
1992 Human Rights Report

[The following is a reprint of the introduction to the 1196-page *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1992*, which was published in February 1993 by the Department of State. These reports are prepared annually in accordance with the requirements of Sections 116(d) and 502(B)(b) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, and they cover the human rights practices of all countries that receive aid from the United States and all countries that are members of the United Nations. Also included are reports on the few countries that do not fall into either of those categories. The reports are submitted directly to the Chairmen of the Senate Foreign Relation Committee and the House Foreign Affairs Committee.]

INTRODUCTION

Looking back over the past year, the American-led landing of multinational armed forces in Somalia on December 8, 1992, marked a defining moment in the role that human rights and humanitarian concerns play in world affairs. Created after the United Nations Security Council accepted an American offer of military assistance, these forces were able to break the stranglehold of local Somali warlords and bandits on the delivery of food, medicine, and other humanitarian assistance.

Although less dramatic, these reports represent a no less important example of this country's continuing and long-standing commitment to human rights in the world. This is the 17th year this Department has submitted these reports to Congress. The reports cover countries that receive aid from the United States and countries that are members of the United Nations, as required by law. As in recent years, this volume also includes reports on countries which are neither aid recipients nor UN members.

These country reports show that, despite the advancement of human rights policy evidenced by the world's response to Somalia, the balance sheet of human rights practices had many negative entries in 1992. The hope for more widespread respect for human rights—buttressed in previous years by the demise of the Soviet Union and by democratic transformations elsewhere in the world—was undercut by horrific abuses of the most fundamental rights. In continued ethnic and religious conflicts in Europe, Africa, and Asia, hundreds of thousands of people, denied humanitarian relief by inhumane governments and warlords, suffered and died. On a scale and scope not seen for half a century, barbarous leaders consciously used atrocities of the most vile nature, including the wholesale rape of women in Bosnia, to drive ethnic populations from their homes. During the past year, false prophets of nationalism and “ethnic cleansing” and religious extremists openly flaunted the values enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Although discredited as an ideology, fidelity to Leninism remained the pretext for several regimes in Asia and Castro's Cuba to try to justify continued denial of the citizens' most basic political and civil rights. Without any serious philosophical pretext, authoritarian regimes in far too many other countries continued to deny the internationally recognized human rights of their peoples. In several countries of the former Soviet Union, the process of democratic transformation stalled, in part due to the residual influence of old regime elites.

But the multinational humanitarian efforts in Somalia were not the only positive entries on the human rights ledger for the year. While these reports document the holdouts, foot-draggers and backsliders, the process of democratic transformation continued to make significant headway, particularly in Africa. Another example of progress occurred in El Salvador, with the ongoing implementation of last year's New Year's Eve peace accords. Ground breaking, albeit

sometimes imperfect, elections occurred in several countries, such as Kenya, Kuwait, and Cameroon. Democracy was restored in Thailand and the consistent respect for human rights, the human rights observance trend line remained, on balance, positive.

The international community was more responsive to widespread violations of human rights, adopting unprecedented means to alleviate them in several instances in addition to Somalia. The United Nations Human Rights Commission is becoming more active in dealing with human rights crises. Its rapporteur for the former Yugoslavia periodically reported to the Secretary General, laying the groundwork for real time responses to human right abuses. For the first time, at U.S. initiative, the Commission met in extraordinary session, again allowing it to confront a humanitarian crisis within a time frame for practical responses. The Security Council mandated extraordinary responses, not only in Somalia, but to crises in the former Yugoslavia and Iraq, as well. The General Assembly passed a resolution that other African governments widely supported expressing concern about the serious human rights situation in Sudan.

The donor community increasingly linked financial aid to human rights performance. The donor countries more effectively coordinated their responses to major problems as in Malawi. Legislation requiring the United States to oppose loans to the most serious human right abusers was amended to cover IMF loans. This action strengthened an important tool we use to encourage greater respect for human right abroad. Human rights advocates here and abroad warmly welcomed the Senate's approval of the Administration-backed International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

So now we look forward to next year—the United States will continue to nurture respect for human rights through strengthening fledgling democracies, supporting the growth of the rule of law and promoting individual liberties. We will have an historic opportunity to further these three fundamental cornerstones of civil and political rights when the World Conference on Human Rights convenes in June 1993. We can all hope next year's country reports, when reviewed in 1993, will mark it a milestone year and that the human rights ledger will have more positive than negative entries.

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