States supported several rural and urban women's empowerment programs, enabling many women to become financially independent. In 2004, due to public interest litigation by an NGO that had received some U.S. assistance, a landmark Supreme Court decision struck down a provision in Nepal's civil code that had prevented women from retaining inherited property after marriage.

The United States continued to assist approximately 100,000 Bhutanese refugees in Nepal through significant contributions to the UN High Commission for Refugees and the World Food Program. The Ambassador's Fund for Refugees allowed 260 teenage Bhutanese refugees to continue their high school education. The Embassy engages the Government and other interested parties to promote durable solutions for the Bhutanese refugee population. The United States also continued to provide significant support for Tibetan

refugees in Nepal. The United States is working with the Nepalese Government, UNHCR and the Tibetan community to ensure that the closure of the Tibetan Refugee Welfare Office does not impact the well-being of Tibetan refugees.

In 2001, the United States began a three-year "time-bound" program to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The United States also funds an International HIV/AIDS Workplace Education project.

Since 2001, the United States has supported a four-year program to combat human trafficking. The program includes economic alternative programs for vulnerable groups, education programs and rights-based training for the Government's anti-trafficking task force members. Achievements include a policy to protect and promote the rights of migrant workers, increased convictions of traffickers, and a growing number of victims rescued at the community level.

Pakistan

Pakistan is a federal republic. President and Chief of Army Staff Pervez Musharraf, who assumed power following the military's 1999 overthrow of elected Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, has repeatedly stated his intention to transform Pakistan into a moderate, democratic Muslim state. In December 2003, the National and Provincial Assemblies passed the 17th Amendment to the Constitution which transferred a number of powers from the Office of Prime Minister to the President and exempted Musharraf from a prohibition on holding two offices of state until the end of the year, allowing him to remain as Chief of Army Staff. In October, over opposition protests, parliament passed another bill which extended this exemption until 2007. Local elections in 2000 and 2001 and national and

provincial parliamentary elections in 2002 established functioning civilian legislatures. While domestic and international observers criticized the elections for being seriously flawed, the resulting bodies are beginning to engage in national political debate and are working to develop mechanisms to check the power of the executive. The Assembly has required senior civil servants to appear before committees to testify on government actions, and held hearings on the defense budget and military operations in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. The Senate convened a special committee on Balochistan and produced a critical report on Okara Farms. The Government has committed that new local elections will be scheduled for 2005 and national elections to be held no later than 2007 will be free and fair. The United States will continue to encourage the Government to adhere to this commitment and will provide needed support. Both contests will be important indicators of the political will for democratization.

The Government's human rights record remained poor, although there were some improvements in several areas. Constitutional amendments passed by the Government have strengthened the powers of the President at the expense of the National Assembly. The military remains heavily engaged in politics, and President Musharraf's decision to continue as Chief of Army Staff has spurred political debate. Political parties are generally weak, undemocratic institutions centered on personalities instead of policies. The judiciary is corrupt, inefficient, and malleable to political pressure. Politically motivated prosecutions of opposition figures continue, as do concerns that opposition leaders or their parties are not always allowed to function freely. Leaders of three major parties remained outside the country, and the leader of one opposition party in parliament remained in prison appealing a conviction for sedition. Despite

its increasing freedom, the media lacks journalistic standards and continues to practice self-censorship in some areas. Security forces have committed numerous human rights abuses, including extra-judicial killings and torture. Societal discrimination and violence against women and religious minorities persist.

The Pakistani Government has over the last year increasingly opened the landscape for political debate. Opposition parties and civil society are beginning to criticize the Government and its policies, however, some political opposition leaders remained in prison or in exile abroad. While the Government has loosened restrictions on the right to assembly, it still denied permits or imposed restrictions on certain groups, such

as the Ahmadis. Measures against terrorist and extremist groups advocating and perpetrating sectarian and religious violence have continued, as have efforts to reform the education system. The Government has passed new legislation to address honor killings and to prevent abuse of laws against blasphemy, adultery, and fornication. Human rights groups remained concerned that perpetrators of honor crimes, in a limited number of cases, could still be pardoned by the victim or heirs. Strategies to combat child labor and trafficking in persons have been accelerated in cooperation with international donors and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

The United States believes that the success of Pakistan's democratization efforts is critical to the strength of our long term relationship and



will positively contribute to its effective participation in the Global War on Terrorism. The U.S. strategy has focused on the promotion of free and fair local and national elections, the strengthening of the capacity of the National Assembly; democratization and institutional strengthening of political parties, improved local governments that are functioning and accountable, and increased respect for the rule of law, including professionalizing law enforcement personnel, and promoting an appropriate role for the military. Senior U.S. officials such as Secretary of State Powell underscored with the Pakistani leadership the need to press forward on democratization and to prepare the groundwork for free and fair parliamentary elections not later than 2007. United States officials also urged respect for human rights by security force personnel, improved legal and judicial systems, and continued actions to curtail the activities of extremist groups. In their public statements, both then Ambassador Powell and Ambassador Crocker stressed the importance the United States attaches to building a fully functioning democracy in Pakistan and the need to continue to strengthen democratic

institutions and improve the rule of law.

On the human rights front, the United States continued to work with the Pakistani Government, civil society institutions, and international organizations to combat religious discrimination and violence, trafficking in persons, child labor and legalized discrimination against women. For example, when opposition leader Javed Hashmi was sentenced in April for sedition, the United States expressed concern with the closed nature of proceedings against him, and urged that the case be handled in a fair and transparent manner. In May, when the Government did not allow member of the opposition Shahbaz Sharif and brother of deposed former Prime Minister to enter Pakistan, the United States encouraged the Government to resolve the matter in a transparent manner, within the context of Pakistan's legal system. The United States also urged the Government to release or charge journalists held in incommunicado detention.

The United States, through USAID is actively engaged in a multi-year strategy to strengthen



Mithi, Pakistan

Villagers wait in line to cast their votes.

AP Photo

Pakistani democratic institutions. Through its legislative strengthening program, the United States provides training to national and provincial parliamentarians that strengthens their secretariats and research capacity; helps to develop a functioning committee system; and promotes regular dialogue between constituents and civil society organizations.

Through its political party strengthening program launched in 2004, USAID worked with the leadership of all major political parties to train future political leaders in campaign finance, platform development and candidate selection. The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) is complementing these efforts by working with the National Democratic Institute to train emerging female political party leaders and improve their capacity to campaign for elected office, serve the public as elected officials, and develop the local capacity of women political leaders to train other women members and elected officials. The United States continued to advocate for the adoption of internally democratic mechanisms in political parties as a way to promote greater government accountability. At the local level, USAID supported the National Reconstruction Bureau in establishing and strengthening local government institutions and encourages cooperation between communities, the private sector, and local governments through district grants.

The United States believes that the strengthening of media institutions and civil society is critical for the long-term development of Pakistani democracy. Under its media support program, USAID worked to develop improved journalistic training in journalism departments at two leading universities and to provide alternative sources of information to media outlets. The United States, through DRL also worked to train broadcast journalists

to improve their capacity for investigative reporting. The U.S. Embassy and Consulates maintained an active dialogue with journalists and advocates for an improvement in their standards of journalism. Moreover, the Embassy regularly nominated journalists as participants in the State Department's annual International Visitors Program. Senior U.S. officials have regularly raised the need to respect press freedom with the Government and have raised specific, high-profile violations of press freedom and pressed for redress.

During the year, the United States concluded a multi-year assistance program to civil society organizations. Under this program, USAID provided assistance to train leading civil society organizations in effective advocacy tools and to organize dialogues with the Government on key policy issues. The program has greatly expanded civil society capacity and led to increased and regularized engagement with the Government.

The United States continued to encourage the Pakistani military to play an appropriate role in the emerging democratic set-up and to refrain from interference in domestic politics. Through the International Military Education and Training Program, the United States continued to provide emerging military leaders with professional development opportunities that emphasize the importance of improved civil-military relations and civilian control of the military. During the year, the United States continued a dual strategy to combat human rights violations by security forces, combining direct training with advocacy and victim assistance. The United States has worked with the National Police Academy and Police College Sihala to develop and implement new training curricula for law enforcement personnel. The curricula focus on criminal investigation techniques, strategic planning and law enforcement management.

Courses incorporate elements that stress the rule of law and respect for human rights.

The United States continues to advocate for the elimination of discrimination against women and children. The United States has remained engaged with local women's rights NGOs and has provided support for their advocacy efforts to strengthen penalties for domestic violence and honor killings and to reform the discriminatory provisions of the nation's legal system. The United States, through DRL provided support to a U.S.-based NGO working with a local women's organization in Pakistan to promote respect for international human rights norms and women's rights advocacy amongst legal aid practitioners and human rights advocates. Local program partners are conducting training courses for lawyers, judges, civil society activists and other opinion makers to offer support to victims of human rights abuses. Partners are researching and tracking human rights abuses and creating a Human Rights Action Forum in collaboration with other human rights NGOs to further their advocacy efforts.

The United States has continued efforts to combat religious discrimination in Pakistan. The U.S. Embassy has pressed the Government to reform discriminatory legislation such as the so-called anti-Ahmadi laws and has encouraged its efforts to prevent abuse of the blasphemy laws. United States officials have spoken out against sectarian violence within the country's Muslim community and urged the Government to continue its efforts to dismantle organizations responsible for such violence. The U.S. Embassy maintains close ties with the Christian, Ahmadi, Shi'a, and Hindu communities and raised cases of discrimination and violence against such groups with the Government. In addition, the Embassy has actively engaged with the country's religious leadership, advocating

tolerance and promoting President Musharraf's vision of enlightened moderation. The United States continued cooperative efforts with the Government as part of the Global War on Terrorism to apprehend terrorist suspects and curtail the activities of terrorist groups. Pakistani law enforcement implicated such groups in sectarian and extremist violence against religious minorities by arresting a few of these perpetrators.

As part of its education program, USAID assisted the Government in its reform efforts and in school construction. The Federal Minister of Education, Javed Ashraf Qazi, vigorously promotes the philosophy of enlightened moderation. At a USAID sponsored education policy dialogue workshop with senior education officials he stated that "the root cause of terrorism in Pakistan is the lack of quality education." The Minister also challenged senior staff members to do away with irrationality and extremism and to modernize Pakistan's curriculum for the benefit of the nation and its children.

Similarly, the United States maintained close contact with local NGOs working on behalf of children. During 2004, the United States continued to support the International Labor Organization's International Program for the Elimination of Child Labor in Pakistan. This project targets working children and children at risk of entering the work force by placing them in non-formal education centers to learn basic literacy and numeric skills with the goal of mainstreaming them into the government school sector. United States officials have continued to press for revision of labor legislation to ensure its compliance with international standards. During the year, 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 more ably.

During the year, the United States established a program to assist the Pakistani Government in combating trafficking in persons. This program utilizes a three-pronged approach emphasizing prevention, prosecution and protection of victims. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is concluding a U.S.-funded study on the nature and extent of the trafficking problem in Pakistan and has conducted a series of awareness-raising activities in collaboration with the Interior Ministry and local and provincial officials. With U.S. assistance, Pakistan has established a dedicated Anti-Trafficking Unit and finalized implementing regulations for its Anti-Trafficking Ordinance. The United States, IOM, and the Pakistani Government are finalizing the establishment of a model shelter to protect and assist victims of trafficking.

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka is a democratic republic with an active multiparty system. From 1983 until 2001, the Government fought the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), a terrorist organization advocating a separate ethnic Tamil state in the north and east of the country. In 2001, the Government and the LTTE each announced unilateral cease-fires and signed a formal cease-fire accord in 2002. While the Government manages most of the country, the LTTE controls roughly 15 percent of Sri Lanka in the north and east and has influence in a significant percentage of the country. The conflict had a significant impact on human rights and democracy issues in Sri Lanka. While the Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens, there were serious problems in some areas. There were extensive reports of torture and custodial deaths as a result of police torture. To address the issue of government accountability for past abuses committed during the war, the Government investigated some past abuses by security and armed forces person-

nel. The Government continued to hold Tamils under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), which permitted arrests without warrants and non-accountable detention.

Violence and discrimination against women, and child prostitution occurred. Violence against religious minorities increased, and institutionalized ethnic discrimination against Tamils was still a concern. Safe migration is a significant issue in Sri Lanka, as approximately one million women are employed as domestics in the Gulf States and reports of physical and sexual abuse and denial of wages may affect up to ten percent of workers. Trafficking in women and children for the purpose of forced labor occurred and there was some trafficking of women and children for the commercial sex industry.

The LTTE continued to commit serious human rights abuses. The LTTE was responsible for politically motivated killings, arbitrary arrest, torture, harassment, abduction, disappearances, extortion and detention. The LTTE continued using and recruiting child soldiers. Through a campaign of intimidation, the LTTE undermined the work of elected local governments in Jaffna and the east. The LTTE denied those under its control the right to change their government, killed candidates standing for office and did not provide for fair trials. In addition, it infringed on privacy rights and discriminated against ethnic and religious minorities.

The United States has taken an active role in pressing for greater human rights and democracy initiatives in Sri Lanka. For most of 2004, U.S. human rights and democracy initiatives focused on the peace process and on bolstering freedom of the press, freedom of religion, fair labor practices and the rights of women and children. Then-Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage raised the importance of the peace process and the human rights situation

in Sri Lanka on different occasions. On December 26, a large-scale tsunami devastated significant parts of the southern, northern and eastern coastal areas of the country, killing, injuring and displacing thousands of people. The Government and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) attempted to ensure that relief efforts were effectively administered throughout the country to include LTTE-controlled areas. However, media reports aired charges by both the LTTE and the Government that disaster assistance was being used for political gain.

The United States contributed aid and supplies to areas devastated by the tsunami. Additionally, USAID funded the local office of the American Center for International Labor Solidarity (ACILS) to help raise post-tsunami awareness about the risk of trafficking among vulnerable groups, mainly women and children, as well as help tsunami-displaced persons obtain legal services. The grant will fund centers operated by ACILS partners to support the needs of community organizations working on these issues.

Major democracy initiatives in 2004 focused on the April parliamentary election. During the election, 11 teams from the U.S. Embassy visited different locations around the country, excluding LTTE-controlled areas. The teams reported that in the south, the election was relatively free and fair; however, in government-controlled parts of northern Sri Lanka, there was evidence of vote rigging and ballot falsification.

To aid election monitoring efforts, the United States supported the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs to fund the two largest indigenous election monitoring groups in Sri Lanka. For the first time, Sri Lankan NGO representatives were permitted in polling places and were able to observe election conditions in most parts of the coun-

try. In October 2004, the United States sponsored a national symposium on electoral reform based in part on the observations of the local election monitoring groups.

The United States provided funding to the Sri Lankan Press Institute, the only independent institution working for greater press freedom, which it used to begin a library and purchase textbooks.

For the second consecutive year, the United States conducted a national survey which focused on the rule of law and the Sri Lankan peace process. The United States shared the survey results with government officials, using them to detail how the Government might better implement rule of law initiatives.

In line with the United States goal of helping Sri Lankans achieve a political solution to ethnic conflict, the Embassy focused on retraining Sri Lankan police to focus on community policing. With U.S. funds, members of the U.S. law enforcement community led courses on basic investigative techniques and management, and worked with their Sri Lankan counterparts to integrate these skills and techniques into the local law enforcement curriculum.

Human rights training is a key component of all U.S.-Sri Lankan military-to-military programs. The United States has sent senior Sri Lankan military officers to professional military education courses in the United States and funded Sri Lankan attendees at senior service schools.

The U.S. Department of States' Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL) provided assistance to help strengthen the capacity of the National Human Rights Commission, a government-appointed body adjudicating human rights complaints.

As part of the outreach efforts to address human rights issues in Sri Lanka, the United States organized numerous International Visitors Programs (IVPs). Six community leaders participated in IVP in 2004; two university student leaders participated in the "Student Leaders in Civic Responsibility" program; two participants attended a IVP program on effecting political and economic change; and a Buddhist monk participated in an IVP program on civic education in religious schools. One civil society leader also attended the "Young Leaders: Effecting Social, Political, and Economic Change."

In June, the United States completed a grant to North Illinois University to establish a program to help women in business and government in Sri Lanka encouraging women's participation in local government and entrepreneurial activities. Using another grant, the United States established a training program to increase management skills for Sri Lankan civil society representatives involved in human rights and democracy activities.

Sri Lanka is predominately Buddhist, but it also has sizeable Christian, Hindu and Muslim populations. The Embassy documented evidence of Buddhist harassment of Christians, especially those belonging to evangelical denominations. In 2004, Ambassador Lunstead held high-level meetings with the president and former and current Prime Ministers of Sri Lanka concerning religious freedom. Throughout the year, U.S. officials, including then Assistant Secretary of State for DRL Lorne Craner and Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom John V. Hanford met with Sri Lankan Government officials to discuss ongoing attacks against Christian churches, pastors, and congregants and the negative implications of proposed religious "anti-conversion" legislation, which would criminalize some religious conversions. By the end of the reporting period, the legisla-



Colombo, Sri Lanka

A Sri Lankan policeman guards ballot boxes before the beginning of the general elections.

AP Photo

tion had not passed. The United States continues to encourage government and religious leaders to find non-legislative means to address these religious issues.

In February, the U.S. Department of Labor's Deputy Undersecretary for International Labor Affairs, Arnold Levine, visited Sri Lanka to promote free trade initiatives and discuss Department of Labor programs in the country. Deputy Undersecretary Levine met with the Sri Lankan Labor Minister and discussed better labor-management relations. The U.S. Department of Labor, through the International Labor Organization, funds programs in Sri Lanka designed to eliminate child labor and help children who are the victims of trafficking and sexual abuse.

The U.S. Department of State's Assistant Secretary for South Asia Affairs, Christina Rocca and then Ambassador-at-Large for Counterterrorism, Cofer Black, met with Sri Lankan officials to discuss issues related to the LTTE's recruitment of child soldiers, child labor abuses and problems related to trafficking of women and children for the sex trade in September 2004.

The United States funded a conference for Sri Lankan criminal justice personnel to enhance their professional capabilities to prevent the trafficking of women and exploitation of children. The Sri Lankan National Child Protection Agency and Embassy organized a conference that featured presentations by three U.S. Government criminal justice experts in the field.



Batticaloa, Eastern Sri Lanka

Election officials carrying ballot boxes to the counting center.

AP Photo

Western Hemisphere

“Human rights will not be guaranteed if we always hope that someone else will step forward.... The whispered resolve of the individual becomes the roar of collective action.”

Oscar Arias
President of Costa Rica 1986-1990
and Nobel Peace Laureate in 1987





Chinautla, Guatemala

Young woman votes for mayor and city council at a polling station six miles west of Guatemala City.

AP Photo

The Western Hemisphere has transformed itself over the last two decades from a region dominated by repressive, authoritarian regimes to one in which 34 out of 35 countries have democratically-elected governments and growing civil societies. Despite this favorable trend, many countries in the hemisphere continue to struggle to consolidate democratic reforms and ensure respect for fundamental human rights.

During the year, Haiti faced political upheaval and internal strife. Following former President Aristide's resignation and departure in late February, a constitutionally-mandated interim government (IGOH) was named on March 17. With the assistance of the international community, the IGOH took significant steps to rebuild democracy and the rule of law over the course of the year. In Bolivia, where citizens remain skeptical of their government's ability to provide accountable, responsive leadership, public unrest in 2004 diminished compared to previous years. Cuba's ongoing repression of pro-democracy dissidents and human rights activists remained a serious problem. Confronting the Venezuelan Government's increasingly authoritarian rule, citizens went to the polls in August in an effort to resolve Venezuela's political impasse over the country's leadership in a peaceful and democratic manner.

Recognizing these ongoing challenges, the United States in 2004 continued its efforts to strengthen democratic institutions, promote good governance and transparency, support the rule of law, and encourage greater respect for human rights. United States efforts included both high-level diplomatic engagement and grassroots-level work with civil society actors.

The United States provided support throughout the region for key democratic institutions, including political parties and civil society. Political party initiatives focused on internal democratization, outreach to marginalized groups, responsiveness to constituent needs and greater accountability. Civil assistance and training promoted greater inclusion in the democratic process. As a result of U.S.-sponsored programs, citizens in many countries were able to call for greater transparency and accountability in government. In Jamaica, U.S. assistance increased civil society's ability to influence the Government, resulting in stronger policies to combat violent crime. In the Dominican Republic, U.S. diplomatic and programmatic support were instrumental in paving the way for elections which were recognized internationally as free and fair. In preparation for Haiti's municipal and national elections, the United States provided funding for voter registration, political party development and voter education.

The United States buttressed regional efforts to resolve internal conflicts, strengthen the rule of law, protect human rights and promote worker rights. The U.S. Peace Program in Colombia evolved in 2004 in response to the Government's efforts to expand peace negotiations with illegal armed groups. The United States established Peaceful Co-Existence Centers in seven of the most conflict-ridden municipalities in Colombia. Throughout the region, the United States assisted government efforts to reform judicial codes and procedures, resulting in greater efficiency and access to justice. The United States coordinated projects throughout the region to strengthen labor systems and markets through promotion of freedom of association, collective bargaining and protection of core labor standards. In addressing trafficking in persons (TIP), U.S. efforts were often regional, reflecting the fact that TIP is a problem that by definition spills over national borders. Anti-TIP efforts funded by the United States were particularly robust in Brazil, Peru, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic and Honduras. Combating child labor often goes hand-in-hand with combating TIP, since children are frequently the victims of exploitation in both situations. To address this combined threat, the United States supports projects designed to raise awareness and reduce instances of TIP and child labor throughout the region.

Strengthening Political Parties in Latin America

In recent decades, Latin America has experienced a wave of democratization as the region moves away from the dictatorships of the past. However, the democratic process remains fragile. Many citizens in Latin America view political parties as out of touch with the populace, driven by the interests of the elite, plagued by corruption and unable to deliver on promises or demonstrate leadership. To counteract these concerns, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) has undertaken a project designed to rejuvenate and strengthen political parties in Argentina, Bolivia and Peru.

Using an interactive, participatory methodology to impart 'best practices' in democratic governance, NDI held regional workshops in February for 18 representatives of organizations that specialize in training political parties. The U.S.-funded NDI initiative asked each participant to create and implement a project designed to improve their clients' internal democracy, transparency and outreach to constituents. While this project faced challenges in Bolivia - pointing to the need for re-doubled efforts at political party revitalization there - the initiative was a clear success in Argentina and Peru. Participants took the 'train the trainer' model to heart, adapting NDI's curriculum for local use. During the workshop sessions, NDI provided training methodologies and materials to help the participants carry out their projects which included instruction on solving political problems, providing solid policy recommendations and outreach to youth. As further resource for political party reformers, NDI posted a number of case studies representing highly successful best practices on its website in Spanish.



Argentina

The Government of Argentina generally respected the human rights of its citizens. Argentina continued to recover politically and economically from its recent economic crisis, although widespread poverty and high unemployment levels remained. Argentina's press was free and independent, frequently critical of government policy and personnel, and civil society remained extremely active and engaged. Despite these trends, problems remained.

There were instances of killings and brutality by police and prison officials. Although police and prison officials faced prosecution and convictions for offenses, impunity remained a serious problem, as did allegations of corruption.

Overcrowding in jails and prisons, as well as substandard conditions within those facilities, persisted. This problem was exacerbated by inordinate delays in investigations and trials and lengthy investigative detention periods. Lack of resources, the need for judicial reforms, and a weak investigative infrastructure make significant short-term improvements unlikely. Anti-Semitism remained a concern. Domestic violence and sexual harassment against women were problems. Coordination in combating trafficking in persons remained an issue, despite the fact that the Government of Argentina increased its efforts to combat trafficking and the sexual exploitation of minors.

The United States worked with the Argentine Government, media, civil society and security forces to strengthen democratic institutions, encourage civil society participation, and fight corruption. These efforts aimed to increase transparency, strengthen the judiciary, and combat trafficking in persons.

Throughout the year, U.S. Embassy officials, including the Ambassador and Deputy Chief of Mission, engaged in a continuing dialogue with Argentine policy and opinion makers on human rights, democratic governance and rule of law issues. Embassy Officials maintained a high profile with national and provincial officials, press

and civil society groups in investigating and following up on allegations of torture, abuse and extra-judicial killings. The United States engaged with national and provincial government authorities on specific human rights cases and maintained close contact with major human rights and civic education NGOs. Through its annual country reports on human rights, religious freedom and trafficking in persons, the United States maintained these issues in the public and official discourse. The Ambassador, Deputy Chief of Mission and other Embassy officers were in a continuous dialogue with the Argentine Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding issues before the UN Commission on Human Rights and the UN General Assembly to ensure Argentina's support for improvements of human rights practices in the region and worldwide.

Argentina has an active and engaged civil society, but some of its most marginalized and disadvantaged groups, such as indigenous communities, need assistance to support their efforts to organize. Several Native American speakers offered Argentine indigenous communities practical steps for reviewing and shaping sustainable plans for community development. Using experiences of U.S. tribes, these speakers illustrated the importance of citizen participation by indigenous peoples in their communities to ensure sustainable development. They shared success stories for building sustainable communities and starting small businesses. The programs included visits to some of Argentina's poorest indigenous communities. Their message of focusing on building strong communities through ethical leaders, good governance and the establishment of long-term, responsible public policies was well received by indigenous Mapuche and Wichi audiences. Shortly after this program, the indigenous community of Amaicha del Valle dismissed their corrupt chief of over 20 years, established a committee to review their constitution, and elected a new chief.

On judicial reform, the United States sponsored several speakers who engaged local audiences on such issues as continuing education for judges, and conducted a series of digital video conferences with a local consortium under the rubric of "Justice Undergoing Change," which provided a

20-hour "train the trainer" course. As a measure of its success, one of the Argentine participants in the course was invited to Guatemala to conduct a conflict-management session with that country's 22 provincial governors. Two speakers discussed Argentina's transition to jury trials. One speaker addressed the Senate, which is considering a bill to introduce the use of jury trials in cases of public corruption and other serious crimes. The second spoke to large and enthusiastic audiences in Buenos Aires (including members of the Supreme Court, the Senate, City Council members, NGOs and members of the legal community) and engaged audiences in Cordoba, Mendoza, Misiones, Neuquen and Entre Rios through digital video conferences.

Transparency and accountability in the public sector are essential elements in democratic governance and the protection of human rights. The United States continued to enhance transparency and public participation in the policy process by hosting International Visitors (IVP) trips, programming U.S. speakers, and distributing materials. Melanie Ann Pustay, Deputy Director of the U.S. Department of Justice's Freedom of Information Office, conducted a week-long workshop for some 100 Argentine Ministry of Justice officials on Freedom of Information Act issues and practices. Ms. Pustay, the Ambassador, and the Legal Attaché also participated in a WORLDNET interactive program on anti-corruption with some twenty Argentine NGOs and Anti-Corruption Office officials. In November, The Trust for the Americas/Organization of American States, together with the Argentine NGO Center for the Implementation of Public Policies Promoting Equity and Growth and with U.S. Government support, began implementing an initiative to improve the quality of journalism in Argentina as a tool to fight corruption, both in the public and private sectors.

A Principal Advisor to the State Department's Anti-Corruption Program spoke to Argentine audiences to discuss the progress made at the Special Summit of the Americas in Monterrey on anti-corruption issues and the challenges still to be faced. He opened Argentina's Catholic University's graduate program on public ethics and engaged with NGOs and government officials.

The United States continued to ensure that civic education programs, emphasizing respect for human rights and civilian control of the military, were an integral part of training provided to Argentine military personnel and Ministry of Defense (MOD) civilians. The United States applied vigorous and comprehensive vetting of all military and MOD civilian participants in international military education and training programs, in compliance with the Leahy Amendment.

Combating trafficking in persons (TIP) remained a top U.S. priority in Argentina. The Deputy Chief of Mission led U.S. inter-agency engagement with Argentine government officials, NGOs and international organizations. A representative of the Department of State's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons visited Argentina twice in 2004 to raise awareness of the issue and meet with officials, prosecutors, the International Organization for Migration and NGOs. He gave an interview to a major entertainment and news network, effectively explaining U.S. policy and ongoing programs. The United States lobbied the Argentine Government to formalize its inter-agency coordination process and appoint a central coordinator of activities. At the end of the year the Federal Office of Victim's Assistance under the Attorney General's Office was identified as the coordinator of anti-TIP efforts.

Bolivia

In 2004, Bolivia had fewer episodes of social unrest than during the previous year, when in October protestors forced President Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada, who had been elected in free and fair elections in August 2002, to resign from office. Since then, the Government of Carlos Mesa Gisbert has generally respected the human rights of its citizens, though serious problems remained, due in large part to weak institutions, pervasive corruption, a violent political opposition and limited resources.

In July, the country held its first national referendum in many decades. There continued to be credible, though fewer, reports of abuses by security forces, including use of excessive force, extortion, arbitrary arrest and detention, and mistreat-

ment of military conscripts. Prison conditions remained harsh, and violence in prisons and prolonged pre-trial detentions were problems. Other problems included pervasive domestic violence and discrimination against women, the abuse of children and widespread child labor, discrimination against and abuse of indigenous people, discrimination against Afro-Bolivians, and brutal working conditions in the mining industry and trafficking in persons (TIP).

The highest priorities of the United States in Bolivia were to promote democracy and political and social stability and to ensure that the police and military respect human rights and cooperate with investigations and prosecutions of alleged violations of human rights. The U.S. Government's strategy aimed to increase citizen participation in democratic processes and improve local government, as well as improve the judicial system and ensure the rule of law. The United States also promoted women's rights and assists in combating corruption, child labor and potential TIP.

The Ambassador and other Embassy officials worked with government officials, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other organizations to identify areas of particular human rights concern and encourage needed reforms. To build international support for the new Government, Secretary of State Powell and then-Deputy Secretary of State Armitage hosted a January 2004 Bolivia Support Group meeting in Washington, with the participation of 19 countries and six international organizations.

The United States supported democratic order and social stability in Bolivia in a variety of ways, through funding programs to strengthen municipal governments, legislative development, political party reform and anti-corruption. These programs encouraged the participation of women and indigenous people, particularly in the city of El Alto. The Embassy also hired native language-speaking indigenous advisors to help it better understand and broaden links with this large and under-represented segment of the population. In the past year, U.S. programs trained nearly 2,000 representatives of indigenous groups. In the peri-

od prior to the December 2004 municipal elections, USAID programs trained over 2,700 women candidates and potential candidates for office. In addition, USAID through the Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) focused the majority of its transition assistance on supporting better economic opportunities and increasing political participation for indigenous communities. Bolivia's nationwide municipal elections, held in October 2004, were without serious incidents and met international standards.

As part of its outreach to the indigenous program, the U.S. Embassy sent various members from the indigenous community and officials to participate in 2004 International Visitors Programs on topics such as democracy and civic education. The Embassy also invited guest speakers and published op-ed pieces on supporting democracy, indigenous issues and fighting corruption. The Embassy produces radio programs, news and coverage of significant events in indigenous languages of Quechua and Aymara. USAID/OTI funded indigenous language radio producers for the communications office of the executive branch to ensure outreach to widest population. In 2004, 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.

Because many human rights abuses occurred within the justice system, the Embassy has focused major human rights and democracy efforts in that sector. The U.S. Government's support for justice system reform, initiated in the early 1990s, continued to support consolidation of the new Code of Criminal Procedures (CCP). The Mesa Government continued to implement a new Public Ministry Law adapting the prosecutorial function of the judicial system to the requirements of the CCP. United States programs helped strengthen the Public Ministry as well as other key justice sector institutions through extensive training and technical assistance. Among other achievements, the reform created a new Public Defense function to ensure citizens' access to due process in criminal trials as required under the Bolivian Constitution.

To date, several thousand judges, prosecutors, police, public defenders, lawyers, law students and NGO representatives have received training on the new CCP.

The United States also made a major contribution to establishing Bolivia's new Forensic Institute, which will greatly increase the quality of evidence used in the criminal justice process and contribute to fairer and more expeditious trials. The U.S. Government 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. Thanks to increases in efficiency brought by the new CCP, criminal trials became more transparent at the same time that the costs and time spent in those trials were substantially reduced.

The United States helped to expand access to justice services for poor Bolivians by helping to establish eight new Integrated Justice Centers in areas of conflict, including the coca-growing regions of the Chapare and Yungas, and El Alto. These centers provided citizens with access to mediation and other legal services, and established a positive presence of the Bolivian Government in areas where respect for the rule of law is fragile.

The United States also helped to establish a new Office of the Presidential Delegate for Anti-Corruption and provided technical assistance to initiatives undertaken by the office. Among other initiatives, the Office worked together with the Attorney General's office and the national police to establish three pilot interdisciplinary anti-corruption task forces to pursue emblematic corruption cases. The United States also supported an initiative led by the Carter Center to support passage of an access-to-information law.

To strengthen its capacity for monitoring and acting on cases of alleged human rights abuses, the Embassy hired a Bolivian attorney to focus exclusively on human rights issues. The attorney worked with the Bolivian military, police, judiciary and other officials to track human rights cases and investigations for the Embassy database and reporting and to support diplomatic outreach on this critical issue.

The Embassy routinely raises the importance and provisions of Leahy legislation and other human rights conditions on U.S. security assistance in ongoing contacts with civilian and military officials and collaborated to help create the Government's own human rights database. The Embassy conducted interagency vetting on all security forces considered for U.S. training and/or support. The United States also provided ongoing training and seminars to the Bolivian military, including regional Human Rights Consensus Document Implementation conferences. The Bolivian military recently assigned a human rights officer to every command. The Embassy continued to assist the National Police with its National Directorate of Professional Responsibility to investigate allegations against police officers of malfeasance, wrongdoing and human rights abuses, and encouraged the establishment of the first national human rights office for the police. During the year, policemen and military personnel received crowd control training emphasizing respect for human rights and internationally accepted principles of crowd control. Narcotics police officers also received training on human rights issues as a key part of counter-narcotics training; basic training included a 40-hour human rights module.

The United States repeatedly raised with Bolivian officials the need for comprehensive action on TIP and related child labor and prostitution concerns. The Embassy promoted passage of a model anti-trafficking law with senior officials and lawmakers and helped fund a newly-created trafficking in persons investigation unit in the police. A U.S. Government grant continued to support a CARE 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.

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. In October of 2004, nationwide municipal elections elected mayors and city council members in each of the country's 5,563 municipalities. Both elections were held without serious incidents and met international standards.

The Government of Brazil generally respected human rights, and there were improvements in a few areas. 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 excessive use of force. Prison conditions remained harsh and life threatening. The judiciary was inefficient, lacked resources and was often subject to political and economic influences - especially at the state level. Judicial officials were often poorly trained and the judicial process remained slow. In many instances, poorer and less educated citizens made limited use of an appeals process that could have ensured their right to a fair trial. Violence and discrimination against women, indigenous people, Afro-Brazilians and homosexuals remained a problem. Child abuse and prostitution, human trafficking, and internal slave and forced labor continued, as did intimidation and killings of rural labor organizers.

The United States human rights and democracy strategy for Brazil focused on increasing political participation of underrepresented persons (mainly women and Afro-Brazilians), strengthening the judiciary, improving access to education and employment for Brazil's poor youth, and especially combating trafficking in persons (TIP) and internal slave labor.

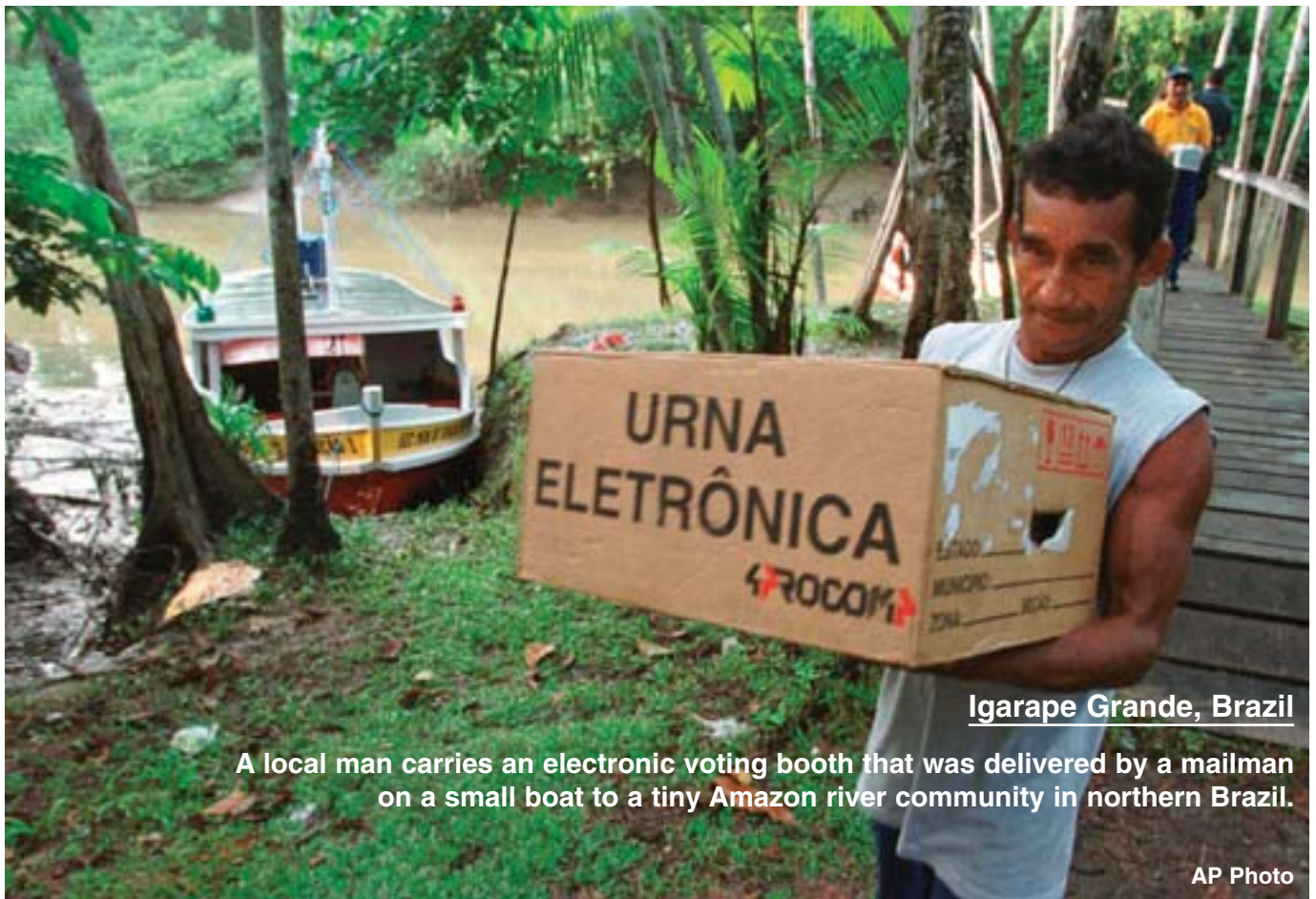
In August, Ambassador Siv, the U.S. Representative to the UN Economic and Social Council, along with Ambassador Danilovich, met with several high-level Brazilian officials involved in promoting human rights and democracy, including President Lula's Foreign Policy Advisor.

In celebration of Brazil's Black Awareness month, former Congresswoman Cardiss Collins spoke at the Federal Senate in Brasilia and addressed groups of students and academics in Brasilia and Salvador, Bahia. Congresswoman Collins spoke about the role of African-Americans in the passage of civil rights legislation during a series of professional training programs on race and gender equality. The Public Affairs Section in Brasilia sponsored both events.

High profile cases charging judges with corruption and influence peddling were common and impunity seemed widespread. At the end of 2004, approximately 115 senior judges throughout the country were under investigation. To address problems in the judiciary, the U.S. Government sponsored a number of guest lectures by professors from Harvard University Law School, the University of Texas Law School and Columbia University to promote civil and political rights and judicial reform.

The Embassy in Brasilia and a local non-governmental organization held the first ever U.S.-Brazil Constitutional Dialogue on The Contemporary Meaning of the Constitution. Professors from the University of Texas Law School and Brazilian Supreme Court Justices discussed the importance of freedom of speech, human rights, and individual and social rights before an audience of judges, prosecutors, lawyers and law students.

The U.S. Government's Disadvantaged Youth Program actively worked to ensure that children and adolescents received access to basic rights by providing at-risk youth with increased access to viable training and employment opportunities. Activities during the year included technical training and life-skill building, corporate mentoring, paid internships and on-site formal sector training. In addition, the United States provided information and communication technology training to 1,000 youth and educators. Trainees conducted market surveys to identify key factors and barriers considered during the hiring process, and launched a campaign to decrease prejudice against young workers from poor communities.



Igarape Grande, Brazil

A local man carries an electronic voting booth that was delivered by a mailman on a small boat to a tiny Amazon river community in northern Brazil.

AP Photo

Brazil has a significant domestic and international TIP problem. It is a major source country for women trafficked into prostitution in Europe and bordering countries. Men and children are forced into agricultural labor schemes on farms in the country's interior. The U.S. Government considered combating TIP a priority and made substantial efforts in this field. To further reduce child labor and associated human rights abuses, the Embassy teamed with Partners for the Americas, the Ministries of Labor, Education and Social Assistance and the Government of Brazil's National Human Rights Secretariat to implement a U.S. Labor Department grant to target child labor in northeast Brazil.

Additional U.S. funding supported International Labor Organization programs working to combat child and forced labor. In addition, Catholic Relief Services began a program funded by the U.S. Department of Labor to combat forced labor by working with cities that traditionally provided victims for slave labor. The Embassy reinforced the

Brazilian Ministry of Justice's efforts at increasing awareness of the human trafficking problem by educating both Brazilian officials and target groups. During the year, Brazil was selected by the U.S. Government as one of eight countries to receive aid under President Bush's Anti-Trafficking in Persons Initiative. The Departments of Homeland Security and Justice consulted with Brazilian officials in preparation for significant grants for projects to help Brazilian authorities combat trafficking under the President's Initiative Program.

In May, the U.S. Consulate General in Sao Paulo and the Sao Paulo State Secretary of Justice inaugurated the Sao Paulo State Office for the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons. This office conducts public education campaigns, assists victims of human trafficking and sexual exploitation and refers individual trafficking cases to the Brazilian federal police and state attorneys. The office will also have a center at the Sao Paulo international airport to assist victims return to

Brazil after being trafficked abroad. The office was the first of its kind in Brazil, and because of involvement by Brazil's Ministry of Justice, serves as a model for similar offices that will be opened nationwide. United States Government assistance to the Sao Paulo Secretary of Justice allowed the office to purchase essential equipment.

The United States also promoted several human rights and democracy programs throughout the year and actively worked to combat human trafficking and sexual exploitation. Activities of the U.S. Government included direct service assistance to human trafficking and sexual exploitation victims, shelter strengthening in target areas, referrals to appropriate legal and law enforcement services to facilitate prosecution of perpetrators and dismantle human trafficking networks. The United States also promoted increased coordination between stakeholders and service providers at the local level, and technical assistance to improve the Brazilian human trafficking and sexual exploitation notification system.

The United States funded anti-trafficking activities that led to a number of significant achievements during the year. Under the umbrella of a Memorandum of Understanding signed with the Brazilian Secretariat for Human Rights and the Ministry of Social Development, the United States worked to strengthen the nationwide network of government centers that provided emergency health, legal, and psychosocial services to human trafficking victims. Over 1,300 public agents, including social workers, psychologists, physicians and teachers received U.S.-sponsored training during the year, which allowed for the design of local operational plans and strategies for 2005. During the year, local partners identified over 700 cases of commercial sexual exploitation, of which 108 involved illegal trafficking.

The Government of Brazil regarded the anti-trafficking program as a model for the country. A report issued during the year by the Brazilian General Accounting Office stated that the program is the most successful and effective initiative that combats human trafficking and sexual exploitation of minors in the country.

At the invitation of the Brazilian Government, USAID held a seat, for the second year, on the Inter-Sectoral Commission on Trafficking in Persons and Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents. This Commission is responsible for coordinating anti-trafficking activities.

In November, the U.S. Embassy in Brasilia took part in an anti-trafficking seminar sponsored by the Embassy of Sweden with participation from the Brazilian National Secretary of Justice Claudia Chagas, the U.S. Departments of Homeland Security, Labor and State, NGOs and the diplomatic community. The U.S. Departments of Labor and Homeland Security presentations addressed an audience composed of the Brazilian federal government officials, NGO representatives, human rights activists, diplomats and law enforcement officials. The presentations outlined the U.S. Government's commitment to the fight against human trafficking through the prosecution of offenders, protection of victims and creation of programs to prevent future trafficking.

Special Ambassador John Miller, head of the State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, toured Brazil to survey Brazilian efforts at combating human trafficking. Ambassador Miller met with several high-level Brazilian officials, NGO representatives, public prosecutors and consular representatives. He participated in a joint press conference with the Sao Paulo State Anti-Trafficking Office, gave an interview to Brazil's largest daily newspaper, and provided an op-ed piece following his visit to continue to raise public awareness of the problem.

Colombia

Although serious problems remained, the Government's respect for human rights improved in some areas. Colombia is a democracy that has been ravaged by an internal armed conflict financed by drug trafficking and other criminal activities for over 40 years. The percentage of reported human rights abuses attributed to security forces was low; however, some members of the security forces continued to commit serious abuses, including unlawful and extrajudicial killings and forced disappearances. Some members of the

security forces collaborated with the paramilitary terrorist group the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC), which committed serious abuses. There were allegations of arbitrary arrests and detentions, and prolonged pretrial detention remained a fundamental problem. Illegal paramilitaries and guerrilla terrorist groups committed numerous human rights abuses, and methods to deal with these threats through the civilian judiciary were complicated by corruption and a cumbersome inquisitorial justice system. In order to better address these issues and resource constraints, the Government began a move to an adversarial 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 was both proactive and responsive, tackling the root causes of human rights violations and social unrest, while continuing 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.

The United States supported a Local Governance Program, which worked to improve the capacity of municipal governments to involve citizens in local decision-making, provide services and manage resources effectively and transparently. The Local Governance Program supported the establishment of 244 social and productive infrastructure projects in 2004. These projects were administered through local citizen oversight committees that established project priorities and oversaw their management and financing. In addition, the United States successfully completed a nationwide public awareness anti-corruption campaign that reached six million citizens through radio, newspaper and television messages. The United States also completed the standardization of internal control units in the last two of a total of 26 government agencies.

The United States Government provided assistance that was instrumental in drafting a new criminal procedure code and paving the way for the new adversarial judicial system. The Colombian Congress approved the draft code in July 2004, which was signed into law by President Uribe in August 2004. This code has been used since January 2005 in Bogotá and the districts of Manizales, Pereira and Armenia. The United States organized joint trial technique courses for judges, prosecutors, police, defense attorneys and investigators. United States assistance funded visits for judges and legislators to observe the adversarial judicial system in practice in Puerto Rico. The United States also implemented an instructors' course at the Prosecutor General's training facility, which trained instructors to conduct their own courses in forensic specialties, basic investigative skills, trial techniques, interview techniques and crime scene management. In cooperation with the Colombian Justice Sector High Level Commission, the United States funded the construction of an additional seven trial courtrooms in 2004, for a cumulative total of 35, to complement the shift toward an adversarial judicial system.



Columbia

Voters cast their ballots.

IFES

In 2004, four additional U.S.-funded Justice and Peace Houses - one-stop legal assistance shops - were established, raising the cumulative total to 37. The Justice and Peace Houses handled 746,000 cases during 2004, and since their inception in 1997 they have increased access to the justice system for more than 2.7 million poor and marginalized Colombians. In addition, the United States assisted in the certification of another 571 dispute resolution experts, for a total of 1,048. The United States developed and implemented a multi-faceted strategy to strengthen the Government's capability to investigate and prosecute human rights cases, providing Colombian judicial police investigators, forensic examiners and prosecutors with necessary training, technical assistance and equipment to enhance and upgrade their individual skill levels. The strategy employed a task force concept, whereby personnel from 11 satellite Human Rights Units in the Prosecutor General's Office train and work together, resulting in a more effective case flow from initial criminal investigation to final case resolution. In 2004, the Office of the Prosecutor General conducted major operations against guerrilla and paramilitary criminal organizations, bringing charges for murder, assault, extortion and drug trafficking.

The United States trained 840 police officers assigned to rural outposts with little or no previous police presence, 400 police in adversarial judicial system trial techniques, and more than 5,000 prosecutors, judges, investigators and defense attorneys. Specialized training and state of the art equipment donations enabled Colombian forensic labs to investigate human rights violations more effectively. These included the enhancement of DNA analyzers and the Combined DNA Index System database, upgrading of the Integrated Ballistics Identification System, updating of forensic imaging and document analysis systems, upgrading of the automated fingerprint identification system, and installation of a wireless network providing inter-agency connectivity and information sharing. In addition, at the request of Prosecutor General Osorio, the United States conducted polygraphs of 446 prosecutors and investigators from the National Human Rights Units and their eleven Human Rights support units. The

Prosecutor General imposed this requirement to combat widespread corruption in the organization. Polygraphed officials included office directors, senior prosecutors and members of the anti-narcotics, anti-kidnapping and anti-corruption units, all of whom received U.S. assistance. Ninety five percent of those tested passed.

Working with the Colombian Ministry of Interior and Justice, the United States provided security protection assistance to 556 people in 2004, for a cumulative total of 3,701 people, and hardened an additional 25 offices in 2004, for a cumulative total of 96 offices that had been under threat by paramilitary and guerrilla terrorist groups. The protection program included threatened human rights workers, union leaders, journalists, members of the left wing Patriotic Union Party, mayors, city council members and municipal human rights workers. The U.S.-funded Early Warning System expanded to 21 regions. In 2004, the system determined that 18 of the 89 alerts it received required a government response to prevent potential massacres, forced displacements or other egregious human rights violations. The Government of Colombia has responded to 195 of the 323 alerts emitted by the system since it began in 2001.

Although NGO statistics indicate kidnappings have dropped approximately 42 percent in 2004, kidnapping remains a significant problem in Colombia. The United States assisted the Government in developing and implementing a comprehensive program to investigate and prosecute kidnapping and extortion offenses. Six courses in the areas of Human Resources Intelligence Management, Racketeering Enterprise Investigations, Kidnapping and Ransom Investigations, and Interviewing and Interrogation were held for 180 law enforcement, prosecutorial and military personnel. The intimidation of witnesses and judicial sector personnel remained a serious problem. The United States provided training and equipment for Government of Columbia protective force personnel in both the witness and dignitary protection areas, including personnel from the Bogotá mayoral and other Government ministerial security details.

The United States Peace Program underwent significant change and growth in 2004. While it continued to support civil society initiatives to promote peace and conflict resolution, the program also developed a working relationship with Colombia's new High Commissioner for Peace to design and implement initiatives to support peace negotiations with illegal armed groups. As negotiations began between the Government and paramilitary groups, the United States provided advice regarding policy and programmatic parameters for a possible demobilization initiative. Also, in conjunction with the High Commissioner and Ministry of Interior and Justice, the United States established Peaceful Co-Existence Centers in seven of the most conflict-ridden municipalities in Colombia. These centers provided communities with a neutral space for dialogue, conflict resolution and social services.

The rate of displacement of people due to armed conflict fell sharply in 2003 and 2004, according to official government figures, but the internal conflict in Colombia has displaced over 2 million people since 1995. The United States supported six international organizations and NGOs in Colombia that provide emergency humanitarian assistance such as food, temporary shelter, hygiene and household kits, psycho-social counseling, health care and temporary employment to newly displaced persons. The United States also provided mid- to long-term assistance to displaced persons focused on economic reintegration of displaced persons, to include a smaller but significant returnee component. Program activities include micro-credit programs, vocational training and job placement, health care, shelter, income generation, improved education and basic community infrastructure. Through these programs the United States assisted more than 581,000 internally displaced persons in 2004. In addition, in 2004, the United States assisted more than 774 former child combatants to leave illegal armed groups and transition into regular society, for a cumulative total of 2,085 assisted by the Child Ex-Combatant program. Assistance includes basic shelter, food, education, job skills training and psycho-social assistance.

The United States also worked with the Government to combat trafficking in persons (TIP). In July 2004, the International Organization of Migration hosted a conference with U.S. funding on the application of justice in fighting TIP. This conference was attended by government officials from Colombia and the Dominican Republic.

Although labor union-related homicides and kidnappings in 2004 were lower than in previous years, violence against labor union leaders and activists continued to be a serious problem. Through a U.S. grant, a U.S. organization provided U.S.-based training and technical education to nearly 40 Colombian trade union leaders who were under threat. The United States also funded an International Labor Organization (ILO) project designed to improve labor relations and generate quality employment for women. A second U.S. grant provided funding to the ILO's International Program for the Elimination of Child Labor. In 2004, nearly 3,000 or more children left their work in low-tech open-pit mines under an IPEC-funded pilot project. However, the project was closed at the end of fiscal year 2004. A new educational program, "Combating the Worst Forms of Child Labor through Education in Colombia," was implemented to assist at-risk youth employed in the cut flower sector in Colombia. These youth were almost entirely employed in small family businesses producing flowers for local sale. The majority of these children were victims of poverty, and in many cases, the parents were convinced that survival required the economic contribution of their children. Eliminating this form of child labor required working with the entire family in order to get the children to school.

Cuba

For 46 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 2004. The Cuban Government ignored or violated virtually all of its citizens' rights, including the fundamental right to change their government. Indeed, the Government has quashed all efforts to initiate a public debate on how Cuba can prepare for a peaceful transition, in general by forbidding

open speculation on possible political changes after Castro's demise, and in particular by rejecting the constitutionally permissible Varela Project petition drive that called for basic political and economic rights.

As part of a March 2003 crackdown, the Government of Cuba arrested 75 pro-democracy and human rights activists, most of whom remain imprisoned. The Government maintained a tight media monopoly, and harassed and imprisoned pro-democracy activists, independent journalists and librarians, often forcing them into exile. Accused dissidents received sham trials and their prison conditions remained life threatening. Domestic violence against women continued, and child prostitution was a problem, as the Government refused to acknowledge Cuba's status as a major destination for sex tourism, including sex with minors. The Government of Cuba severely restricted worker rights, dismantling independent unions in 2003, and then claiming that they did not exist.

The priorities of the U.S. Government in Cuba are to encourage a peaceful transition to democracy and to direct international attention to the severe human rights crisis on the island. While the Castro brothers remain in power, any movement toward an open society and democratic political processes is slow to non-existent. Significant human rights improvements are also difficult to achieve under current conditions. A May 2004 government-organized protest required a million Cubans to march past the United States Interests Section (USINT), and December 2004 television broadcasts sought to portray U.S. diplomats as engaged in inflammatory activities.

To focus international attention on Cuba's deplorable human rights situation, the United States has greatly increased high-level public statements on ongoing abuses and encouraged other governments to do the same. In May 2004, the President approved the recommendations of the report of the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba, a comprehensive plan to accelerate a peaceful democratic transition in Cuba and coordinate U.S. support to a free and democratic Cuban Government. In January 2004, the President condemned Cuban human rights violations in a

speech to at the Special Summit of the Americas in Monterrey, Mexico. Secretary of State Powell authored an editorial in support of democracy in Cuba in March, and State Department Spokesman Richard Boucher frequently called attention to the deteriorating condition of political prisoners such as Dr. Oscar Elias Biscet. Chief of Mission James Cason focused on human rights themes in all his media interviews and in major addresses in Miami and Tampa. The U.S. Government worked actively to help achieve passage of a resolution on the situation of human rights in Cuba at the UN Commission on Human Rights in April.

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. Government grants to fifteen 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 non-governmental organizations, defend the rights of Cuban workers and provide direct outreach to the Cuban people.

To break the Cuban Government's stranglehold on all forms of public discourse, USINT mounted a major effort to increase Cuban access to information about events inside and outside Cuba. Consistent with the presidential directive to make Radio and TV Marti more effective, the Interest Section actively solicited audience preferences concerning format and content. Despite the Government's prohibition on the commercial importation of books on democracy, economics, human rights and other topics, the United States distributed more than 300,000 media items in 2004, including books, magazines, newspapers, news clips and articles. The United States also distributed several thousand radios to help Cubans obtain information on the outside world. USINT offered more than 6,000 hours of free Internet access to members of civil society in 2004. To educate Cubans on democratic processes, USINT invited members of Cuba's civil society to watch U.S. election night returns, observe a televised presidential debate and the results of the New Hampshire primaries, and participate in a seminar on the U.S. electoral process.

The U.S. Interest Section's human rights initiatives seek to send a message to the oppressors as well as the oppressed. In March, the State Department announced that the U.S. Government would not grant visas to those who helped the prosecution in the show trials of the 75 imprisoned activists. The United States urged other countries to adopt similar measures.

Because U.S. statements cannot reach Cubans through the state's media monopoly, USINT found creative ways to disseminate messages that promote human rights and democratic reforms. When words are blocked, powerful symbols and images have taken their place. USINT held an internationally televised ceremony to mark the burial of a time capsule that included messages of hope from Cuba's leading pro-democracy activists, to be read on the eve of Cuba's next free and fair elections. The Interests Section installed a mock jail cell exactly replicating the one inhabited by human rights activist Dr. Biscet, a poignant exhibition of the inhumane conditions in which Cuba holds its prisoners of conscience. In December, USINT included a lighted number "75" in its outdoor holiday lights and decorations, to remind the public of those still imprisoned unjustly. The intensity of the Government's campaign against USINT efforts to publicize the plight of the prisoners ensured that the average Cuban learned about the incarceration of the 75 pro-democracy activists.

To document the cases of Cuba's prisoners of conscience - the highest number per capita in the world - and to provide moral support, U.S. officers followed more than 350 cases and met with the prisoners' families. Officers also met with any Cuban wishing to discuss human rights violations in Cuba, receiving over 300 visits in 2004. Officials from USINT invited human rights and pro-democracy activists and political prisoners' spouses to representational events to underscore their legitimate place in Cuban civil society. In January, U.S. officials invited the children and mothers of political prisoners to a Three Kings Day celebration, and in December, the Chief of Mission received them for a holiday party. Interests Section Officers also countered Government propaganda by briefing thousands of visitors from the United States and other countries on local human rights condi-

tions and by consulting closely with other Cuba-based diplomats.

The Cuban Government has refused to recognize the extent of child prostitution or conduct public awareness campaigns to combat it. The United States has consulted closely with international NGOs and other diplomatic missions to promote increased awareness of the child prostitution problem on the island.

To recognize the important role of Cuban religious figures in society, USINT invited a broad range of religious leaders to representational events. Mission officers also provided information and humanitarian assistance to religious organizations. Although the Cuban Government has eased curbs on religious worship, it restricted the importation of religious materials, the arrival of foreign priests and missionaries to serve in Cuba, and the authorization of new places of worship, particularly for those religions not officially registered with the Government.

To help advance labor rights in a country where most leading independent union organizers are in prison, U.S. officials met with dozens of independent labor leaders and disseminated information on international labor issues, including the 2004 report of the International Labor Organization's Committee on Freedom of Association, which cited Cuba's failure to meet internationally recognized labor standards. In December, U.S. officials organized a teleconference between labor experts in the United States and Cuban independent union leaders.

Dominican Republic

Although there were some improvements in a few areas, overall the Dominican Republic Government's human rights record remained poor. The Dominican Republic enjoys a democratically elected government and a robust, multiparty system. In August, President Leonel Fernandez retook office after a generally free and fair election, replacing President Hipolito Mejia. The Constitution provides for an independent judiciary; however, internal corruption and interference from outside authorities remained a problem.

Members of the security forces committed unlawful killings. The police and, to a lesser degree, the military, tortured, beat or otherwise abused suspects, detainees and prisoners. Prison conditions ranged from poor to harsh. Lengthy pretrial detention and long trial delays continued to be problems. Domestic violence, trafficking in persons (TIP) and discrimination against Haitian migrants were also serious problems. Child labor remained a cause for concern. The Government made some advances in improving respect for human rights and worker rights. Notably, in September, a new Criminal Procedures Code that provided suspects with additional protections took effect. In October, a new Code for Minors took effect, providing increased protections and stiffer sanctions in cases of sexual or commercial exploitation. The judiciary continued to consolidate its independence and carry out reforms aimed at greater efficiency and due process. Additional military and police units received training in human rights. A new penitentiary school began training guards and administrators.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy aimed to strengthen democratic institutions, encourage enforcement of the rule of law and support governmental and non-governmental efforts to increase understanding and respect for human rights. In addition, the human rights strategy increased the Government's capacity to enforce its own proscriptions against child labor and TIP, fight corruption and comply with international labor standards. Throughout 2004, U.S. officials frequently highlighted human rights and democracy concerns, both privately and in public events. Ambassador Hertell and other Embassy officials stressed the need to respect individual rights and the importance of strengthening democracy and democratic institutions. These efforts contributed directly to the successful organization of a peaceful election and change of government and to visible steps toward enhanced respect for human rights by the authorities, including through the implementation of the new Criminal Procedures Code. Additionally, the U.S. Permanent Representative to the Organization of American States (OAS), Ambassador Maisto, used public presentations to encourage the Dominican Government and civil society to augment their

efforts in anti-corruption, education and basic human rights.

Electoral assistance and support from the United States, which included direct observation of the May 2004 presidential elections, was instrumental in promoting an election widely considered to be one of the freest and fairest in Dominican history. The press praised U.S. Government efforts. For more than a year in advance of elections, U.S. officials - including the Ambassador, Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Noriega and others - met with presidential candidates and media sources to encourage a free, fair and transparent electoral process. A U.S. grant to a Dominican NGO led to documented improvements in the Dominican electoral process. The NGO monitored the 2004 electoral process, from logistic preparations to training of polling station officials.

On election day approximately 6,500 volunteers trained with U.S. assistance observed and reported on the elections, which resulted in improved voter confidence in the electoral process and in the tabulation of results. Though less visible, this grant gave a Dominican NGO the ability to recruit, train and encourage smaller civil society groups throughout the country to participate in election activities. This tangential impact of the U.S.-funded grant served to broaden and deepen civil society activism on governance issues. Through this grant, the United States also promoted government responsiveness to the electorate by training civil society groups to monitor the performance of elected officials in 15 selected municipalities of the country.

The United States provided funding to the OAS and U.S.-based NGOs to monitor the 2004 election. On election day, international observers - including more than 50 U.S. Embassy community members accredited by the OAS - monitored voting and the tabulation of returns at election sites across the nation. During preparations for elections, U.S. officials spoke publicly about the importance of free and fair elections. On election day, the Ambassador, accompanied by other Santo Domingo-based Ambassadors, personally visited several polling stations and monitoring headquar-

ters, and publicly supported a transparent election process.

The efforts of the United States strengthened the Government's enforcement of the rule of law. Technical assistance and training provided by the United States helped the Dominican Republic begin implementation of the new Criminal Procedures Code. Specialists supported with U.S. funding assisted in the drafting of the new Criminal Procedures Code, which the Government implemented in September 2004. The new code, based on the U.S.-style adversarial model, provides suspects with considerably more legal protections than the previous Napoleonic-style code.

Technical assistance has been provided by the United States for a number of activities to assist with implementation of the new code. Funding from the United States supported planning for staffing, training, supervision and performance monitoring in the Office of Public Defense, the Public Prosecutor's Office and the court system. The United States also supported the creation of peer advisory groups around the country to support effective implementation of the new code and improve inter-institutional coordination. To prepare judicial officials to handle new oral trial requirements and additional constitutional protections afforded by the code, the United States provided specialized training for judges, prosecutors and defense attorneys. A U.S.-funded series of week-long "public education" seminars were developed, and described the advantages of the new adversarial justice system provided by the new code. The United States also provided support for civil society efforts to monitor the implementation of the code to train community leaders, grassroots organizations and lawyers. A local outreach program disseminated information about the code through radio spots, brochures and newspaper advertisements.

Technical assistance from the United States had a direct and profound impact on the rights of persons whose cases had been languishing in the Dominican judicial system. With U.S. funding, teams performed an inventory and purged about 300,000 pending criminal cases from the judicial system. In many cases, affected prisoners had

been in detention for years waiting for initial hearings on their cases. The case inventory was lauded by justice sector officials, as there was no existing record of the number of cases pending in the criminal justice system. This purging process, in addition to increasing productivity of public defenders, resulted in a decrease in criminal case processing time from 33 months in 2003 to 15 months in 2004.

The United States provided technical assistance to a Dominican judicial institution that offers free legal assistance and representation to the poor and disenfranchised in the Dominican Republic. This assistance included the merit-based selection of 21 new public defenders and two investigators, as well as their training in the National Judicial School. The rising number of public defenders, combined with greater efficiency, resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of indigents receiving free legal defense (1,992 in 2004 as compared with 866 in 2003).

The United States urged the Government to improve its human rights record in several areas, including assistance in development of programs to reduce unlawful killings, torture and unwarranted violence by members of the National Police and military. During 2004, the United States provided start-up funding to two NGOs and the National Police to create a Police Abuse Reporting Center, which began receiving and registering complaints of human rights violations in the first quarter of 2005. This information will enable police and other groups to concentrate investigations and human rights programming funds on problem areas. The United States sponsored a series of human rights training seminars for approximately 450 officers. The United States also funded the production and nationwide distribution of small, portable cards to the National Police that contain a list of Miranda-style rights affirmed in the new Criminal Procedures Code.

Projects funded by the United States continued to encourage the Dominican Government's support for efforts to eliminate child labor. The United States funded a multi-year program to address the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation and dangerous agricultural

work. Through this program, more than 1,500 children have been removed or kept from hazardous work environments since 2001. The United States also implemented the Combating Child Labor through Education project to fund educational programs for exploited and at-risk children and provide educational opportunities. Since 2002, more than 1,100 children have been placed in educational programs as part of this project.

In order to call attention to a marginalized and discriminated sector of society, the Ambassador visited workers at a sugarcane plantation near San Pedro de Macoris in February. The visit received national press coverage and prompted the decision of the plantation operators to improve facilities for some sugarcane workers.

The Ambassador and other U.S. officials spoke out about the dangers of illegal migration and TIP and sponsored speakers and conferences to call attention to these issues. The Ambassador gave the opening remarks at an international conference on best practices for combating TIP in October. The Embassy offered several training sessions for incoming administration officials regarding TIP and encouraged the government to consolidate TIP-fighting resources into one organization under the auspices of the attorney general. The United States sponsored a local NGO to give seminars and training for prosecutors and judges with respect to prosecutions under the 2003 anti-TIP and alien smuggling law. The Embassy funded a public campaign that used posters, radio ads and other media to discourage prospective migrants from risking their lives to travel illegally to the United States.

Ecuador

Ecuador has a democratically elected government that generally respects human rights. However, its weak government institutions, widespread corruption and severe inequities in distribution of income 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. Prison conditions remained poor. Persons were subject to arbitrary arrest and over 70 percent of the detainees in jail had not been formally sentenced. Although there was a free and vigorous press, some self-censorship occurred in the print media. Pervasive discrimination against women, the indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorians continued to occur and included occasional violence. Child labor and trafficking in persons (TIP) remained problems.

The U.S. Government's human rights and democracy strategy in Ecuador is to support democracy, good governance and advocate respect for democratic institutions. The United States efforts included helping strengthen the judicial system and the rule of law, promoting human rights education, assisting Colombian refugees, protecting the human rights of migrants 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. Experts from the United States worked with local leaders on judicial ethics and citizen participation in democratic processes, and participated in an international youth conference on leadership. 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 Ecuadorian historical figures. Embassy officials advocated stronger workers' rights protections and development of legislation and a national plan to combat TIP.

Ecuador's judicial system is plagued by inefficiency and corruption that undermine the rule of law and hinder speedy and fair trials. In 2004, the United States supported a number of projects to

strengthen judicial effectiveness and fight corruption. With U.S. funding, judicial reform programs helped train police, prosecutors and judges in criminal justice reform and the proper application of the legal system, including the oral accusatory system and oral litigation skills. Although the Ecuadorian Government has made little progress in advancing its anti-corruption program, the United States implemented programs at the local level to improve transparency and accountability.

With U.S. assistance, Ecuador's multi-institutional commission to advance criminal justice reform developed a detailed action plan, made some progress on improving coordination among judicial institutions and wrote a bill to reform the criminal code. The United States developed and distributed a multimedia training package to inform civil society about applying the criminal procedures system. To strengthen an inadequate public defense service, the United States provided funding to expand citizens' access to justice, especially that of poor people in rural regions of the country.

The United States, through USAID, expanded its program to increase effectiveness and transparency in government, working with 48 local governments and three additional provinces. The program also increased citizen participation through citizen audit committees established to oversee implementation of local assistance projects and development of legal proposals to decentralize government. Additionally USAID launched a project to train teachers on their constitutional rights and responsibilities and a separate program to lobby Ecuador's Congress for passage of a Freedom of Information Act (which occurred in May 2004 and was signed by the president in January 2005). The program will train citizens on their rights and institutions on application of the law.

The United States continued military-to-military contact focused on promotion of fundamental human rights and humanitarian outreach, including medical assistance and peacekeeper exercises. The Embassy coordinated interagency human rights' vetting of military units proposed for U.S.



Ecuador

Cayambe women arrive at a polling station during the presidential election.

AP Photo



Quito, Ecuador

A group of Ecuadorean women in funeral attire march through the streets protesting the low number of female candidates in elections.

AP Photo

training and/or support, and 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 continues to improve the city's monitoring of domestic violence cases and processing of sex crime cases.

As of November 30, almost 8,000 Colombians had sought refugee status in Ecuador. (The actual number of displaced Colombians who entered Ecuador was much larger, due to people entering without documentation.)

To help this vulnerable population, the United States, via the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, provided funding to the UN High Commission for Refugees, the International Organization for Migration, the American Red Cross and the Pan American Health Organization to support refugee centers and services for Colombians seeking refuge in Ecuador.

The United States funded two major programs to support Ecuadorian Government efforts to combat child labor. A grant provided to Catholic Relief Services will administer a four-year project aimed at meeting the educational needs of child laborers and children at risk of entering the banana and flower industries. An ongoing project targets 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 Ecuador's outdated labor code to ensure the right of association without fear of retribution, and requested action by the Government in specific labor rights cases.

In addition to working against the worst forms of child labor, the United States repeatedly raised with Ecuadorian officials the need for coordinated action against the broader problem of trafficking in persons. The United States funded a grant to the American Bar Association to review proposed TIP legislation and coordinate efforts to combat trafficking. The United States also began work with local governments to fight TIP. Since alien smuggling networks made migrants in Ecuador vulnerable to human trafficking, USAID assisted host government efforts to dismantle alien smug-

gling organizations; cooperation between U.S. and Ecuadorian officials led to the dismantlement of 27 alien smuggling rings and the arrest of 128 alien smugglers. The United States also provided equipment for airports and border crossings to allow authorities to better monitor travelers in part to limit human trafficking.

Guatemala

The Government of Guatemala generally respected the rights of its citizens; however, very serious problems remain. State institutions charged with enforcing the rule of law remained weak. Police brutality and prison conditions were concerns. Arbitrary arrest and lengthy pretrial detentions were problems. Intimidation and corruption of judges and other law enforcement officials was widespread. Threats against non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and human rights workers by unidentified persons remained approximately the same as the previous year. The Berger Administration took significant steps to downsize and reform the military. There was progress investigating official corruption and efforts to reform the judiciary continued. Impunity for offenses of criminal violence was pervasive.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy is targeted toward encouraging and supporting the Government's efforts to strengthen democratic institutions, improve the rule of law and transparency and supporting key human rights initiatives.

In an effort to strengthen democratic gains made over the last decade, the United States provided political party development training to parties across the political spectrum. Assistance focused on identifying root causes of political party weakness and promoting party reform, internal democratization and accountability mechanisms designed to modernize parties and encourage constituent outreach. Using USAID's decentralization and local governance program, the United States worked to strengthen national policies that promote decentralization (e.g. Municipal Tax Code) and at the local level, in targeted geographic areas, to improve resource generation, management efficiency and transparency, responsiveness to citizen

needs and citizen participation in determining local priorities.

In September 2004, the United States initiated a new program focused on strengthening the rule of law, which builds on past justice reform efforts to improve the transparency and efficiency of criminal judicial processes, implementing crime prevention programs, increasing the use of alternative dispute resolutions and developing stronger leadership and support for justice reform in Guatemala. To address profound problems in the country's judicial system, the United States funded the expansion of a network of Justice Centers to improve access to justice and modernize the justice sector by implementing administrative reforms to improve judicial operations.

In coordination with the Villa Nueva Justice Center, located in a suburb of the capital, the United States funded intensive training of the police, especially focused on the problem of combating the frightening gang violence that plagues much of Central America. The United States provided material support to the Guatemalan Public Ministry's Office of the Special Prosecutor for Crimes Against Human Rights Workers. To support investigation of police officers implicated in crime or corruption, the United States provided training and material support to the National Civil Police's Office of Professional Responsibility, the equivalent of an Inspector General. United States assistance also supported a crime prevention coalition, which opened a self-help and training center for disadvantaged youth on the grounds of a former presidential retreat facility.

President Bush, then Secretary of State Powell, then-Undersecretaries Bolton and Grossman, and Undersecretaries Dobriansky, and Assistant Secretary Noriega, Deputy Assistant Secretary Fisk and others raised human rights concerns during meetings with President Oscar Berger, Vice President Eduardo Stein, Members of Congress and other high-level Guatemalan officials. The Embassy expressed interest in key cases to authorities investigating human rights abuses during the year. Authorities were generally cooperative and in several cases shifted resources to investigate cases of particular concern. Ambassador Hamilton frequently met with human rights lead-

ers and publicly expressed U.S. support for their work by hosting a reception in honor of the Guatemalan human rights community. The Ambassador has advocated for numerous human rights initiatives with the Government, including the establishment of a local UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the UN Commission to Investigate Clandestine Groups proposed by civil society, stronger legislation for prosecution of traffickers in persons (TIP) and improved labor legislation. The Embassy continued to urge the Government to investigate threats against human rights defenders, journalist, and justice workers and to provide protection to the victims when warranted and feasible. Through the International Visitors Program, the Embassy sponsored trips focused on human rights and free press for civil society leaders, giving them the opportunity to interact with parallel organizations in the United States and interchange experiences.

The United States completed a three-year human rights program in September 2004. Through this project, the United States supported grassroots human rights efforts, including through the training of local human rights promoters, media campaigns and targeted support for the Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman (limited training and equipment). The project also supported the Human Rights Movement, a coalition of human rights NGOs. The program has improved awareness and increased demand for training and knowledge about human rights laws and treaties, especially regarding the indigenous population, women and children. Grantees disseminated information about the civil conflict to over 44,000 persons. The program and its counterparts influenced the creation of a National Reparations Program and Commission. Rosalina Tuyuc, one program counterpart, was chosen by the president to lead the Commission and several others are members.

President Berger appointed Frank LaRue, a key leader in the human rights movement, to direct the Presidential Human Rights Commission in January 2004. It is encouraging that civil society has blossomed in Guatemala since 1996 and is now a major contributor to the new Government's human rights policies.

Since 1999, the United States has funded the exhumation of mass graves from Guatemala's internal conflict, providing closure for families and religious burials for thousands of victims. Forensic scientists have exhumed more than 2,857 remains from more than 321 sites since exhumations began in 1992. During the year, forensic scientists exhumed 433 remains from 71 different sites. The project also offers mental health services in connection with the exhumations.

The United States funded negotiations between civil society and the Government to create a National Reparations Plan, which was established to compensate victims of the civil conflict. In March 2004, the United States announced that it would support a program to provide systematic advocacy and pressure for legal follow-up on human rights abuse cases from the civil conflict. The project will also develop restorative justice processes and alternative dispute resolution at the local level.

The United States provided assistance to the UN Development Program that supports civilian-military relations by strengthening the capacity of civil institutions to understand and engage in dialogue on security and intelligence issues. The work of a preparatory commission funded by the United States led to the installation of a civilian Security Advisory Council to the president in June 2004.

The United States began an initiative to resolve land conflicts through mediation. These conflicts have, led to government evictions of squatters occupying plantations and, on one occasion, violence.

The United States supported the Presidential Commission against Racism and Discrimination against Indigenous Groups and the appointment of a National Indigenous Assembly. The United States participated in a donor dialogue on indigenous issues to prevent duplication of efforts. The United States also sponsored a digital video conference between indigenous leaders in Panama, Guatemala and the United States to discuss obstacles currently facing these populations.

To foster a more professional security force and to reduce human rights abuses, the United States worked with the Defense Ministry to develop a Human Rights Initiative Consensus Agreement with the Army. In December, civil society leaders and the Human Rights Ombudsman's Office worked alongside military officers to design a plan to systematize the military's observance of human rights in civil-military relations, and to establish training and education, human rights doctrine and internal controls to prevent abuses. United States Southern Command Brigadier General Wendell Griffin attended the event to express support for the Guatemalan Defense Department's efforts on these reforms. The United States printed and disseminated copies of the "White Book," the new military code of conduct, which was praised by the UN Verification Mission in Guatemala.

The United States is engaged in two regional projects to strengthen the enforcement of labor standards. The United States has entered the second year of a four-year project to strengthen labor inspectorates in Central America. 2004 marked the inauguration of a second four-year project to promote labor rights education. Among other activities this year, the project supported the creation of a website to disseminate accurate information about labor law. The United States negotiated the U.S.-Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) with Central American nations, which incorporated labor rights protections. If ratified, the CAFTA will supersede existing labor condition regulations under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP). An inter-agency U.S. delegation conducted bilateral labor consultations in May. In February 2004, the U.S. Trade Representative held hearings on open GSP labor petitions. In all these exchanges, U.S. officials expressed concern about the need for the Government to fully investigate past violence against trade union leaders, reform its labor justice system and reinstate workers illegally fired for unionizing activities. The Embassy continues to express concern to the Government over the potential for anti-union violence in the maquila sector, where union formation is almost non-existent. In March 2005, the United States committed to finance a labor rights enforcement program for Guatemala and El Salvador.

Guatemala was rated a Tier II country Watch List in the State Department's 2004 Trafficking in Persons Report to Congress. United States officials briefed the Government on the implications of the report and urged the Government to step up its efforts to prevent, prosecute and punish this crime. United States officials also urged Guatemala to implement the Memorandum of Understanding it signed with Mexico to aid victims along the border areas of the two countries. In response, the Government formed an inter-agency working group, composed of ministries, Congress, the Attorney and Solicitor General's Offices and the judiciary. The Embassy actively participated in this process, to help coordinate these efforts. The Embassy has urged the Government and Members of Congress to stiffen sanctions against traffickers, to which they responded with new legislation passed in February 2005 to expand prosecutorial powers to fight TIP. To support these increased Government efforts, the United States announced several integrated programs to combat TIP. These programs supported efforts by the Special Prosecutor for Crimes Against Women and the Secretary for Social Welfare as well as a 3-year regional project for the development of regional, national and local networks to prevent TIP and protect trafficking victims. The latter project also includes support for the continued development and implementation of improved TIP legislation and a media campaign to increase awareness of the perils of trafficking among vulnerable populations. The United States is scheduled to carry out training workshops for justice workers and the courts on dealing with trafficking victims.

Haiti

The Government of Haiti's human rights record remained poor. During the year, various actors perpetrated numerous human rights abuses, particularly during the armed revolt and the authority vacuum that followed. The year began with a continuation of the political impasse and violence stemming from controversial results of May 2000 legislative and local elections. The human rights record of the Aristide Government remained poor. There were numerous credible reports of extrajudi-

cial killings by members of the Haitian National Police (HNP). Police officers used excessive, sometimes deadly, force in making arrests or controlling demonstrations and were rarely held accountable for such acts. Attacks on and threats to journalists and political dissenters by members of popular organizations and by supporters of the President's party, Fanmi Lavalas, increased. Systematic, state-orchestrated abuses stopped under the Interim Government of Haiti (IGOH). Nevertheless, there were credible allegations of HNP involvement in extrajudicial killings during attempts to quell pro-Lavalas incited violence during the fall of 2004. Incidences of retribution killings and politically motivated violence, particularly in the provinces, also resurfaced following Aristide's departure. Prison conditions remained poor. 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.

On January 31, President Aristide accepted the Caribbean Community Secretariat's Prior Action Plan, committing the Government to a number of measures necessary to create a climate of security for elections. Aristide failed to take steps to fully implement the plan, despite numerous assurances that he was committed to its implementation. Opposition political parties and civil society organizations rejected the plan. Moreover, Aristide's Government continued to condone and sometimes participate in human rights abuses, including violent suppression of legitimate peaceful dissent. Anti-government armed rebels along with members of the former military mounted a major insurgency in early February, ultimately resulting in Aristide's resignation and departure from Haiti on February 29, 2004. The IGOH was formed and installed on March 17, 2004.

After the departure of President Aristide in February 2004, the U.S. human rights and democracy strategy in Haiti focused on providing stability and assisting in the reconstruction of democracy

in Haiti, including respect for the rule of law and for human rights. Given the security and political situation on the ground, the initial focus was on assisting the IGOH election efforts, reconstructing the criminal justice system (including police, judges and prosecutors), disarming all non-governmental forces, supporting good governance, assisting human rights organizations and supporting reconciliation, reconstruction and social reintegration efforts.

In preparation for national and local elections, which are scheduled for the fall of 2005, the United States has provided technical assistance, training and support for elections planning and administration, development of a new electoral law, implementation of a voter roll and creation of a Provisional Electoral Council. Efforts by the United States to increase voter awareness and political representation in Haiti included support for political party development, civic and voter education and political polling programs. Additional efforts are underway to ramp up current election support and provide international election observers and training for domestic partisan and non-partisan poll watchers for upcoming elections.

The Embassy sent 62 Haitians - attorneys, civil society leaders, judges, journalists, scholars, government officials and human rights activists - to attend seminars in the United States on human rights practices and advocacy, campaigns and elections, anti-corruption, responsible media, judicial reform and public administration. To demonstrate the mechanisms of a sustainable democracy to a large audience, the Embassy funded the live Creole-language interpretation of the U.S. presidential debates and assisted several stations in broadcasting the President's inaugural address live. A radio play based on Martin Luther King's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," and focused on his writings on non-violence and civic engagement, was written, produced and distributed throughout the country. The Embassy's civic education program "Democracy for All" was expanded to include creation of Creole-language radio skits, production of a four-hour televised series of interviews and student-written skits outlining citizen participation in a democracy.

During 2004, the Ambassador promoted the rule of law in Haiti through frequent high-level meetings and public statements. On December 1, 2004, Secretary of State Powell and the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs Assistant Secretary Noreiga traveled to Haiti and emphasized to the IGOH the importance of an independent judiciary and police enforcement of court orders, the arrest of criminals with outstanding warrants and the release of those still in detention despite valid release orders. Following the departure of Aristide, the United States initiated a comprehensive, long-term administration of justice assistance program with the Haitian Government. In 2004, U.S. assistance for the HNP included technical assistance, equipment, training and 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. Throughout 2004, the United States conducted seminars and workshops for more than 40 civil society organizations advocating the rule of law and judicial independence. Among other benefits, this program resulted in the formation of a new federation of bar associations and the creation of an active coalition of civil society organizations promoting judicial reform.

In public statements, the Ambassador constantly condemned politically motivated violence, stressing the importance of general respect for the human rights of all Haitians. During a press conference in recognition of International Human Rights Day on December 10, 2004, the Ambassador issued a call for unity among Haitians in their mission to create a democratic future free from repression. In conjunction with the press conference, the Ambassador presented certificates to the winners of an Embassy-sponsored essay contest on the subject of human rights. The winning eight youths, four each from secondary and university levels were subsequently 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. Under the Victims of Organized Violence program in 2005, the United States will partner with four local non-governmental organizations to assist 550 victims of violence and human rights abuses.

Despite the political crisis that plagued the country in early 2004, combating child labor practices in Haiti, particularly internal and external trafficking of children as domestic workers or “restaveks,” remained a U.S. focus. The United States provided funding to the Pan-American Development Foundation to implement an anti-trafficking program to shore up government efforts. Embassy and other U.S. officials participated in the anti-trafficking training programs for government officials held around the country during the year.

Honduras

Honduras' constitutional Government is headed by President Ricardo Maduro, elected in November 2001 in elections that domestic and international observers judged to be free and fair. Since its inauguration in 2002, the Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, there are serious problems in some areas. Members of the police were accused of committing extrajudicial killings. Organized private and vigilante security forces were believed to have committed a number of arbitrary and summary executions. Human rights groups accused former security force officials and the business community of colluding to organize “death squads” to commit extrajudicial, summary and arbitrary executions, particularly of youth. Prison conditions remained harsh and detainees often did not receive due process. The administration of justice was problematic due to inefficient, understaffed, and under-funded police, Public Ministry (prosecutors) and judiciary, all of which were subject to corruption and political influence. Members of the economic, military and official elite enjoyed considerable impunity. Other human rights problems included violence and discrimination against women and discrimination against indigenous people. The Government did not effectively enforce all labor laws and child labor remained a serious problem. Honduras is a source and transit country for trafficking in persons (TIP), including commercial sexual exploitation.

The U.S. strategy in Honduras includes supporting democratic political processes and drawing

attention to the need for improvements in human rights conditions, particularly in the areas of the rule of law and combating TIP. The Ambassador and other officers of the U.S. Mission worked closely with Honduran government officials, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), labor unions and other organizations to discuss areas of particular concern and to encourage reforms. Secretary of State Powell discussed human rights and democracy issues on October 21, 2004, during meetings with senior Honduran Government officials in Washington. The Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs on September 16 in Washington and the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs also discussed these issues during his September 8-10 visit to Honduras. The Mission is also sending various civil society leaders and government officials on International Visitors Programs in 2004-2005, on topics such as the administration of justice and the rule of law, anti-corruption, civil society and democracy and journalism.

With national and municipal primary elections set for February 20, 2005 and general elections set for November 27, 2005, the United States dedicated resources for assisting the Honduran Government's ability to conduct the elections and increasing the voting public's awareness of recent significant electoral reforms. Under the new electoral law, voters will be able to select candidates based not only on their names but also on their photographs, a process without precedent in Honduras. This new method for the direct election of congressional members contrasts with the old system, in which candidates were elected on party rank-ordered congressional lists. The United States, through USAID is providing assistance for the elections by supporting the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) and the National Registry of Persons. The United States, through USAID is also providing financial support to the IFES and for a Cooperative Agreement with the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights' Center for Electoral Assessment and Promotion, to allow these organizations to provide advisory assistance to the TSE. The United States is also providing funding to the Honduran Federation of NGOs (FOPRIDEH) to support its nonpartisan voter edu-

cation campaign. The United States also gave funding to the Organization of American States for its election observation mission for the primaries. The U.S. Government continued its efforts to promote democracy through the development of transparent and accountable democratic institutions at the local level. The United States, through USAID is providing funds for municipal development efforts to promote decentralization and increase municipalities' capacity for basic service delivery. In many cases, these projects demonstrated a positive correlation between the transparency and accountability with which municipal governments are being administered. Citizens' growing confidence in the work being performed by their local governments has increased their faith in democratic governance.

The Embassy expended a significant amount of its human rights and democracy promotion effort on various aspects of promoting the rule of law and administration of justice, in areas such as police reform, judicial reform and anti-corruption. To foster more professional police and reduce human rights abuses, the Embassy provided The U.S. State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL) Police Assistance Funds to assist the Police Internal Affairs Office with investigating complaints, including those from private citizens, and to make recommendations for substantiated complaints, ranging from administrative disciplinary action to criminal charges.

The United States is providing significant financial assistance for administration of justice measures. Over the last several years, USAID funding has supported the development and implementation of a new Criminal Procedure Code, which introduced oral, adversarial trials, more effective and transparent procedures and greater protections for individual rights. The United States funded the training and distribution of materials for judges, prosecutors, public defenders and forensics experts. The USAID-designated pilot courts in Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula concluded an impressive total of 948 trials and another 4,219 cases were closed through non-trial procedures during the year. The Supreme Court-run and USAID-funded "purging unit" is clearing back-

logged cases from prior to the implementation of the new code. By year's end, 73 percent of 140,000 pending cases under the previous procedure had been dismissed or resolved. The FOPRIDEH, with USAID assistance, has been dynamic in promoting broader and more effective civil society participation in justice sector reforms and monitoring, and in exercising oversight of the public policy process.

To improve the country's fight against corruption, the United States is providing funds for Transparency and Anti-Corruption efforts. Activities under these programs include: 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 Mission has encouraged the Government and the Attorney General's office to vigorously pursue cases that involve corruption, particularly cases involving government officials. The Embassy also brought in a U.S. consultant expert as a speaker on anti-corruption in October 2004.

The United States is executing a project to assist the Honduran Government in addressing financial crimes and money laundering in the country. The project includes technical assistance in the operation of the Financial Information Unit, technical assistance to the investigative and prosecutorial agencies that have responsibility for the cases of money laundering and financial crimes, and training of judges, bank officials and other entities involved in the fight against financial crimes.

The Embassy provided funds for "Si Se Puede," a government program coordinated by the Vice President's office that seeks to prevent drug use and gang membership among vulnerable sectors, such as youth at risk. Many of these youth are targets of violence, including extrajudicial killings, if they join gangs. In order to allow wide participation, NGOs, police, community leaders and teachers assist in carrying out the projects.

Several U.S. officials engaged government, private sector and labor union officials on the importance of enforcing labor law and ensuring that core labor rights are protected, which has been particularly important given the U.S-Central America Free Trade Agreement, which is awaiting ratification. The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) funded proj-



Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Women participate in the 50th anniversary celebration of women's right to vote at the Plaza Capitol Centro.

AP Photo

Tegucigalpa, Honduras

The 50th anniversary celebration of women's right to vote in Tegucigalpa.

AP Photo

ects to strengthen Labor Systems in Central America (Cumple y Gana); Freedom of Association, Collective Bargaining and Industrial Relations in Central America Project; and a Regional Occupational Safety and Health Project. USAID is supporting efforts to improve the functioning of regional labor markets while strengthening the protection of core labor standards, through assistance to the Secretariat for Central American Economic Integration and alliances with international private businesses and NGOs, including the Continuous Improvement in the Central America Workplace project.

Child labor is a significant problem in Honduras. The DOL grants supported the International Labor Organization's International Program for the Eradication of Child Labor (ILO/IPEC), as well as other organizations conducting projects aimed at combating and gathering information on the worst forms of child labor. Ongoing projects in melon production and combating the commercial sexual exploitation of children are implemented by ILO/IPEC. In addition, the Government of Honduras is participating in a DOL-funded regional project implemented by CARE USA to combat child labor through education, which includes direct action in Honduras.

Honduras is a source and transit country for trafficking in persons for sexual and labor exploitation. Most victims are young women and girls, who are trafficked to Guatemala, Belize, El Salvador, Mexico, the United States and Canada. Women and children are also trafficked internally, most often from rural to urban settings. The Embassy brought in a U.S. NGO expert twice, as well as a State Department official, to be keynote speakers at seminars organized by the Honduran Government on the prevention and eradication of the commercial sexual exploitation of children and trafficking in women and children in San Pedro Sula, Santa Rosa de Copan, Puerto Cortes and Tela. The Embassy is spending funds from the State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons to provide training, technical assistance and equipment to police investigators and prosecutors working to combat TIP, as well as public awareness campaigns on TIP. The Embassy is also providing INL Police Assistance

Funds to support the Frontier Police to, among other goals, prevent and interdict the transportation of illegal immigrants, including trafficked persons. The State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat TIP funded classes in the Department of Justice Office of Prosecutorial Development and Training to educate Honduran judges on TIP cases.

Jamaica

The Government of Jamaica generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, there were serious problems in some areas. Members of the security forces committed unlawful killings. Mob violence against, and vigilante killings of those suspected of breaking the law remained a problem. Police and prison guards abused 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 committed abuses remained a problem. The judicial system was overburdened and lengthy delays in trials were common. Discrimination against women and homosexuals was common. Discrimination and violence against individuals living with HIV/AIDS also continued. Child labor and trafficking in persons (TIP) continued to be problems in Jamaica.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy in Jamaica is to promote democracy and good governance and increase 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, 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 assistance to civil society through the institutional strengthening and capacity-building of civil society groups. Through coalition-building, networking, and advocacy, these groups pioneered policy changes that combat the high levels of crime and violence in Jamaican society. Embassy-organized democracy

programs focused on fighting corruption in government and law enforcement, and educating Jamaicans about the 2004 U.S. presidential election and the democratic process in the United States.

In an effort to strengthen the capacity of the legal system, the United States provided seven case management systems to Jamaican courts. These systems greatly increased the ability of the local judiciary to track cases as they progress through the court system and expedite resolution of cases. Other projects increased the level of training for court reporters in an effort to increase the efficiency of record taking and storage. With U.S. funding, an online database containing all 587 Jamaican laws was established and a Justice Education Unit with public education and information dissemination capabilities is now operational. Both initiatives provide a valuable reference point for citizens requiring legal information and increase citizen access to public information.

To assist Jamaica in building a more professional police force, the United States provided support for a Law Enforcement Development Advisor (LEDA) position within the Jamaican Constabulary Force (JCF) to implement 83 recommendations for police reform from the Police Executive Research Forum. Working through the office of the JCF Commissioner, the LEDA submitted recommendations on how to restructure and reform the police and establish a system of accountability and transparency, including stronger internal affairs and personnel practices. In addition, the Commissioner updated the Citizens' Charter, which contains a Code of Conduct for police officers, incorporating the principles of human rights and democracy into each officer's daily routine.

Through a series of recommendations, the United States is assisting LEDA in its efforts to develop a professional, effective police force that respects the rights of citizens and is respected throughout Jamaica. In 2004, the JCF implemented a new policy on officers' use of deadly force, based on suggestions from the LEDA. Published copies of the new Human Rights and Use of Force Policy have been distributed to every member of the JCF and training on the new policy continued as a priority. During 2004, middle and upper management offi-

cers were introduced to Operational Planning Training that required extensive planning and supervisory approval prior to the execution of police operations. Further management skills training was provided in the areas of accountability, expectations and effective management of resources. In addition, the United States sought to change the perception of the police as a hostile force in the community and to foster organizational change from which both citizens and officers would benefit. An initiative of the LEDA for the creation of a Professional Standards Unit was developed and is gradually being implemented. The unit is responsible for complaints of misconduct and corruption, staff inspections, policy development, legal affairs, and planning and research. Both policy and training have been facilitated in the area of anticorruption and police misconduct. The United States worked closely with British counterparts in their efforts to modernize and reform the police force.

The United States provided grant funding to develop a community-based anti-crime program in the once-embattled Grants Pen inner city community located in Kingston. The grant provided the JCF with training in community policing and consensus-building. Local police were taught methods to promote safe encounters with citizens and community members received training in mentoring and problem solving.

The United States supported human rights education in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions with the goal of improving the understanding of human rights norms and the roles and responsibilities of the citizenry. Jamaican human rights NGOs work in a variety of areas to educate and protect citizens from abuses. With U.S. assistance, a Jamaican organization developed, produced, and distributed educational materials now used in primary schools throughout Jamaica. The books emphasize the inherent rights of children, allowing educators to incorporate human rights into the national curriculum.

Embassy officials remain in dialogue with Jamaican officials and civil society regarding respect for the rights of women, children and people with disabilities. The stigmatization of people

with HIV/AIDS in Jamaica is a critical issue, sometimes leading to mob violence and denial of police assistance. Through a series of events designed to confront the myths and misconceptions that promote HIV/AIDS transmission, the United States built a strong foundation in Jamaica for future collaboration and partnership to improve the conditions of those affected by or infected with HIV/AIDS. The United States funded public service announcements that sought to combat the stigma of those living with HIV/AIDS. In October 2004, an Embassy-funded conference brought medical professionals from the United States to meet with their Jamaican counterparts to discuss the myths and stigma associated with HIV/AIDS, as well as the latest medical treatments for the disease. Through a unique public/private partnership, USAID and a U.S.-based pharmaceutical company agreed to provide technical assistance and program support to a Jamaican organization for at least the next five years to carry out its HIV/AIDS awareness, anti-stigma and persons living with HIV/AIDS care programs.

In 2004, U.S. International Military Education and Training assistance was provided to 78 members of the Jamaica Defense Force (JDF). JDF members received training in 105 total IMET courses, including human rights instruction. This training prepared enlisted personnel who assist local police units in patrolling high crime areas in Jamaica, and included units on basic leadership, due process, civilian control of the military and the role of the military in a democratic society. Those 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.

Embassy officials maintained an open dialog with the Government on the prosecution and criminalization of TIP cases. The Embassy encouraged the Jamaican Parliament to pass the Child Care and Protection Act, which was voted into law in March 2004. Embassy officials worked with NGOs and relevant government ministries to press for vigorous enforcement of the law, particularly the clause

prohibiting the trafficking or sale of children. The United States provided funding for a TIP awareness program working with young people across the country to educate them about the risks of the island's sex trade and TIP.

In 2004, a U.S.-funded Border Security and Migration Management system was launched at both of Jamaica's international airports. The system allows the Government to monitor all international arrivals and departures through its airports and also tracks crew members of merchant and cruise vessels. By enabling the Jamaican Immigration Service to detect fraudulent documents and analyze immigration and migration patterns, the system assists officials to detect incidents of illegal migration and TIP. The project also includes important training components, such as seminars on TIP. By combining infrastructure with important training, the Embassy is increasing Jamaica's awareness of TIP, including seminars on TIP and providing officers and officials with the tools to combat the problem.

Peru

The Government of Peru generally respects the human rights of its citizens. Although the estimated real growth was 4.5 percent, the poverty rate was 54 percent, and the Government lacked revenues for social investment. Police on occasion tortured and abused detainees, and prison conditions were poor. There were charges that police officers sometimes harassed victims to keep them from filing charges. The judicial system suffers from inefficiency and corruption, and pretrial detention continued to be prolonged. Peru has a vital and diverse media and an active non-governmental organization (NGO) sector that closely monitors human rights. Impunity for past crimes committed during Peru's long war with terrorist groups remained a problem. 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; however, a 2002 law addressed some of these issues. Child labor remained a serious problem in the informal sector.

The Government recognized trafficking in persons (TIP) as a problem and took steps to address it. Finally, while Peru remained committed to democracy and the country's economy grew, there was growing public impatience with perceived governmental inefficiency and the slowness with which the population felt the benefits of economic growth.

The United States fosters human rights and democracy in Peru by promoting good governance, especially at the regional level, and establishing programs to educate historically marginalized groups about the democratic process and encourage their political participation. The U.S. Government's other priorities include anti-corruption efforts, economic transparency, judicial reform and attempts to strengthen the national Congress in coordination with broader regional efforts as part of the Andean Regional Initiative. The United States strives to strengthen civil society and increase public awareness of human rights and democracy issues. The United States supported the efforts of Peru's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) to help Peru recover from the aftermath of terrorist violence. The United States worked to build the technical capacity of the Labor Ministry to encourage and teach the techniques of peaceful collective bargaining to leaders in business and labor. It helps to fight child labor (including in the mining industry), child sexual exploitation and trafficking in persons.

During August meetings with President Toledo and other officials, including important members of the opposition, Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs Roger Noriega encouraged continued efforts to strengthen democratic institutions and processes and cited the importance of press freedom and anti-corruption initiatives. Embassy officials and high-level delegations continue to raise these and other human rights issues both in public statements and private discussions with government officials and civil society.

Regional/municipal elections in late 2002 led to the creation of new regional governments in January 2003, with newly elected mayors - many in office for the first time - assuming their posi-



Peru

Polling officials wait for voting to begin.

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tions. For a five-year period, from 2002-2007, the United States is providing financial support to the new regional governments, including training in budget preparation and responsible management of social programs transferred to the regions by the central Government. The establishment of a competitive Special Incentive Fund designed to cofinance small-scale infrastructure projects is being supported as well as special initiatives that benefit regions or municipalities. This fund is designed to implement a market-like incentive for good governance in areas outside Lima.

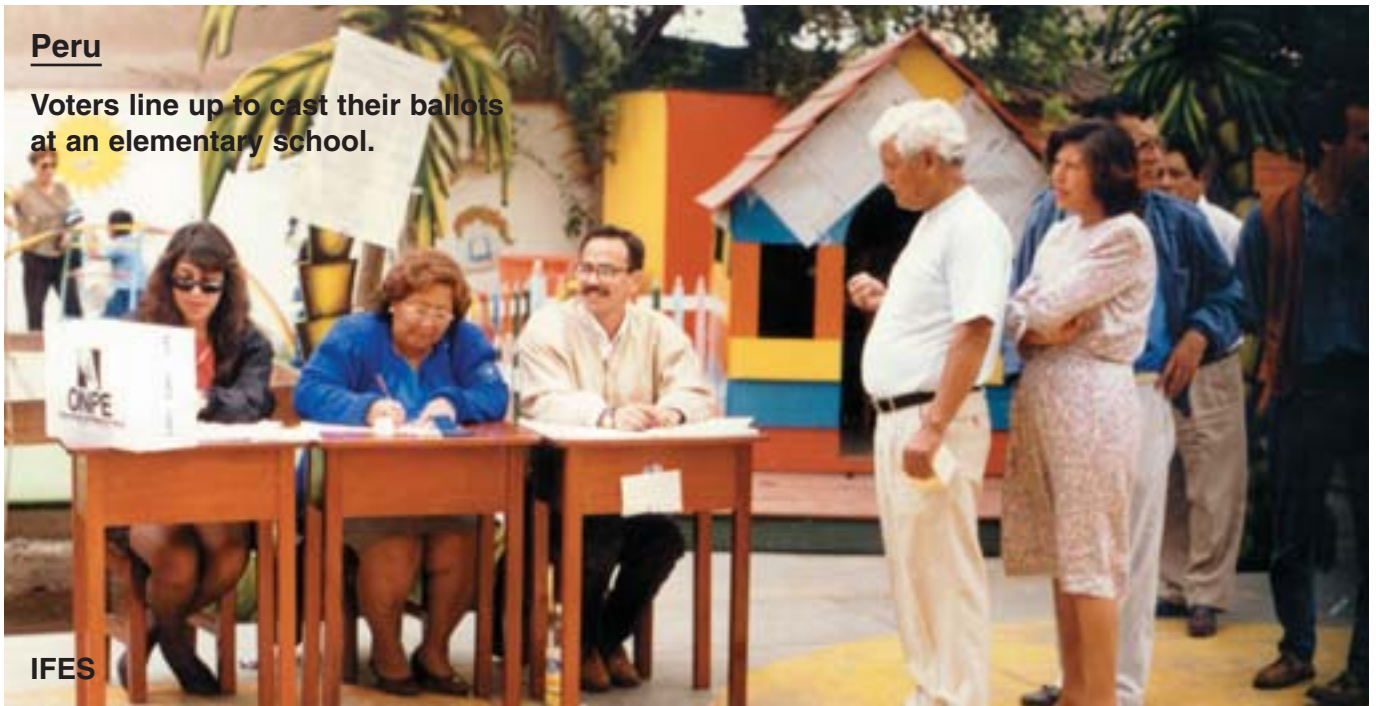
Peru is one of four nations worldwide participating as a pilot country in the G-8 Anti-Corruption and Transparency Initiative, of which a major goal is strengthening democracy. The United States provided technical and financial assistance to Peru in the preparation of its action plan, which proposes activities in citizen information/internet connectivity, improving central government fiscal transparency, development of GOP procurement systems, improving regional/local government transparency and management, improvement of transparency of extractive industry revenues and development of asset forfeiture systems and legislation. The United States is also actively working to help locate the resources still needed to fully fund activities under the initiative.

Over a five-year period (2001-2006), the United States is investing heavily in judicial sector reform. This aid is conditioned on political performance and continued political will. The United States provides technical assistance to a wide range of judicial institutions including the courts, the Public Ministry, the Ministry of Justice, the National Judicial Council, the Judicial Academy and the Ombudsman's Office. The program includes technical assistance to streamline the criminal and commercial proceedings and reduce caseloads in strategic courts, including Lima and Ayacucho, as well as measures to strengthen civil society oversight of judicial performance.

The United States is also providing funding over three years (2002-2005) to support essential reforms in the National Congress. Working with Peruvian civil society organizations and the State University of New York, USAID is providing technical assistance to increase Congressional transparency, strengthen congressional committees, capacity to produce solid legislation, and to enhance both citizen oversight of Congress and establish mechanisms through which members can better communicate with constituents. These efforts have already borne fruit in a reduction in the number of congressional committees and the establishment of a center for parliamentary research in Congress.

Peru

Voters line up to cast their ballots at an elementary school.



IFES

The United States promoted reforms in diverse areas intended to strengthen civil society and foster the rule of law. The Ministry of Education has formally incorporated into its national curriculum a class on "values and citizenship" at all grade levels that was based on an ongoing, U.S.-funded program for junior high students that promotes a culture of lawfulness. The United States worked to support ongoing restructuring of the police force, funding police training that included education on human rights and non-lethal crowd control. To establish police presence in lawless zones east of the Andes, the United States has funded two special academies that will graduate 400 new police officers in 2005. All U.S.-Peru military training missions incorporated human rights training and military and police units proposed for U.S. training and/or support received thorough interagency reviews consistent with Leahy legislation.

Other outreach and public awareness programs robustly supported structural reform efforts in Peru by working with civil society. For example, International Visitors Programs focused on decentralization, journalism, the media and NGOs, U.S. grants, speakers and public videoconferences with U.S. and Peruvian experts promoted better public awareness of race relations, domestic violence and anti-corruption issues.

In addition to promoting and financing key structural reforms, the United States was the largest single donor to Peru's TRC. The United States provided funding to the commission and to assist victims. The commission formally went out of existence in 2003, though initiatives inspired by its work continue under the direction of the Ombudsman, the UN Development Program and other civil society actors. During 2004, for example, the TRC along with the Ombudsman opened a documentation center that provides citizens with information on the violence perpetrated by domestic terrorist groups from 1980-2000. The Government has also established a multi-sectoral committee to implement some of the reforms recommended by the TRC. Support for the Ombudsman's Office has aided in the establishment of satellite offices in the interior of Peru, where they have helped prevent and manage conflicts, particularly in coca-growing areas.

During 2004, the Government recognized that trafficking in persons (TIP) in Peru was a major problem. During the year, President Toledo established a permanent, ministry-level, multi-sectoral committee to address this problem. Peruvian police are carrying out an increasing number of raids against clandestine brothels and have arrested both international and domestic traffickers who

are now awaiting trial. In addition, the Congress passed new legislation that not only significantly increased the punishments for traffickers of under-age sex workers but also, for the first time, sanctioned their clients. The Foreign Ministry also started a program to warn travelers of the dangers of trafficking and established a fund to help a Peruvian woman trafficked to Japan return home. Recognizing these efforts, the United States has agreed to support financially different programs to assist Peruvian NGOs in their efforts to implement anti-trafficking programs in alliance with the Government. These programs include the development of a statistical database and related police training for tracking TIP cases; specialized training for law enforcement, prosecutors and judges; campaigns to promote legislation and greater public awareness of this human rights issue; and establishment of a temporary care facility for victims.

As a result of these efforts, Peru has become an active participant in regional anti-trafficking initiatives. The Peruvian Government participated in a TIP Conference in La Paz, Bolivia, in November, sponsored by the Organization of American States and the International Migration Organization. The conference brought together representatives from Bolivia, Peru and Chile to discuss common approaches to this increasingly high-profile human rights challenge.

Suriname

The Government of Suriname, headed by President Ronald Venetiaan, is still in the process of consolidating democratic and constitutional rule. The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens, but there were problems in some areas. Police mistreated detainees, particularly at the time of arrest, and local detention facilities remained overcrowded. A shortage of judges resulted in a significant case backlog and lengthy pretrial detentions. Media self-censorship continued. Societal discrimination against women, minorities and tribal persons persisted, as did violence against women. While the Government took steps to combat trafficking in

persons (TIP), it remained a problem, with women and children in the commercial sex industry constituting the majority of the victims.

To strengthen human rights and democracy in Suriname, U.S. officials routinely and publicly highlighted the need for improvements in human rights conditions in Suriname. The Ambassador and other mission officers also worked privately with government officials, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other organizations to identify areas of particular concern and promote systemic reforms.

The United States also promotes a strong and independent media in Suriname. Two journalists participated in a U.S.-sponsored cooperative training program aimed at helping media effectively convey facts via television. A U.S. journalist trained 57 journalists and government public relations officials on radio and broadcasting techniques.

Trafficking for sexual exploitation remains a serious concern in Suriname. The United States strongly and consistently urged government action against TIP, and continued funding a two-year program with the U.S. Department of Justice to assist Suriname in that fight. As part of this program, the U.S. Government conducted two seminars on preventing and prosecuting TIP and protecting TIP victims with government and NGO participants, including members of the anti-trafficking commission founded in 2003 and composed of various ministries and a local NGO, headed by the Ministry of Justice and Police. A Ministry of Justice official participated in a U.S.-sponsored International Visitors Program aimed at promoting global cooperation to combat various forms of international crime, including TIP. The outcomes included the Government's adoption of a national action plan to combat TIP and issuance of two operations manuals for training police and immigration officials on identifying and prosecuting TIP. These processes accelerated momentum to improve currently available law enforcement mechanisms to combat TIP, resulting in the launch of a one-year-long pilot project directed by the

Ministry of Justice and Police. At year's end, the Suriname Police Corps arrested a prominent local government official for trafficking female victims into Suriname for sexual exploitation; the official remains in custody awaiting trial.

Venezuela

Venezuela's human rights record continues to be poor. In 2000, Venezuelans elected Hugo Chavez president in elections generally judged to be free and fair. Chavez was first elected in 1998, and re-elected in 2000, following the approval of a new Constitution. Over the past six years, Chavez increasingly has consolidated power within the executive branch, extending its control over the country's other branches of government. The political situation has at times been highly polarized and volatile, as Chavez has pursued his "Bolivarian" revolution and pursued policies opposed by many of those who first elected him. In 2002, the country's political polarization led to violent disturbances, a brief interruption of the

constitutional order and then a crippling national strike. Political violence, often by government supporters facing little resistance from security forces, became a part of the political landscape in 2003.

In 2004, the human rights situation deteriorated. The Government increased its control over the judicial system and its interference in the administration of justice. The National Assembly passed a law in May that enabled it to pack the Supreme Court with Chavez sympathizers and exert greater control over the justices. Judicial harassment and baseless political prosecutions against opposition and non-governmental organization (NGO) leaders proceeded. Such prosecutions intimidated NGOs, including human rights groups, who were also subject to threats by government supporters.

The legislature also passed a law in December that erodes freedom of speech. The new media law includes vague prohibitions against transmitting violent images or statements that might lead to



Caracas, Venezuela

Venezuelans check voter lists before voting in regional elections.

AP Photo

public disorder and stiff fines that have led to fears of self-censorship by media owners. The National Assembly also passed amendments to the penal code that provide for prison sentences for making statements through any media that “upset the public.” The law also criminalizes noisy public protests (“cacerolazos”).

According to press reports, Chavez vetoed some of the penal code amendments in February 2005 in response to prison strikes, asserting that some of the amendments violated the Constitution. Police and military units killed suspects in “confrontations,” which eyewitness testimony often categorized as executions. Such actions were rarely prosecuted or punished. In February-March, there were numerous complaints that members of the National Guard tortured demonstrators, often using similar techniques and methods. The condition of Venezuela’s prisons remained harsh, and the authorities were unable to contain prisoner on prisoner violence that contributed to 327 deaths and 655 injuries in prisons. Child labor and violence against women and children continued to be a problem, as did trafficking in persons.

The United States supports the efforts of the Venezuelan people to strengthen democracy, the rule of law and human rights. Senior U.S. officials consistently have spoken publicly in favor of a peaceful, democratic solution to Venezuela’s political conflict and on behalf of freedom of the press and other human rights. United States diplomats worked closely with other governments to coordinate support for democracy and human rights in Venezuela, especially to help build international support for the referendum process, and in defense of the press and civic associations facing increased government pressure. The Embassy continues to express the U.S. Government’s concern to the Venezuelan Government that it is not doing enough to combat trafficking in persons.

In the first half of 2004, the opposition struggled to get the electoral authorities to hold a constitutionally-sanctioned presidential recall referendum. The U.S. Government supported this electoral solution as the best way to implement Organization of American States (OAS) Resolution 833, which called for a peaceful, democratic, elec-

toral and constitutional resolution to the political crisis in Venezuela. The Embassy worked to help strengthen democracy in Venezuela through various electoral projects, including working with electoral observation groups. Both the Carter Center and the OAS fielded teams of international monitors to observe the presidential recall referendum as well as electoral events leading up to it, such as the petition and signature verification process. Embassy officers also observed the referendum signature drive, the signature confirmation event, the referendum itself and regional elections during the year. The Embassy put together an International Visitors Program (IVP) on electoral procedures that included a pro-Chavez National Assembly Deputy and members of the opposition.

According to international observers, including the OAS and the Carter Center, the National Electoral Council (CNE) behaved in a partisan manner throughout this period, restricting avenues for the referendum, allowing massive last minute naturalizations and manipulating the electoral rules to disadvantage the opponents of President Chavez. Nevertheless, the referendum took place on August 15, and official results indicated President Chavez won 60 percent of the votes cast. There were widespread complaints from the opposition that the CNE engaged in vote fraud and pre-referendum manipulations. Although the Carter Center noted that “the referendum process suffered from numerous irregularities throughout the entire process,” the OAS and Carter Center declared that the vote represented the will of the Venezuelan people.

To help strengthen political parties in Venezuela, the National Democratic Institute promoted programs with political parties across the political spectrum focused on political party renewal and internal democratization. The International Republican Institute continued to provide technical assistance to political parties, training its 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 locally.

State Department spokespersons publicly expressed the U.S. Government’s concern that the media law passed by the National Assembly could

threaten freedom of the press. The Embassy distributed this statement throughout the media to send as strong a message as possible to the Venezuelan media that the U.S. Government supported its struggle to maintain press freedoms. The Embassy also hosted a digital videoconference on freedom of the press timed to coincide with the debate over the law. Embassy officials also have expressed the U.S. Government's concern over the law in private conversations with Venezuelan officials. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights' Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression also noted concern over the media content law, a concern the U.S. Mission to the OAS supported publicly.

To strengthen civil society overall, the United States worked to help strengthen the relatively weak human rights NGOs working in Venezuela, some of which have had to work in a climate of intense pressure and harassment by the Government of Venezuela. Freedom House began a program to teach human rights organizations and practitioners successful strategies employed by human rights defenders in other countries and to increase their institutional capacity through exchanges. This program is also solidifying 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, indigenous rights and property rights as human rights.

The United States also worked to strengthen civil society groups by assisting local NGOs focused on supporting peaceful debate and conflict resolution, democratic institutions, promoting civic education and providing/increasing platforms for individuals of differing political ideologies to come together to resolve issues. The Embassy sent a group of student political leaders to the United States on an International Visitors Program to study grassroots democracy and another group to an OAS conference that taught them ways to strengthen democracy and learn more about their rights as citizens.

To reduce the instance of extra-judicial killings and torture, Embassy law enforcement representatives included human rights segments in all their training programs with Venezuelan law enforcement

agencies. The Embassy also sent Venezuelan police officers to the United States on IVPs, which included human rights components. In Caracas, the Embassy began a series of four digital videoconferences with the Police Chief of San Jose, California for 30 police officers on protecting human rights in daily police activities. Various Embassy sections vetted all candidates for military training in the United States for human rights violations, in compliance with the Leahy Amendment.

The Embassy worked to strengthen the democratic process and promote the rule of law by sending U.S. diplomats to criminal proceedings against opposition leaders to show U.S. Government concern over due process. Opposition leaders under investigation were invited to Embassy events, along with government supporters, to show U.S. Government support for democracy and political tolerance and rejection of judicial intimidation. State Department spokespersons called attention to the negative effect on judicial independence of the Supreme Court law. Embassy officers, congressional delegations and visiting State Department officials also delivered messages to Venezuelan government, judicial and prosecutorial officials in defense of NGO leaders accused of treason for accepting U.S. Government funding. The Embassy arranged a series of digital videoconferences on the adversarial system to help train Venezuelan judges and lawyers. It also brought two judges and a mediator from the United States to talk about increasing the efficiency of court proceedings to insure swift and impartial administration of justice and a court mediator to discuss alternatives to judicial proceedings.

The U.S. Government sanctioned the Venezuelan Government for inaction on the problem of trafficking in persons by placing Venezuela in the Tier Three list of countries not doing enough to fight trafficking in persons during the year.

2004 Human Rights and Democracy Achievement Award Winners

This third annual edition of *Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2004-2005* presents a picture of how the United States is engaged worldwide with people and institutions dedicated to building freer societies. Fostering democracy and human rights is a strategic decision founded on the understanding that given the opportunity, people will choose governments that are accountable to the governed, exercise rule of law, and 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.

Michael Goldman of Embassy Tashkent was selected as winner of this year's award for exceptional achievement in the field of human rights and democracy. Mr. Goldman was selected from an impressive group of nine candidates nominated by their Ambassadors in a year in which issues of democracy and human rights moved even further to the forefront of the foreign policy process.

In the challenging human rights environment of Uzbekistan, Michael Goldman succeeded in advancing the U.S. human rights agenda. Ambassador Purnell wrote: "the fact that there has been progress at all is a testament to Mike's energy, creativity and diplomatic skills." Michael's cables on wide-ranging abuses, arbitrary arrests, renewed harassment of the opposition and imprisonment of political and religious leaders led to the Secretary's determination in July that Uzbekistan had not made sufficient progress in meeting its obligations under the 2002 Strategic Partnership Declaration. His reporting on female members of the banned Party of Islamic Liberation and other developments provided the United States with insights into the complexity of the Government of Uzbekistan's handling of democratic issues. Mike facilitated a series of lunches between Freedom House's director and the Ministry of Internal Affairs that led to an unprecedented roundtable on torture between law enforcement officials and human rights advocates. His efforts also led to the release of independent journalist Ruslan Sharipov, and he is currently working on the establishment of an inter-ministerial investigative commission on human rights.

Choosing the winner of this year's award was a challenge because of the number of other superior candidates nominated by their Ambassadors. All of them deserve the Department's praise and gratitude:

Kim Kambourian in Buenos Aires was commended for “exceptional contributions to the 2003 Human Rights Report.” She also won praise for her activism in monitoring child labor abuses, reporting on the investigations and trial for the terrorist bombing of The Jewish Community Center (Amia) in 1994, and her energy and insightfulness in demonstrating to the country team that Argentina deserved designation as A Tier 2 country because of the severity of the trafficking in persons problem.

Tobin Bradley, while serving in Dhiqar Province in Iraq, pioneered the use of food ration cards for the election of local officials, thereby demonstrating to the UN the feasibility of this mechanism for Iraq's National Elections. By increasing the political participation of women, fostering reforms in parliamentary procedures, and supporting city councils in building increasing independence in their work, he won the praise of then-Ambassador Bremer and other senior officials for “One of the most impressive examples of democratic institution building in Iraq.”

Through painstaking documentation and program activism, **David Brooks** in Lima first raised Embassy Lima's attention, then the Department's, and finally all of Peru's to the major problem of trafficking in persons there. His work with the Government resulted in the creation of new government mechanisms, legislation and enforcement actions to confront the problem. This work also provided David with case materials he used for conducting international seminars about the TIP problem for the Organization of American States and the International Organization for Migration.

Sharon UMBER in Minsk supported dozens of Belarusian non-governmental organizations (NGOs), independent newspapers and opposition groups and reported meticulously on oppressive legal proceedings against them. She raised the issue of excessive punishment for minor crimes to the highest levels of government and helped independent newspapers, the Belarus Helsinki Commission, and Belarusian Association of Journalists confront government harassment of independent media. She also organized the coverage, monitoring and post-election analysis of the parliamentary election and referendum.

Richard Swart in Niamey effectively managed Human Rights and Democracy Funds to help organize political party registration and the work of both domestic and international observers to enable Niger to achieve its highest voter turnout in “free and fair” elections. His advocacy work in child labor persuaded the U.S. Department of Labor to identify Niger as a country that is a good candidate for educational grants in areas with high incidence of exploitative child labor, and he organized training to support anti-TIP legislative efforts.

Her activism and detailed reporting made **Dana Banks** in Port-Au-Prince “the public face of the embassy’s human rights efforts.” Her work provided balance to information from the Government in the high profile case of Father Jean-Juste, advanced the investigation of labor rights abuses in Haiti’s first free trade zone and supported the World Bank affiliate’s mediation efforts, and provided timely reports and guidance for U.S. responses to Government handling of a controversial death squad re-trial.

The professionalism, analytical depth and determination that **Benjamin Weber** in Shanghai brought to his human rights work enabled him to gain access to and report on key experiences for expanding external perspectives on China’s civil activist, the complexity of the Protestant religious experience, and the changing role of women in China. His information about infringements on religious freedom was central in both academic forums and in developing the new Shanghai legislation on religious activities in China.

Despite the efforts of the Government of Laos to withhold information and control its citizens, **Gregory Chapman** in Vientiane was “alone of all diplomats in Vientiane, in gaining access to families of dissidents, key NGO go-betweens, and the press.” He elucidated the situation of the Hmong population, providing U.S. Government agencies with facts against the misinformation that had surrounded them, and his reporting on Laotian religious activity won kudos for going “the extra mile” in support of religious freedom.

The Assistant Secretary's award for exceptional achievement in the field of human rights and democracy recognizes 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.

Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record is produced by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, but 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.

Michael G. Kozak
Acting Assistant Secretary of State
for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor

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Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor