
LEGISLATION AND POLICY

Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2003-2004

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Earlier this year I was here to introduce the State Department's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2003*. The basis for that report is that governments should be held to internationally accepted human rights standards and norms. For more than twenty-five years, the United States has been willing because we believe in the power of information to publish the country reports, which some have called a name it and shame it strategy. But what many people around the world do not realize is that we do not just "name and shame," we provide diplomatic support, training and assistance around the world to aid people and strengthen institutions that promote freedom and human rights. That is the story that Supporting Human Rights and Democracy Report lays out.

In the three months since the release of the most recent country reports, much has happened. I would like to begin with the abuses at Abu Ghraib Prison. As an individual, and as the State Department's Assistant Secretary charged with advancing human rights abroad, I have been particularly appalled by the abuses that occurred there. They are unworthy of America. I have been pleased to see the Department of Defense pledge to take action against those individuals involved in such atrocious behavior, and take steps to ensure that similar acts do not occur again. Already, criminal prosecutions are underway, in addition to several different administrative investigations, and positive changes have been announced at Abu Ghraib.

I have been asked if Abu Ghraib robs us of our ability to talk about human rights abroad. It is a reasonable question. How can we talk about human rights if we fail to uphold the highest standards? On May 17, 2004 when Deputy Secretary Armitage first released this new report, he noted that when President Bush expressed his deep disgust and regret about events at Abu Ghraib, it was not just his personal reaction as a man of principle. It was also his reaction as the head of state of a country that holds itself to a higher standard, both at home and in our conduct in the world. We will indeed find and expose the truth, and will hold all who bear responsibility for these shameful episodes fully accountable. And we will do everything in our power to ensure that such actions do not occur again. This is all that we ask other countries to do. In doing so, we are showing the world that we hold ourselves to the same standards of accountability for human rights abuses to which we hold them.

To those who wonder if we still possess the will to press for internationally accepted human rights standards and norms I would point to our actions on Darfur. We have taken strong and decisive action to end the violence there. It is President Bush, Secretary Powell and the U.S. government that are leading actions to end killing, torture and rape in Darfur. Once again, the United States is taking a leadership role. Secretary Powell's recent visit to Sudan gave him the

opportunity to directly convey a message to the government about our concern over the continued human rights abuses taking place in Darfur. We continue to share our concern with the government of Sudan at the highest levels.

As we are all aware, grave violations of international human rights continue in Darfur. There are credible reports of torture, widespread and systematic rape targeting of innocent civilians in villages and internally displaced persons (IDP) camps by the government-supported Jinjaweed militia groups. The immediate priority of the U.S. government is to take action to immediately stop the violence and allow refugees to return to their homes safely. DRL, with vital input from several non-government organizations, has developed an effort to document human rights atrocities in Darfur. The department is scheduled to deploy a state and non-government organizations team by the first week of July to the Chad border to interview refugees and conduct investigations.

Also, as you are aware, the Department publicly identified 7 Jinjaweed commanders and leaders responsible for the violence in Darfur. Our investigations continue and we plan to name others if the atrocities do not end immediately. I would also like to mention that members of the Jinjaweed are feeling the pressure. Two days after the names were made public, Jinjaweed commander Musa Hilal, gave an interview in the *Arabic Press Review* trying to distance himself from the atrocities taking place in Darfur and denying any links to the Jinjaweed.

This — coupled with the myriad human rights programs that the U.S. Government provides all around the world — is why we continue to create a constructive legacy that promotes and protects human rights and democracy. In places like Darfur — and Burma and Zimbabwe and Belarus and elsewhere — who would benefit, and who would pay the price if we self-consciously turned inward and ignored human rights abuses outside of our country?

Today, I am very pleased to formally present to Congress our report on *Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2003-2004*. This report provides examples of how we are engaged worldwide with people and institutions dedicated to advancing freedom, and how we are trying to help others around the world who want the same institutions we have: institutions that protect human rights and punish those who would violate them. The purpose of this report is to answer the question, “What are we doing about all those abuses in the Country Reports?”

Unlike the 196 individual Country Reports, this report highlights U.S. efforts to promote human rights and democracy in (by legislative mandate) those 101 countries and entities with the most serious human rights abuses. We take care to include places of concern for “extra judicial killings, torture, or other serious violations of human rights,” as called for in the *Foreign Relations Authorization Act of Fiscal Year 2003*. To make this report consistent with the criteria in the legislation, this year’s report also includes a number of additional countries and a few deletions from last year’s edition.

Each report typically begins with a summary of the human rights conditions in the country referred to. This snapshot is not a complete picture of everything we know about the human rights conditions in the country; that is the purpose of the mother Country Reports. Next, we provide a short narrative about our human rights strategy, followed by a sampling of the activities we are taking to defend and extend liberty. This report is an overview of our efforts, not an exhaustive account of all U.S. government efforts. It is a representative sample of our human rights activities. To get a truly comprehensive picture it would be necessary to consider other areas too: for example, this Administration’s commitment to try to reform the World Bank and other multilateral development banks to make them more effective in improving the world’s poor areas.

We employ a wide range of strategies to promote human rights and democracy. In societies that enjoy some measure of openness, we can and do employ a wider range of strategies to

promote human rights and democracy. Many who follow these issues closely will recognize strategies that are “tried and true,” that are part of our standard tool kit. Other strategies described in the report are innovative and represent the cutting-edge of democracy and human rights promotion, and we’ve highlighted some in this report: a school to enhance the leadership skills of East African women so that they can run for political office; the first independent printing press in Kyrgyzstan so that journalists can advance media freedom; halfway houses for former child soldiers in Colombia so that they can get off the battlefield and begin normal lives; a training academy for non-government organizations and others in Yemen to help enhance their democratic process. Our ability to develop a mix of programs unique to each country where we are active is the result of careful study of the human rights situation and ideas generated by our collaboration with local activists and non-governmental organizations in these countries. By combining approaches that encompass the old and new, the tested and experimental, and top-down and bottom-up, we have the capability to address different situations more effectively.

Even with these many challenges, we are fortunate to be living in a world where freedom is advancing, and where we can benefit from acting in combination with other countries that share our commitment to human rights. This volume necessarily focuses on the activities of the United States, but there are many countries around the world that increasingly are involved in the fight against tyranny and oppression. They are beginning to take on the same roles we seek to fulfill: contributing financial and technical support, strengthening the democracy focus of international institutions, and protesting and refusing to turn a blind eye to abuses in their regions and beyond. Using vehicles like the Community of Democracies, we can begin to depend on a synergy of effort, and so can the millions of people who dream of freedom.

In addition to all of the efforts I have already laid out, we also continue to engage and remain active at the United Nations (U.N.) Commission on Human Rights, including this spring. The U.S. delegation worked diligently to make that body a more effective instrument for advancing human rights worldwide. Members of your staffs joined us in Geneva in that effort, and I thank you for letting them participate. They were extremely helpful to us in demonstrating what I’ve said is one of the great assets of my job, that the Executive and Legislative Branches, Republicans and Democrats, speak with one voice about the importance of human rights and democracy. We look forward in the coming months to discussing with you ways in which we can intensify such collaboration at CHR-61.

In some cases we achieved our objectives at the Commission, evidenced by the passage of resolutions condemning human rights abuses in Cuba, North Korea, Burma, and Turkmenistan. In other cases, we met resistance from countries that would prefer to obscure their records, countries that claim that we have no right to raise concerns about human rights within their borders. But their protests did not, and do not, deter our effort to ensure that human rights are not swept under the rug.

Some ask: “Does it all work?” The answer is obvious: the support we have given for the past quarter century all over the world has helped usher in some of the most dramatic political changes in history. Twenty-five years ago, there were around forty democracies in the world. Today, there are more than 120. In the 1980s in Latin America and in Eastern Europe, the U.S. government sought to ensure that democratic reformers were given the oxygen they needed to bring about changes in countries like Chile, El Salvador, Poland, Taiwan and Hungary.

In the 1990s, the United States supported South Africa’s democracy movement, which helped produce a new era of freedom in a country that some believed would descend into chaos. And for the last decade, we’ve worked with opposition leaders and non-government organizations in places like Cuba and Burma and Zimbabwe, and also in places like Georgia, where last year, the

time and the energy and the heart of our effort, and the effort of so many others, culminated in the peaceful Revolution of Roses.

Many challenges remain, and we in this Administration have not shrunk from taking them on. We do not have unlimited funds, so we use a framework to focus our efforts. We determine whether the conditions exist to obtain the changes we seek. We use human rights reporting to tailor assistance programs. One example of this approach is the U.S. and Middle East Partnership Initiative; another is the Millennium Challenge Account, for projects in countries whose governments rule justly, invest in their people and encourage economic freedom.

Transitions to democratic government and the rule of law happen in numerous ways, sometimes relatively quickly and sometimes very gradually. Underlying this diversity of paths is the universal human aspiration for freedom. Our own experience as a nation and the unfolding of our history may be unique, but our striving for freedom and equality has been animated by values of human dignity shared by people around the world. As the Report notes, in places like Central Asia and the Middle East where doors were closed for so long to anyone wanting to talk about democracy and human rights, we are continuing to press on those issues.

In the last portion of the report, the recent recipients of our annual Human Rights and Democracy Achievement Award are listed, and it is worth mentioning the two winners. Phil Kaplan serves at our embassy in Ankara, where he not only reports on key political developments, but also works with private organizations, the Turkish government and groups from across civil society, to advance the cause of Turkey's commitment to human rights. Until recently, Ted Burkhalter worked in Uzbekistan, where he analyzed developments in civil society, but he also saved lives by pushing for protections and justice for all detainees, and by supporting those who struggle to bring democracy and human dignity to that country. I applaud these officers and the other nominees for their efforts to advance internationally accepted human rights standards and norms, and note that there are many, many other officers in our embassies and posts working hard to advance human rights and democracy.

Time does not permit a full description of the regional sections of the report, but I would like to provide an overview of some of our activities in the various regions. Those interested in more detail should review the report, copies of which we have brought with us today, and which is also available on the State Department website at www.state.gov.

In Georgia, years of U.S. assistance including a parallel vote tabulations was instrumental in proving that the official parliamentary election results last November had been manipulated and did not reflect the will of the people. During the subsequent peaceful demonstrations, the Ambassador urged the government and opposition to avoid violence. The demonstrations remained peaceful and eventually led to President Shevardnadze's resignation and new elections.

In Belarus over the last few years, the National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute have provided training focused on leadership and message development, political party strengthening, and coalition building, while the U.S. Embassy and the government of Lithuania have supported and continue to support a series of skill-building workshops and roundtables in neighboring countries for Belarusian democratic leaders and activists. These efforts have begun to pay off. Six of the seven largest political parties, more than two hundred non-government organizations, a number of independent trade unions, regional organizations, youth groups, and members of the business community and civil society have united into a democratic coalition called "Five Plus." Five Plus is the largest Belarusian democratic coalition, and represents the most promising effort in recent years to reach the Belarusian electorate with a modern, responsive and hopeful democratic message.

In the Kyrgyz Republic I am pleased to note that our programs have succeeded in expanding freedom of expression and freedom of speech to the Kyrgyz people. The independent printing press that Freedom House established with United States funding is now printing twenty-eight independent newspapers, enabling media outlets to publish without fear of being denied access to the state-run printing press or having to engage in self-censorship. The network of twenty-four Information Centers for Democracy created by the National Democratic Institute now cover the entire territory of the Kyrgyz Republic, enabling local activists to host “town-hall” meetings to discuss current political issues. The information libraries are allowing citizens to have free access to newspapers and to use the Internet, some for the first time ever.

Morocco has taken courageous steps to improve human rights and democracy, most recently through bold changes to the family status code, which significantly increased the rights of women and children in areas such as marriage, property rights and inheritance. Competitive elections, vibrant non-government organizations, and other legislative reforms are other milestones that make Morocco a leader in the region. The United States is active in its support, funding programs that train new parliamentarians, advice on legal reforms and implementation, nurture non-government organizations and campaign against child labor. We have true partners in our efforts in both the Moroccan government and its people.

In Saudi Arabia, the Ambassador and other senior United States officials routinely highlight the need to improve human rights conditions. For example, I visited Saudi Arabia in July 2003 and raised concerns about political reform and human rights, and Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom John Hanford visited Saudi Arabia in October 2003 and raised concerns about religious freedom issues with high-level officials. During 2003, we supported men and women journalists to study in the United States, organized in-country training workshops for women journalists, hosted roundtable discussions with journalists, and encouraged editors to expand their coverage of human rights.

Following more than two decades of conflict in Sri Lanka, President Kumaratunga has expressed an interest in re-initiating talks with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The United States is providing \$1.5 million to train and empower local civil society groups, media organizations, political parties, and stakeholders in peace to participate in national dialogues of peace.

In Afghanistan, the adoption of a constitution on January 4, 2004 and on-going voter registration represents a victory for the central government and a major step along the road towards democracy and stability. In fiscal year 2004, almost \$400 million will go toward democracy and governance.

With the turnover of power in Iraq on Monday, June 28, 2004, we are now witnessing the birth of a new Iraq. The Iraqi Interim Government, led by Prime Minister Ayad Allawi, has assumed sovereign authority over Iraq and the Coalition Provisional Authority has dissolved. Mr. Allawi’s government will face enormous challenges, particularly in restoring stability and security and leading the nation to elections scheduled for January 2005.

The Iraqis, working closely with the U.N., have already begun preparations for elections, putting in place an independent election commission and planning the administrative and security frameworks that will guide the process. The elected assembly will be responsible for drafting a permanent constitution, which we expect to be ratified by public referendum in the fall of 2005 and to govern the election of a new sovereign government by the end of that year.

In addition, a national conference will be convened this summer to select members of a consultative council. This council will have an important role to play in advising the interim government and bringing together a wide range of Iraqi communities.

Through the Coalition Provisional Authority, the United States government has been very active in providing assistance to support a successful transition to a peaceful, lawful, democratic, and sovereign Iraq. We have supported numerous initiatives to bring accountability for past atrocities and to put in place government and non-government institutions to safeguard human rights in the future. These initiatives have addressed mass graves, missing persons, documentation of crimes under the previous regime, and the establishment of an Iraqi Ministry of Human Rights and an independent Human Rights Commission and Ombudsman. We have supported the establishment of an Iraqi Special Tribunal that, in the months ahead, will begin to try key perpetrators of the human rights atrocities and war crimes committed during Saddam Hussein's regime. We have funded programs that have now for months provided technical assistance and consultation to Iraq's emerging political parties to help them compete effectively in the upcoming elections. Together with our colleagues at United States Agency for International Development (USAID), we have also dedicated substantial support to non-governmental groups, enabling them to conduct human rights advocacy, democracy and human rights education and activities in conjunction with the elections. We are working to ensure that an independent and vibrant media operates in Iraq, and we have launched several initiatives, including a U.S. and Iraq women's network, and are on the verge of funding more, aimed explicitly at promoting the economic, political, legal and social status of Iraqi women and girls.

Our role in Iraq has changed with the dissolution of CPA, but our dedication to the promotion of human rights, institutions of freedom and respect for the rule of law will continue through the activities of our Embassy, under the leadership of Ambassador John Negroponte. The many activities described above will continue, in partnership with the Iraqi Interim Government. The advancement of freedom in Iraq is critical to our shared goal of helping Iraq become a secure, stable, and successful independent state with democratic, representative government.

In Nepal, the on-going Maoist insurgency has weakened government institutions and created an environment where rampant human rights abuses occur. In this atmosphere, the United States has initiated a \$6 million program to support the rule of law and respect for human rights. We are also working with the National Human Rights Commission in researching and analyzing draft anti-terror legislation and ensuring the right to a fair trial.

The historic Kenyan 2002 general election peacefully ended Daniel Arap Moi's twenty-four years in power. President Kibaki is making good on pre-election promises to fight corruption and provide free compulsory education and more recently his government has established an independent Human Rights Commission. In 2003 and early 2004, the United States continued to support efforts to strengthen government institution and civil society.

Tackling the Lord's Resistant Army's brutal eighteen-year insurgency in northern Uganda, the U.S. funded a program to expand access to quality education for children at risk of exploitation as child soldiers.

As the Government of Zimbabwe continues its concerted campaign of violence, repression, and intimidation, United States programs are assisting victims of torture and other political violence and funding access to independent media.

The important purpose of this follow-on report to the Country Reports is to show that U.S. support for human rights is more than a once-a-year exercise in identifying abuses. I am reminded of President Bush's words when he said, "The message to those who long for liberty and those who work for reform is that they can be certain they have a strong and constant ally in the United States of America." And likewise, Secretary Powell said in the preface to this report:

On every continent, we are making important, long-term investments in democracy. We are helping to build democratic institutions. We are working with

non-governmental organizations, faith-based groups, opposition parties, minority communities, women's organizations and labor movements to develop dynamic civil societies. We are promoting good governance to create conditions for economic growth and sustainable development. We are helping to free the flow of information and to ensure free and fair elections. And through our exchange and other programs, we are acquainting rising generations with democratic ideas and processes.

Most importantly, extraordinary men and women around the world take great personal risks to shed light on human rights abuses and press for democratic change, courageous people like Oswaldo Payá in Cuba, Morgan Tsvangirai in Zimbabwe, and Aung San Suu Kyi in Burma. This report demonstrates our effort to stand in solidarity with these brave souls who are working hard to achieve freedom, not only in democratic societies, but also in repressive ones. They are setting the course of history and we must help them.

This year we have tried to provide a report that is true to the language and the spirit of the mandating legislation that came out of this Committee. We are crafting programs to promote freedom and liberty, and we are making the connection from reporting to policy. Much work remains, and we look forward to working with this Committee to find more and better ways to promote human rights and democracy. We continue to welcome ideas and suggestions for next year.